



THE NORWEGIAN EXPLORERS  
OF MINNESOTA, INC.



# EXPLORATIONS

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"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 Sherlockian Reawakening .....	2
Study Group — IDEN .....	4
From Tobacco to Tea .....	5
"My Dear Watson" .....	6
I [Notice] Sherlock Everywhere .....	7
Should We Favor Talent? .....	7
Study Group — ILLU .....	9
Sherlock Holmes on <i>Jeopardy!</i> .....	10
Book Recommendations .....	11
Parting Words and Trifles .....	12

## Editor's Desk



Welcome to Summer and the latest issue of *Explorations*. This issue has an essay by Bob Sharfman, a member from Chicago, who reflects on awards and the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. There is also an essay by first-time contributor, Erica Fair, providing her thoughts on her Sherlockian reawakening. Karen Ellery writes of a T-shirt for tea drinkers. The Study Group sessions continue to be very popular, and the group's thanks go out to the leaders Steve Miller, Steven Schier, and Mary Loving. Our editorial thanks also go out to Karen Murdock for her ongoing summaries of the meetings. Over the years I have received several compliments from members on how much they appreciate Karen's write-ups of the Study Group sessions.

This past April my wife, Karen, and I traveled to Austin, Texas. The reason for the trip was to view the solar eclipse on April 8th, as well as seeing a part of the country we hadn't been. We had fun seeing outdoor gardens, experiencing the food (Texas barbeque and Tex-Mex), an art museum, and hearing music (we met up with a niece at a

great jazz bar in downtown Austin). Of course, there was a Sherlockian component. The Harry Ransom Center is a world-renowned research library on the campus of The University of Texas at Austin ([www.hrc.utexas.edu](http://www.hrc.utexas.edu)). The collections focus on literature, photography, film, art, and the performing arts. Included among the treasures are items from Frederic Dannay (BSI "The Dying Detective"), one half of the Ellery Queen writing team. I had arranged to see the original manuscript of "A Scandal in Bohemia" as well as Dannay's copy of the 1887 *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. The manuscript especially interested me as it was the subject of *Bohemian Souls*, the first of the Baker Street Irregulars Manuscript Series that I had worked on with production editor John Bergquist. And, as many of you know, I have a particular interest in *Beeton's Christmas Annuals*. The HRC also has a number from other years, many rarer than the 1887 issue (but less interesting), which I examined and photographed for future use.

From Austin we made our way to New Orleans for a few days, another area we had not previously visited. While there we looked around the French Quarter, visited the Audubon Aquarium, and I examined one more 1887 *Beeton's*, this one at Tulane University. One thing that was exciting was viewing three early appearances of STUD; the 1887 Annual (this copy was bound with all pages present except the front cover and the frontispiece), the 1888 Ward, Lock and Co. first English edition (second impression), and the 1895 companion to the *Windsor Magazine* Christmas number. All in all, it was a fun trip, Sherlockian and otherwise.

The conference planning committee remains busy with preparation for our conference to be held July 26–28 at the Andersen Library and the Courtyard by Marriott hotel. We have reached capacity for the event. All of us look forward to seeing many of you at the conference. ~ Phil

## A Sherlockian Reawakening

BY ERICA FAIR

**I** take my binder from the corner of the desk and my highlighter from its neat “Make It Happen” coffee mug. Which is it today, I wonder, canon or pastiche? It is canon, a seven-page selection. Every day for three months, I have closely read one story, highlighting and making margin notes as I go. To keep things interesting, I have printed out my own copies, shuffled them out of order, and removed the titles, seeing how long it takes me to recognize them (or for Watson to helpfully blurt it out). The *Adventures* and *Memoirs* I can tell at a glance, having listened to them for years as a child, but others are so long forgotten that I couldn’t even summarize their plots. Indeed, I’m not sure about today’s piece until halfway. A woman in hiding... it’s possible this is GOLD, or even VEIL, but aha! ATTENTA means REDC, and I carefully read Emilia’s tale to the end, absorbing every detail.

With a long sigh of satisfaction, my daily dosing is complete. I spend what’s left of my lunch break scanning the Sherlockian Calendar for virtual meetings I’ve missed, begging admission to every scion from Hawaii to Hudson Valley, and reading an ever-growing number of Sherlockian blogs and Facebook posts — each one links endlessly to more! I commute to work with Sherlock & Co. on my way in, and “I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere” on my way out. At home, I’m on season 4 of *Elementary*, with the Russian series and then a Granada rewatch on deck, and I just finished playing my way through the Frogwares video games (*Chapter One* is a guilty pleasure, but *Testament* is my favorite). Every day I get new ideas for articles, and this piece you are currently reading is the ninth one I have started since March, though only the third to be finished. Step one: I admit it, I’m obsessed.

As Sherlockiana slowly takes over my life, I somehow still find time to be a felony criminal prosecutor, an aspiring medical history writer, and a recreational sabre fencer, and Irish dancer. I’m also married to a non-Sherlockian saint, with two manic dogs and one lazy cat. On top of it all,

I’m only 33, too young to be so far gone! With so much going for me, how did I end up a full-time Holmes addict, lying face-down in the Gutter-snipes? I’d always loved the canon, but it was something I could control, just a little indulgence now and then! Sure, I’d go to the Explorers’ Christmas party and study groups once in a while, but I swear I only used Holmes socially. How did it come to this?!

Like most gateway drugs, I started reading Holmes because someone I trusted said it was cool. My dealer was my seventh-grade English teacher, who assigned us SPEC and REDH to read, then let us watch the Granada episodes of

FINA and EMPT. What nerdy kid could be exposed to such pure product and *not* get hooked? And in a school zone, for shame! At my insistence, I got two volumes of the canon for my 13th birthday, and predictably, I later spent all four years of high school with 60 stories and zero dates. But while that situation later fixed itself, Holmes forever altered my life in another way — like the elder Trevor did to him, Holmes first set me on the path of criminal law that is my profession and passion today. I spent my childhood interested in medicine, but

senior-year chemistry broke me (and given Holmes’s scientific aptitude, that was a hard punch to take). With six months to rethink my entire future, I retreated to crime stories, and decided that I wanted to be a prosecutor. I enjoyed acting and presenting, and this way I would always be learning about different sciences, from fingerprints to accelerants to diagnoses of exclusion. Prosecution was the marriage of drama and science; Holmesian to a T. I committed to law and have never looked back.

Through college, law school, and my first years in practice, I returned to Holmes whenever I felt nostalgic or overwhelmed. Holmes’s frenetic energy and unwavering dedication to his cause helped me push myself in tough times, and he comforted me during setbacks, for even when he got it wrong or the villain escaped, with the turn of a page, he was right back up on his feet. Still, Holmes remained mostly a vestige of childhood. At times I unwittingly quoted him, as years of audiobooks had engraved some turns of phrase in my vocabulary, and I had strong opinions about then-



new adaptations (RDJ yes; BBC no; and I'm not paying for *Elementary*), but I certainly wasn't a scholar.

In fact, I don't recall ever really speaking about Holmes with others until 2019, at the Minneapolis event Convergence, where I volunteered for a Holmes panel. Regrettably for all, I spent most of the hour unleashing a decade of pent-up grievances against that damned BBC atrocity with Bubblegum Scratch-and-sniff. I mean sure, I'd only ever seen the first episode, but still, *how dare they*. It's like they didn't read the stories at all! After the panel, a kindly audience member suggested that if I was this much of a purist, I should join a local group called the Norwegian Explorers. If that person was you, I owe you so, so much. I took your advice, signed up for this group... and totally ignored it for two years. I lived in Plymouth, you see, and St. Anthony Library was just so faaaaarr....

Luckily, in 2021, the *Christmas Annual* announced a medical theme, and that got my attention. I *love* medical history; it's a holdover from my early interest in doctoring. So naturally, I wrote a paper about Dr. Presbury's real-life counterpart, Charles Brinkley, who liked to put goat testicles in people (consensually! Well, at least for the human). I went to the Christmas party to pick up my copy, and was caught completely off guard by the amount of welcoming attention I received. I knew my paper would be, uh, *memorable*, but it felt like everyone wanted to talk to me. I met dozens of people, including many whom I had no clue were Sherlockian celebrities. I left with about 20 new Facebook friends and a new invitation to the Zoom study group, but even then, I remained a mere dabbler. I enjoyed the study groups, and a pastiche might catch my eye here or there, but I struggled to find ideas or time for scholarship, and I remained wary of adaptations. So long as Barbecue Quakeroats was the public's misshapen image of my childhood hero, I rejected most new offerings outright.

Flash forward to February 2024. Like Holmes at the start of REIG, I have just finished the most demanding period of work in my career so far, and all kidding aside, I feel that I am on the verge of a breakdown. I have had four months of near-non-stop major trials while also running the office half-staffed, so I take a week off, close the blinds, and lose myself in video games (the sober girl's alcohol). Some years ago I had bought, but never started, the Frogwares Sherlock Holmes games, so

I make my way through until I reach *Chapter One*. It's a prequel that takes some extreme liberties, but I like it nonetheless. When I must return to work, all I think about in court is how eager I am to go home to Cordona. Except... what are all those street names on the game map? Most are obvious enough — Adler, Lestrade, Baskerville — but what are "Redbeard" and "Euros"? I may be rusty on the canon, but I could swear those aren't real. Wait a minute. *Oh, no...*

Oh, yes. They're from That Show. And like it or not, it's quasi-canon for Millennials like me. After resisting for several days, I finally accept that I have a duty to watch That Show, even if I must go kicking and screaming the whole way. These references are going to keep appearing, and if I want to be taken seriously the next time I criticize it, I should have more evidence than a single episode. And who knows, maybe it'll get better! (Please remember that I was recovering from brain fever.)

The results of my study in *Sherlock* are currently being edited for another paper, but I was filled with surprisingly mixed emotions, and thus a burning need to talk to someone. Someone who was knowledgeable and welcoming and who had made her opinions clear already, so that I could cut loose in any direction without fear. I am forever grateful to Karen Ellery for being that person. After months of me lazily rebuffing every invitation she sent, I reached out and was welcomed instantly. She arranged a tea party with several other Explorers, including Mary Loving and Phil Bergem, who let me talk to my heart's content. In exchange, they made me promise to start writing, a suggestion which at first baffled me, as I had zero ideas. As I've gotten more engaged in the community, though, now I find ideas everywhere. Right now, I have no fewer than thirty prompts on my whiteboard, and at any given time I'm actively drafting two or three papers.


Diving into the Sherlockian community has been a huge part of this, as I not only learn new things from experts and presenters, but also make connections with some of the warmest, funniest, and most humble people I have ever met. I randomly reached out to Monica Schmidt one day on Facebook, having no idea that she was *The* Monica Schmidt, and asked her a series of completely inane questions. She was so friendly and kind and awesome about it that of course I am now hugely embarrassed and will be hopelessly starstruck the next time I meet her. I've never met a community that is so huge and yet so close knit, one that is

so focused on having fun and learning new things, whether you can recite the whole canon or are brand new to the duo. The warmth and excitement shown to every newcomer is simply incredible, and seeing everyone else's interest and energy spurs me to dig deeper and get more involved, especially by writing.

In law school, we are taught to continue research until the cases double back on themselves and start citing the same ones you read before. At that point, you have touched the bottom of the pool and can presume you've found the issue's limits. I tried the same approach to Sherlockiana, and instantly was gasping for air. The bottom to this ocean is beyond the depths that any one person can dive — over a century of journals, pastiches, communities, newsletters, presentations, dramatizations, and the new floodgates of public domain and self-publishing (plus podcasts, blogs, and YouTube) make it impossible to know it all. At first I felt helpless. How can I possibly say anything new or insightful at all? There's probably a podcast or an article out there that undermines me, or worse, presents my idea better than I can! I panicked at the thought of every paper being relentlessly cross-examined by the combined forces of the entire Sherlockian community.

But to my surprise, I've found that doubling back point after all — in the people who participate in the events I've started attending. The same names and faces keep showing up in the scion meetings, the special events, the Facebook groups, and in the blogs, papers, and podcasts I'm trying to catch up on. As I start to recognize the repeat players, and how focused everyone is on simply learning from each other and having a good time, the ocean doesn't seem so daunting. If I flub an idea or retread old ground, no one will demand that I be kicked from here to Charing Cross (I hope). And the more I engage with the community, the more truly unique inspiration I collect; for instance, the John H. Watson Society's "Best Watson Debate" in May set me off writing a spirited defense of Ian Hart (look for it in the next *Watsonian*!). And the piece you hold now is my ninth one, not because I can't stay focused, but rather the opposite — each topic ends up turning into a dissertation. For all my trepidation about being original, once

I get started, I find that there is always more to say!

In fact, I've already kept you way too long; our conference is coming up, and I'd love to meet you then so we can chat. This will be my first major Sherlockian event, and I have a countdown on my calendar and my calling cards ready, so please stop and say hi! If you can't wait or can't attend, my inbox is always open for penpals, discussions, and stray thoughts on anything Sherlockian: **elmadore@gmail.com**. For now and forever, the game is always afoot — I hope I can keep up! 



## The Study Group Reviews "A Case of Identity"

BY PHILLIP BERGEM



On Saturday, April 20th a group of twenty Norwegian Explorers met, virtually over Zoom, to discuss "A Case of Identity." While many of the participants were from the Twin Cities, there were several from other regions of the country, including Lakewood, CO, Evanston, IL, Saint Louis, MO, and one person linked in from Lyon, France.

Steve Schier was the Study Group leader for this month, and he started us off by having everyone introduce themselves, then there was some time for "show and tell."

Steve shared the fact that IDEN was the second story that Conan Doyle wrote, although it was the third story that was printed.

The consensus of the group was that the story describes a poor showing by Holmes. It has a lackluster ending where Holmes does not act in the true interests of his client.

Mary Loving suggested the possibility that Mary Sutherland had face blindness and that made it difficult for her to recognize James Windibank as Hosmer Angel. Ruth Berman reminded the group that Sutherland was short-sighted and wore glasses. Steve Miller summed it up by saying that Holmes wound up ruining



By Josef Friedrich.  
Courtesy of  
[www.arthur-conan-doyle.com](http://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com).

Mary's life by not telling her the full details. It was clearly a dysfunctional family and Mary would have been better off on her own. Ruth did remind the group that Holmes gave Sutherland good advice if she chose to heed it.

There was discussion about how Holmes was not being good at working with or understanding women, and this made things difficult for him. His poor social skills likely stood in the way of telling Mary Sutherland to give up on "Hosmer Angel."


Phil Bergem mentioned how common dysfunctional families were in the canon. He wondered if this was just a useful plot device, or if it was truly common in the Victorian era.

Someone pointed out that women of the time didn't have a lot of opportunities. In the story, Mary had an inheritance that provided her with an annual income. Phil mentioned that Conan Doyle's first wife, Louise, had an inheritance from a relative that likely provided Conan Doyle with the plot device.

Steve S. asked the group how Windibank ranked as a villain. The overall opinion was that he was a lightweight villain with the potential to develop into something much worse, agreeing with Holmes's assessment that he would "rise from crime to crime until he does something very bad, and ends on a gallows." Mary Loving pointed out that Windibank seemed similar to James Ryder in *BLUE*, taking advantage of a situation because he possessed a weak character.

Steve S. made a marked comparison between the personalities of Irene Adler and Mary Sutherland. They are very different individuals, occurring in two of the first short stories, and both taking place in close proximity. (Baring-Gould set *SCAN* on March 20, 1889 and *IDEN* on June 14, 1889.) Was there an effort on the part of the author to portray radically different people as the main female characters?

Steve S. asked if the group thought that Holmes got a fee for his work. Ruth thought that he wouldn't have had the nerve to ask for money. Steve also pointed out that this is one of the few tales that has not been dramatized for television, although there was an Eille Norwood screen adaptation in 1921. Could it have been improved to make a decent 50-minute episode? The thought of the group was that it could not without changing the unsatisfying ending. (Steve M. suggested having Windibank falling down the stairs and breaking his neck, which several in the group thought would be a suitable conclusion.)

Steve S. asked the group to rate the story on a 1 to 5 scale. There were several votes for 3 but most people ranked it between 1 and 2.5, with one person giving it a 1¼. 

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## *From Tobacco to Tea: The Case of the Illustrious Illustration*

BY KAREN ELLERY



*mail from Karen Ellery to Jerry Margolin:* Sorry to bug you, dear, but do you know where I might get or who I might contact about a high-quality jpeg or bmp of one of the Paget illustrations from *RESI*, please? I'm specifically looking for the one of Holmes with the cigar and cigar case. Thanks.

*Email reply from Jerry Margolin to Karen Ellery:* Hi, you picked the right person to contact as I have owned that original Paget for almost 50 yrs ...

A little over three years ago, I started The Tea Brokers of Mincing Lane, a society of Sherlockian Tea Lovers (and lovers of Sherlockian tea). We've recently had the great fortune to have a new logo created for us by the amazingly talented Amanda Downs Champlin, and we began discussing having pins and other merchandise made for the group.

It so happened that, during the Sherlock Mondays (Rosenbach Museum and Library) discussion of *Resident Patient*, Edward Petit posted a Paget illustration of Holmes holding a cigar and cigar box. I've certainly seen it before, but suddenly I could imagine it actually showing Holmes holding a teacup and saucer, and realized what an excellent image that would be for the Tea Brokers.

I took a poor-quality copy of the picture to the Brokers' Facebook page and asked if any of the members could manipulate the image to feature cup and saucer. Sandra Nelson (owner of Northern Lights Tea in Minneapolis) quickly obliged, and her effort was *so good*, members immediately began to request that it be turned into a t-shirt. With a new logo, a new motto ("Tea at once if convenient. If inconvenient, Tea all the same," suggested by Veronica Educatrix-Jones), and this delightful Paget-permutation, I knew it would be a winner.

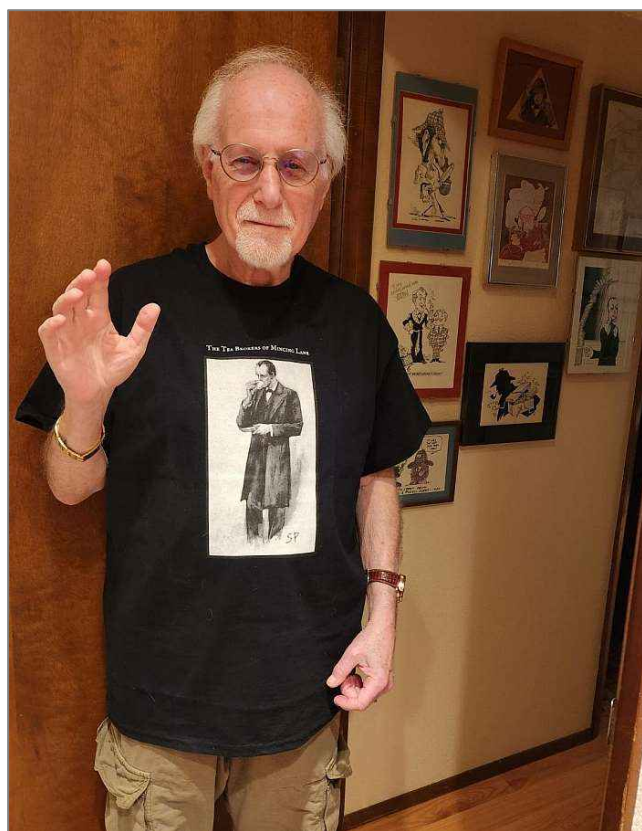
Unfortunately, to make a really good shirt, you need to start with good quality art, and so I went



looking for a high-resolution image of the illustration. I'm fortunate to live in the same state as the wonderful Sherlock Holmes Special Collections of the University of Minnesota, so I considered approaching them for a suggestion, but then of course it dawned on me that I had the acquaintance of one of the foremost experts on and collectors of Sherlockian illustrations — Jerry Margolin. With hopes of getting some kind of lead, I emailed and got the serendipitous reply printed above.

Jerry graciously took the time and trouble to send me two hi-res pictures of his framed artwork for our use, and Sandy did another great job adjusting the image. Before long, we had the t-shirt designed and members eagerly purchasing their preferred size, color, and style from Zazzle.

As a modest thank you for his contribution



*Photo by Judy Margolin*

(and appreciation for the fact that he liked the idea and design), the Tea Brokers presented Jerry and his lovely wife Judy with complimentary t-shirts, and we received another picture from Jerry once he got the shirt. In all, it went so smoothly and happily that I can only wish as positive an experience to any other group leaders creating merchandise for their groups.

You can order your own t-shirt from Zazzle using the link: [www.zazzle.com/tea\\_at\\_once\\_t\\_shirt-256003383475187607](http://www.zazzle.com/tea_at_once_t_shirt-256003383475187607)

## *“My Dear Watson”*

BY PHILLIP BERGEM

**I**n the Sherlock Holmes stories it does seem as if Holmes uses the phrase “my dear Watson” quite a bit, but how often? Of course, all Sherlockians should know that in the original stories and books the phrase “Elementary, my dear Watson” was never used, but what of the final three words of the four word phrase? In checking, I found that “My dear Watson” appears 92 times in the Canonical accounts. The distribution is as follows:

10 times – HOUN

9 times – EMPT

7 times – FINA

5 times – VALL, MISS, WIST, LADY

3 times – NORW, SECO, DEVI, RETI

2 times – REDH, SILV, CARD, CROO, NAVA, DANC, BLAC, 3STU, DYIN, ILLU

1 time – SIGN, BLUE, SPEC, COPP, STOC, GREE, SOLI, PRIO, CHAS, SIXN, ABBE, MAZA, 3GAR, CREE

None – STUD, SCAN, IDEN, BOSC, FIVE, TWIS, ENGR, NOBL, BERY, YELL, GLOR, MUSG, REIG, RESI, GOLD, BRUC, REDC, LAST, THOR, SUSS, 3GAB, BLAN, LION, VEIL, SHOS

Holmes uses the phrase “my dear fellow” frequently as well, an additional 48 times, many of them said to Doctor Watson. There are also 16 times where “my dear Holmes” is uttered.

Interestingly, the word “elementary” appears only eight times in the entire Canon. That is much less than I would have thought since the word seems to be associated with Holmes because of the famous but non-Canonical quote.

## *I [Notice] Sherlock Everywhere ...*



Steve and Cherie Miller were recently on a trip that took them to Krakow, Poland. Their guide was taking them from Wawel Hill to Oldtown Krakow when Steve noticed a sign for a tobacco shop that was worthy of a photo. Thank you to Steve for sharing this with the rest of us. 📷



## *Should We Favor Talent?*

BY BOB SHARFMAN



Recognition for a job well done is really nice — especially if you are the one receiving that recognition. Usually, an award in the form of a trophy, certificate, medal, or even a statue goes with the honor. How many people can say they never dreamed of standing on the Olympic platform and having the gold medal hung around your proud neck while your national anthem was being played? Or receiving an Oscar, an Emmy, a Nobel Prize, or that ubiquitous participation trophy. I say honors, awards, and recognition are good for the recipient (and parents, relatives, and friends) and an undisputed part of our everyday life.

Sherlockians have recognition and honors no less than others. Membership certificates; awards for a job well done (maybe a book or subscription); an investiture at your scion or even ASH or BSI. Or in the case of writers, the Morley-Montgomery Award. As you all (mostly all) know, this award was started in 1958, and given to the author of the best article published in the Baker Street Journal.

Recently (2022) Nicholas Utechin for his article “For Christ’s Sake” (about Jay Finley Christ of Chicago’s Hugo’s Companions); and Russell Merritt (2021) for “The Doubleday Omnibus Edition: The Madman’s Sherlock Holmes”; and more recently (2023) Eric Scafe for his article, “Five Quarter Centuries of Confusion Over the Missing Three Quarters.”

Sadly, both of the former great Sherlockians left us far too early, but have our recognition for their good ... very great ... work.

Writers in the general population of authors receive other high honors and recognition. The Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize are just two, but are probably the highest category of recognition. I may add my own “Attaboy/attagirl ... you did it” award given by me to my friends who do good stuff. But there is one prize most authors either forget, or don’t know of its existence. Others refuse to acknowledge it entirely.

I am of course referring to the winner of the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. Of course, all reading this should know of the contest sponsored by the English Department at San Jose State University. With participants from over fifty countries, and every state in the U.S., over 10,000 entries are reviewed annually and judged. For what? Simple. The goal of each contestant was to compose the worst possible opening — or introductory — sentence for an imaginary novel. More bluntly put, intentionally bad prose. What! Why? The answer is simple: to encourage all those who would rather write bad books than real good ones. Yes, for those who truly believe the pen is mightier than the sword, a phrase coined by none other than Bulwer-Lytton in the play *Richelieu*. The entire quote runs:

Beneath the rule of men entirely great,  
The pen is mightier than the sword.

So how bad must a sentence be? Here are some examples from the past entrants:

*Category:* Sister Marie in The Mud-Wrestling Pit:

“As she fell face down into the black muck of the mud-wrestling pit, her sweaty, three-hundred-pound opponent muttering curses in Latin on top of her, Sister Marie thought, there is no doubt about it: the Pope betrayed me.”

*Category:* Like an overripe peach in a blender:

“Tenderly their eyes looked over the dinner table which, laden with wine as cold as his wife’s

heart and bread as hot as his new mistress' passion, threatened to split asunder, leaving their viands embarrassingly on their laps."

*Category:* Lyttony?

"Sir — sir, it is a boy."

"A boy?" said my father, looking up from his book and evidently much puzzled; 'what is a boy?'"

*Category:* Caliber Investigations

"Millard Fillymissolimp (who was otherwise known as Joe) stepped into the room where his great-grandfather, Colonel Douglas Moran of the Fourteenth Idaho Light Cavalry Dragoons, was assassinated on April 2, 1852, by an enraged sergeant major of drummers who was aiming for someone else entirely but was apparently a very lousy shot, and asked for a glass of wine, which was bottled in the wonderful Bordeaux region of France, where the sky is deep blue and the hills are a vibrant green and the sea isn't there and the people are often drunk, but was quickly refused."

*Category* (I promise this is the last one): In Dubious Taste

"Her eyes were a greenie-blue sort of, and reminded him of the exquisite passage in which Coleridge described a bowl of urine by moonlight."

Enough! But wait, there is one more, a phrase also by Bulwer-Lytton: "It was a dark and stormy night," which deserves a category of its own. Why? It is generally thought that this is the most innocuous and turgid string of words ever put together by an untalented writer. There are other opinions on this, but I ignore them in the interest of finally getting to the point of all this.

Our favorite literary agent/author is justly known for his contribution to great literature. The stories by John H. Watson about his roommate are a good example. I have no reluctance in calling our Canon great literature and great writing.

But after reading *It Was a Dark and Stormy Night* compiled by Scott Rice and being brought into a world of bad prose — and I freely admit that I thought some of the examples were really great prose ... just saying, I decided to read the Canon with an eye out for any possible entries from our Sacred Writings to the Bulwer-Lytton contest. Cast an orb at these: (Get it? "With an eye out" ...

"cast an orb" — I don't know about you, but I hope it gets better).

"It was a wild and tempestuous night." "The Adventure of the Golden Pince Nez"

"It was on a bitterly cold night and frosty morning." "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange"

"...(I)t was a bleak and windy day..." "His Last Bow"

"It was a blazing hot day." "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box"

"...(A) dense yellow fog settled down upon London." "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans"

Could it be that the great doctor was considering an entry in the Bulwer-Lytton contest, or was a (perish the thought) poor writer? I say absolutely not. Technically these were not opening sentences, but more substantively they fit and fit well into the narrative and style.

It will be a dark and stormy night when I could even consider any passage of the Canon poor prose — although some stories are better than others — the prose is always golden.

Some fellow named Newton had an idea that for each action there had to be an opposite and equal reaction — or some such rule. The literary world's Nobel/Pulitzer, etc., and the Bulwer-Lytton award are a similar pairing. I place the Canon in the Nobel category. The only reason the Canon and its author have not, to date, received the recognition is that the Nobel Prize for Literature is awarded for fiction. I hope the descendants will be satisfied with their reception of my "Atta boy/atta girl" award.

A note of caution: Nothing stated above should be considered as a lessening of my desire to favor any award which will save us poor authors from the tyranny of the talented.



## References

Scott Rice, *It Was a Dark and Stormy Night* (NY: Penguin Books, 1984).

Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* (NY: Doubleday & Co., 1930). 🐕



## Study Group Discussion – “The Illustrious Client”

BY KAREN MURDOCK

**T**he discussion group met on May 18th with 19 participants (including Sherlockians from New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Illinois, Wisconsin, California, England, and France). Steve Miller led the discussion of “The Illustrious Client.”

In “Show and Tell” Karen Murdock showed a board book for infants entitled *Sherlock Holmes in The Hound of the Baskervilles: A Sounds Primer*. It is available from **BabyLit.com**.

Pete Cavanaugh showed a Sherlock Holmes comic book series from the 1930s which has now been republished. An Edith Meiser series from the 1960s has also been republished. David Hitchcock read a “Mother Earth” poem for Mother’s Day

Steve Schier really liked the character of Porky Shinwell Johnson in *ILLU*. He said, “I think he would be a very attractive character” to star in a series of pastiches. Bob Brusic, who used to be a docent at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, said that the MIA has a very fine collection of ceramics, including some from China which would surely interest Baron Gruner.

A Turkish bath is probably the most unusual setting for the beginning of any Sherlock Holmes story. [*This would have been Charing Cross Baths, owned by Nevill’s Turkish Baths, and located where Northumberland Avenue intersects with Northumberland Street. By coincidence, this is adjacent to the Sherlock Holmes Pub in London.* – Ed.] Ruth Berman pointed out that, in Minnesota, we have many saunas, especially in (or in back of) houses belonging to people of Finnish descent. Robin Rowles punned, “It’s a steam pipe problem!” Pete C. said that, while the setting might seem a little creepy to us today, Turkish baths were not at all unusual for the turn of the 20th century. Sandy Kozinn said that there were public steam baths in New York City well into the 1950s. Karen Ellery thought these facilities were the equivalent of what today would be fitness centers. Steve Schier said it was “hard to lurk in the shadows of

a steam bath,” and therefore they were a good place to meet people.

Most Explorers were willing to accept the identification of “the illustrious client” as the future Edward VII, though some thought it might be some other prince of royal blood. Robin thought the client might have borrowed a royal coach. Shana Carter supported this theory because nobody who wished to remain anonymous would drive around in a coach with a royal crest on the door. Sir James Damery was what today might be called a “fixer.” (This term was much in the news as I wrote this because former president Donald

Trump was on trial in New York City for paying hush money to a porn star and then covering up the payment. Michael Cohen, who testified in court, was often referred to as “Donald Trump’s fixer.”)

Tom Smith observed that Baron Gruner was a collector who was “looking to collect *her*” (Violet de Merville). Pete C. said that, while villains Moriarty and Moran were “business men,” Gruner was a psy-

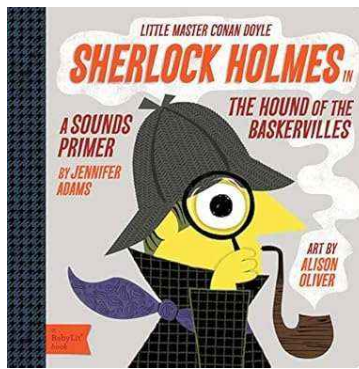
chopath. Karen E. said that Gruner was “the one modern villain” in the Canon. He wanted to “possess his victims” and break their spirits before he killed them.

Bob B. asked, “Does Holmes solve the crime?” A crime of assault was committed against Holmes and the crime of vitriol throwing was committed because he brought Kitty Winter to the Baron’s house. But the Baron’s murder of his first wife was not investigated, though it was mentioned.

Mary Loving pointed out that, although Gruner was of the aristocracy, it was Kitty Winter and Shinwell Johnson (from the lowest stratum of society) who had superior moral values.

Karen E. wished that the confrontation between Kitty Winter and Violet de Merville (fire and ice) had been witnessed by Watson, who would have written a better description of the dramatic scene than Holmes did.

Robin wondered why Holmes had brought in Watson to pretend to be an expert on ceramics; why did he not hire an actual expert? The Explorers thought there was an element of danger, and Holmes knew that Watson would be able to stay cool under pressure. Karen E. said that Holmes was clearly doing something illegal (breaking and entering) and he did not want to involve an outsider in such an undertaking.



Several Explorers wondered why, when Watson was cramming up on Chinese pottery, he did not read Baron Gruner's book on the subject. Ruth thought that "Lomax didn't think much of Gruner's book." Karen M. thought the book might have been written in German; Sandy thought it might have been written in Chinese.

Steve S. said Holmes was putting Watson in real danger and that "in the real world, Holmes would be dead by 1890."

Steve M. wondered why Baron Gruner's book (which Kitty Winter called 'Souls I have ruined') was left in a desk pigeon-hole where anyone could see it, rather than locked up in a safe. Sandy said some people just think they are invincible. Karen E. said he liked to keep his collection close at hand.

Shana wondered what happened to Violet after the story. Sandy thought that "she got a little smarter and a little nicer" as the result of her experience and ended up marrying some wealthy, titled young man.



"It needs careful handling, Watson. A set of this would be worth a king's ransom"

From *Colliers*, November 8, 1924,  
by John Richard Flanagan.

Courtesy of [www.arthur-conan-doyle.com](http://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com).

The Baker Street Irregulars rated this story a "3" on a scale of 1 to 5. Explorers were kinder; most of us rated it a 4 and a few gave it a 5. The story was criticized because Holmes did not really solve anything. It was praised for its strong women, the depth and richness of its ancillary characters, one of the best (nastiest) villains in the entire Canon, and some really good lines. 🐾

## Sherlock Holmes on Jeopardy!

BY PHILLIP BERGEM



he popular game show, *Jeopardy!*, is set up where three contestants compete against each other. They are given a clue, in the form of an answer, and are supposed to phrase a question intended for that answer. The show originally ran from 1964 until 1979. It returned in 1984 and has been on the air ever since.

Clues are presented in various categories and are devised by a group of eight writers known as the Clue Crew. Popular topics include U.S. Presidents and Shakespeare. The Clue Crew evidently likes Sherlock Holmes as well since he, Watson, and related topics occur relatively frequently in the clues.

The website <https://j-archive.com/> contains the archive of past clues and responses. To use it, click on "[All]" and then use the search box at the top to search for "Sherlock," "Holmes," or "Watson." You get a lot of non-Sherlockian results, but can sort it out from the descriptions.

As of this writing, searching for "Sherlock" produces 322 results. Examples include:

Recently, on May 6, 2024, there was the category "Holmes, Sherlock Holmes." Clues included "While battling the evil Moriarty in 'The Final Problem,' Holmes appears to meet his end, tumbling over this Swiss cataract (for \$800, see response A provided on page 12); and 'In 'The Adventure of the Six Napoleons,' the Napoleons are these, with one concealing a secret treasure' (for \$100, response B).

On December 13, 2023, the category was also "Holmes, Sherlock Holmes." Clues included "Gregson, Lestrade, Hopkins & Jones isn't a law firm; they're guys who sought Holmes' help for this 'national' agency (for \$400, response C); and 'This kindly landlady was first mentioned by name in the second Holmes story, 'The Sign of the Four'' (for \$1000, response D).

The category for February 21, 2023, was "From 'E' to 'Y': 'Arthur Conan Doyle had Sherlock Holmes say this word, but didn't ever follow it with 'my dear Watson'' (for \$1200, response E).

The show for January 17, 2022, had a category "Arthur Conan Doyle Characters." Amusingly, the adjacent category was "Holmes &



Watson” with clues about non-Canonical people named Holmes or Watson. An example from the Sherlockian category is “In addition to all the evil & crime, this man had time to write the book ‘The Dynamics of an Asteroid’” (for \$200, response F).



On April 14, 2018, one category was “On TV.” The \$1600 clue was “On PBS, Benedict Cumberbatch's brilliant but wacky Sherlock is kept grounded by Dr. Watson, played by this actor” and they showed a picture of Martin Freeman.

Searching for “Watson” turns up 309 results, although many do not involve John Hamish. A category of “Famous Pairs” on February 6, 2024, had the clue “This duo that figured out a double-stranded structure shared the 1962 Nobel Prize in medicine with Maurice Wilkins” (\$800, G). The category for November 30, 2022 was “My Dear Watson,” all with non-Canonical people, but interesting nonetheless.

While most of the questions are not difficult for dedicated Sherlockians, I enjoy the show enough that it is fun to find a connection between two of my interests. I hope you have enjoyed the connection as well. 🐾

## Book Recommendations

BY PHILLIP BERGEM



here are several books that I have acquired recently that I would highly recommend. I have not actually finished reading these yet, but they have been added to my tsundoku pile. (Tsundoku [ 積ん読 ] is a Japanese word defined by the Cambridge Dictionary as the practice of buying a lot of books and keeping them in a pile because you intend to read them but have not done so yet; also used to refer to the pile itself.)

- *Finding Sherlock Holmes: A guide to locations in England mentioned in the Sherlock Holmes Canon* by Paul Thomas Miller (Manchester, NH: Belanger Books, 2023). Paul Thomas Miller lives in Portsmouth, England. He has put in a phenomenal amount of effort in identifying all the significant places listed in the Canon, and researching the actual locations. There are entries for each story, with canonical and real-life locations listed, notes on how he reached his conclusions, and many photos and maps. As someone who enjoys the background of the stories, I love this book and will use it for future projects and excursions to England.
- *Canonical Cornerstones: Foundational Books of a Sherlockian Library* by Peter Eckrich and Rob Nunn (Indianapolis, IN: Gasogene Books, 2023). Peter and Rob have selected 17 books that can be viewed as essential for any Sherlockian collector, and asked prominent Sherlockians to write about them. Each essay is wonderfully written with great background information or interesting insights for the subject book.  
Rob Nunn is member of the Explorers, as are Julie McKuras, Tim Johnson, and Ross Davies, who wrote essays on Baring-Gould's *Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*, and *Apocrypha et Cetera* respectively. My only complaint about the book is that it lacks a table of contents.
- *The Worlds of Sherlock Holmes* by Andrew Lycett (London: Frances Lincoln, 2023). Andrew uses his depth of knowledge of Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes to produce a lovely, well-illustrated, and informative book. It lives up to the book's subtitle, “the inspiration behind the world's greatest detective.” A sample of chapter titles — A Sherlockian Sense of Place, Britain and the Wider World, The Advance of Science, Art in the Blood — gives an indication of the breadth and depth with which Lycett covers the subject. 🐾

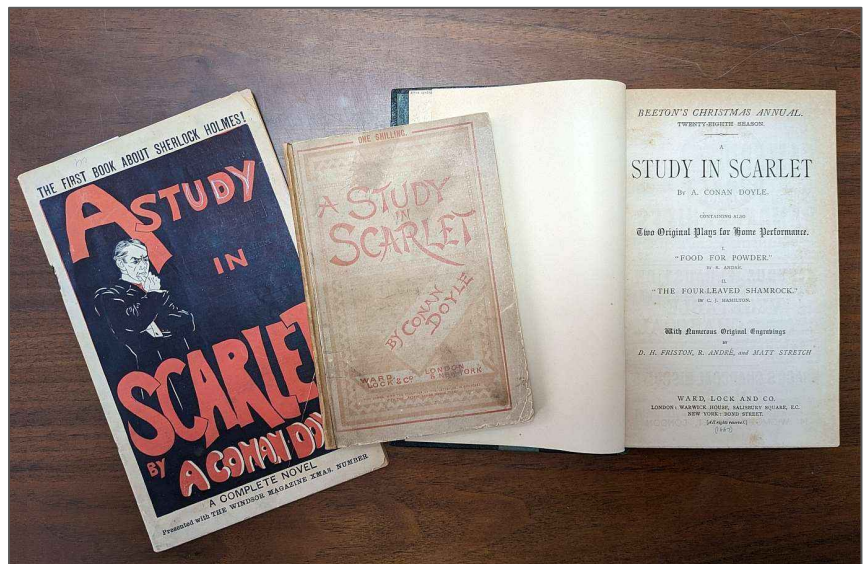
Responses to Jeopardy! questions (Pages 10 & 11)

- A. What is Reichenbach Falls?
- B. What are busts of Napoleon?
- C. What is Scotland Yard?
- D. Who is Mrs. Hudson?
- E. What is Elementary?
- F. Who is Moriarty?
- G. Who are Watson & Crick?

## Parting Words and Trifles

- 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 P.M. / Saturday: 10 A.M.–4 P.M. [www.minnesotabookfair.com](http://www.minnesotabookfair.com) Note the new location.

- 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.
- We are presently accepting submissions for the 2024 Norwegian Explorers’ *Christmas Annual*. This year’s theme is “The Collecting Mania.” The submittal form can be found on the Explorers’ webpage ([www.norwegianexplorers.org](http://www.norwegianexplorers.org)). We have a 2500 word maximum and entries must be received no later than **Friday, October 4, 2024**. Submit electronic versions of papers (Microsoft Word is preferred) to [ray@PULPlications.com](mailto:ray@PULPlications.com) with “ATTN: Christmas Annual” as the subject line. 📧



Three early versions of *A Study in Scarlet* at Jones Hall, Tulane University, New Orleans, Louisiana. Left to right: 1895 companion to the Windsor Magazine Christmas number, the 1888 Ward, Lock and Co. edition, and the 1887 Beeton's Christmas Annual.

### The Norwegian Explorers

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