



THE NORWEGIAN EXPLORERS
OF MINNESOTA, INC.



EXPLORATIONS

WINTER 2024

ISSUE NO. 88


"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."

Contents


Editor's Desk	1
A Word from the President	1
The 2023 Annual Dinner	2
Dinner Toasts	3
2024 Baker Street West	6
First Time at the BSI Week	7
The Starting Point of Remarkable Adventures ..	9
The Next Big Sherlockian Play	10
Multiple References to the Curious Incident ..	10
Study Group Session - GREE	12
Parting Words and Trifles	14

A Word from the President

BY TOM GOTTWALT


s you will note from the many articles throughout this issue, our group has been busy since the publication of the previous edition of *Explorations*. Our December Annual Dinner, Baker Street West event, ongoing Study Group meetings, and upcoming Conference are discussed in this issue. Stay tuned for the Red Throated League's planned performance on the conference's final day. It's shaping up to have some interesting surprises.


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.

As you read this, we are moving through late winter and into spring. Our Conference Planning Committee continues working steadily to ensure it's a success. I look forward to seeing some of you on July 12th and 13th at the Minnesota Antiquarian and Rare Book Fair (held this year at Hamline University) and at our conference on July 26-28 at the Elmer L. Andersen Library on the University of Minnesota campus. 



Editor's Desk

reetings to one and all. This Winter issue is always a fun one for me as I look back on the exciting Sherlockian happenings of the past few months. For fellow-Explorers who live in Minnesota, many of us attended our Annual Dinner, held for the last decade or so at the Minneapolis Golf Club. Minnesota also always has a strong contingent who attend the festivities in New York in early January, and we gather again, a few weeks later, to hear tales of their fun exploits.

This issue contains a number of wonderful articles written by Explorers. My thanks go out to Rob Nunn, Michael Eckman, Melissa Aho, Jeff Falkingham, Karen Murdock, and Amanda Downs for their contributions to this issue. ~ Phil 

The 2023 Annual Dinner

BY PHILLIP BERGEM



On Thursday, December 7th, sixty-five Explorers and guests gathered at the Minneapolis Golf Club for our annual dinner. With the unusual winter we have had this year, the total lack of snow or cold temperatures was a striking contrast from other years. Despite the radical change in weather, the friendship, fun and good food of prior years remained consistent for the evening.

As normal, the evening started out with half an hour of socialization and conversation before we took our seats. An invocation was given by Father Basil Gilliland before groups of people made their way to the buffet for food. Toward the end of the meal, Steve Schier called on various people to present toasts. The toasts presented by John Bergquist, Amanda Downs, Chris Atkinson, Monica Schmidt, and Jeff Falkingham are provided after this write-up.

Following the toasts Tom Gottwalt gave a summary of the Explorers' year of activities. Afterward there was the annual Business Meeting. The slate of officers was Tom continuing as president, Melissa Aho taking over the vice-president position, and Phil Bergem continuing as treasurer. As at-large Board members there are John Bergquist, Bob Brusic, Tim Johnson, Ray Riethmeier, and Dick Sveum. Past presidents are Gary Thaden, Julie McKuras, Bruce Southworth, Pj Doyle, and Paul Martin. There was a motion and vote and the slate of candidates was elected by the group. Phil Bergem gave the treasurer's report and there was a donation of \$221 from the group to the Sherlock Holmes Collections which was accepted by Tim Johnson.

Ray Riethmeier and Phil Bergem handed out the Sigerson Awards to contributors to the Norwegian Explorers *Christmas Annual*. A copy of the Annual was given to each person at the Dinner. Copies had also been sent to New York to include in the BSI Dinner packets. Names of the Awards were once again cleverly devised by Julie McKuras with phrases that come from the Canon.

- "A Norwegian Named Sigerson Arrives at Lhasa" – artwork – Amanda Downs – The "I Know What is Good When I See It" Award (HOUN)
- "How About Doing a Christmas Annual?" – John Bergquist – The "Publish the Singular Facts" Award (CREE)

- "Norwegian Explorers' Diamond Jubilee" – poem – David Forest Hitchcock – The "Fine Flow of Language" Award (SOLI)
- "Early Memories of the Norwegian Explorers" – Andrew Malec – The "Jot Down the Facts" Award (BOSC)
- "The French 75" – pastiche – Julie McKuras – The "His Stay in France" Award (FINA)
- "The Diamond Jubilee Puzzle" – Melissa Aho – The "Throes of Some Vexatious Problem" Award (CREE)
- "Canonical Gems and Precious Metals Associated with Seventy-Five" – Michael Eckman – The "Glints and Sparkles" Award (BLUE)
- "Memories of Mac" – Pj Doyle – The "Genius and the Wonder" Award (FINA)
- "Holmes and Watson Christmas Visit: How Much is too Much?" – pastiche – Bob and Lucy Brusic – The "There Was Some Little Delay in Finding It" Award (RESI)
- "Hibernian Doyle: Flying the Green Flag" – Ruth Berman – The "Celtic Power of Quick Intuition" Award (SIGN)
- "'Twas Another Night Before Christmas" – Donald Izban – The "Compliments of the Season" Award (BLUE)
- "His Last Bow + The Valley of Fear = 75" – Bruce Harris – The "Strong Sense of Probability" Award (BLUE)
- "Dr. John H. Watson, Number Theorist" – pastiche – Paul Reiners – The "Mathematical Theory" Award (SIGN)
- "Learning from Sherlock Holmes" – Bob Sharfman – The "Powers of Analysis" Award (STUD)
- "Remembrances" – pastiche – Art Hogenson – The "Cry of Surprise" (YELL)
- "An Empty Shelf No Longer" – Robert Brusic – The "Knowledge of Literature" Award (STUD)
- "Squabble at *The Fire Pit*" – pastiche – Christopher Atkinson – The "Curious Conduct" Award (CASE)
- "The Mid-Seventies: Enjoyable and Productive Sherlockian Times" – Mike Eckman – The "Colour and Life" Award (COPP)
- "Seven and a Half Pounds: Food, Fraud, and Malnutrition in Holmes's London" – Erica Fair – The "Trout in the Milk" Award (HOUN)
- "Sherlock Holmes's 'Three-Quarter Musings'" – pastiche – Jeff Falkingham – The "Experience of my Own" Award – (BLAN)
- "A Glance at the Moor" – artwork – Philip H. Swiggum – The "Twinge of Melancholy Lay Upon the Countryside" Award (HOUN)

Following the awards there was a more somber moment with the acknowledgment of former Explorers and friends of the group who had “passed beyond the Reichenbach” during this past year. Dick Sveum and Julie McKuras gave a tribute to Russel Merritt, Cheryl Fong recognized Stanton O. Berg, and Tom Gottwalt spoke of Jon Skrivseth and Julia Wallman.

Next came the keynote speaker. Dr. Dan Friedman gave an illuminating presentation on the many people in Conan Doyle’s life and beyond who influenced his stories. This topic is the subject of Dan’s recent book, co-authored with his father, Eugene, titled *Doyle’s World – Lost & Found: The Unknown Histories of Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*. The talk was engaging and interesting. Dan mentioned people and connections that go beyond those examined by most studies of



Dan Friedman

Conan Doyle. After the dinner Dan had copies of his book available for purchase and he inscribed copies for the members who made purchases.

The evening’s entertainment drew to a close as Melissa Aho read William Schweickert’s “A Long Evening with Holmes.” 🐾

Dinner Toasts

John Bergquist – John Watson

Tonight, I am honored to pay tribute to a man whose exploits have graced the pages of intrigue and captivated the imaginations of generations — Dr. John H. Watson.

In the dimly lit corridors of Victorian London, amidst the fog-draped streets and enigmatic alleyways, Dr. Watson stood as an unwavering pillar of support to none other than the enigmatic detective Mr. Sherlock Holmes. A man of multifaceted talents, Watson was tested on the battlefields of the

Second Afghan War, where his courage as a military surgeon foreshadowed the indomitable spirit that would later mark his collaborative endeavors with Holmes.

Imagine, if you will, the hallowed ambiance of 221B Baker Street — a residence where deduction became an art form. In this shared abode, Watson’s down-to-earth practicality served as a grounding force to Holmes’s brilliant, albeit eccentric, deductions. Watson’s pen, mightier than the sword, meticulously chronicled the brilliant and often baffling cases that unfolded in the master detective’s wake.

To Dr. Watson, we owe not only the written accounts that bear his narrative, but also the embodiment of steadfast friendship. Through the smoke-filled rooms of the Diogenes Club to the eerie moor surrounding Baskerville Hall, Watson stood as the unyielding companion, a reliable confidant to Holmes’s cerebral brilliance.

As we raise our glasses this evening, let us pay homage to the man whose prose brought us face to face with the mysteries of 19th-century London, whose courage mirrored the heroes of yore, and whose loyalty cemented a friendship that transcends the written page.

To John H. Watson, M.D. — a beacon of loyalty, a chronicler of adventures, and a paragon of unwavering friendship. May his legacy endure, and may we, like him, navigate the complexities of life with courage, camaraderie, and an ever-watchful eye for the extraordinary.

To Dr. Watson!

Amanda Downs – Mrs. Hudson

As a woman whose cuisine is a little limited, but also has as good an idea of breakfast as a Scotch-woman, I find Mrs. Hudson relatable.

Little is written about her in the Canon, but it takes a levelheaded, patient woman to be landlady to Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson. She is a woman of few words but steady care for her tenants. What are her reasons for such loyalty?

She is paid well, but she could certainly have had less difficult tenants occupying the rooms she lets. Mrs. Hudson tolerates Holmes’s unusual habits, his strange guests arriving at all hours, and his chemical experiments not only because she believes in the importance of Holmes’s work, but because she also relishes being a willing participant in the action.

A Victorian landlady of good standing would hardly admit to joining in such strange escapades,

but if one happened to be in the vicinity, one could hardly be blamed for assisting the Great Detective and his biographer in the midst of a mysterious adventure.

Mrs. Hudson kept Holmes's room untouched for years under orders from Mycroft, and put herself in a position of great danger by moving the wax bust of Holmes every quarter hour in "The Adventure of the Empty House." Even after a long absence, Holmes trusts her and appreciates her nerves of steel. This is loyalty above and beyond a formal business relationship between lodger and landlady; this is true friendship. I hardly need to add the fact that she continues to attend to Holmes into his retirement in Sussex.

With such fondness for the worst tenant in London, Mrs. Hudson is the steady heart of 221B Baker Street, and she holds an enviable position of witnessing, firsthand, the best show in town. Any reader of the Canon can both see *and* observe common details that point to her devotion.

So, let us raise a glass to toast "our worthy landlady," Mrs. Hudson!

Chris Atkinson – Richard Brunton (edited for space)

Tonight, we tip our hat to a sharp butler. During the next few minutes, the spotlight is directed toward a deserving chap, a recluse of sorts, Richard Brunton, the butler of Hurlstone.

Brunton wrote us a letter. Let us listen to the words of the infamous butler. Consider this a Tale from the Crypt. Or, maybe this correspondence is a whisper from the crematorium, a new twist on the beloved Fire-side Chat:

Greetings honored guests. Thank you for your interest in learning more about my life. Before I continue too much, I do want to note that any references to the modern day have been made possible by my good friends, Dr. Emmett Brown and Marty McFly. I was so fortunate to meet them in Hill Valley, California, during a trip to America

in September, 1885. Their DeLorean time machine with the flux capacitor is a marvel.

I am getting caught up in the details. Did I tell you I like details? Okay, let me get back to the Musgraves.

I served under the employ of Sir Reginald Musgrave. And, oh, what a trying period of my life. The challenges were endless. Let me give some examples.

First, let me say that in no way is the post of Butler of Hurlstone a rockstar gig. I can't count how many errands and petty requests I performed over the years. I understand that one of your British actors performing in America has suggested that being a butler is worth about as much respect from the householders as "a used piece of toilet paper." I agree with this sentiment.

Second, I just want to say that any accolades that Sir Reginald Musgrave received were over-rated and misguided. Yes, he sat in the House of Parliament. I am sure the blisters on his Gluteus Maximus could have told us a story or two. I am not one to whine, but pardon my exasperation at Sir Reginald's undeserving accolades, blah, blah, blah. In sum, my master's produced work didn't match his assumed importance.

Third, I would have to say my boss's ineptitude and laissez faire approach when it came to his family history served me well. It was good to have the personal habits of Sir Reginald committed to memory. His daily routine is deliberate and very predictable, nearly to the point of boredom on my part. Yet, it is these habits that provided me the opportunity to discover and nearly drool over the Musgrave Ritual.

I took great pride in cracking the Ritual and being viewed as very clever by Mr. Sherlock Holmes; smarter than ten generations of Musgraves.

I would have to say that from the first time seeing the puzzle, I was hooked. The high I felt in working to solve the Musgrave Ritual was my greatest desire, somewhat akin to those poor wretches that cannot indulge enough in the god-forsaken opium dens of the Far East. This enigma was my



*Illustration by Martin Van Maële.
Courtesy of
www.arthur-conan-doyle.com*

drug of choice, and all my energies focused on the puzzle that was the Ritual.

Of course, you know the particulars of the story; yet, there may be some finer details that may be unknown, even among experts. So, let me indulge your curiosity for a spell.

Let me say that generations of damn Musgraves dug up so much of that grass field out front that I nearly broke my ankle numerous times. It is amazing how off some of their searches were. Yet, their attempts helped give me hope that indeed I was on the right track. The grassy field was great fun because I knew I was close. I felt like dancing a jig as I stepped off the square pattern that would lead me to the X marking the spot of the treasure. Can you hear the rhythm?

Roundheads, Cavaliers, and chopped heads, oh my! Roundheads, Cavaliers, and chopped heads, oh my! To Charles I, all I can say is thanks for taking one for the team.

It could be said that my personal life colored my desire to claim the treasure identified in the Musgrave Ritual. The death of my wife Catherine left me lost and adrift. Knowing this, the affections of both Rachel and Janet helped soften the blow. Unfortunately, my priorities at the time were clouded, and maybe in hindsight I should have chosen a new bride beyond Sussex and set the others free. It would have made for more professional relations around the manor house and environs. In reality, Janet was unrelenting in her pursuit of me, and it rushed my courtship of Rachel. Yet, in all this, I do admit a wandering eye for those of the fairer sex.

Yes, I should have given Rachel a greater involvement in my life. If I would have done that one thing differently, then the night I solved the Ritual, all might have been different.

As you know, the stone slab covering the treasure was too bloody heavy for one man to lift alone. I needed a companion to help me and one I could trust. Unfortunately, my choice of companion failed on both counts: Failure 1) Rachel discovered my joy rides with Janet; and, Failure 2)

she proved too weak to be of much help. Little did I know my concrete pit awaited.

Rachel enjoyed killing me. As the stone came crashing down on my head, her sallow face was an equal mix of Michael Myers and The Joker.

In closing, I have two final pieces of advice: One — To students that seek to find treasure, study mathematics, history, and geography. Two — Refrain from reading *The Cask of Amontillado* prior to treasure hunting.

Yours eternally,
Richard Brunton

Let Us Raise a Toast to Richard Brunton, the Butler of Hurlstone.

Monica Schmidt – Sherlock Holmes

Mr. Sherlock Holmes was a great man. A great man does big things, great things that change the world.

I think few would argue that Holmes was *not* great. After all, he had one of the most brilliant minds in history — being able to observe the smallest of details and deduce the most obscure facts about a person's livelihood, habits, and personality. Watson described him as "the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen," and he used this peculiar power to assist various members of the aristocracy with their problems, and to serve the British government, as well as a certain gracious lady, in international affairs of intrigue. He also handled small matters for both the French government and the Pope.

The greatness of his deeds has made him immortal, which is why hundreds of us from around the globe are gathered here to celebrate him 167 years after his birth.

But the question is: Can a great man also be a good one? What makes a good man? A good man is a gentleman, acts with integrity, is honest, and understands just action.

In one-sixth of his documented cases, Holmes is employed by a vulnerable woman who has no one else to turn to but the great detective. Even



though Holmes's distrust of women is well-documented, he is a gentleman and will go out of his way to assist those who could not otherwise afford help.

Holmes is a man who acts with the greatest integrity. He is a man of his word: When he accepts a case, he intends to see it through to its conclusion — even if that conclusion is one he did not anticipate. (I don't think Holmes ever anticipated being beaten in a case, let alone being beaten by a woman from New Jersey.)

Holmes also understands that often justice must be tempered with mercy. In more than a third of his cases, the villain is turned over to the police, but in no less than one-fifth of the cases, he lets the culprit go, often noting that it would be the merciful thing to do. In the case of the Blue Carbuncle, Holmes has every intention of turning the culprit over to the police, but in the end, he lets James Ryder go free, noting that it would not be just to make him a gaolbird for life.

Holmes has an understanding that sometimes the spirit of the law must be followed when the letter of the law will not properly serve justice. These things make Holmes the perfect antidote to all of those gritty and flawed heroes of our age, and the reason why he still remains a relevant hero across three centuries.

So, raise your glass in honor of a man who was not only great, but also something far better than that: To a good man. To Mr. Sherlock Holmes!

Jeff Falkingham – Moriarty

London, Eighteen Eighty-Five.

A marvelous time to be alive.

But let's jump ahead a year, or three,
And closely examine what we see:

Sherlock's work has taken its toll.
The criminal element was under control!
Bored out of his gourd, addled by drugs,
He dreams of blackmailers, killers & thugs.

When a worthy foe he cannot find,
He begins to *create* one, in his *mind*.
He always said he'd make a grand criminal.

So, he became one — in his subliminal!

What would he look like? No mystery here;

All Holmes had to do was look in the mirror.

A scholarly man. Tall, balding, and thin,
With *two* personas, at *war* within.

One who felt *justice* was sublime,
The other, a "Napoleon of Crime."
Reptilian lips, slithering eyes,
Child's play for a master of disguise.
Add drooping shoulders from years of study,
Voilà! The ideal imaginary buddy.

Holmes tried him out, and fooled Lestrade.
No one else even found it odd
They hadn't heard of, had never seen,
This diabolically evil thinking machine.
But the doppelgänger wouldn't stay put,
And now the Game truly was Afoot.
Valley of Fear, Baskerville Hall,
Empty House — he was behind them all.
The cocaine needle returned to the shelf,
As our Great Detective matched wits with —
himself!

Shame on you, Monica Schmidt,
I'm shocked you never *talked* of it.
Like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,
Moriarty was Holmes's *darker* side.
So, raise a glass, and welcome to the party:
Sherlock's *alter-ego* ... *Moriarty!* 🍷



2024 Baker Street West

BY MELISSA AHO



he Baker Street West event took place this year on Sunday, February 4, 2024, and the good weather and prospect of an authentic British Isles menu brought out over 30 people (including some from out of state, some from outside the Twin Cities, and some new to the group) to the Eagan Arms Public House.



*Baker Street West gathering at the Eagan Arms Pub.
Photo by Melissa Aho*

The dinner started with Melissa Aho, who took over hosting and emceeing duties this year, welcoming everyone. Then President Tom Gottwalt gave an update on upcoming events, including this summer's conference, *Sherlock Holmes @ 50*. Dick Sveum reported on this year's BSI Dinner and shared what was in this year's swag bag of goodies. Then first-time attendee to the NYC events Amanda Downs discussed all she had seen and attended over the very busy weekend. (*Amanda has written about her experiences in the next article – Ed.*) We learned that around 10 Minnesotans were in NYC this year for the BSI weekend events and the hot new unofficial BSI item to buy was the personalized scarf. Great people, great conversations, and great food made for a great night. 🐾

First Time at the BSI Week: 90 Years of Celebration

BY AMANDA DOWNS

In January 2024 I was thrilled to be invited by Pj Doyle (BSI) to tag along for the 90-year celebration of the BSI Birthday weekend in New York City. I flew out on Wednesday to LaGuardia airport and took a cab to the Yale Club Hotel. After check-in, I walked with Pj to the Joyce Public House restaurant for the ASH Wednesday dinner. The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes is the oldest women's Sherlockian society and is based in NYC. I met new friends and shook hands with several well-known Sherlockians at the dinner, including Carla Kaessinger Coupe, Jan Burke, and Andy Solberg.

The welcome was warm and sincere; everyone was excited for me to enjoy my first BSI experience. We had a long, lovely dinner and drinks, then walked back to the hotel via the Grand Central pedestrian walkway. The weather was warm all week, in the 40s and perfect for wandering around the city in good company.

On Thursday morning I woke early and walked the six blocks to the Westin New York Grand Central Hotel lobby to meet a half dozen Sherlockians for The Morley Walk. Jim Cox led the walk and talked about Christopher Morley, who founded the BSI in 1934. We visited historical buildings and sites where Morley worked, met friends, and enjoyed his famous 3-hour lunches. We walked by the Chrysler Building, Pershing Square, Grand

Central Station, and the Roosevelt Hotel. I broke off from the group for a moment to take photos of the Algonquin Hotel where Dorothy Parker, Alexander Woollcott, and Robert Benchley met daily for lunch. This was exciting for me because I grew up reading Parker and authors of her era.

The Morley Walk entourage paused in Bryant Park to meet up with Dore Nash. She brought donut holes and we drank coffee in the windy sunshine. Then we hopped on the subway and rode to the World Trade Center station, where the towers stood before the tragic attack on 9/11. The station there is a beautiful monument of universal welcome, reverence, and a sense of hope for a better future. The Oculus Transportation Hub was designed by Santiago Calatrava to be functional and airy, like a cathedral.

We walked to the Woolworth Building for a surprise talk by Roy Suskin, who is building manager and a goldmine of information about the history (both truth and fiction) of how it was built. The building is a beautiful, odd blend of Gothic, Flemish, and turn-of-the-century architecture: gaudy and sturdy, stone-clad steel with Italian marble, elevator doors by L.C. Tiffany, and ceiling tiled with glass mosaic and terracotta busts of important industry barons of the early 1900s.

Then we traipsed through City Hall Park (where scenes from CBS's Sherlockian adaptation *Elementary* had been filmed) ... yes, I was excited about seeing a park bench where Jonny Lee Miller and Lucy Liu sat a decade ago.

Then we went to McSorley's Old Ale House for a well-earned lunch. McSorley's is celebrating its 170th Anniversary. The walls have decorations dating back as far as its founding year. I ordered dark beer, a burger and fries. It was delicious after a long walk, and many Sherlockians were already there to meet up and talk about the week. Above my head, next to a reclining classic nude, was an oil painting of Christopher Morley. I later discovered the portrait was painted by Chuck Kovacic, who was invested this year into the BSI. He is well-known in oil painting circles and it was my great pleasure to meet him that evening at Rosie Dunn's, the bar where many Sherlockians socialize at the end of each BSI day.

After lunch, I walked with Max Magee to the Grolier Club. I was glad to find it was easy to tag along with someone doing something interesting at every event. The Grolier had a fabulous display of "Whodunit? Key Books in Detective Fiction" to peruse. There were more than 90 examples of

sources, memoirs, and first appearances of beloved fictional detectives (including Holmes). I found myself inches away from a first edition of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902). I also met Anastasia Klimchynskaya (BSI) and Edward Pettit (head of public programs at the Rosenbach and host of Sherlock Mondays online) there. The docent at The Grolier Club gave us a tour of the building, including a glimpse into the exclusive club rooms on the upper floors. I enjoyed the original artworks there, including two Howard Pyle paintings I had never seen before.

We shut down the Grolier and I hustled back to my hotel to change clothes. Pj Doyle and I went to the Distinguished Speaker Lecture at the NYC Bar Association. Tess Gerritsen (author of many bestsellers featuring homicide detective Jane Rizzoli and medical examiner Dr. Maura Isles) spoke about “What Did Watson Know?” She gave a fascinating and harrowing account of Victorian medical knowledge and the condition of hospitals in the late 1800s. Germ theory was virtually unknown and handwashing was an affront to “gentlemen surgeons,” yet mysterious diseases kept appearing including child-bed fever, an affliction that killed most women who gave birth because attending doctors never washed their hands. Needless to say; calling a doctor or going to the hospital was a dicey choice.

After the lecture, Pj and I walked to The Oyster Bar in Grand Central. We met Eric Scace and Jessica Schilling (who was invested in the BSI this year!) at the door and found a small table to dine together. It was nice to sit together and chat about plans for the week and the excitement of being in NYC.

On Friday, we walked to the William Gillette Memorial Luncheon at Connolly’s. I was thrilled to meet Curtis Armstrong there (actor and BSI member) and enjoyed his performance of Holmes in one of several skits. The Susan Rice Mentorship Award was given to Francine Kitts (BSI) for her work in bringing Holmes to young readers. I was fortunate

to sit by Francine and her husband Richard to hear stories about their work with the Beacon Society. I also met Steve and Rusty Mason, the father-son duo behind the entertaining comic “Baker Street Elementary” featured regularly on the I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere website.

After lunch, I joined Madeline Quiñones and Beth Gallego to visit The Mysterious Bookshop, the oldest mystery specialist bookstore in America. I bought a pile of mystery books there and was thrilled to find a copy of the *Norwegian Explorers Christmas Annual* No. 18 on the shelf downstairs with my own illustration of Jeremy Brett on the cover.

I went back to The Yale Club to change into fancy dress for the evening. The annual BSI dinner is open to BSI members and The Gaslight Gala is open to all who want to participate. Slattery’s Midtown Pub hosted the Gala this year. We dined, shared toasts, readings of poems, and enjoyed a soundtrack of Holmes-related music while we chatted. I talked about the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota and encouraged people to come to our conference in July.

Going to Rosie Dunn’s after the Gala was especially meaningful that night because the 14 new

BSI investitures made their appearance after the BSI dinner. Everyone was dressed their best, excited to have a drink and congratulate the new members of the BSI. I stayed a while but quietly ducked out to get some much-needed sleep while the party continued.

On Saturday morning, we congregated at The Westin Grand Central Madison Ballroom to peruse the Merchant’s Room. Sherlockians from all over brought rare books, collectibles, new publications, and games to buy, sell, and trade. I bought a beautiful *Illustrated London News Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee* souvenir book published in 1897 and carefully wrapped it for my suitcase. I wanted more books but realized I would need to ship them or leave my clothes behind to bring everything back to Minnesota.



Amanda Downs and Dick Sveum
at Baker Street West

Pj invited me to the BSI Luncheon Reception to formally welcome new BSI investitures that afternoon. We dined and enjoyed an auction of rare Sherlockiana to benefit the Dr. John H. Watson fund (a financial assistance package for the BSI weekend). Then we heard stories about the BSI dinner from the night before, including poems and toasts, and had a chance to chat with longstanding BSI members. I shook hands with Peter Blau (BSI) and chatted with Monica Schmitt (BSI) about the whirlwind week I was enjoying in New York.

We had a little time for resting after lunch, then off to dinner at The Playwright for “Lost in New York with A Bunch of Sherlockians,” in honor of the 170th birthday of Sherlock Holmes. Chrys Kegley (BSI) and Jerry Kegley (BSI) hosted the event. We said the Sherlockian Pledge of Allegiance, toasted Holmes and friends, and enjoyed a reading from *The Book of Ogden*. I failed miserably at the quiz portion of the evening and decided I need to reread the Canon a few times to commit more to memory.

Once again to Rosie Dunn’s, I drank and talked late into the night with new Sherlockian friends. I stayed up far too late and we closed down the bar. But the wit and warmth of the conversation was worth the disrupted sleep schedule.

I rose slowly on Sunday morning and strolled down to find coffee. I visited The Algonquin one last time. I wandered through the lobby, looking for ghosts of authors I admire. On my way out to the street, I met up with Rudy Altergott and Bob Sharfman, both newly invested in the BSI. We talked about friendship and what an honor it is to be among so many like-minded people of all ages gathered in one place. We walked to The Long Room restaurant together for the ASH Brunch; a wonderful last hurrah buffet with discussions about books, scion societies, and hugs all around.

I was reluctant to leave but I had a plane to catch. I thought I would sleep on the flight back to Minneapolis, but I was too full of thoughts from my BSI experience. The variety of interesting, caring people and their enthusiastic support was energizing. We found common ground in music, literature, history, and Sherlockian niche interests I did not expect. I left feeling warm and connected to an extended family. Sherlockians are the best people. 🐾

The following article comes from Rob Nunn. It was first printed on his blog posting, <https://interestingthoughthelementary.blogspot.com/2020/06/the-starting-point-of-so-many.html> on Sunday, June 7, 2020.

The Starting Point of So Many Remarkable Adventures [MAZA]

BY ROB NUNN



Most Sherlockians don’t like “The Mazarin Stone” (MAZA). I have to admit it had been a few years since I’ve read it, and after revisiting it this week, I don’t either. For a while I held it in a slightly higher regard because I used it as a coda to the Colonel Moran plot in my novel *The Criminal Mastermind of Baker Street*, but that was because I used the source material for my adaptation, not this version.

“The Mazarin Stone” was first published in the October 1921 edition of *The Strand Magazine*, but that was not the first time fans had seen Sherlock Holmes fool an air-rifle toting big game hunter with a wax dummy. No, this ploy was used just a few months before in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s short-lived one-act play, *The Crown Diamond: An Evening with Sherlock Holmes*.

Oh, were you thinking of another story? Nope, this is about Doyle’s play.

According to the introduction to *The Theatrical Sherlock Holmes* by Paul Stuart Hayes, *The Crown Diamond* was a big hit, touring for over a year around England and being a financial boon to Doyle in his later years. The public had only had one Sherlock Holmes story published in the last eleven years, “His Last Bow,” and *The Crown Diamond* showed Doyle that there was still an audience for The Great Detective.

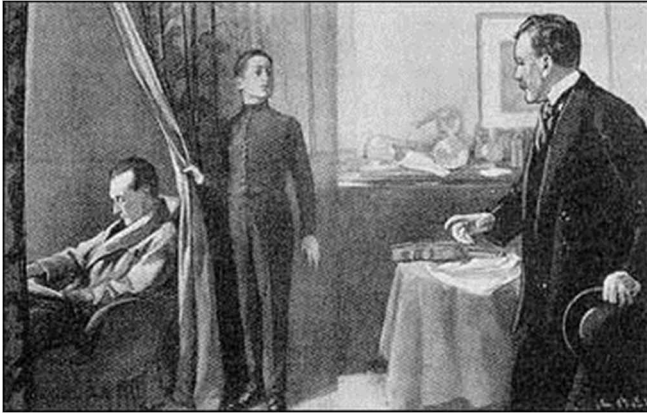
The Crown Diamond would go on to be adapted into MAZA, and this would be the first story of the final set of Sherlock Holmes stories to be released. No matter our opinion on MAZA (and mine is not good), we have this story to thank for some of the lasting impressions we have of Holmes. MAZA opened the door for “The Problem of Thor Bridge” and “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client.” Without MAZA, we never would have gotten to see Holmes in retirement as we do in “The Adventure of the Lion’s Mane” or his loyalty to Watson from “The Adventure of the Three Garridebs.”

Although MAZA is pretty universally panned, it’s an important part of the Sherlockian Canon,



because without it, we may never have gotten to read a full one-fifth of the stories we've come to rely on for entertainment over the years.

Lord Cantlemere tells Holmes, "We are greatly your debtors," and we could say the same to Doyle. So, here's to "The Mazarin Stone," the wilted vegetable in an otherwise delightful Sherlockian feast! 🍷



The Next Big Sherlockian Play

BY KAREN MURDOCK

Lucky us. We live in The Golden Age of Sherlock Holmes. Future generations of Sherlockians will look back upon the early 21st century and sigh with envy. Pastiches, television series, movies — Our Hero is everywhere. Not least on the stage.

Ken Ludwig's "Baskerville: A Sherlock Holmes Mystery" was the last widely-produced Sherlockian play. You probably saw it at Park Square Theatre in St. Paul in 2018. Then along came the Covid-19 pandemic and played hob with theatres around the world. But now that the disease is in slow retreat, full seasons of plays are again being played.

The next widely-popular Sherlockian play will be *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson: Apt. 2B*, written in 2021 by Kate Hamill. Hamill is one of the most-produced playwrights in America. She has adapted, among others, Jane Austen, *Little Women*, and *Dracula* done as a "feminist revenge fantasy."

Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson has not yet been staged in Minnesota. I drove down to Iowa to see it at the Mount Vernon-Lisbon Community Theatre in February. It's a fast-paced farce featuring two female leads and two other actors who play multiple roles.

Plot? Not enough of one that you would notice. However, the dialogue is witty and filled with pop culture references, clever wordplay, and enough Canonical nods to make it clear that Ms. Hamill is honoring the Immortal Duo even as she sets them up for multiple pratfalls. When it comes to the Twin Cities, do not hesitate to buy your tickets. 🍷

The Multiple References to the Curious Incident

BY MICHAEL V. ECKMAN

Since Sherlock Holmes is so well known, we are used to seeing references to him in fiction, particularly regarding the curious incident of the dog in the nighttime. In my reading, however, I have found references to the curious incident in many nonfiction books. In some cases, the reference is combined with a reference to the *Hound of the Baskervilles*, other Holmesiana, or Doyle.

For example, *An American Melodrama* is a detailed account of the 1968 Presidential election written by three *London Times* Journalists. At the beginning of the chapter dealing with the effort to nominate Ted Kennedy at the Democratic convention in Chicago, the authors chose to quote the exchange from "Silver Blaze" dealing with the curious incident of the dog doing nothing in the night. The authors then relate the story of Ted Kennedy not pursuing the nomination at the convention.

Despite the evidence that Meriwether Lewis, of the Lewis and Clark expedition, committed suicide in 1809, there are conspiracy theories that he was murdered. In his book *Undaunted Courage*, Stephen Ambrose states that these theorists "need to deal with a 'dog that did not bark' aspect of the case." Ambrose goes on to say that if "William Clark entertained the slightest suspicion" or "if Thomas Jefferson had such suspicions" they would have done everything they could to find the murderer.

Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard argue in *Killing Patton* that there was at least one, if not more, plots to do away with General Patton who was thought to be trouble for all sides in the post WWII world. Patton is pictured as a great general who knows his history. "Patton knows that ever since the time of Julius Caesar, when Germanic tribes battled the Romans, the Germans were fond of going on the offensive and employing unique tactics

to gain the element of surprise.” In December of 1944, Patton is troubled by the lack of German activity. “Patton finds himself reminded of the story of ‘the dog that did not bark,’ in which a cunning predator conceals himself before suddenly lunging out to fight his victim.” The authors apparently confuse the dog in the nighttime with the hound of the Baskervilles.

Edward Jay Epstein destroys the myth of Edward Snowden as a whistle blower in *How America Lost Its Secrets*. Snowden stole many more documents than have been published and fled to a welcome in Russia by passing through Hong Kong. Epstein writes that while Snowden was in Hong Kong, “He could have walked out of the Mira hotel, caught a taxi to the Hong Kong airport, and gone on Swiss International Air Lines via Zurich to any country in South America or to Iceland. But, as in the oft-quoted Sherlock Holmes clue of the dog that did not bark, Snowden’s inaction in not obtaining visas during this thirty-day period suggests that he had no plans to go anyplace but where he went: Moscow.” At the beginning of his Conclusions section, Epstein quotes Holmes: “In solving problems of this sort, the grand thing is to be able to reason backwards.” (STUD)

Calder Walton’s *Spies: The Epic Intelligence War Between East and West* gives a readable history of the Cold War and warnings about dealing with Russia and China in the future. At the beginning of the chapter dealing with the transition from the Second World War to the Cold War, Walton quotes from “His Last Bow”: “There’s an east wind coming all the same, such a wind as never blew on England yet. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast.” In the early 1980s, the Soviet Union believed the United States and NATO were actively preparing for nuclear war and launched Operation RYAN, an acronym in Russian for “nuclear missile attack,” which called for the collaboration of the two branches of Soviet intelligence, the KGB and GRU. “Secretary of State George Shultz said that Andropov [the new general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party] reminded him of Professor Moriarty, the evil genius of the Sherlock Holmes stories, ‘all brain in a disregarded body ... a formidable adversary.’ With Moriarty at the helm in Moscow, Operation RYAN went into overdrive.” There was no nuclear missile attack from the west, but the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 raised the fear of nuclear proliferation because “of Soviet nuclear weapons falling into the wrong hands —

rogue regimes, terrorists, or criminals.” The U.S. intelligence community prioritized counter-proliferation and “As usual with security intelligence, success was measured by what did not happen — a dog that revealingly does not bark.”

Lisa Pearlman’s *Suspect No. 1* argues that Charles Lindbergh is the one who kidnapped and euthanized his own son. The bulk of the book recreates the case and shows the evidence discrediting the conviction of Richard Hauptmann. The author also gives a not very flattering short biography of Charles Lindbergh himself. Lindbergh was fond of cruel practical jokes, referred to his son as “it” and had taken and hidden his son from the rest of the household in the past. From the time of the discovery of the son’s disappearance, Lindbergh was given authority to direct the course of the investigation. Lindbergh rejected the assistance of veteran detective Ellis Parker, known as “the Sherlock Holmes of New Jersey” as he had solved more than 95 percent of the 300 major cases in his career.

On the night of the kidnapping, the Lindbergh’s dog Wahgoosh remained silent. “That the dog did not bark — like the famous dog in a Sherlock Holmes mystery — appeared to be a valuable clue.” The police initially believed the kidnapping was an inside job because of the silence of the dog, but Lindbergh argued that the dog was too far from the nursery to have heard the kidnappers. Dr. Peter Speth, a nationally renowned forensic expert, examined the corpse that was found and identified as the kidnapped son. “It is easy to picture Sherlock Holmes himself doffing his deerstalker hunting cap in tribute to Dr. Speth. From the peculiar lack of evidence of maggot activity on the corpse, he deduced both that the child might have been euthanized before death, and that Inspector Walsh had to be lying when he testified to a veil of vermin on the corpse in the woods. From the unexpected preservation of the right foot, Dr. Speth concluded that had to be purposeful. Most impressively, he deduced that a chemical preservative applied to the face best explained why the face turned from white to dark blue in the rain.”

In *Think for Yourself*, Vikram Mansharamani argues that specialization and siloization has led to a dependence on experts and has also produced tunnel vision with a limited focus. Mansharamani proposes that breadth rather than depth should be prized and quotes the dog in the nighttime scene from “Silver Blaze” as an example. “The short story is a wonderful example of a mystery


that is solved by managing focus. The police inspectors can't solve the case, because they are too focused on certain things. They don't have any attention left to expend on topics like the lame sheep, the expensive dresses, or the non-barking dog at night."

In his book *Standard Deviations*, Gary Smith details and discusses the ways data and theories can be used to mislead us. Smith writes, "More than a century ago, Sherlock Holmes pleaded to his long-suffering friend Watson, 'Data! Data! Data! I can't make bricks without clay.' Today, Holmes's wish has been granted in spades. Powerful computers sift through data, data, and more data. The problem is not that we don't have enough data, but that we are misled by what we have in front of us." Because of evolution, we look for patterns in the data and often see patterns that are not there. We can be misled because we are hardwired to be deceived.

One of the studies Smith writes about was called "The Hound of the Baskervilles Effect." Since Charles Baskerville was pursued by a vicious dog and died of a heart attack, could it be true that Asian Americans who were suspicious about the number four suffer heart attacks on the fourth day of each month? Smith notes that we see the number four every day and asks, "Are Asian Americans really so superstitious and fearful that the fourth day of the month — which, after all, happens every month — is as terrifying as being chased down a dark alley by a ferocious dog?" The Baskerville study (Smith notes its initials would be BS) argued that the data did show additional deaths on the fourth of each month. Smith analyzed the data and methods in the Baskerville Study and concluded that data was pruned from the study and "Without this helpful pruning, there is no evidence that the fourth day of the month is fatal for Asian Americans. What the study really demonstrates is that support can be found for any theory — no matter how silly — by discarding data that don't support the silly theory."

Smith also reports that the lead author of the Baskerville study coauthored another study that argued "Chinese people may be 'ill-fated' for diseases that affect the organs associated with their birth year. For example, because 1937 is a fire year and the zang fire organ is the heart, Chinese people born in 1937 may be more likely to die of heart disease." The study did argue for the extra deaths due to heart disease, but Smith's review of the data and methods again showed that data that did not support the theory was discarded. Smith

points out that the authors of the Baskerville study were not the only ones to ignore inconvenient data. "[Arthur Conan] Doyle was the antithesis of the Holmes character he created. He was so fascinated by paranormal phenomena, which by definition, have no logical explanation, and his desire to believe was so strong that he ignored all evidence that might threaten his beliefs." Smith writes of the Cottingley fairies and Doyle's disagreement with Houdini about spiritualism and concludes, "We are all resistant to evidence that threatens our beliefs, but Doyle's gullibility and self-deception were astonishing."

As you read, keep your eyes open for references to Holmes. 

Study Group Session, "The Greek Interpreter"

BY KAREN MURDOCK



Twenty-two Explorers and far-flung friends gathered on Zoom on February 17, 2024, to discuss "The Greek Interpreter." The meeting started at 1:00 PM Central Time with Steve Miller leading the discussion.

In "Show and Tell" Karen Murdock showed a program from the Kate Hamill play *Ms. Holmes & Ms. Watson: Apt. 2B*. This is a new play and has not yet been produced in the Twin Cities. Karen M. traveled down to Mount Vernon, Iowa, on February 10 to see the play at a community theatre. Glen Miranker (from San Francisco) showed the manuscript of GREE, which he owns. The manuscript is not bound, as many Doyle manuscripts are, but is in 34 individual leaves. David Hitchcock (from upstate New York) read a Valentine's Day poem about giving blood and read his poem "Mycroft Holmes."

David (who is a member of The Mycroft Holmes Society of Syracuse) said, "This is *our* story," the only story in the Canon in which Mycroft plays a significant role. Karen M. said she thought Doyle did not grasp the possibilities of Mycroft and therefore this character was underused in the Canon. A brother with a very important position in the British government could have provided Sherlock Holmes with many useful things from a false passport to a battleship or whatever else Sherlock might need in order to solve his cases. Pastiche writers (notably Laurie King) have made extensive use of Mycroft, but Doyle did not.

Bob Brusic wondered why Mycroft got involved in the case at all, since Melas was not involved in an important international affair. But Melas was a neighbor and Mycroft felt a neighborly duty to help him. Steve Schier thought that Mycroft might have regularly brought cases to Sherlock, but these cases involved such sensitive diplomatic matters that Watson never wrote up them up.

GREE is the only story in which we learn some background about the Holmes family. Bob B. (who used to be a docent at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts) said that the MIA has a painting by the French artist Vernet, a possible great-uncle of Sherlock Holmes. Mary Loving said that Mycroft shared a family trait with Sherlock: they both liked to surprise people. Sherlock liked to surprise Watson. Mycroft liked to surprise his younger brother Sherlock. Glen said that Watson may have known more about

Sherlock's background but chose not to reveal anything about it until this story. Watson was very patriotic and to "spill the beans" on Mycroft might have meant to reveal national secrets.

Sandy Kozinn (Zooming in from the west side of the Hudson River, across from New York City) said that Sherlock might have regularly visited Mycroft and talked with him at the Diogenes Club. GREE might just have been the first time that Watson ever visited the club.

All the Explorers liked the scene in which Sherlock and Mycroft trade observations about a man who is passing by on the street. Mary called it "deduction ping-pong." David said the humility of Sherlock is revealed since he allows Mycroft to beat him in this friendly contest. Mary said that

many adaptations of the Canon show some animosity between the brothers, but such a feeling is never shown in this story.

Jeff Falkingham said that Mycroft was an attractive figure because he is "mysterious and powerful." But several Explorers questioned Mycroft's judgment in putting that advertisement into the newspapers, an action which resulted in the death of Paul Kratides and the near death of the client, Mr. Melas.

The Diogenes Club was the subject of much interest to the Explorers. Most clubs in London were social clubs, but the men at the Diogenes Club apparently did not socialize with one another at all. Karen Ellery said that men don't communicate the way that women do. All-male clubs were a place for men to get away from their wives, children, and servants. Sandy pointed out that many

newspapers and magazines were available to Diogenes Club members and the atmosphere was very quiet so it was a good place for reading. Sherlock describes the membership as "the most unsociable and unclubbable men in town." Steve Schier said he has a digital version of this story which uses the word "un-

lovable" instead of "unclubbable" and he wondered if both things could be true. Several Explorers protested that there is no evidence that the club members are unlovable, just introverted. Sandy said that the Diogenes Club might well have had a dining room in which conversation was permitted. Ginny Crouse (of The White Rose Irregulars of York, Pennsylvania) said the club must have had a bar where members could drink and talk. Glen said that Arthur Conan Doyle was a member of many clubs, including a club for authors.



"THE MAN, WITH A CONVULSIVE EFFORT, TORE THE PLASTER FROM HIS LIPS."

Illustration by William H. Hyde, *Harper's Weekly*, Sept. 16, 1893.
Courtesy of www.arthur-conan-doyle.com

GREE is a story in which Watson plays an important role, since he brings Melas back from the verge of death. Brandy was used, as in so many medical emergencies in the Canon. Steve S. was skeptical of this treatment. He said, "I've been to the doctor many times, and I've never been offered brandy." But Sandy pointed out the strong placebo effect. "If you think it will work, it will."

Steve Miller asked how it was possible for Melas to sneak in all the questions he was asking Paul Kratides. Jeff said he often saw Major League Baseball players being interviewed in Spanish or Japanese. The player might give an answer of several sentences, but the interpreter gave an answer to the English-speaking audience of just a few words. Karen M. pointed to Gideon Bibles, which in their first pages have many translations of the Bible verse John 3:16. In an English translation this verse reads "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." The many translations shown in the Gideon Bible include some that are much longer than the English version.

Steve S. asked why the bad guys did not simply forge the signature of Paul Kratides. Glen thought this was "a ridiculous plot point."

Karen M. said she was really enjoying the Public Television series "Miss Scarlet and the Duke," which is set in approximately the same Victorian era as are the Sherlock Holmes stories. She said that the street scenes in this series were very detailed and authentic, including real hansom cabs such as Holmes and Watson so often used to get around London. Mary said there were hobbyists in Great Britain who lovingly restore old carriages just as many American hobbyists restore old automobiles. (Alternatively, the hansom cabs in the show might be reproductions of those from the Victorian period.)

Steve M. asked attendees to rate GREE on a scale of 1 to 5. Most Explorers settled on 3. The story was criticized for its weak ending, the fact that the client nearly got killed, and the fact that Sherlock really does not solve anything in the case. Bob Brusic (who probably had been waiting two hours to deliver this line) opined, "It's Greek to me." Positive attributes of the story included the introduction of Mycroft and the background on Sherlock's family, the competitive interaction of Mycroft and Sherlock, and the starring role of Dr. Watson in saving the life of the client.

The meeting ended at 3:50 PM. The story for discussion in March will be IDEN. 🐾

Parting Words and Trifles

- We would like to thank all of the members who have already paid their dues for 2024. As of this writing we have 100 members who have paid for this year. Our normal count of paid memberships is around 140 people or couples. You can contact Phil (pgbergem@gmail.com) if you are unsure if you have paid or not, or if you wish to pay by check. If you prefer to use PayPal, you can go to the website: **www.norwegianexplorers.org**
- The Minnesota Antiquarian Book Fair will be held July 12–13 at Hamline University, Anderson Center, 774 Snelling Ave N, St Paul. Hours are Friday: 3 – 7 PM / Saturday: 10 AM – 4 PM. **www.minnesotabookfair.com**
- Our upcoming conference "Sherlock Holmes @ 50: Celebrating the Golden Anniversary of the Sherlock Holmes Collections" will be held at the Andersen Library, Friday July 26 to Sunday July 28. See the Explorers's website for details and how to sign up. 🐾

The Norwegian Explorers

Room 15G
Elmer L. Andersen Library
University of Minnesota
222 21st Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455



Edited by

Phillip Bergem and Ray Riethmeier
pgbergem@gmail.com ray@PULPlications.com

Online presence:

norwegianexplorers@gmail.com
www.norwegianexplorers.org
www.facebook.com/groups/572794092812100
X (Twitter): @NEofMN