The Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota, Inc. presents

Minneapolis, Minnesota
June 11 - 13, 1993
Conference Proceedings
Holiday Inn Metrodome
Introduction

by Bruce Southworth, BSI

It has been just over two years since *Sherlock Holmes’ Rogues, Rascals and Ruffians* was held in Minneapolis. Now in the fall of 1995, we are on the threshold of the dedication of the John Bennett Shaw Collection at the University of Minnesota Special Collections Library. There have been many changes over the two years. Both Austin McLean, Curator of Special Collections and John Jenson, Assistant Curator, retired in June of 1995. At the helm now is Clarence Carter, who brings renewed enthusiasm for the remarkable collections under his care. And many of the suggestions which came from the Planning Committee, which met in advance of the ‘93 conference, are being instituted by the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections, organized in fellowship with the University Library.

In my introduction to the conference program I noted the “tradition of scholarship and of keeping green the memory of Sherlock Holmes.” This tradition and aim have not changed during the two years. It is within that tradition that the following papers from *Sherlock Holmes’ Rogues, Rascals and Ruffians* are presented. They demonstrate the breadth and depth of the material which was offered to conference attendees.

These essays will treat you to a world ranging from opium dens to poison wielding women to murderous physicians. Statistical discrepancies between the crimes handled by the London Metropolitan Police and those recounted by Dr. John Watson are investigated as well as clues to the true character of Irene Adler.

The banquet keynote address was given by Victorian literature scholar Dr. Harold Orel, Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Kansas. In his paper, Dr. Orel focuses on the rules of fair play, the sense of justice which was at the heart of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and which prompted him to espouse an astonishing and intense variety of opinions on social and judicial behaviors and the conduct of international politics.

With few exceptions these are the complete texts of the presentations from the 1993 conference. The exceptions are those programs that were primarily visual in content and could not be easily, if at all, converted to the written word.

To those who attended *Sherlock Holmes’ Rogues, Rascals and Ruffians* I welcome you to relive that wonderful weekend and enjoy again the outcome of our presenters’s researches. To those who were not able to attend, I invite you to sit down, relax and enjoy the singular collection you are now holding.
A Study in Scarlet Journalism: The Curious Non-correlation Between late Victorian Criminals and those Depicted by John H. Watson, Popular Author

by Marshall S. Berdan

During his seventeen year "co-operation" (VEIL) with Mr. Sherlock Holmes, Dr. John H. Watson had the absolutely singular pleasure of being an eyewitness to, and a participant in, the career of the world's first consulting detective. The exact number of cases in which the good doctor was personally involved will probably never be known, but from several references he makes in the introduction to his individual chronicles, that number was no doubt considerable. In the preamble to "The Adventure of the Second Stain," for example, he writes of "many hundreds of cases to which I have never alluded." In a similar narrative entree into "The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger," we are told of "the long row of yearbooks which fill a shelf" and "the dispatch-cases filled with documents, a perfect quarry for the student, not only of crime, but of the social and official scandals of the late Victorian era." Suffice it to say, as he admits in "The Adventure of the Second Stain," Watson did not want for a "lack of material."

Out of this abundance, Watson selected 58 cases to bring the attention of an inquisitive public via the pages of *The Strand Magazine.* Given the sporadically busy nature of his medical practice and the irregular demands upon his time made by a spouse, it is perhaps remarkable that this many made their way to publication. On the other hand, considering the princely sums tendered by *The Strand* to the Literary Agent, and presumably from said Literary Agent to the author, it is perhaps even more remarkable that Dr. Watson, whose career as a physician was erratic at best, didn't produce even more of the lucrative narratives.

The purpose of this monograph, however, is not to speculate upon the quantity of those reminiscences; instead, it is to assess their quality, or more specifically, their compositional nature. A review of the published narratives reveals that there is a substantial difference between the overall nature of the criminals and malefactors depicted by Watson and published statistics on late Victorian crime. Nor does this gap appear to be merely coincidental. But more of that anon.

First, the facts. Statistics were hardly the art form in Victorian England that they are today, but history has blessed contemporary criminologists with one extensive treatise, "The English Convict: A Statistical Study" by Charles Goring MD., B.Sc., published in 1913 by His Majesty's Stationery Office as an official publication of the Home Office of the British Government. Dr. Goring, who served as Deputy Medical Officer at H.M. Prison, Parkhurst, collaborated with scholars at University College London to disprove the existence of an anthropological criminal type.

Based on extensive and precise physical measurements, especially phrenological ones, of 3,000 randomly selected convicts between the years 1902-1906, Dr. Goring effectively disputes the long-existing stereotype of the "prototypical" British criminal, a morphological conceit given recurring voice in both the popular writings and sentiments of the period. In doing so, however, he also casts a suspiciously yellow shadow upon the efforts of one of his contemporary, albeit amateur, criminologists.

Not surprising to any student of crime of any era is what Dr. Goring's tabulations revealed about the most prevalent type of crime: during the period of his study, a full 95% of the indictable crimes were what is known as "acquisitive" in nature; i.e., that had as their motivation the acquisition of someone else's property. Goring separates these acquisitive crimes into two distinct categories: those where the acquisition occurred via direct physical taking (e.g., stealing and burglary) and those where the acquisition was done indirectly and mentally (e.g., forgery and fraud). Again, not surprisingly, the former clearly predominates: stealing and burglary account for a full 89.13% of all the crimes Goring surveyed while forgery and fraud ac-

Since Holmes himself chronicled "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier" and "The Lion's Mane," these two have been excluded from the survey. As definitive authorship of "His Last Bow" and "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone" has yet to be determined and Watson was present for at least part of the action, these two narratives have been included on the statistically justifiable assumption that of the two known narrators, Watson, and not Holmes, was the more likely.

Although Watson himself was not involved in the two earliest Canonical adventures, "The 'Gloria Scott" and "The Musgrave Ritual," and Holmes suggested them to Watson as appropriate objects of his authorial attention, the fact remains that Watson chose to follow Holmes's advice, not out of compulsion, but because he agreed that they were worthy narratives. Therefore, they have been included in the survey. We will never know how many, if any, of Holmes's other suggestions Watson may have vetoed. Nor will we ever know, how many, if any, of his narratives were rejected by the editors of *The Strand.*
counted for a mere 5.76%. Of the remaining 5% of indictable offenses, violence to the person accounted for just over half (2.64%), with the remainder allotted to sexual offenses (1.84%) and damage to property (.63%).

After having classified the nature of Parkhurst "qualifying exams," Goring turned his attentions to the status of their perpetrators. To prove his thesis—that there was no such thing as an inherently criminal character in either shape or substance—Goring focused on two main determinants, the social class of the parents, and the occupational class of the subject. Social class was broken into four subsets (well to do or upper middle class, prosperous poor or lower middle, poor or lower, and very poor or destitute, while occupational class was subdivided into seven broad categories (professional, commercial, select, labourers, sailors, miners, and artisans).

Goring's crosstabulations between status and the nature of the indictable crime are shown in the accompanying chart. [see appendix—ed] Some of the results are most interesting. We can see, for example, that just more than half (51.4%) of all the crimes surveyed were committed by the prosperous poor or lower middle class. The second most criminally-inclined class was the poor or lower with 32% of all inmates, followed by the well to do or upper middle (13.8%) and the very poor or destitute with 2.8%. In terms of occupation, artisans and laborers clearly dominated at Parkhurst with 37.3% and 29.5% of the inmates, respectively. The commercial class placed a distant third with 14.1% followed by select classes with 5.5%, professionals with 5.3%, miners with 4.4%, and sailors with 3.9%. Such proportions of criminals are very much in line with the proportions of these classes to the national population as artisans accounted for 37.7%, labourers 32.4%, commercial class 10.4%, select 6.0%, miners 5.9%, professional 4.5%, and sailors, 3.2%.

And what of the nationality of Parkhurst inmates? Not surprisingly, native Britons (defined by Goring as English, Welsh, and Scotch) predominated, accounting for 82% of the resident felons. Of the other ethnic categories he recognizes, Irish account for 8%, other foreigners for 6%, and Jews for 4% of criminals.

Now what about those criminals depicted by Dr. Watson in his 58 recorded adventures? The second handout [see appendix—ed] represents my own culpability survey of the Canon. Obviously, a few disclaimers and explanations are warranted. Let it first be said that those adventures of Sherlock Holmes depicted by his professional partner (and sometime roommate) cannot be definitively categorized: their intricate and often deceptive nature precludes any such cut-and-dried labeling. What starts out as an innocent holiday from university in "The 'Gloria Scott'" for example, evolves first into a quest to explain a suspicious apocryphal attack, then the revelation of a twenty-year-old unsolved mystery of the high seas, and finally, an unsolved double disappearance in Hampshire.

Difficulties notwithstanding, something can still be posited about the overall nature of the individual cases and the following survey seeks to do just that. After the title of each adventure comes a delineation of the essential crime(s) that are involved, or more accurately, appear to have been committed since that first impression is the basis of Holmes's participation in the case and consequently of the reader's interest as well. It is absurd, for example, to conclude that no crime whatsoever was committed in "The Adventure of Shoscombe Old Place" when the highly suspicious series of events related by John Mason were the basis for Holmes's immediate departure to Berkshire.

But Watson had more in mind than just an aseptic, court reporter style recapitulation of random felonious conduct. As Holmes himself was wont to criticize, as he does in "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," Watson was not above "attempting to put colour and life into each of [his] statements." Watson himself confesses, in the same narrative, that "[he] cannot quite hold himself absolved from the charge of sensationalism which has been urged against my records." But did he really go so far as to "degrade what should have been a course of lectures into a series of tales," as Holmes shortly thereafter recriminates? Perhaps Dr. Goring's statistical analysis can shed a little lurid light?

Following the criminal designation is a checklist of the various significant "dramatic elements" of the narrative itself—those characteristics (or as Holmes would say "embellishments") which give the depiction of the people and events a dramatic presence. The ten "dramatic elements" that I have quantified are qualified below:

1) F (Foreign Intrigue): the presence of non-British principals who bring to the activity being investigated their own particular national flavor or, more generally, their own unsolved nefarious business.

2) L (Love Interest): the integral presence of romantic machinations, healthy or otherwise, that significantly affect the actions of the principals or serve to engage the reader's sympathies.
3) R&F (Rich and Famous): the presence of wealthy and/or socially prominent principals of any nationality.

4) DD (Damsels in Distress): the presence of a distressed female, either single or married, whose perplexity and/or plight plays favorably upon the reader’s sympathies.

5) HT (Hidden Treasure): the significant presence of lost, stolen, or strayed valuables, either at the outset or conclusion of the investigation.

6) HS (Hidden Secrets): the existence, and eventual revelation, of personal secrets on the part of the principals that has a significant, if not the most significant, motivating effect upon their actions, generally via the threat of revelation, i.e., extortion.

7) NS (National Stature): the fact that the investigation underway deals with matters of national importance or stature, either in the political (e.g., diplomatic), or popular (e.g., entertainment and sporting) arenas.

8) B (Bizarre): the presence of dominating features of the truly bizarre (e.g., exotic religions, unnatural phenomena) and/or the revelation of a particularly unusual motivating factor on the part of one of the principals.

9) GM (Gross Mistreatment): the presence of particularly heinous examples of a Victorian’s cruelty to his fellow Victorian.

10) IS (Innocence Saved): the exoneration of an individual upon whom suspicion most foul and undeserved has fallen.

No attempt was made to gauge the proportional importance to the narrative of these dramatic elements. If significant, their presence was simply noted. In theory, a case could therefore exhibit none, all, or any combination of the ten dramatic elements. Again, the presence of an attribute does not mean that it plays a significant role in the structure of the narrative. The purpose here is not to deteriorate into a subjective debate over degrees and shades of relativity, though it is freely admitted that any such subjective undertaking necessarily invites just such scrutiny. Instead, the intention is to identify the basic qualities that characterize the overall corpus of Dr. Watson’s published chronicles.

Now I freely admit that there is no exact statistical overlap between the convicts studied by Dr. Goring and the cornucopia of malefactors presented by Dr. Watson. For starters, Goring’s subjects were exclusively men who had been caught, tried, and convicted of a crime and then sent to a Home Counties prison. As we know, many of Holmes’s antagonists came from outside the London area, more than a few were women, and many were simply not delivered into the hands of the authorities as a result of Holmes’s ex officio adjudication of their actions—what he often referred to as “compounding a felony.” In addition, Goring denoted only one crime per convict, in this case the most serious one for which sentence was passed. He also limited his selection to a relatively narrow chronological period, one which corresponds only briefly with the active practice of Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

A comparison of Watson’s criminals with those of the professional penal physician therefore might well be challenged on the basis of statistical impreciseness. Indeed, any slight variations could well be explained away by the inherent discrepancies in the two data bases. But the extreme variations between the two defy such casual dismissal. Watson’s criminal profile is so far out of line with that of the British Government, that one must seek elsewhere for the source of such statistical discordance.

Nowhere is this discrepancy more pronounced than in the nature of the crime itself. Of Watson’s 58 cases, exactly half (29) involve the actual or attempted deliberate killing of at least one human being, either as premeditated murder or reduced culpability manslaughter. Even subtracting those where the homicide was in self defense, yields a more than healthy 27 to which I would insist upon adding the two cases that involved a feigned murder (NORW and THOR) and the two (LION and SILV) where what appears to be murder at the outset, eventually turns out to be death by misadventure. No matter how you cipher it, Watson clearly exhibited a healthy predisposition for sanguinary sagas.

Compare Watson’s 50% murder rate with the statistical analysis of Dr. Goring. Of the 3,000 crimes committed by his Parkhurst Prison subjects, only 358, or 2.64% fell into the even broader category of “violence to
the person." A Watsonian malefactor was thus twenty times more prone to serious violence than the average British criminal, who, according to Goring's tabulations, was overwhelmingly disposed (89%) to the lesser crimes of stealing and burglary. In comparison, Watson's panoply of peccant perpetrators committed robberies in only 13 of 58 cases. Perhaps in compensation, or perhaps because it made for a better story, Watsonian criminals preferred the more glamorous lesser crimes—things like extortion (5) and abduction (4). And of course since this was the late nineteenth century, sexual offenses were positively unspeakable to that preeminent Victorian, Dr. Watson.

Correlating with the prodigious discrepancy between the two doctors in crime is the equally wide gap in criminals. Though still mostly "the home-made article," Watson's roster of miscreants is laced with a rich assortment of foreigners. An even larger proportion of the narratives (34 of 58) involved foreigners who brought their intrigues onto British soil: 12 from Europe (as might be expected given Continental proximity and ease of access) but a full 19 from the colonies or former colonies—three each from Australia, India, and South Africa, one from Canada, and eight from the United States. Of the remainder, one intrigue was imported from both Africa and the Far East, two from Latin America, and one from the high seas.

And finally, there is Watson's undeniable preference for genteel criminals. Thirty-seven of the cases he chronicles, or a full 64% of the Canon, involve criminal activities involving the most refined of societal circles. Such a propensity is in wide disagreement with Goring who found that only 10.8% of his subjects were from the "well-to-do, or middle or upper middle classes."

What emerges from even this rudimentary assessment of Victorian crimes and criminals, real and popular, is the undeniable impression that Watson willingly and knowingly pandered to his reading audience and their well-known predilection for a good murder, preferably from the upper echelons of society and with exotic foreign connections, a far cry from the statistically typical British crime at the turn of the century.

Are the reasons for this really that difficult to discern? I suggest not. Watson was, after all, competing with a range of unmitigated bleat, not only from the Agony Columns but from the likes of the popular press such as the *Family Herald*. That he allowed his narrative instincts as a raconteur and his professional judgments as a journalist to "flavor" his selection and rendition of those narratives to be brought before "an inquiring public" is hardly surprising. To call him the Maury Povich of his day, pandering to a blood-thirsty populace bent on savoring the social and economic demise of the Victorian rich and famous, with an unhealthy dose of exotics thrown in for good measure, might be going a bit too far.

In his own defense, I enter into evidence Dr. Watson's testimony, taken at the outset of "The Cardboard Box," clearly one of his less statistically accurate felonious reportings:

"In choosing a few typical cases which illustrate the remarkable mental qualities of my friend, Sherlock Holmes, I have endeavored—so far as possible—to select those which present the minimum of sensationalism while offering a fair field for his talents. It is, however, unfortunately impossible entirely to separate the sensational from the criminal, and a chronicler is left in the dilemma that he must either sacrifice details which are essential to his statement and so far give a false impression of the problem, or he must use matter which chance, and not choice has provided him."

But it is only meet and proper that the last word this morning be given to the first object of our attentions—and indeed of our convocation here in the great Midwest. When faced with Watson's dilemma himself, Holmes is forced to mitigate his observational criticisms. As he opines in the introduction to "The Blanche Soldier:"

"The ideas of my friend Watson, though limited, are exceedingly pertinacious. For a long time he has worried me to write an experience of my own. Perhaps I have rather invited this persecution, since I have often had occasion to point out to him how superficial are his own accounts and to accuse him of pandering to popular taste instead of confining himself rigidly to facts and figures. "Try it yourself, Holmes!" he has retorted, "and I am compelled to admit that, having taken my pen in hand, I do begin to realize that the matter must be presented in such a way as may interest the reader."

To all of us readers who have remained so interested and entertained over the years, I raise this toast with coffee.
Appendix I


TABLE 60.
Class and Nature of Crime.

I. Professional. II. Commercial classes—clerks and shopkeepers. III. Selected classes—soldiers, policemen, messengers, servants. IV. Labourers—agricultural, roads, quarries, railways. V. Sailors, including fishermen. VI. Miners—coal, minerals. VII. Artisans—factory operatives, floating traders, and of no occupation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crimes</th>
<th>Social class of parent.</th>
<th>Occupational class of subject.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I.II.</td>
<td>III.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>mar.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crimes</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>E</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>H</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>J</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>L</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Damage to property</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing and burglary</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>303</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual offences</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violeces to the person</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>182</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgery and fraud</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Per cent. observed frequencies of class in total criminals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. II.</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>391</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crimes</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Damage to property</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stealing and burglary</td>
<td>39-12</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual offences</td>
<td>3-94</td>
<td>8-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violeces to the person</td>
<td>5-76</td>
<td>5-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgery and fraud</td>
<td>5-76</td>
<td>5-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Derived frequencies per centum, of social classes and occupations of criminals generally, and comparison of latter with occupations of the general population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All criminals</th>
<th>General population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. II.</td>
<td>10-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>58-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>28-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>2-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>14-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>30-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>3-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>37-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2

Of Crime and Criminals: A Statistical Comparison of Canonical Villains with Late Victorian Criminals in General with Some Observations on Dr. Watson's Narrative Propensities

or

A Study in (Pale) Yellow Journalism

Characteristics of Chronicled Cases

Crimes: (that or those most apparent at the outset)

M = Murder
(MF) = Most Foul
(A) = Attempted
(R) = Revenge
(SD) = Self-Defense
(F) = Feigned
(Th) = Threatened
PD = Precipitated Death (Indirect Murder)
AD = Accidental Death
D = Disappearance; (SM) Suspected Murder
R = Robbery; (F) Feigned
SG = Strange Goings-on
EX = Extortion
TT = Treasure Trove
AB = Abduction
S = Suicide; (A) Attempted

Dramatic Elements:

F = Foreign Intrigue
DD = Damsels in Distress
R&F = Rich and Famous
L = Love Interest
HS = Hidden Secrets (Extortion)
HT = Hidden Treasure
NS = National Stature
B = Bizarre
GM = Gross Mistreatment (Torture)
IS = Innocence Saved
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE</th>
<th>CRIME</th>
<th>DRAMATIC ELEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloria Scott</td>
<td>PD</td>
<td>F (Australia), R&amp;F, HS, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musgrave Ritual</td>
<td>D,S,G,M,R</td>
<td>R&amp;F, L, HT, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study in Scarlet</td>
<td>M(R)</td>
<td>F (America), DD, L, GM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speckled Band</td>
<td>S,G/M,(MF)</td>
<td>F (India), DD, R&amp;F, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Patient</td>
<td>S,G/M(R)</td>
<td>HS, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noble Bachelor</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>F (America), R&amp;F, L, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Stain</td>
<td>R/M</td>
<td>F (European spies), DD, R&amp;F, L, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reigate Squires</td>
<td>R(F),M, EX(Th)</td>
<td>R&amp;F, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scandal in Bohemia</td>
<td>D(SM)/none</td>
<td>F (Bohemia), R&amp;F, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twisted Lip</td>
<td>SM(2)/M(R)</td>
<td>DD, HS, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five Orange Pips</td>
<td>D/none</td>
<td>F (America), R&amp;F, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case of Identity</td>
<td>SG/R</td>
<td>DD, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red-Headed League</td>
<td>M/(A)M(MF)</td>
<td>HT, NS, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dying Detective</td>
<td>TT/R</td>
<td>F (Far East)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Carbuncle</td>
<td>M(F)(R)/EX</td>
<td>R&amp;F, HT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley of Fear</td>
<td>SG/none</td>
<td>F (America), R&amp;F, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow Face</td>
<td>EX,AB/(A)M(MF)(R)</td>
<td>F (America), HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek Interpreter</td>
<td>E,AB/(A)M(MF)(R)</td>
<td>F (Greece), L, GM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sign of the Four</td>
<td>D,S,G/(A)M(MF)(R)</td>
<td>F (India), DD, R&amp;F, L, HT, HS, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hound</td>
<td>PD/(A)M(MF)</td>
<td>F (Canada), R&amp;F, DD, L, HS, GM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper Beeches</td>
<td>SG/EX</td>
<td>R&amp;F, DD, L, GM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boscombe Valley</td>
<td>M(R)</td>
<td>F (Australia), R&amp;F, L, HS, IS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stockbroker's Clerk</td>
<td>SG,M,R,S(A)</td>
<td>NS, HT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naval Treaty</td>
<td>R/(A)M</td>
<td>R&amp;F, L, NS, IS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardboard Box</td>
<td>SG/M,(MF),(R)</td>
<td>L, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer's Thumb</td>
<td>(A)M(MF)</td>
<td>HS, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crooked Man</td>
<td>PD/(A)M(R)</td>
<td>F (India), L, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisteria Lodge</td>
<td>M(R)</td>
<td>F (San Pedro), R&amp;F, HS, B, IS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver Blaze</td>
<td>AD(SD)/Fraud</td>
<td>R&amp;F, L, HS, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beryl Coronet</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>R&amp;F, L, NS, IS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Problem*</td>
<td>(A)M</td>
<td>F (Europe), R&amp;F, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empty House*</td>
<td>M/(A)M(R)</td>
<td>F (Europe, Asia, Africa), R&amp;F, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golden Pince-Nez</td>
<td>Accidental,M,S</td>
<td>F (Russia), HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Students</td>
<td>SG</td>
<td>R&amp;F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solitary Cyclist</td>
<td>SG,AB,(A)M</td>
<td>F (South Africa), DD, L, HT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Peter</td>
<td>M,(MF),(SD)</td>
<td>F (high seas), HS, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norwood Builder</td>
<td>(F)M(R)</td>
<td>L, HS, IS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bruce-Partington</td>
<td>M,R</td>
<td>F (European spies), HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veiled Lodger</td>
<td>SG/M(R),S(Th)</td>
<td>R&amp;F, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sussex Vampire</td>
<td>SG/(A)M</td>
<td>F (Peru), HS, B, IS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Three-Quarter</td>
<td>SG/no crime</td>
<td>R&amp;F, L, NS, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbey Grange</td>
<td>M(R)</td>
<td>F (Australia), R&amp;F, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devil's Foot</td>
<td>SG/(A)M,(MF),(R)</td>
<td>F (Africa), R&amp;F, L, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing Men</td>
<td>SG,M,S(A)</td>
<td>F (America), DD, R&amp;F, L, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired Colourman</td>
<td>D,MZ(MF),S(A)</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Excess</td>
<td>Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. A. Milverton</td>
<td>Ex/R(A),M</td>
<td>DD, R&amp;F, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Napoleons</td>
<td>R,SG/M</td>
<td>F (Italy), HT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thor Bridge</td>
<td>M(F),S</td>
<td>F (America), DD, R&amp;F, L, GM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priory School</td>
<td>AB,D/M,EX</td>
<td>R&amp;F, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoscombe Old Place</td>
<td>SG/no crime</td>
<td>R&amp;F, L, HS, NS, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Garridebs</td>
<td>SG/(A)M</td>
<td>F (America), HT, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady Francis Carfax</td>
<td>D/R,(A)M(MF)</td>
<td>F (Continent, Australia, South Africa), DD, R&amp;F, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrious Client</td>
<td>Mercy Mission/(A)M</td>
<td>F (Austria), DD, R&amp;F, L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Circle</td>
<td>SG,AB/M(SD)</td>
<td>F (America &amp; Italy), DD, L, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blanched Soldier*</td>
<td>SG/no crime</td>
<td>F (South Africa), R&amp;F, HS, IS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Gables</td>
<td>SG/R</td>
<td>F (Italy &amp; America), R&amp;F, L, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mazarin Stone</td>
<td>R/(A)M</td>
<td>F (Italy), R&amp;F, NS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creeping Man</td>
<td>SG/no crime</td>
<td>F (Bohemia), DD, R&amp;F, L, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lion's Mane*</td>
<td>AD</td>
<td>L, B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Bow</td>
<td>patriotic duty/ espionage</td>
<td>F (Germany), R&amp;F, NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Crime Totals:
- 8 Basic Murders
- 13 Attempted Murders
- 13 Murder Most Foul
- 13 Murders of Revenge
- 2 Murders in Self Defense
- 2 Feigned Murders
- 29 Cases Involving Actual Murders
- 2 Accidental Deaths
- 33 Cases Involving Death
- 13 Robberies
- 5 Extortions
- 4 Abductions

Dramatic Element Totals:
- 34 Foreign Intriques
- 16 Damsels in Distress
- 37 Rich and Famous
- 27 Love Interests
- 17 Hidden Secrets
- 7 Hidden Treasure
- 16 National Stature
- 8 Bizarre
- 5 Gross Mistreatments
- 9 Innocence Saved
Those Bars of Gold: Proprietors and Inhabitants of the Opium Dens of London,
Tales from London’s East End

by John Pforr

Good morning ladies and gentleman and other irregular people, oh please excuse me, proper term for this group I suppose is other irregulars. My name is PO LING, for several years I operated a opium den in Limehouse section of London's east end. I feel most honored to be able to speak before such distinguished group of people. Last several days I meet some of your followers here and some people I have met before; some of you have strange custom of two names; I say hello to one of the hosts here Allen Mackler, he say his name is Sarasate; I say hello to Peter Blau, he say his name is Black Peter; I say hello to Sherry Roses-Bond, she say she is Violet Hunter. Very confusing, also see people here in Deerdalker caps and inverted capes, oh, please excuse me once again, name is deerstalkers hat and inverness capes, Po Ling thinks that many of you already have personal knowledge of Opium Dens.

This morning I want to give you brief history of opium trade in London, its uses, availability, locations of opium dens, proprietors and types of clientele, and how Sherlock Holmes's literary agent intertwined opium in his adventures.

Opium and its effect on the human mind and body has been in existence for approximately 6,000 years, where it found itself in the medical world of the Romans, Greeks, and Arabs. So you see, no one can blame its existence on people like myself.

Opium comes from the white poppy plant and other varieties of this plant which grows to a height of one to two feet. It is the "brown sticky substance which is obtained after drying the milky exudate which oozes when the poppy capsule is incised." Opium today grown in number of places, including Laos, China, and Afghanistan. In 19th century, many remedies and preparations had opium as their base, including laudanum, paregoric, chloroform and morphia, better known to us as morphine. Opium and opiates had two primary uses in the medical world of Victorian London, relief of pain and mood alteration. For the every day person, they were the self-prescribed medicine for the relief of aches and pains as well as a tonic for low spirits and general misery. It is the latter use which gave opium and people like myself a bad name in London and surrounding areas. The majority of all opium imported into England during the 19th century came from Turkey, not China or other countries from the Far East. That is not to say that we discouraged its availability or did not profit from its existence. "In the 19th century opium was the most widely used drug of its day, much like aspirin is today." It was being sold in thousands of places, from chemist shops, corner grocery shops to vendors in the open air markets. One could purchase opium pills, opiate lozenges, opiate confection, vinegar of opium, wine of opium etc. It has been described as "a universal panacea for all ills."

This slide will give you overall view of area of London where opium dens existed and Chinese community lived. This is area where tales from the East End flourished. It is area on the north side of the river Thames, east of Blackfriars Bridge, running along the waterfront down to the Tower Bridge. It is along this area that the many docks, wharves, and "vile alleys" existed, where opium was imported aboard ships, and where Chinese settled. Chinese population in the late 19th century was relatively small; London's permanent Chinese population numbered less than a thousand. We lived mostly on two narrow streets of dilapidated houses, now destroyed by bombing and redevelopment—Pennyfields and Limehouse Causeway. Most of us set up grocery stores, restaurants, laundries and houses to lodge Chinese seamen. A few of us operated opium dens, but not as many as have been woven into your minds by literary agents such as your Mr. Doyle and others.

Pictured here is Limehouse section of London as seen from the Thames. It is from here that many Chinese seamen and others disembarked to partake in the pleasures offered by our dens. Life at sea could be a drudgery so time on shore was always a welcome relief. Limehouse section of London was often suspected by members of Scotland Yard as being the center of much of the existing crime. We would often observe river police patrol boats watching for signals of such crimes from this Asian quarter. Because of this misconception on the part of the police, distrust of the police runs deep within our hearts. In other words, when questioned by the official force, "mum is the word."

American shipbuilders produced the brig Antelope in about 1842, sailing her along the China coast and other Asiatic ports, to pick up her cargo of drugs and silver, then setting sail for England etc. She was once described as "one of the prettiest little craft that was in the opium business." She was captained by Philip Dumaresq, hardly of Chinese origin. The officers of most well managed opium clipper ships were Westerners and the crew was usually made up of lascars and men of similar origin. You will recall that the keeper of THE BAR OF GOLD was a Lascar.
Opium, the base drug from which opiates are extracted, is obtained from the white poppy and its varieties. It is grown in many parts of the world, several areas I have already mentioned. In 1991, Afghanistan produced nearly 2,000 tons of illicit opium, vs. 645 tons in 1989, a total second in the world to Burma. “The poppy’s seed capsule is incised just after the petals have fallen but before it is fully ripe, using a sharp multibladed knife. From the incision exudes a milky juice which dries on contact with the air to form a brownish gummy mass. Extracting the opium is a skillful task.”

The opium pipe, which many are of Chinese design, vary in length, are made of metal, clay and other materials, have a small bowl with a pin-sized hole on its upper lid. The technique of opium smoking is not as easy as smoking a pipe, and it is for this reason that perhaps Sherlock Holmes relied on his occasional 7% solution of cocaine injections to alter his mood. “A drop of opium gum is first placed on the point of a needle and heated over a flame where it gradually turns pale, softens, swells and begins to bubble and splutter. It is then quickly carried to the surface of the pipe bowl, inserted through the small hole in the bowl of the pipe, before it turns to vapor, and the bowl is then tipped into an open flame. The heavy white smoke that results is then inhaled. Two or three puffs and the drop is consumed and the process may have to be repeated several times until the effects are felt.” The pipe shown here comes from the collection of a Dr. Barnicot of The Six Napoleons fame, known also as Ralph Edwards, BSI. Once again very confusing to Po Ling.

Opium and opiates were stored in many different places, often in places of disguise, especially after laws changed the availability of the drug, when they were often obtained illegally. Some men would store the drug in their tobacco cans, but women would not always be so discrete.

The government, medical profession, and concerned public of England began an anti-opium movement, because of the addiction, deaths due to opium overdosing, and opium eating as a disease. The latter was illustrated in Thomas De Quincey’s writings. The main organization in the anti-opium movement was the Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade.

Opium dens catered to people from all walks of life, from London's elite to the dregs of society. It has been documented that the Prince of Wales visited a den in London's East End in the 1860's, one that was managed by a Chinese who was married to an English lady. Pictured here is the den that obviously caters to London's upper crust, although on divan on the right is a merchant seaman whose mind appears to somewhere in the upper stratosphere. He is enjoying his "three pipe problem." Note the Victorian lady lounging in the background having a pipedream. Does this opium den appear sinister and wicked to you? Each person has their own little setup, consisting of opium pipe, smoking lamp, several needles, boxes of opium and its residue, and often tea or water to quench one's thirst. The Chinese proprietor would replenish your supply when you ran out and bring you another setup on a tray and place it on your tea table.

A small number of opium dens or "Hop Joints" catered to the public in London’s Chinatown. Most were controlled by the Chinese syndicate, known as “tongs or societies,” much like the Mafia here in your country. These men came from such places as New York and San Francisco, both of which harbored large Chinatowns. One such establishment was called Wong’s. You can see from this picture that it was most luxurious and that its clientele didn’t reside in London’s East End. Wong’s was well furnished and a "lay-out" cost one guinea whereas others charged from half a crown to five shillings, depending upon the amount of opium used. Wong’s was situated in a three storied building formerly occupied by offices of a shipping company. To enter, one requires no special password, but were scanned prior to entering, much like your speak easies of days past. Once you have gained entry and have passed inspection by Chinese doormen, they bow and point you toward a second door, which opens silently. "The hall is lighted by four large lamps and the walls are covered with Chinese hanging screens and ornaments, while a red sign with black lettering reads, "Chinese Restaurant." The dining room contains eight tables, with Chinese lanterns hanging from the ceiling; the decorations are in red and black," same as racing colors of Colonel Ross's stables. The food served here was excellent, and chop suey was one of the favorites. Wong's catered to many people of prominence, including society people, army officers who had served in China, politicians and on occasion popular jockeys. Some patrons had no idea what took place on the upper floors, and others were not so in the dark. For those who wanted to relax more, they ascended to the upper floors where they were greeted by a Chinese attendant who escorted them to a variety of smoking rooms, either private ones, dormitory style rooms for men or more elaborately decorated rooms for men and women to enjoy their pipsfulls. Some dens catered exclusively to Orientals, either locals or seamen, the latter having to go only a short distance from the docks. These were not so elaborate, and may have consisted of a large room, consisting of mattresses or bunks for its patrons. Others welcomed all comers, and in these quarters one could find people from all walks of life, depending upon how deep their pockets ran. Proprietors not interested in your life history, only your bank statement. In other words, if Jack the Ripper wanted to partake, and didn't announce his profession, he was welcome. If he did announce his profession, he may still be welcome, depending upon proprietor’s bank statement.
This makeshift den, probably within walking distance of the wharves, is one reason that people had the misconception of the number of dens in London's East End. Orientals such as these three shown took advantage of the opportunity to "hit the pipe." In this case, den is here today, gone tomorrow.

Now we come to opium in the Canon as written by your literary agent, Sir ACD. He included it in six of his stories; Sign of Four, "Silver Blaze," "Adventure of Wisteria Lodge," Study in Scarlet, "Adventure of the Lion's Mane," and "The Man with the Twisted Lip." In The Sign of Four, Jonathan Small said at the old fort of Agra "I would stand outside the gateway, looking down on the broad, winding river and on the twinkling lights of the great city of Agra. The beating of drums, the rattle of tomrots, and the yells and howls of the rebels, drunk with opium, were enough to remind us all night of our neighbors across the stream." In "Silver Blaze," stable lad Ned Hunter had his meal of curried mutton drugged with powdered opium, thus allowing the Wessex Cup favorite to be stolen from Colonel Ross's stable. Miss Burnet, children's governess to Don Murillo in the "Adventure of Wisteria Lodge," was kidnapped and drugged with opium, but managed to escape. In Study in Scarlet, Dr. Watson rated Holmes's knowledge of politics as "feeble" but said he was "well up in bel- ladonna, opium, and poisons generally." "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane" saw Ian Murdoch burst into a room and shouted for "brandy, oil, opium, morphia, anything to ease this infernal agony."

Opium and their dens played a most significant role as you know in "The Man with the Twisted Lip." The story of the disappearance of Neville St. Clair, and the sighting of him by his wife at The Bar of Gold on Upper Swandam Lane. Here we see Holmes removing the wig and dirt from the professional beggar Hugh Boone, only to find Mr. St. Clair. Dr. Watson and Inspector Bradstreet look on in amazement.

Mrs. Neville St. Clair would have always been welcome in my den, but I am not so sure if that would have applied to Mr. Boone.

Here we see Sherlock Holmes in his dressing gown pondering this "three pipe problem" in this case, smoking his shag tobacco in his old briar pipe.

This scene depicts men of The Yard and perhaps Dr. Watson making inquiry at a suspected opium den, met by a Malay or Lascar, not unlike lookouts or attendants at various dens.

Finally in "The Man with the Twisted Lip" we see Dr. Watson, much to his surprise, discovering Sherlock Holmes in the Bar of Gold.

Here we are in Minneapolis, keeping green forever the memory of The Master. People like Rathbone and Brett have kept his image ever present.

I feel most humble and honored to have been given the opportunity to address this distinguished gathering, and in closing I invite you to my den, for those who want to end this weekend on a "high" note. THANK YOU!
The Most Winning Woman...

by Marina Stajic, BSI/ASH

Mr. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson were investigating the murder of Enoch Drebber at the very beginning of their partnership, when Holmes remarked to the doctor, "Forcible administration of poison is by no means a new thing in criminal annals. The case of Dolsky in Odessa and of Leturier in Montpellier will occur at once to any toxicologist."

Well, neither of these cases occurred to me at once, and as a matter of fact, I have now been a actively engaged in toxicology for over 20 years and they still fail to occur to me. My only consolation is that I am obviously not just "any toxicologist."

There is a case, however, which happened in the Montpellier area and should indeed occur to any toxicologist since this case introduced toxicology as a science into the courts of law. And if Holmes's collection of Ms was as fine as the one of Ms, surely it contained the name of Marie Lafarge.

MARIE CAPELLE LAFAarge can't be described as winning woman in any sense of that word. She was an orphan, well educated and of noble blood, but neither beautiful nor rich enough to make a good match in Paris. In 1839, her foster parents arranged for her through a Matrimonial Agency to marry Charles Lafarge, an unattractive man with a minimum education, who lived in the south of France. Both parties erroneously assumed that the other one was wealthy. Marie, however, seemed to have a more difficult time dealing with her disappointment and shortly after the marriage she resorted to giving arsenic to her husband. She purchased it under the pretense that the house was being overrun by rats. As the rat problem kept getting worse so did Lafarge's health. A month later, he died. (As far as I know, rats were never mentioned again.) All the circumstances surrounding the death of Charles Lafarge were pointing to arsenic as the lethal weapon and Marie Lafarge as the culprit. She was charged with murder (by a Magistrate Moran) and imprisoned in Montpellier. She was in addition convicted on an unrelated charge of jewelry theft and was imprisoned when the murder trial started.

The defense claimed that the presence of arsenic was not proved in the body of the deceased, which was a normal occurrence in those days, since the technology was not available to perform testing of body organs and poisoners were convicted based on the proof of malicious intent and on circumstantial evidence, which we know is occasionally very convincing as when one finds a trout in the milk." The prosecutor answered by stating that, "Fortunately, the investigation of poison murders has recently been revolutionized by advances in the science of chemistry. Probably the defendant would not stand before this court at this moment had not science given us the means to prove the presence of poison where hitherto it could not be detected in the very body of the victims."

No need to look for the trout in the milk any longer! The method for detection of small amounts of arsenic was developed by the English chemist James Marsh in 1836 and became the first analytical methodology used in toxicology to be presented in a criminal trial. The defense attorney, Maitre Paillet, acted as his colleagues would continue to do since—he contacted a forensic expert, the dean of chemistry and toxicology of the times, Dr. Orfila. Dr. Orfila wrote a criticism of circumstantial evidence and the lack of using the Marsh test as the latest analytical methodology for arsenic. Prosecution in turn engaged their experts to analyze the stomach contents by the Marsh method and to everyone's surprise no arsenic was detected. Orfila's previous experiments, however, showed that there are cases where arsenic could not be detected in the stomach but was still detectable in other tissues. Organs from the exhumed body were analyzed including liver, spleen, lungs, heart, intestines and brain, again with negative results. And yet, the prosecution experts analyzed the beverages and food administered to the victim and found these to contain large amounts of arsenic. At this point the prosecutor insisted on summoning Dr. Orfila, as the ultimate authority on the subject. Orfila formed a team of all participating experts and for two days they proceeded re-analyzing the evidence. The result was the dramatic and historic statement by Orfila which established toxicology as a forensic science: "I shall prove, first, that there is arsenic in the body of Lafarge; second, that this arsenic comes neither from the reagents with which we worked nor from the earth surrounding the coffin; also, that the arsenic we found is not the arsenic component which is naturally found in every human body." Thus the testimony of toxicologists, for the first time in history, became the final determining factor in the jury's verdict of guilty. Marie Lafarge spent over 10 years in the Montpellier prison and died of TB shortly after she was released in 1852.

Is it possible that Watson misunderstood "the case of Lafarge" for "the case of Leturier?" Was his French that poor? Or did he change the name on purpose to protect a lady's memory? Whatever Watson's reasons were, Holmes with his "minute knowledge of the history of crime" would have been familiar with this story
and may have been referring to Marie Lafarge, among others, when he made his comment about forcible administration of poison not being a new thing in criminal annals.

This remark, at the best, is an understatement. Intentional and accidental poisonings were certainly not a novelty in 1881. Moreover, forensic toxicology already begun to play an important role in the criminal investigation, including a case right here in St. Paul, which happened in 1860 when Holmes was a mere child.

Stanislaus Bilansky was a saloon keeper in St. Paul, whose gray-eyed blonde wife, MARY ANN BILANSKY, née Wright, fell in love with a young handsome carpenter, John Walker. Bilansky died shortly after Mary Ann complained to her girlfriend that he was nothing but a nuisance. The girlfriend related the conversation to her husband, who informed the police. An exhumation was ordered and arsenic was found in the body. Both Mary Ann and her lover were arrested, but he was released for lack of evidence. She, on the other hand, was found guilty and sentenced to be hanged. On March 23, 1860 she confessed to the large crowd who gathered to watch the hanging. She was the only woman ever hanged in the history of Minnesota. So much for the local folklore.

I was invited here this afternoon to evoke the dubious and questionable memories of a few women who didn’t know about Marie Lafarge or didn’t learn from her experience and who lived and poisoned in England during the years of Holmes’s active career as a consulting detective. You can decide whether they can be classified as rogues, rascals or ruffians, or maybe just simply as adventure-seekers. These not so gracious ladies came from all strata of Victorian society, some killed only once, some were mass murderers, their victims ranged from babies to old people, their motives were varied. Some were more winning than the others.

In 1888 Holmes tells Watson, “The most winning woman I ever knew was hanged for poisoning three little children for their insurance money.” He was either not referring to MARY ANN COTTON, or Watson misunderstood again, since this woman, known to be very pretty, with lustrous black hair, poisoned not three children, but three sets of children for insurance money (plus a few adults). Mary Ann Cotton is considered England’s worst mass murderer. She was a miner’s daughter, born in East Rundown in 1833. She was a devoted churchgoer, working regularly in the chapel and she was considered the prettiest and gentlest child in the area. At the age of 20 she married a miner with whom she had four children but all of them died at an early age. Her husband quit mining, became a sailor and died soon after returning from one of his trips. All five deaths were attributed to gastric fever and Mary Ann collected the insurance money. After falling in love with a miner in Sea View Harbor, Mary Ann got a job as a nurse and married one of her patients, who shortly died of gastric fever. She didn’t collect insurance this time, but she didn’t need to since she inherited everything according to his will. Again she married, this time a widower with four children and had a child with him. All five children died of gastric fever. The husband suspected Mary Ann of stealing his money and kicked her out, which probably saved his life. After this incident, Mary Ann held several jobs, including being a matron in the Sunderland penitentiary. She left this post to become a housekeeper to a ship’s captain and while he was at sea she sold his household goods and left. Next she worked for a doctor who caught her stealing and fired her. So, she went back to the mining area and to collecting insurance money. In Northumberland she married another young widower, Frederick Cotton (she was officially still married to her previous husband.) They settled in Newcastle with his two sons and the boy they had together, and she promptly took out insurance on the whole family, except herself. Mr. Cotton soon had a fatal attack of gastric fever while working in the mine. Mary Ann’s married paramour showed up, now a widower himself, and she invited him to move in. He was there to console her when her baby and one of the stepsons died, but he also fell a victim of the gastric fever, after she had him insured. At that point, Mary Ann decided to offer her surviving stepson as a servant in a warehouse, (apparently his wages were higher than the insurance money) but even tough she collected all of his wages, she announced that she could have married again, but for him. “But there, he won’t live long and will go the way of all the Cotton family,” she said to the supervisor of the warehouse where the boy worked. When her prophecy came true shortly thereafter, the supervisor went to the police. The boy’s body was exhumed and examined for arsenic. Exhumations of all the other bodies followed and tests showed that all 16 died as a result of arsenic poisoning. Mary Ann Cotton was brought to trial in Durham in March of 1873. The defense tried to argue, unsuccessfully, that arsenic came from the green floral wallpaper, which when washed created an arsenic dust inhaled by the Cotton family. Obviously, this could possibly account only for the deaths of five victims. Mary Ann Cotton was hanged, but not before she gave birth to her seventh child five days before her execution. The child’s father was an excise officer, Quick-Manning.

The deadly pair AMELIA SACH and ANNIE WALTERS were also mass poisoners of children, but not for insurance money. They found a much more lucrative way of using poison. The youthful, kind Mrs. Sach who ran a “nursing home” in East Finchley, London, appeared to be a doting mother to her own children. Her ad ran as follows: “ACCOUCHEMENT: Before and during, skilled nursing. Home comforts. Baby can remain.”
This meant that unwed mothers could deliver babies in her "nursing home" and for a fee of £25-50 she would find foster homes for the children. In reality, her assistant, the ugly Annie Walters would promptly kill the baby, usually with chloroform and then either dump the body into the Thames or bury it in a garbage dump. But one day in 1902, Annie Walters decided to take home one of the babies "for company" telling her landlord, a constable, that she was watching a couple's baby for a few days. The constable's wife became suspicious, since Annie commented on what a dear little girl the baby was, and yet while she watched Annie change the baby, she discovered that it was a boy. Sex aside, the baby died a few days later, to Annie's great grief. Two months later, she brought another baby home, who also died in its sleep. The investigation revealed the horrible secret of the "baby farmers" and the two women were hanged together in 1903, the first women to be executed in Holloway Prison. It is not known how many babies died in their hands. The only additional details about them can be found in the hangman's diary: "These two women were baby farmers of the worst kind and they were both repulsive in type. One was two pounds less than the other, and there was a difference of two inches in the drop which I allowed. One had a long thick neck and the other a short neck, points which I was bound to observe in the arrangement of the rope. They had literally to be carried to the scaffold and protested to the end against their sentence."

Not all of the deadly ladies were child killers. The next two femmes fatales, were hanged for poisoning only one person. LOUISA JANE TAYLOR's background remained sketchy, despite extensive investigations by Scotland Yard. What is known is that in 1882 she was an attractive thirty-six year old widow. Her recently deceased husband was twice her senior. She was left with a small pension and a friend of her husband's invited her to move in with him and his wife and to exchange nursing services for room and board. Mr. Tregillis was 85, his wife 82. Even though she started keeping company with a young man, Mrs. Taylor at one point invited the old man to elope with her. He refused, using his age and marital status as an excuse. Shortly after that proposal, Mrs. Tregillis started getting sick. Her shivering and vomiting started soon after Mrs. Taylor obtained from her doctor "sugar of lead" (lead acetate) which was supposed to keep her complexion smooth. Ironically, the same doctor kept treating Mrs. Tregillis and supplying her murderer with the poison. He only became suspicious after the old man accused Louisa of stealing and called the police. Mrs. Tregillis by now had the typical symptoms of lead poisoning, including a dark blue line at the edge of the gums. Before she died, she was still able to describe her other symptoms to the doctors and to accuse Louisa Taylor of poisoning her. Why she didn't speak up before, remains a mystery. Louisa Taylor was hanged in Maidstone Prison about two months later, in January of 1883.

Another poisoning for insurance, though only for £22, was perpetrated by MARY ANSELL, a domestic servant in London. In 1899. Mary sent a cake to her half-witted sister Caroline, who was in the Leavsden Asylum in Watford. The girl shared her goods with other inmates, and all became sick, but Caroline, having eaten most of it, died. Mary Ansell refused to authorize an autopsy, but the asylum doctor performed some toxicologic analysis anyway and diagnosed phosphorous poisoning. Mary was arrested, and though she first denied sending the cake, she later claimed she needed phosphorus to rid the house of rats. She was convicted and sentenced to death. The judge seemed unhappy with her motive since he commented during her sentencing, "Never in my experience has so terrible a crime been committed for a motive so utterly inadequate." Mary Ansell was only 22 when she was hanged.

The last two ladies have also something in common—they were both foreign born, they married Englishmen who they were accused of poisoning but neither one of them was hanged. Both trials became causes célèbres.

ADELAIDE BARTLETT was the luckier of the two. She was acquitted of charges that she poisoned her husband. She was a woman with a mysterious past, born in Orleans, France in 1855 as Adelaide Blanche de la Tremouille. Her mother was English and it seems that her father was a French count (at one point it was suggested that her father was actually a member of Queen Victoria's entourage on her Majesty's visit to Napoleon III, but this seems highly unlikely—the visit took place in August and she was born in December.) She grew up in France, but in 1875 she moved to England to live with her maternal aunt and uncle, the Chamberlains, in Kingston-upon-Thames. There, Edwin Bartlett, a prosperous grocer fell in love with the beautiful girl and married her. Instead of a honeymoon, however, he sent her off to a boarding school for two years and then to a finishing school to Belgium, all in order to improve her education. In 1878 she returned to live with her husband in Herne Hill, but apparently, with one exception, their marriage was platonic. The one exception happened when Adelaide decided that she wanted a child and found out how babies are made from a book by T. L. Nichols, M.D. with the impressive title of Esoteric Anthropology (The Mysteries of Man): A comprehensive and confidential treatise on the structure, functions, passionate attractions, and perversions, true and false physical and social conditions, and the most intimate relations of men and women. Anatomical, physiological, pathological, therapeutical, and obstetrical; Hygienic and hydropathic. Dr. Nichols was the principal of the American Hydropathic Institute. (Hydropathy is a method of treat-
ment that attempts to cure all diseases by the external or internal use of water.) Whichever way the water was used in this case, it worked since Adelaide got pregnant, but the pregnancy resulted in a stillbirth. In addition to having sexual relations with his young wife only once, Edwin Bartlett had some other unusual tastes: he was fond of what was popularly called "French letters," he liked his wife to hold his foot while he slept, and he believed that a man should have two wives—one for intelligent companionship and one for domestic purposes. Apparently he also believed that the wife was entitled to the same. After the couple moved to Merton, near Wimbledon, they befriended the local minister, one George Dyson and Bartlett did his best to encourage his wife and the cleric to have "some pleasant intercourse." He even told Dyson that if anything happens to him, he would like the two to "come together." In August of 1885 the Bartletts moved to Pimlico, where their landlord was a Registrar of Births and Deaths. The liaison between Adelaide and Dyson openly continued. Bartlett was a healthy man, other than having bad problems with his teeth, but he was a hypochondriac and was taking many drugs, including mercury (mercury in those days was used to cure syphilis, which Bartlett apparently never contracted.) In December, 1885 he got sick, but recovered and yet remained depressed and had frequent fits of hysteria. Adelaide turned into a devoted nurse, but hoped that he would recover soon otherwise she may be "accused of poisoning him." All of a sudden, Bartlett wanted to reclaim his right to the marriage bed, a thought very repulsive to his wife. On December 27, she asked Dyson to get her a bottle of chloroform to alleviate spasms from which Bartlett was suffering. His spasms and all his other problems ended four days later. On New Year's Eve, Adelaide woke up next to her patient's bed only to realize that he had died. The doctor who was treating him could not explain the sudden death, and ordered an autopsy, which revealed no anatomic cause of death, but toxicologic analysis did result in finding chloroform in his stomach. The possibility of suicide was briefly considered, but soon everyone, including George Dyson, started believing that chloroform was forcibly administered to the decedent by his wife. The fact that she disposed of the bottle did not help matters. She claimed that she intended to use the chloroform to defend herself from his advances in case his desire for her became too strong. (She would sprinkle it on her handkerchief and wave it in his face.) Adelaide Bartlett was charged with willful murder and Dyson was named as an accomplice before the fact, but the Crown withdrew the case against him before the trial began. The public opinion was very much against Adelaide Bartlett whose marital life was offensive to Victorian ideas. And after all—she was a foreigner! However, she had a supreme defense attorney, Edward Clark. All the improprieties of Adelaide's life were discussed at the trial, including reading the book on Esoteric Anthropology, etc., etc. (Justice Wills seemed particularly upset with the book—such "garbage" and "outpouring of impurity" available to corrupt the public mind. By the way, he was the same justice who later tried Oscar Wilde on homosexual charges and sentenced him to two years of hard labor.) Medical evidence proved the presence of chloroform in the dead man's stomach, but experts claimed that there was no recorded case of murder by liquid chloroform and that a sleeping adult would awake if such thing was attempted, since the liquid would cause choking, burning the windpipe and leaving obvious traces, none of which were found in this case. Clark's defense of this case went down in history as one of the greatest performances at the English bar. Among other things he tried to discredit the theory that Mrs. Bartlett forced chloroform down her husband's throat and claimed that he must have deliberately taken the poison as a result of his depression. The jury found the prisoner not guilty, even though they thought that "grave suspicion is attached to the prisoner, but not sufficient evidence was shown how or by whom the chloroform was administered." Edwin Clark celebrated the acquittal by attending a performance of Faust at the Lyceum Theatre that evening where he was cheered by the audience.

The remainder of Adelaide Bartlett's life is as mysterious as her beginnings. According to some accounts, she went back to Orleans. Some say that she and Dyson finally married, others that they never saw each other again. Of course, the verdict of "not guilty" is not the same as being innocent. Queen Victoria's surgeon, Sir James Paget of St. Bart's Hospital who must have had a passion for definite and exact knowledge, declared that "Mrs. Bartlett was no doubt properly acquitted, but now it is hoped that, in the interest of science, she will tell us how she did it!"

This case was referred to in Adrian Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Gold Hunter" (the Cambewell poisoning case) in The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes. Holmes explains that chloroform "might well suggest itself to a murderer, since only last year, in a famous murder trial at the Old Baily, Mrs. Adelaide Bartlett was acquitted from charge of poisoning her husband by pouring liquid chloroform down his throat as he lay asleep" and that "chloroform is easily obtainable, as the British public knows from the Bartlett case."

And then there is the sad story of FLORENCE MAYBRICK. While it was generally thought that Adelaide Bartlett was actually guilty, the situation with Florence Maybrick was exactly the opposite. She most likely paid for a murder she never committed.

Born as Chandler in Mobile, Alabama in 1862, Florence came from "good American stock." At the age of 18, during an Atlantic crossing, she met an English cad, a cotton broker named James Maybrick, old enough to
be her father. They were soon married in London and for the next three years they lived half a year in Norfolk, Virginia and the other half in Liverpool, but in 1884 they permanently moved to Liverpool. Florence was attractive, vivacious and always chose her dresses to match her violet eyes. James Maybrick was envied by many, yet he secretly had a mistress. Like Edwin Bartlett, he was a hypochondriac, a popular affliction in Victorian days. Cocaine and hashish were commonly used drugs at the time, and so was arsenic. Maybrick became an arsenic addict, after being treated for malaria with arsenic and strychnine some time back and he used it as a pick-me-up in the form of “liquor arsenicalis.” He would use it up to five times a day. Finally in 1888, Florence started complaining to the doctor that her husband was taking a strong medicine in the form of a white powder. By now, she was also aware of her husband’s mistress and the fact that his business was not doing too well. So it was not surprising that she became infatuated with Alfred Brierly, a tall, handsome young man whom she met at her own house. She went so far as to meet him in London, at the Flatman’s Hotel, after making reservations in the name of Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Maybrick. The affair did not continue, since the young man informed her that he cared for someone else. But the harm was done, Mr. Maybrick heard about the meeting in London and was not amused. A month later (March 1889) Florence purchased a dozen flypaper, which she soaked in water, claiming that she was making an arsenical face lotion for herself. Many ladies in those days did use arsenic to improve their complexion, “pour être belles.” A few days later, Maybrick’s complexion changed for worse and he started vomiting and having numb limbs, but he got better in a few days. Florence got more flypaper, this time two dozen. She also rekindled her affair with Mr. Brierley and wrote to him in an open letter that her husband is “sick to death.” The maid Alice Yapp, who was aware of soaking flypaper, never delivered the letter, but gave it to Maybrick’s brother Edwin instead. He immediately telegraphed another brother, Michael, to come at once from London. Upon his arrival, Michael Maybrick informed a doctor of the suspicious circumstances in the Maybrick manor. While the whole household kept an eye on Florence, James finally died on May 11, 1889. That morning, before he died, Florence fell into a coma due to nervous exhaustion and remained in that state for 24 hours. In the meantime Edwin and Michael searched her room and the house and found enough arsenic throughout the house to kill 50 people. Three days later, Florence Maybrick was taken into custody on suspicion of causing her husband’s death. Arsenic was found not only in the dead man’s body, but also in some of the food in the house (Valentine’s Meat Juice and Du Barry’s Revaleta Arabica.) Considering the fact that Maybrick was a heavy arsenic eater, these findings shouldn’t have been unusual. Nevertheless, Florence was brought to trial on July 31, 1889. Her defense attorney was Sir Charles Russell who later became Lord Russell, Lord Chief Justice of England. Like Adelaide Bartlett, Florence Maybrick was intensely disliked by the public. She too was a foreigner and she had been unfaithful to her husband! And so, even though the public was not convinced of her guilt, she was considered a “wicked woman.” An all male jury (3 plumbers, 2 farmers, 1 milliner, 1 wood-turner, 1 grocer, 1 ironmonger, 1 house painter, 1 baker, 1 provision dealer) deliberated for 38 minutes before returning a verdict of guilty. The judge (who was later declared insane) sentenced her to death. Suddenly, the public opinion swung around, petitions against hanging started arriving at the Home Office, both from England and the United States. Three days before the execution was to take place, the sentence was changed to penal servitude for life based on the following statement: “Inasmuch as, although the evidence leads to the conclusion that the prisoner administered and attempted to administer arsenic to her husband with intent to murder him, yet it does not wholly exclude a reasonable doubt whether his death was in fact caused by the administration of arsenic.” It appeared now that Florence was to spend her life in prison for attempting to murder her husband; and yet, she was never tried or convicted for attempted murder. She was charged with murder and that was not proven beyond reasonable doubt. Regardless, for 15 years Florence Maybrick moved from one penal institution to another. Many famous people, including two American presidents, Grover Cleveland and William McKinley, appealed for mercy on her behalf. So did Lord Russell and the famous American newspaperwoman “Gail Hamilton” who addressed an open letter to Queen Victoria protesting Mrs. Maybrick’s innocence. The Queen was neither amused nor interested. She personally opposed Mrs. Maybrick’s release. Only after Queen Victoria died in 1901, Mrs. Maybrick was told that she will be released in three years. She finally regained her freedom in 1904 and returned to America. Her children had died while she was in prison and her mother died shortly after her release. She tried to prove her innocence and she published a book entitled Mrs. Maybrick’s Own Story in 1905. For a while she also lectured, mainly on English prisons. After a while she stopped being a cause célèbre. In 1917, she finally took back her maiden name and moved to the village of South Kent, Connecticut as Mrs. Chandler. She seemed to find peace at last. She was well liked by the community though considered a little eccentric as she devoted most of her time to caring for orphaned cats. Mrs. Chandler, alias Mrs. Maybrick, alias The Cat Lady, died surrounded by her cats in South Kent in 1941.

What do these women have in common, other than dabbling with poison a good deal and being contemporaries of Sherlock Holmes? According to Watson, Holmes had an immense knowledge of sensational literature and he appeared to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century. Therefore, he must have been aware of these woman, and yet their names were either never entered in his commonplace book or, more likely, their names remain among not only unpublished, but also unmentioned cases. Was Holmes
consulted in any of these cases? You may have noticed that none of these cases occurred during the Great Hiatus, so he was available. Mary Ann Cotton may have been the most winning woman Holmes ever knew, but she was hanged in 1873, before he started his practice as a consulting detective. By 1889 he claimed to have investigated some 500 cases of "capital importance" and a 1000 cases in all by 1891. Between 1884 and 1901 he handled hundreds of cases. The cases of Louisa Taylor (1883), Mary Ansell (1899) and Amelia Sach and Annie Walters (1903) can't be considered of "capital importance" and they seem simple enough to have been resolved by the local police without the need to engage Holmes's talents. After all, he did choose to associate himself "only with those crimes which present some difficulty in their solution." (1883—April, SPEC; 1899—January, CHAS; and in 1903—January, BLAN; May, 3GAB; summer, MAZA; September, CREE.)

On the other hand, Adelaide Bartlett (1886) and Florence Maybrick (1889) did receive tremendous publicity and Watson tells us that between 1894 and 1901 Holmes was consulted in every public case of any difficulty. He also was responsive to every little rumor or suspicion of unsolved crime." Suspicion remains until today regarding the whole truth about these ladies. 1886 was quite a busy year for Holmes, but mainly in October (RESI, NOBL, SECO) and Adelaide Bartlett's trial was in April. Perhaps he agreed with the jury that the evidence was not sufficient for a verdict of "guilty," or he felt that this was yet another crime "which the law cannot touch, and which therefore, to some extent, justifies private revenge." Or was he once again beaten by a beautiful woman and that is why we never heard of his involvement in this case?

After Holmes retired (in 1903 or 1904), he apparently destroyed those cases which might compromise his more exalted clients. It is not known whether Florence Maybrick was among them, but there is some evidence in the Canon that Holmes was involved with investigating her case. Florence was sentenced to death on August 7, 1889 and the execution scheduled for August 20. As I mentioned, three days prior to that event, her sentence was changed to life imprisonment. 1889 was also a busy year for Holmes (EOSC and STOC in June, NAVA in August and CARD, ENGI, and CROO in September.) Baring-Gould dates GREE as 1888, but according to Patrick this adventure took place in 1889 and according to Bell, Smith and Sayers in 1890. Why is this important? I draw your attention to the following dialogue which took place in the Stranger's Room of the Diogenes Club:

Mycroft: "By the way, Sherlock, I expected to see you round last week to consult me over that Manor House case. I thought you might be a little out of your depth."

Sherlock (smiling): "No, I solved it."

Mycroft: "It was Adams, of course."

Sherlock: "Yes, it was Adams."

Mycroft: "I was sure of it from the first."

Who is Adams, you may ask and what is his connection with winning women? Obviously, he was a person of high enough importance for Mycroft to take an interest in his case. As mentioned before, James Maybrick had two brothers, Edwin and Michael. Michael Maybrick was a forceful personality who had "got on in life and made a lucrative career as a singer and composer of such Victorian hymns as "The Holy City" and "Star of Bethlehem." He achieved his success under the nom de plume of Stephen Adams. Michael Maybrick, alias Stephen Adams—"It is always awkward doing business with an alias"—(Holmes in BLAC) was the person who started pointing the accusing finger at Florence when he arrived from London two days before James Maybrick died. It was Michael who told the doctor, "God forbid that I should unjustly suspect anyone. But do you not think, if I have serious grounds for fearing that all may not be right, that is my duty to say so to you?" It was Michael who, a day prior to James's death thought he saw Florence pouring medicine from one bottle to another and said, "Florrie, how dare you tamper with medicine!" It was Michael and his brother who searched Florence's room, while she lay comatose, and found a package labeled "Arsenic: poison for cats," and letters to her lover. After that she was kept a virtual prisoner in her own home until her arrest. During those two days the brothers didn't allow anyone to talk to her and they even send her children away without allowing them to see her. She was never to see them again since they died before she was released from prison. Following Michael's arrival, the delirious patient cried on one occasion, "There are some strange things knocking about this house!" After all, before his brother showed up from London, James's illness was rising and falling in intensity. This could have been a result of his addiction to arsenic and also to the fact that the doctor was treating him for dyspepsia and the treatment in those days was a mixture of white arsenic and potassium carbonate. Death occurred after Michael and Edwin started caring for the resident patient. Before Florence fell into her coma, she wrote a letter to the patient's personal doctor saying: "My misery is great and my position such a painful one that when I tell you that my brothers-in-law are here to take the nursing of Jim and management of my home completely out of my hands, you will understand how powerless I am to assert myself. I am in great need of a friend..."
have sinned once must I be misjudged always?” A friend apparently showed up and contacted Holmes whose investigation led to the comment “It was Adams, of course.” But why did then Holmes allow an innocent woman to spend years in prison? We know he “disliked and distrusted the sex, but he was always a chivalrous opponent.” And even if he mistrusted the best of women—this was a bit much! There must have been a good reason for his actions, a reasons of majestic proportions! It is not know why Queen Victoria personally opposed Florence’s release so much to ignore requests by two American presidents. Was she trying to keep Florence in jail or trying to keep Adams out of jail? At any rate it is understandable that a subject loyal to the extent of adorning his wall with a patriotic V.R. in bullet-pocks would go only so far to oppose his Queen’s wishes. Maybe the emerald tie-pin was presented not just for recovering submarine plans but also for not making waves over Florence Maybrick? Or maybe he kept his silence due to Mycroft’s influence, since he too took interest in Adams’s case? For one or more of these reasons, Florence Maybrick remained confined, not only until Queen Victoria died, but for three more years, until Sherlock Holmes retired.

All of this, of course, is just a theory. And let us never forget what a capital mistake it is to theorize before one has all the evidence.
A Murderous Medical Trio: Drs. Roylott, Palmer and Pritchard by Alvin E. Rodin, BSI and Jack E. Key, BSI

"The Speckled Band" was Arthur Conan Doyle's tenth Sherlock Holmes story and the eighth in the "Adventure" series. As such, it is part of his first group of 23 Sherlockian exploits, published from 1887 to 1893. It has been considered as the most popular of the 60 writings by both its author and by legions of readers. The question then arises as to reasons for its high ratings. There are undoubtedly many elements—elements of terror, the supernatural, violent events, and an old and decrepit ancestral home, including wild animals and gypsies on its grounds. These, plus a terrified heroine, a macabre instrument of death, and an evil doctor, make it truly a gripping tale.

Grimesby Roylott is indeed an utter villain. If not "the worst man in London," he must have been no less than a contender for the rest of England. Conan Doyle endowed him with the physical aura of evil: "A large face, seared with thousands of wrinkles, burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion...deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high, thin, fleshless nose gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey." This was intensifed by his huge size, black top hat, and long frock coat. Such an appearance could lead one to expect nothing but sinister deeds.

One wonders why the young Mrs. Stoner, who had been widowed in India with twin daughters, subsequently married someone who had been imprisoned for a long term for beating his butler to death. His motivation for marriage seems evident—the Stoner widow had been left with a considerable amount of money. After the death of the new Mrs. Roylott in a railway accident in London, her husband and his stepdaughters moved to his family estate at Stoke Moran. It was seemingly then that the terrible change came over Roylott. He exhibited an absolutely uncontrollable temper—indulging in ferocious quarrels with anyone who crossed his path. Roylott was responsible for the murder of one twin, using a poisonous snake to effect the deed. Two years later, the life of the surviving twin was being threatened. Holmes thwarted Roylott's attempt to murder the surviving twin, also with a snake. Justice was served when Holmes drove the snake back to Roylott. Thus it was his own instrument of death which killed the villain.

In Strange Studies from Life, Conan Doyle postulated two basic motivations for murder: "the lust for money and the black resentment of a disappointed love." Roylott's driving force was obviously to retain his deceased wife's money. But also significant was his brutal and violent character, which contributes to the gripping suspense of this adventure. There are other murderers in the canonical tales, but none set in so dismal and threatening an atmosphere. This story and its setting are the epitome of the Gothic novel, a type of fiction characterized by an atmosphere of mystery, gloom and terror, and in which violent and grotesque events occur. Stoke Moran and its inhabitants, human and otherwise, certainly meet these criteria, as does their effect on Helen Stoner—"It is not cold which makes me shiver...It is fear, Mr. Holmes. It is terror."

Doctor Roylott is one of the 36 medical practitioners found in the Canon, but, aside from Watson, the only one that is a major character, and the only one behaving in so sinister a manner. There are, however, many more medical villains in Conan Doyle's noncanonical fiction. A truly malignant one is described in his short story "The Blighting of Sharkey." Doctor Baldy Stable, surgeon to the infamous pirate, Captain Sharkey, once held the largest practice in Charleston until he "misused" a patient. Malevolent physicians are not unique to Conan Doyle's works, being found throughout literature, and especially in crime stories. A prominent example is the depiction of unscrupulous physicians in the short stories and novels of the more modern detective fiction writer, Raymond Chandler. His attitude towards Conan Doyle's detective was ambivalent. "Sherlock Holmes after all is mostly an attitude and a few dozen lines of unforgettable dialogue."

Conan Doyle's graphic portrayal of the murderous physician, Grimesby Roylott, has counterparts in the real world, even though such behavior is contrary to the precepts of the Hippocratic oath to heal the ailing and to save lives. Between 1855 and 1882 alone, there were a large number of murders committed by doctors. Awareness of these may have suggested the character of Doctor Roylott for Conan Doyle's 1892 thriller. None of these physicians were, however, sufficiently imaginative to use a snake as their modus operandi.

In the real world, acts of murder are not commonly committed in such a bleak and gloomy atmosphere as Stoke Moran, nor necessarily by obviously deranged individuals. Two such 19th century physicians are briefly referred to in "The Speckled Band" as examples of Holmes's statement "when a doctor goes wrong he is the first of criminals. He has nerve and he has knowledge." These real life cases involve Doctors William Palmer and Edward William Pritchard, the former occurring in England and the latter in Scotland.
WILLIAM PALMER (1824-1856)

William Palmer was born in 1824, in Rugeley, England, near Stafford. Although the son of a wealthy timber merchant, his family background and environment were not promising. His father was a successful swindler, his mother of loose character, and many of his relatives drunkards and degenerates providing William with an ambiance of drink, immorality and easy money. Before he was eighteen, he is stated to have sired some fourteen illegitimate children.

After receiving his education at a grammar school, William was apprenticed to a wholesale druggist at Liverpool, but was soon dismissed for embezzlement. He was then apprenticed to a surgeon near Rugeley, but was forced to leave because of untoward behavior. After this, he became a pupil at the Stafford Infirmary and subsequently completed his medical studies at the St. Bartholomew Hospital in London. In August, 1846, he became a member of the Royal College of Surgeons, and then in September was apprenticed at the hospital to, Mr. Stanley, a house-surgeon. Within a month he resigned this post, to become a general practitioner at his home town of Rugeley.

In October, 1847, William Palmer married Ann Brooks by whom he had five children, four of whom died mysteriously in infancy. After several years of a small medical practice, he turned to owning and breeding race horses, which led to financial difficulties. In January 1849, Palmer invited his mother-in-law to visit and stay at his home. He told a neighbor that she was not expected to live a fortnight, and she then died ten days later. The death was certified as being due to apoplexy by Dr. Bramford who was a kindly eighty year old physician. Palmer did not benefit financially from her death as her money was tied up in court.

The following year Palmer lost £600 to a friend at the race track, money which he could not pay. Within a few days this friend was dead, and it was again Dr. Bramford who signed the death certificate. Still not satisfied, Palmer tried to convince the widow that her husband had owed him money. Such was the success of this venture that it was repeated in the case of a young man named Bly, who died after he won £800 in bets from Palmer. And yet again, Dr. Bramford signed the death certificate, and Palmer told the widow that her husband had owed him money.

Palmer insured his wife’s life for £13,000 with an annual premium of £760. It is rather surprising that the insurance company approved this policy on the wife of a debt-ridden doctor. She became ill in September of 1854 and was treated by the ever obliging Dr. Bramford and by a Dr. Knight. She was also given pills by her husband when the doctors were out of the way—presumably strychnine. Mrs. Palmer died nine days after her illness began, and was certified by Dr. Knight as dying of the English cholera. Palmer then received an insurance check for £13,000, which was immediately taken by his debtors.

In a similar fashion, Palmer obtained an insurance policy of £14,000 on the life of his brother Walter, who died shortly thereafter. This time, however, the insurance company delayed making payment because of suspicious circumstances. Palmer then demanded that his brother’s wife pay him for a nonexistent debt. When money lenders continued to press him for payment, Palmer again sought funds through murder, this time of his old friend John Parsons Cook. He then requested £4,000 from Cook’s stepfather, a retired merchant named Stevens. This was to be his downfall.

Stevens insisted on an autopsy of his son, which was then carried out in a hotel room by two neophyte physicians—Devonshire, who was unqualified, and Newton who had originally provided Palmer with strychnine. Neither knew anything about pathology or anatomy nor had they ever even seen a post-mortem. In attendance were four doctors, a lawyer, the postmaster, a minister, the hotel proprietor, various townspeople, and, of course, Dr. Palmer. The stomach was hacked out by Newton who held it up to show everyone, and then gave it to Devonshire who slit it open. Palmer reacted by pushing Newton against Devonshire who nearly dropped the stomach, spilling its contents. It was put into a jar which also held the intestines. But soon the jar was noted to be missing. It was found near the door, after which Palmer explained that he had moved it there because it would be more handy to take away.

When the jar was later taken by cab to the railway station, Palmer offered the driver £10 if he would overturn the cab and smash the jar. He refused. When the jar finally reached Professor Taylor, the pathologist at Guy’s Hospital in London, no strychnine was found. A second autopsy was held and strychnine was demonstrated in organs other than the stomach and intestines. Palmer attended Cook’s burial and was seen to be weeping as he walked behind the coffin. He sent the coroner gifts of fish and game, but bribes were of no avail.

Professor Taylor’s report on the second autopsy was read in private by Palmer before it was submitted. Palmer then wrote the coroner, advising him to return a verdict of death due to natural causes. He claimed
that the Professor, no matter what would be said at an inquest, had previously written that there was no trace of strychnine or of other poisons. To further fortify his case, Palmer enclosed a £10 note. In spite of his protestations, an inquest was held.

On December 15, the inquest closed. The bodies of Palmer’s wife and brother were then exhumed. The findings led to the charge of willful murder against Palmer. Because of the considerable excitement in his home town of Rugeley, Palmer was tried at Stafford in March, 1856. At his trial, evidence for the prosecution was given by 24 doctors and scientists, and by 15 for the defense. After 12 days, he was found guilty of the murder of his friend Cook, his wife Ann, and his brother Walter. On June 14th, 1856, he was hanged on the grounds of the Stafford jail, and buried within its precincts. The doctor likely committed more than three murders, there having been other mysterious deaths in Rugeley. An estimate has been made of 12 to 15 slayings by Palmer. In all instances, poison was the suspected agent.

Although William Palmer was a callous murderer, his behavior was so blatant that one would almost think that he wanted to be caught, at least subconsciously—and indeed it is remarkable that he got away with the ultimate of crimes for so long. Undoubtedly there were several factors contributing to his success—the legal system, at least outside of London, was relatively meager, forensic sciences were in their infancy; and the dangers of strychnine, which is found in the seeds of a tree native to India, were not well known at the time. Strychnine, when used in excessive amounts as Palmer did, are not pleasant: hyperacuity of hearing, convulsions from minor stimuli, complete muscle relaxation between convulsions, perspiration, and finally, the cessation of breathing.

A major factor in William Palmer’s escape from detection for so long was his ingratiating personality. His overall behavior suggests that he was a psychopath—that is, one who engages in antisocial behavior, who feels no empathy with others, and who manipulates others for his own gain.

Edward William Pritchard (1825-1865)

Edward William Pritchard was born in Southsea, Portsmouth, in 1825. Like Palmer, his family was reasonably well-off, his father being a captain in the Royal Navy. His parents, however, were considerably more respectable than those of Palmer. At the age of 15, Pritchard was apprenticed to two surgeons in Portsmouth, John and Charles Henry Scott. Three years later, in 1843, he became a student at King’s College Hospital where he studied surgery. By all accounts Pritchard was a charmer—tall, good looking and having an enormous beard. At the age of 21 he became a member of the College of Surgeons, and at once sailed on the steam sloop Hecate as assistant surgeon on a voyage to Pitcairn Island.

On his return to England, Pritchard remained with the ship. However, when ordered to the Mediterranean in 1847, he resigned his commission, and passed the examination to become a licentiate of the Society of Apothecaries. Three years later, in 1850, he married Mary Jane Taylor, daughter of a wealthy, retired silk and lace merchant in Edinburgh. With his father-in-law’s financial aid, he established a practice in Hunamb, Yorkshire, in 1851. At first his medical practice was fairly successful, but soon decreased considerably because of rumors about his unethical behavior toward his more attractive female patients.

At Hunamb, Pritchard became a member of the Freemasons. He took to wearing his Masonic robes in public, and used his membership for advertising purposes, activities that are forbidden by this organization. In 1854 he relocated to the neighboring seacoast village of Filey. Then in 1859 Pritchard moved first to Edinburgh, Scotland, and in the next year, to Glasgow—mainly because an irate husband threatened divorce proceedings for Pritchard’s liaisons with his wife. Other physicians were glad to see Pritchard go, as his extravagant lies and boasting had cast a slur on them as well. After Pritchard left, a newspaper described him as “fluent, plausible, amorous, politely imprudent and singularly untruthful. The prettiest liar ever met with.”

In Glasgow Pritchard, not finding anyone to sponsor him in practice, wrote his own testimonials, in which he forged the signatures of several eminent surgeons, none of whom would have anything to do with him. Pritchard also promoted himself by distributing pamphlets on dangerous substances, by writing letters to newspapers, and by taking part in the management of the Glasgow literary club and its scientific assembly.

Pritchard’s legal problems began in May, 1863. A mysterious fire broke out in a bedroom when Pritchard’s wife and children were not at home. The fire brigade was quickly called by a passer-by, and the fire put out. It was then that the dead body of his young servant girl was found in the smoldering bedroom, undisturbed by the fire. Although Pritchard was suspected of drugging her, no criminal charges were made because of lack of
evidence. It was rumored, however, that he had been having an affair with her. She was soon replaced by Mary, another young, comely maid. Pritchard claimed that valuable jewelry had been lost in the fire, but the insurance company refused to pay, and he withdrew his claim.

In 1864 he purchased the practice and home of Dr. Corbett, in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, now part of the Royal Crescent. In October 1864, Pritchard’s wife suddenly became ill with stomach cramps. Over her husband’s objections, she went to Edinburgh to stay with her mother, Mrs. Taylor, and rapidly recovered while there. Mrs. Pritchard returned home on December 22nd, but her symptoms also returned within two weeks. Her husband was very attentive and expressed considerable concern about her mysterious illness. He asked for an opinion from his wife’s cousin, a retired physician, whose only suggestions were mustard poultices to her abdomen and small quantities of champagne as a tonic. There was no improvement in her condition. Another physician was then consulted, but became enraged at such treatment and at Pritchard’s unfounded diagnosis of catalepsy, an outdated term for rigidity of extremities and hysteria. He placed her on a light diet.

Pritchard’s mother-in-law, Mrs. Taylor, came from Edinburgh to stay with her ailing daughter. In short order, however, she too became ill. Yet another physician, Dr. Paterson, was called, but to no avail. Mrs. Taylor died on February 25th, 1865. When Dr. Paterson refused to sign her death certificate, Pritchard did so, listing the diagnosis as paralysis and apoplexy. Dr. Paterson stated, in response to an inquiry on her death from the District Registrar, that Mrs. Taylor’s death was sudden, unexpected and mysterious. Soon thereafter, Pritchard again asked Dr. Paterson to look at his wife. Antimony poisoning was suspected. On March 17, she became delirious and once again Dr. Paterson was called. She died the same day, in the arms of her husband. Pritchard signed the death certificate with a diagnosis of gastric fever as the cause of his wife’s death. At her funeral, he raised the lid of the coffin and kissed her on the lips.

Within a few days an anonymous letter about the deaths of Pritchard’s wife and her mother was sent to the authorities, probably by Dr. Paterson. Pritchard was arrested on the charge of murdering both of them. Autopsies were carried out by professionals rather than amateurs, such as those who had dissected Dr. Palmer’s friend. The bodies of both Pritchard’s wife and mother-in-law were found to contain large quantities of antimony. The side effects of overdoses of antimony are even more frightful than those of strychnine—throat constriction, difficulty in swallowing, burning pain in the stomach, vomiting, dehydration, edema of the lungs, and, finally, failure of the kidneys and liver. Antimony has been used in the past for infection of the intestine by worms, but is no longer prescribed.

Pritchard’s trial began on July 3, 1865. The most damning witness for the prosecution was the family servant, Mary, whom Pritchard had seduced at the age of 15. She had become pregnant, and had been aborted by him. Pritchard claimed that Mary had done away with his wife because she wanted to marry him. But she told the court that he had promised to marry her if Mrs. Pritchard should die. Pritchard made vehement denials and calls to the Almighty to prove his innocence. The Solicitor-General stated that these were particularly unpleasant crimes because “it was murder with a doctor’s finger upon it.” Even the defense said “if he committed it (he would be) one of the foulest criminals that ever lived.” Palmer also deserves such a title, having committed even more murders.

Pritchard’s trial lasted for only five days, in contrast to the 12 days for Palmer. At the end of the summing up on July 7th, the jury took only 55 minutes to find Dr. Pritchard guilty of murdering both his wife and his mother-in-law. The Lord Justice told him “the evidence leaves in the mind of no reasonable man the slightest doubt of your guilt.” He then passed the death sentence, with execution set for July 28, only 11 days after his conviction. On the night before he was to die, Pritchard confessed to both murders. He was hung in the jail courtyard before thousands of spectators. Pritchard attempted to address the crowd from the scaffold, but was stopped by the prison authorities. His last words were to the parish priest, congratulating him on wearing his gown for the occasion. It was the last public execution in Glasgow.

Unlike for Palmer, Pritchard’s motivation for murdering his wife is not clear. It seems even more puzzling because she did not interfere with his seduction of their maid, Mary. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Taylor, may have been murdered because of her suspicions that he was poisoning her daughter. It has been suggested that Pritchard, like Palmer, killed his wife in order to receive insurance money. Financial gain, however, was not a likely motive for the murders because Pritchard was only slightly overdrawn at the bank, and had no difficulty borrowing money from his in-laws. His motivation may have been ego enhancement by demonstrating to himself that he could commit murder without being detected.

Pritchard was a prodigious liar, doing so for his own self-aggrandizement, rather than for financial gain. He talked vividly of places he had been, but none of which he had actually seen. For example, he posed as a friend
of the Italian Liberator, Garibaldi, whom he had never met. Pritchard deceived himself even more than he did others. He was quite convinced that he loved the wife whom he had poisoned.

**A Comparison of Three Murderers**

The fictional Grimesby Roylott and the factual William Palmer and Edward William Pritchard were quite similar in that their murderous activities were directed in good part against their own families. But Roylott differs from the other two in several ways. Whereas Roylott's behavior suggested mania, Palmer and Pritchard both related to others as affable individuals. Roylott's motivation was most likely financial as it was for Palmer although not for Pritchard who remains an enigma. In all three instances, the method used for murder was quite painful for their victims, being relatively rapid for Roylott's stepdaughter, Julia Stoner, and prolonged for those poisoned by Palmer and Pritchard. Roylott's medical practice in India was large, unlike those of Palmer and Pritchard which did not last for long because of their untoward behavior to patients.

The current psychiatric label for the three murderous physicians is antisocial personality, a term which replaces the previous designations of psychopath and sociopath. Such individuals may exhibit a large number of abnormal behaviors. Although some may have considerable charm and plausibility, they cannot maintain a prolonged affectionate relationship with others, as demonstrated by Palmer and Pritchard. Along with the fictional Roylott, they exhibited typical characteristics—poor toleration of frustration; lack of remorse or guilt; hostility, aggression and violence; amoral, impulsive and irresponsible behavior, dishonesty manifested by lies; and frequent moves.

Individuals with such antisocial behavior may have parents with similar personalities, as evident in the relatives of Doctor Palmer. Similarly, Dr. Roylott's violence of temper and his destructive behavior was inherited from his family. According to Helen Stoner "Violence of temper approaching mania has been hereditary in the men of the family." His behavioral characteristics include impatience, lack of insight, and open hostility. Other untoward conduct, as demonstrated during Roylott's visit to 221B Baker Street, were intrusiveness and aggressive irritability when crossed.

Roylott also differed from Palmer and Pritchard in his method of murder, which was more direct—a large snake with speckled bands. There is, however, some doubt as to the true nature of the snake. The most favored by Sherlockians is the poisonous Russel viper of India where indeed Roylott had lived for some time. The viper, however, has three longitudinal rows of reddish-brown spots outlined in rings of black and white—unlike that of Roylott's murder weapon. Of further incongruity is that snakes do not crawl on ropes, such as a bellpull, nor do they drink milk, as did Roylott's pet.

Another difficulty with the plot line of "The Speckled Band" is that a snake bite does not result in swift death, as it did for Julia Stoner and for her stepfather. There can, however, be rare exceptions, when bites are on the face and the neck. These areas have many superficial blood vessels which may quickly spread the venom to the rest of the body. Be that as it may, Conan Doyle's story of "The Speckled Band" is indeed a classic Gothic drama with mysterious murders, a threatened and terrified heroine, an evil doctor, and a horrifying instrument of death. It is elementary that "The Speckled Band" has been labeled as one of the most imaginative and successful stories in the Canon.
REFERENCES


Sometimes a writer gets a great notion and knows it. I’ve occasionally read about another author’s project and thought: wish I’d thought of that first. This isn’t envy; you simply recognize a meaty idea that you could have sharpened your literary fangs on. I finally got such an idea first, one that writers and readers are calling “brilliant,” when in fact it was simply . . . elementary. I knew that my talents and history were ideally suited to the project the moment I conceived of making Irene Adler—the only woman to outwit Sherlock Holmes; the woman to him ever after; an opera singer and an American to boot—a protagonist in her right.

It should be no surprise that my “Bible” at one time during my youth was The complete Sherlock Holmes stories by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, with a preface by Christopher Morley. I resolved then that if they ever let kids on “The $64,000 Question,” my area of expertise would be Sherlock Holmes. They didn’t, and I went on to forget almost every minute detail I knew about Baker Street and beyond.

So, although I absorbed the spirit of the stories early on an unconscious level, I have to research the Holmes link to each new Irene book from scratch, which is the best way for a writer to work. (After devouring historical novels in high school and college, I read mysteries exclusively for a period in the Seventies, but eased into fantasies afterwards, which is the same course I followed in writing my first novels: a historical Gothic, a historical swashbuckling adventure, a fantasy novel that became a series set in a sequence of invented worlds.)

Although mystery was often an element in my early novels, I “accidentally” stumbled into writing mysteries as a genre. My previous 19 novels had been marketed as romance and mainstream women’s fiction, and predominantly as science fiction and fantasy. Holmes pastiches are a strong subgenre for sf/fantasy readers, so when I evolved the idea of making Irene Adler the protagonist of a novel, I considered it part of my sf/fantasy output.

It finally dawned on me when the book was in production that it would be labeled and displayed as a mystery, pure and simple. I rushed to the nearest bookstore to see where I would land on the shelves in my brand-new genre, mystery—and found that Douglas would sit next to Doyle. Talk about serendipity!

So the Irene Adler series of historical adventures is utterly a product of my mind and times, not of the marketplace. Though I always felt the concept was timely and should make an impact, this is seldom predictable in publishing; certainly the no one harbored especially high hopes for the book. Imagine, then, my surprise when the Adler books had modest hardcover reprintings, and, I note immodestly, rave reviews in The New York Times, Publishers Weekly, and numerous other journals. The first and third novels were featured titles in Book-of-the-Month Club, my first such titles, although my other mystery protagonist—feline detective Midnight Louie, Esq., of Las Vegas—later joined them in the Club. Good Night, Mr. Holmes won an American Mystery Award for Best Romantic Suspense (it isn’t a romantic suspense novel, however), a Romantic Times magazine award for Best Historical Romantic Mystery, and was named a Notable Book of 1991 by The New York Times Book Review, one of 16 crime titles so honored. No wonder. Irene Adler has long fascinated Sherlockians and less particular readers alike. Although Adler only appears in one Holmes short story—the first, “A Scandal in Bohemia”—she is the supremely obvious romantic interest for the woman-impervious Holmes.

All right, the cavil comes, lots of plays, movies and latter-day Holmes fictions dredge up Irene Adler in that role, what was so new about my concept?

What was old is obvious: virtually all Holmes interpreters have been men, and all interpretations of Adler depict her as a ‘Victorian vamp.’ She is beautiful (à la the Canon), worldly, clever. Watson even labeled her an ‘adventuress,’ a Victorian euphemism for a courtesan.

My revisionist concept evolved the way most of my novel ideas do: first I asked myself, why are virtually all novels set in the Sherlock Holmes world written by men, though I (and many women) had loved the stories as youngsters, too? My years as a newspaper reporter taught me that when men monopolize anything it’s time for women to examine it from a female point of view. Although women played supporting roles in the canon, I remember how, as a child, I was mystified when women characters in Doyle fainted of “brain fever” in a crisis and vanished for the rest of the tale. Conjuring the few strong women in the Canon, I remembered Irene—last—and developed a more logical, thorough and psychologically realistic version of her actions and character. One reason I thought of her after Violet Hunter, for instance, was that the male view of her from Doyle on did not make her appealing to me. Royal mistresses are fascinating and often led extravagant lives,
but most such women are shallow, vain and venal. Not the qualities of a heroine.

Despite the enduring male, romantic view of Irene as beautiful but amoral, the story itself is amazingly ambiguous about her character so I took another, harder look at the glamorous American opera singer and presumed mistress of a king. I saw no reason not to suppose other characteristics and motives for her than the ones usually put forward. My Irene Adler is as intelligent, self-sufficient and serious about her professional and personal integrity as Sherlock Holmes, and far too independent to be anyone's mistress but her own.

In addition, she moonlights as an inquiry agent while building her performing career, so she is a professional rival of Holmes's rather than a mere romantic interest. Her adventures intertwine with those of Holmes and Watson, but she is definitely her own woman in these novels.

To re-create Irene I had to reexamine the story, both what is said and what is left unsaid, and study the characters for clues to the proper tack. I view my novelistic characters as I regarded characters I played when I was acting: fully formed puzzles to penetrate as I put them through their paces within the supporting framework of a plot and setting. My job is to get inside of their skins to reveal them to themselves and other characters and to the reader, as well as to myself.

In the case of the Irene Adler story, so much was left unsaid that going deeper into her character and motives is a piece of puzzle-solving in itself. There is no doubt that by the end of "A Scandal in Bohemia," Sherlock Holmes, that intellect so cool to the warmest of emotions, romantic love, admired Irene Adler above all women. After encountering her he even dropped his jibes against women's lack of wit, as Watson tells us at the beginning of "A Scandal in Bohemia."

For me, the key question was: Would Sherlock Holmes have fallen victim to a bimbo?

The common notion about Irene Adler is obvious in Doyle's story. First, she not only is beautiful and clever, but also darling. Like Holmes, she dons disguises—men's clothing—in her case. This makes her a consummate actor (like Holmes) and a liberated woman unwilling to bow to the day's social limitations. Some flamboyant nineteenth-century women in the arts—George Eliot, Sarah Bernhardt for two—adopted male dress as a social statement of bohemianism and equality with men. And that was a shocking matter at the time, no doubt about it. Irene Adler, though fictional, is the only woman to use male dress as a disguise to permit greater physical liberty. I enlarged its use to serve her avocational purposes as a private inquiry agent.

Where I found room for speculation was in the relationship between the King of Bohemia and Irene Adler. Although the story implies a past liaison between Adler and the King, who wants to reclaim a photograph of them together, and although the King claims that she will publish it to ruin his forthcoming royal wedding, the relationship he depicts does not ring true.

The King's Irene Adler "has a soul of steel. She has the face of the most beautiful of women and the mind of the most resolute of men." He claims that she will ruin his forthcoming marriage. Yet when Adler absconded with the photograph she insisted that she only kept it for "protection."

According to the King's chronology, their liaison occurred five years before. Irene Adler is now—at the infantile age of 30, for opera singers gain power with age—retired from the operatic stage after a Continental career, and living in London.

Yet we are to believe she will release the compromising photograph—which would be regarded as an innocent double portrait nowadays—so long after their parting simply to ruin his marriage to a Scandinavian princess. Such long-steepled revenge does not fit a woman whose mere written assurance at story's end that she will not release the photograph satisfies the King, who then asserts that "her word is inviolate."

Irene herself says in her parting letter to Sherlock Holmes that the King has "cruelly wronged" her and that she is leaving England forever with "a better man who she loves and whom she is loved by"—the dashing and mysterious barrister Godfrey Norton.

My mission, once I discovered it, was to adhere to everything presented in the story, except the King's timetable, which we have only his word upon, and which Holmes did not question or investigate. I also had to resolve any apparent inconsistencies of character—which are primarily undeveloped facets—and those of minor fact, such as Doyle calling Adler both a 'prima donna' and a 'contralto,' when only sopranos have leading roles in opera. (Searching for operatic leading roles that Irene could in reason play has been one of the most challenging tasks of the series. One solution has been to portray her voice as edging toward "dark"
soprano.)

Obviously, Irene Adler was ripe for serious reconsideration. What if she were the feminine counterpoint to Holmes, with music her career and detection her avocation, a reversal of the Holmesian order? What if she applied the same dedication and integrity to her pursuits that Holmes did to his? If her detective abilities were founded on a performer’s insight into human motivations rather than Holmesian deduction? If her “cases” sometimes intersected with Holmes’s—and vice versa? If their paths crossed . . . could mutual admiration lead to something more?

My re-reading of Holmes’s apparent allergy to women concluded that the restricted roles of Victorian women accounts for his romantic indifference, which is why Irene Adler is so exceptional to him. As Holmes says to Watson in the prologue of Good Night, Mr. Holmes: “I would give a great deal to know what inevitable stages of incident produced the likes of Irene Adler. Show me a method of forming more women so, and I would show more interest in women.” The remainder of the novel goes on to demonstrate exactly what Mr. Holmes asked for.

But Holmesian purists, simmer down. Any Holmes/Adler romance would violate the Irene-Godfrey marriage, and must fit my goal of remaining true to the Canon’s spirit as well as its letter. I violently object to the Baring-Gould projection that Godfrey turned out to be a wife beater (!), with Holmes and Adler later united just long enough to produce a son. This makes Irene a born victim with chronic masochistic taste in men, and certainly unworthy of Holmes’s esteem, not to mention ours. I don’t care what fairy tale some need to explain Nero Wolfe.

In fact, a major challenge in fleshing out Doyle’s dramatis personae is the enigmatic Godfrey Norton, who is handsome enough to star in a romance novel but otherwise undeveloped.

In a historical footnote about a rotter of a barrister named Norton, I found both a new mystery for Irene and Sherlock to sink their teeth into, and a family background and strong motivation for Godfrey. This involves two oddities of history: Marie Antoinette’s lost Zone of Diamonds (a floor-length bell) and the law of England that permitted a husband to claim his wife’s earnings even if she chose to live apart him and supported herself and their children by her own efforts. (Doyle himself campaigned to end this inequitable law, which reinforces my goal of keeping true to his assumed intent, where possible.)

The first reference I found to the case of Caroline Norton linked the scandal to the early 1850s, which instantly caught my attention, as Holmes was born in 1854 and Adler in 1858. A grand-daughter of Thomas Sheridan, the playwright, Mrs. Norton was married to a rogue of a barrister so beastly that she and her three sons had left him to live apart, a terrible scandal then. She supported her family unexpectedly well by writing novels, so well that the scoundrel Norton sued for her income, and got it. Such a cad was easy to recast as the sort of man who would come into illegal possession of the fabulous Zone of Diamonds.

Godfrey, as a descendent of this sore-tired woman, could have logically become a barrister to atone for the first bad barrister Norton and to work toward abolishing the property law so unfair to women. As one indirectly wronged by this law, he is a protofeminist and a “supporting” character in every sense of the word. Of course, the Napoleons never had a son named Godfrey, and had been separated for many years by the time of his birth. So—awkwardly—does fact wed with fiction. Still, Caroline Norton was in her forties when “Godfrey Norton” would have been born. A Norton connection, however unacknowledged, is not impossible.

I did change bad barrister Norton’s first name, being uneasy about intertwining the fate of a fabulous historical jewel with a historical family. Godfrey’s family history can now be assumed to be an intriguing historical anomaly and a matter of feverish speculation—or better yet, can provide mystery material for a future Irene Adler novel.

As for Marie Antoinette’s Zone of Diamonds, it was a true historical artifact, lost during a political upheaval and never discovered again, although it supposedly ended up in the hands of the jeweler, Tiffany, who broke it into separate stones.

So in these novels, points of historical interest are true and accurate—except when it suits the author or the storyline to take some literary license, or when I am fleshing out the original story. For instance, the scandalous photo was likely a mere joint portrait, but I embroidered on this to show one aspect of how the King had “cruelly wronged” and misled Irene. My supposition is the Old Story; she presumed marriage and he was not frank enough to admit that he could not wed according to his wishes. Their photo was taken at his suggestion, with Irene wearing the Bohemian crown jewels at his insistence. It was wildly indiscreet of the King,
but he was infatuated and (as seen from his wailing chorus of “what a queen she would have made!” in Doyle’s story) guilty of imagining the impossible and sweeping Irene up in his enthusiasm.

One critic—female—took me to task for making Irene “chaste.” She was, the woman said with great authority, good enough for Holmes and Doyle the other way. But Doyle never addresses the actuality of the relationship; the reader assumes it. Neither did I ever say Irene was a virgin, only that she refused to sleep her way up in the world. And while I support sexual freedom, using sex to manipulate people’s minds and money is not admirable in any age.

Speaking of “chaste,” we come to Nell. To tell Irene’s tale, I created an impoverished parson’s daughter, Penelope Huxleigh, whose strict ideals of Victorian womanhood parallel Watson’s John Bullism and provide a reliable foil for Irene’s flamboyance. Holmes and Adler share a Bohemian disregard for convention that shocks—as well as delights and mystifies—their respective chroniclers. As a larger-than-life heroine, Irene is “up to anything.” Her biographer’s prissiness contrasts with her Bohemian friend’s worldliness. Together, the two provide a humorous point-counterpoint on women’s restricted roles then and now. Narrator Nell is the character who “grows” most during the series, as her unconventional friend Irene forces her to see herself and her time in a broader perspective.

My Irene is more Holmes’s rival than a romantic interest. She is not a detective in the same mold as Holmes, but she is as gifted in her way. Nor is her opera singing a convenient profession for a beauty of the day, but a passionate vocation that was taken from her by the King of Bohemia’s autocratic attitude toward women, forcing her to turn to detection to occupy herself. Although Irene is beautiful, well-dressed and clever, she is not a manipulator of men, but a woman who demands that she be taken seriously despite these attributes.

Because Irene’s background (and mine) is theatrical, literary and artistic, her cases gravitate to those worlds. Supporting players in Good Night, Mr. Holmes include Charles Lewis Tiffany, the Bram Stokers and Oscar Wilde, Bohemian composer Antonin Dvorak—and Holmes and Watson, of course.

Good Morning, Irene, the sequel, features Sarah Bernhardt and the dead man on Bram Stoker’s dining room table—historically true, I swear—as well as an obscure character reference from the Canon, the French Montpensier family. I plan to return to Mr. Stoker and his most famous creation, “Dracula,” in a future book. A novella in which Irene encounters Stoker’s Dracula himself at the Warsaw Opera, “Dracula on the Rocks,” should arrive in a “Celebrity Dracula” horror anthology from DAW Books in 1995.

The fourth novel, Irene’s Last Waltz, returned to Bohemia, as well as introduced the banking Rothschild family; Charles Frederick Worth, the Englishman who founded Parisian haute couture and was the first man to scandalize society and “dress” women; and the Golem of Prague, the series’s first touch of the occult.

A major goal in developing the Irene Adler series is to pay homage to the last decade of the 19th century when the key works of modern popular fiction categories were brought to full flower, including Doyle’s own forays into science fiction and fantasy as well as mystery and adventure. Irene’s Last Waltz bows to the first political thriller, Hope’s The Prisoner of Zenda, with a nod to Dumas’s The Man in the Iron Mask as well.

Another goal is to place current political hot spots in 19th century perspective. Bohemia was more than an operatic kingdom, but part of a long power struggle in eastern Europe, as it is today. Irene’s Last Waltz continues the eastward turn I took in Good Night, Mr. Holmes. Good Morning, Irene, the second adventure, introduced the first beautiful blond American heiress to become Princess of Monaco, Alice Heine. And Irene At Large put the Battle of Maiwand in Afghanistan into perspective with Russia’s invasion of that land in our own century, as well as dragooned a future Holmesian villain into Dr. Watson’s past.

Because I decided to adhere to the facts in “A Scandal in Bohemia” as Watson set them down, and because Watson and Doyle intertemperately declared the second-most fascinating character in the canon to be dead at the outset of the story regarding her, Irene and I have been forced to maintain the fiction of her “death.” Her returns to England are incognito so far. What will happen when my Irene chronology catches up to the actual 1894 [sic] appearance of “A Scandal in Bohemia” in The Strand Magazine, I cannot say. As poor Nell observes at the end of Irene At Large 1889, “Why must everyone I know be presumed dead? Except that . . . that miserable Sherlock Holmes.” (To her, of course, Holmes will always be the man, and not in a complimentary sense.) Give it time, Nell; give it time.

As final asides, I must say that I am feeling pressure from some readers to lead Nell where Watson went more than once to great confusion. They want Nell to lose her innocence in some romantic alliance. My instincts tell me that doing that would be similar to having Holmes elope with Mrs. Hudson. There goes the series and
the entire brave new Adler universe.

Other observers feel it's now unnecessary to include Holmes and Watson in the novels, though their participation has been mostly minor. Still, I keep finding fascinating ways to introduce some facet of the Canon, sometimes as minor as a single thread. I enjoy the game of keeping up the tradition. The link in Irene's Last Waltz was handed to me on a silver platter during research, and this filament is as slender as a single surname.

The gamesmanship of the novels's detail remains a good part of the fun and fascination for me. Good Night, Mr. Holmes ends with a reinterpretation of "A Scandal in Bohemia" from Irene's viewpoint, including the harrowing train flight from Prague to London, Irene and Godfrey's previously undetailed courtship, which one critic found remarkably restrained, and what else (besides the photograph the King wanted) Irene whisked out from under Holmes's hawk-like nose . . . the Zone of Diamonds. In the recovery of this artifact, I brought in both deceased and somewhat ambiguous Nortons and a key clue is in a novel called Cloris of the Crossroads. Caroline Norton was the model for Diana of the Crossways in George Meredith's novel of that name.

My working title for the first Adler novel, by the way, was The Adventuress of Sherlock Holmes. My agent wanted something less cumbersome, so I arrived at Good Night, Mr. Holmes which reflects how Irene, dressed as a young man, greeted a disguised Holmes on his own doorstep after ascertaining that he was indeed on her trail.

"Good night, Mr. Sherlock Holmes," she muttered, in a display of nerve that could have alerted the detective. Instead, he waited till morning to find his quarry gone. Since Holmes is partisan to Adler over the King, he doesn't mind her escape.

The first novel is only a launching pad for Irene Adler's solo career as an ethical adventuress. What is really new and noteworthy about this series and my interpretation of Irene Adler is that I write Irene Adler novels, not Sherlock Holmes pastiches, that combine elements of humor, Victorian, adventure and mystery. They also comment obliquely on the social role of women—then and now. And that's long overdue, in Holmes's world and our own.
Prayer for Norwegian Explorers Banquet, June 12, 1993

by Robert Brusic

O Lord, our God, like the psalmist of old, we pray that you would keep us as the apple of your eye and protect us from the deadly enemies who surround us. Indeed, even though we acknowledge and fear the rogues and malefactors, the villains and cutpurses who infect your good world, we also infer—perhaps even deduce—that you have something better in mind for us and for creation.

So let remember the lilies of the field which neither toil nor spin, for they are signs of your good presence. And let us likewise remember that it was The Great Detective himself who once deduced that our highest assurance of the goodness of (your) Providence seems to rest in the flowers, for it is only goodness which gives extras. For these extras, for this food we eat, the fellowship we enjoy here and elsewhere in the Holmesian universe, for the knowledge and comfort that good and noble human beings have walked (and still do walk) this earth: for all these and many other marks of goodness we are truly grateful and we lift our hearts in thanksgiving. Keep us as the apple of your eye and the moss rose in your garden. Amen
A Tribute to The Norwegian Explorer  
by Joseph W. Moran, BSI

Shortly after this Conference was announced, I told Bruce Southworth that it would be incomplete without some commemoration of the centennial of the years during which the exploits of that remarkable Norwegian Explorer named Sigerson were taking place.

I realize that Sigerson doesn’t fit into the main theme of this Conference, since he can hardly be described as a dastardly villain. Even so, his exploits were the inspiration for naming the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota—a group which enjoys such great prestige among Sherlockians around the world that we should pay tribute to the original who has so inspired them.

Two of my own personal experiences illustrate the high regard for the Explorers among Holmes lovers everywhere—especially in Europe. They occurred on May 4, 1991, the 100th anniversary of the death struggle between Sherlock Holmes and the villainous Professor Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls.

I had the good fortune to be among the 100 or so members of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London who undertook a joyous pilgrimage to Switzerland to commemorate that important occasion. (Nine days in Victorian costume, surrounded by cameras!)

The key event of the week, at least for the media, was our journey to the Falls to observe reenactments of the hand-to-hand struggle and the plunge to the bottom.

This was followed by a memorial service of lamentation for our supposedly fallen hero. The centerpiece for that memorial service, wreathed in flowers for the occasion, was the plaque that had been placed on a rock near the foot of the Falls several decades ago under the auspices of the Sherlock Holmes Society and the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota.

During our several days in Meiringen, we also watched Dame Jean Conan Doyle dedicate the new Sherlock Holmes Museum, located in the Conan Doyle Plaza only a few feet from John Doubleday’s provocative statue of Sherlock Holmes. Close by were the Sherlock Holmes Sporthotel and other reminders that the enterprising Swiss know how to attract tourist dollars and pounds.

This scene had changed since my first visit to Reichenbach in 1977. At that time, there had been only one reminder in the area that the “best and wisest man” had once been there: the Explorers’ plaque. To many of us, it remains today the best tribute to Sherlock Holmes in Meiningen, and a reminder that the Explorers were there long before the tourist industry transformed the scene.

The second example of the Explorers’s prestige was a large envelope that I received shortly after I returned home. It came to me from Markus Geiser, who heads the Swiss Sherlockian group known as the Reichenbach Irregulars, and contained copies of all the press writeups which had appeared in numerous Swiss newspapers during the 9 days of our pilgrimage.

And what quid pro quo had made that massive effort worth while to Markus? He had let it be known that he was eager to acquire a Norwegian Explorers Pin, and I had responded to his craving by giving him one of mine.

This verbose digression is an attempt to compensate for the fact that we really don’t know much about Sigerson...

It’s likely that he was conceived in conversation between Sherlock Holmes and his brother Mycroft, probably at the Diogenes Club in London in early 1891. He came to life, full-grown, in Switzerland in May 1891, and was last reported seen sometime before April, 1894. Despite that short life-span—less than 3 years—he was reported to have traveled to an astonishing number of exotic locales, including Tibet and Mecca and Khartoum and Montpellier.

Much has been written by Sherlockians about the choice of “Sigerson” as Sherlock Holmes’s identity during his travels to those places—or wherever else he really spent three years away from London. Some have speculated that it was a clue that Sherlock’s father was named Siger Holmes.

My own hypothesis is that Sherlock Holmes was much more imaginative. His choice of “Sigerson” was intended to give us a more subtle clue as to his ancestry. Here it is: Spelled backwards, Sigerson becomes NOS REGIS, which can be read as a message in Latin that we can translate, roughly, as “We are of royalty.”
Thus I think the selection of "Sigerson" as Sherlock Holmes's *nom de voyage* was his way of telling us that Sherlock and Mycroft had royal blood in their veins. Having to read the clue *backwards* to discover that fact probably is meant to tell us that this royal ancestry was acquired on the wrong side of the bed— or, more likely, in the wrong bed.

This analysis also reinforces the point I made earlier: that the Norwegian Explorers, the Sigersons, can consider themselves to be "of royalty" among Sherlockian groups.

With that example of how far some of us will reach to find something new to say about Sherlock Holmes, I ask that you all join me in a toast: To Sigerson—*The Norwegian Explorer*. 
Conan Doyle's Sense of Justice

by Harold Orel

You recall that in "The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor" Holmes said that he read nothing but the criminal news and the agony column. ("The latter," he added, "is always instructive.") But Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—who strenuously objected to being confused with his creation—read widely, and took an avid interest in countless issues that would scarcely have interested the Great Detective. In my following brief remarks, I touch on a subject that warrants more investigation than it has received: Conan Doyle's sense of what constituted fair play, or, in other words, his sense of justice.

Surely Holmes had his own special concept of what needed to be done to bring to account someone who had transgressed the law. From behind a curtain he watched as a woman whose life had been ruined fired bullet after bullet into the body of her betrayer. "the king of all the blackmailers," Charles Augustus Milverton, and did nothing to prevent her from grinding her heel into Milverton's upturned face. Even more remarkable, he refused to help Inspector Lestrade: "The fact is," he told his visitor from Scotland Yard, "that I knew this fellow Milverton, that I considered him one of the most dangerous men in London, and that I think there are certain crimes which the law cannot touch, and which therefore, to some extent, justify private vengeance."

And there are other special moments in the Canon: "The Blue Carbuncle," when Holmes announces that he is not retained by the police to supply their deficiencies; "The Abbey Grange," when Holmes tells Watson that he had rather play tricks with the law of England than with his own conscience; and several stories in which the issues are ambiguously presented — A Study in Scarlet, "The Devil's Foot," "The Crooked Man." It is not easy to predict, on a first reading of several such stories, how Holmes will judge the issue, and whether a private individual's mercy will interfere with the strict judgments of the law.

"What is the meaning of it, Watson?" Holmes asks (at the conclusion of "The Cardboard Box"). "What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever."

Holmes feared the east wind that was coming, "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." So he thought in "His Last Bow." He seemed to recognize increasingly often, as the years wore on, the impossibility of settling all problems by use of reason.

Compare that growing grimness, the gathering-in of shadows on Holmes's willingness to act even as he acknowledged that not all his options were clear—a change that we may associate with the aging process—to the indomitable spirit of Conan Doyle. Even in his fiercest polemics against those who refused to recognize the value of the Spiritualist movement, Conan Doyle never thought that the east wind of a changing age could frost his determination to speak the truth as he saw it and to defend the right.

In some ways, of course, he gave freer scope to his imagination than Holmes did; he increasingly often thought of Holmes as "merely a mechanical creature, not a man of flesh and blood,—and easy to create because he was soulless." I am not referring here to Holmes's ignorance of astronomy, the theories of Copernicus and the composition of the solar system, or of literature, philosophy, and politics (the list of limits as recorded by Watson in the second chapter of A Study in Scarlet. As the Canon grew, Holmes's knowledge of the sciences and the arts correspondingly improved; Holmes was not ever as two-dimensional as Conan Doyle pretended. But there is something freer and larger about Conan Doyle's sympathies with the oppressed, the unjustly persecuted, the underprivileged, than we can claim for Holmes's character.

I am not making a case for viewing Conan Doyle as a friend of all mankind. There are moments in his life when even his friends were startled by an Old Testament ferocity in what he said or did. I recall how surprised I was when I read that during his visit to Sing Sing at Ossining in New York State, he sat in the electric chair to see how it felt, to imagine the current crashing through his body. He was astonishingly grim about what needed to be done to punish those who in time of war fought unfairly, and were responsible for the deaths of women and children. In 1901, citing his precedent the fact that the Germans during the Franco-Prussian War had continually carried French hostages in the trains, he recommended putting a truck full of Boer irreconcilables behind every engine which passed through a dangerous part of South Africa. The first duty, Conan Doyle argued, was to English soldiers. The Boer attacks on railway trains had killed non-combatants indiscriminately, and these were outrages that invited—nay, demanded—reprisals.

Conan Doyle's anger at the Germans during the Great War may be traced in Letters to the Press, that indispensable volume edited by John Michael Gibson and Richard Lancelyn Green. He had a clear notion of what
the rules of war were; when the German Navy laid mines in open waters and caused the death of neutrals, this was "murder." It was immoral to bombard unfortified towns by sea or by air. The Germans treated prisoners with shocking disregard for what was right, for what was necessary in a world that respected civilized values. Zeppelin raids on helpless civilians enraged him. He urged retaliatory raids upon German towns, and he did not flinch at the thought that German civilians might be killed. "The Hun is only formidable when he thinks that he can be frightful with impunity," he told his countrymen; "'Blood and Iron' is his doctrine so long as it is his iron and some one else's blood."

Conan Doyle hated lukewarm feelings so far as the Germans were concerned. Hatred—a righteous wrath—was the means whereby the English could attain an invincible (and, from his point of view, a necessary) resolve. "When Miss Cavell was shot," he wrote in 1918, "we should at once have shot our three leading prisoners. When Captain Fryatt was murdered we should have executed two submarine captains. These are the arguments which the German mentality can understand. We have law and justice on our side. If they attempt a reprisal, then our own counter-reprisals must be sharp, stern, and relentless. If we are to have war to the knife, then let it at least be equal for both parties."

Yes, one may say, but this was wartime, a period of emotional excess. When peace prevailed in the land, did Conan Doyle speak as stridently about the issues he was interested in? He certainly delivered his views with great energy, and one may not say that he was ever unclear about what he believed. Because so many of you here are familiar with the broad outlines of the two most important cases which obsessed Conan Doyle—namely, the cases of George Edalji in 1907 and Oscar Slater in 1912, going on for more than two decades after—I will not retrace them in detail. But his hatred of Establishment influence used to create injustices in court, his contempt for lawyers who behaved abominably while covering up legal scandals and the inexusable behavior of police officials who assisted them in doing so, was not limited to these landmark cases.

Some court sentences struck him as entirely inappropriate, such as the three months judgment against an American lady who had stolen some small articles of silver from a hotel-room. "It is to a consulting-room, and not a cell, that she should be sent," he argued. He stood up for women workers in a Brighton hotel whose pay was being reduced. As he told the voters in 1900, he felt pledged to oppose all narrow or reactionary legislation. Indeed, his concerns ranged from the relatively minor—as when he denounced the officials who set speed traps in the Guildford district during the summer to catch motorists, or the Sunday laws which prevented rifle shooting while allowing cycling, motoring, boating, and even golf as legitimate activities on the Sabbath—to the stupidity of the Lord Chamberlain in his capacity as censor of plays; to the unforgivable intolerance of the divorce laws (which Conan Doyle thought were based largely upon theological considerations); to the color prejudices which prevented full Empire representation at the Olympic Games; to the outrageous murdering of wild birds for their skins and plumes (he was a prime mover in the Importation of Plumage Prohibition Bill of 1914); to wartime profiteering; to the release (for whatever reason) of criminals who had been convicted three or four times of a penal offense.

"We segregate our lunatics and we segregate our infectious cases," he wrote The Times in 1929, "and the hardened criminal is a mixture of both. He is a man with a dangerous idee fixe, and he is a man who is likely to infect others by exerting his influence upon those who are younger or weaker than himself. The world has no use for him. He is the enemy of society. It is folly, therefore, to give him successive sentences, which mean intervals when we have to pay the penalty for our own weak and illogical leniency. The true method of guarding ourselves is to eliminate him altogether. From the time that his true character is established the prison doors should never open again."

Whether one agrees with the sentiment or not—and even those who agree with it will concede its harshness of tone—one can understand and appreciate why Conan Doyle is occasionally described as one of the few Great Victorians who speak directly to our own age. There is no mistaking where he stands on the issues, and he had an uncanny knack for interesting himself in issues that remain timely.

I recognize the crankliness of some of Conan Doyle's positions, such as the blast he delivered in 1926—the year of the General Strike in England, and widespread unrest among a disillusioned populace—against the way in which vacationers went to the Riviera for hotel accommodations, rather than to the southern coast of England. He proposed a heavy poll tax to penalize those who made money in England, and preferred to spend it abroad. Only good reasons of health or of business could excuse their absence from England. He was in favor of blacklisting tax-evaders in the Channel Islands and other places abroad; if they remained recalcitrant, he went on, they should be deprived of all rights of citizenship. "The times are serious," he declared, "and drastic methods are needed." In brief, he believed that he was delivering a just verdict on those who merited punishment for shirking their duties to home and country, and he did not flinch from the charge that he might be more extreme than circumstances warranted. At such moments he reminds us of Sir Nigel Loring in The
White Company, who preferred to return two blows for every one that he received, and the other great historical figures of that romance: John Chandros, Pedro of Castile, the Black Prince and his father, the noble Edward III, and the semi-mythical Bertrand du Guesclin, warriors all, men determined not to be defeated in the continuing battles of life.

What, then, did Conan Doyle's sense of justice amount to? He demanded a fair hearing for all sides of a question. (When he wrote The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct, he was seeking to explain the British view, and to define the causes which led to it; he was incensed that the foreign press had presented only one side of the issue.) He wanted tariff proposals, and other Government bills, to be judged "in a judicial and impartial spirit," because such judgments would perform "an important national service." He urged greater equity in taxes, pointing to the disparity between what the poor paid for their necessities and what the rich did not have to pay for the import of diamonds, motor cars, velvets, and silks. He wanted reforms in the system of income-tax assessment, and elimination of the assessor's right to impose "peculiarly outrageous" judgments on helpless citizens. His was one of the angriest voices raised against the villainous behavior of the representatives of King Leopold of Belgium in central Africa, behavior that remains appalling and unforgivable to this day. In similar fashion he condemned Portugal, in 1910, for its barbarous treatment of prisoners: "We have before us," he wrote, "cruelty, injustice, want of chivalry, everything which is alien to the real Portuguese nature...."

Unlike Holmes, who had little or no interest in opinions and leading articles, Conan Doyle was a man who held strong opinions and wanted a free play of opinions in an open forum; and he was capable of changing his mind, too, as when he became a convert, in 1911, to the cause of Home Rule for Ireland. He did not want to be ignored, or his proposals for remedying social wrongs and injustice to be taken lightly. He was, taken all in all, a courageous warrior enlisted in worthy causes, and deserves to be remembered in our time not only for the passion of his convictions, but for the eloquence with which he expressed them.
His Old Friend Charlie Peace Reconsidered

by R. Dixon Smith


Their real-life counterpart may well have been Charlie Peace—actor, musician, liar, braggart, cracksman, murderer; consciousless villain, lecher, moral monstrosity. The romantic trappings of his larcenous legend were preserved anecdotally in Victorian boy's papers and penny-dreadfuls, and one of his mistresses called him "a demon beyond the power of a Shakespeare to paint."

But does he not belong, at least tangentially, to the Holmesian Canon, a score of Sherlockians reminds us? Does not the Master Detective conjure up the memory of this malignant, inventive genius when he contemplates the complex mind in "The Adventure of the Illustrious Client?" "All great criminals have that," he tells Sir James Damery. "My old friend Charlie Peace was a violin virtuoso."

Yes, real-life rogue Charles Peace is mentioned in the Saga, but for the particulars of his ruthless blood-letting we must turn from the crime fiction of Conan Doyle to the well-documented history of British lawbreakers.

Charles Frederick Peace was born in Sheffield on 1 May, 1832, the son of a moderately successful shoemaker, John Peace, who had earlier worked as a wild-animal trainer. As a youth Peace apprenticed as a tinsmith near Sheffield, where his leg was injured in an accident in 1846, leaving him permanently lame. Later trial accounts record the fact that he lacked one or more fingers of his left hand, the result of a bullet wound incurred in a scuffle with another young ne'er-do-well. (One notes that accounts occasionally differ with respect to the placement of the wound or wounds sustained. Was the affected member his hand, his leg, or both? One cannot but be reminded of the discrepancy in accounts of the wound—or wounds—sustained by Dr. Watson in Afghanistan.) In any event, the loss of a finger or fingers failed to impede young Peace's progress as musician, pickpocket, or second-story man. He rarely ever pursued honest toil after suffering these handicaps.

In physical stature he was small, no taller than five feet four inches, with a maimed hand and a game leg; yet, despite these deformities, he was a powerful, agile, little monkey-like man, not unlike both Tonga and Professor Presbury. He later sat for, and was immortalized in, Mme. Tussaud's Wax Museum.

Charlie Peace was endowed with intelligence, a mechanical bent, and an inventive brilliance. His earliest occupations that fell within the law were those of carver, glider, picture-frame maker, hawker of small wares, and entertainer. It is with the last that one begins to realize that art in the blood indeed takes strange turns. He was a self-taught musician of no little merit, much in demand at local public houses, accompanying his ballads on a single-stringed fiddle of his own construction. His exquisite collection of violins, most of them pillaged, was exceptionally valuable. Like Sherlock Holmes, he had a flair for the theatrical, billing himself as "The Modern Paganini" and, in blackface, "The Great Ethiopian Musician," as he performed his favorite piece, the grave-digger's scene from Hamlet. Once, when arrested, he gave his occupation as "professor of music." Love of music was Peace's only solace. Whatever wealth he abandoned in his harried flights, he never left a fiddle behind.

He began his burglarious career as a pickpocket, specializing in fairs. Between 1854 and 1872 he was regularly in and out of jail, the customary charge being that of breaking and entering, and larceny. His first term of imprisonment, for burgling a home in Sheffield, earned him four-years's penal servitude; he later served six years on a second conviction. Never a member of a gang, he always plied his trade alone.

From 1872 until his final capture in 1878, Charlie Peace stalked England's northern industrial cities as well as London itself, in an unrivaled spree that included at least two murders. In 1875 he settled in a town near Sheffield, and later moved to Lambeth, where he precipitated a wave of burglaries there and in Greenwich. Here he masqueraded as a Mr. Thompson, accompanied by his wife; he attended church regularly, and his musical tastes and accomplishments were warmly recognized. But, curiously enough, he always went to bed early—an ominous portent of the crime wave that followed. Mr. Thompson's collection of violins and other material possessions began to grow. It was at this time that he adopted the masterful disguise which allowed him to appear in public, unrecognized, as a one-armed man: his famous false lower arm, a sheath of cloth and wood, which he held in his hand and to which he attached a stout iron hook.

After innumerable thefts, Peace was apprehended during a house-breaking on 9 October, 1878. Initially un-
aware that their prisoner was the notorious Charlie Peace, police finally unmasked him when he was betrayed by his wife, Mrs. Thompson. He was charged with burglary and wounding a constable, and was sentenced to penal servitude for life. But the Sheffield authorities also wanted him, for they suspected him of the murder of Mr. Arthur Dyson, a civil engineer from Banner Cross, a Sheffield suburb. The two had argued over Dyson's wife, to whom Peace had become attracted. To Sheffield he was taken in January, 1879, where he was convicted of the murder. While awaiting execution, he confessed to having shot police constable Nicholas Cock outside Manchester on the evening of 1 August 1876, during the course of an otherwise routine burglary. The man who had been wrongly convicted of that crime was duly pardoned.

At the end, Peace appeared prematurely aged. His countenance seemed that of an elderly man, suffering as he did from dental caries and ill-fitting dentures. The villainous-looking little gargoyle was hanged on 25 February 1879; he was 46 years old.

It is instructive to speculate upon the fate that might have attended Charlie Peace if only Sherlock Holmes, then just beginning his own career, had put himself on Peace's trail. His endeavors, we might think, would have made the air of London—indeed, of all England— the sweeter for it.

Or is it instructive? Some would contend that such speculation is as harmless as it is innocent. Holmes, after all, does call Charlie Peace "my old friend," a comment he may or may not have intended to be taken literally. How, therefore, might the two men have met? Perhaps they acted together, or Holmes encountered him in one of the capital's seamier districts, where the detective had already established one of the many refuges he often used to don his own disguises.

No, let us not mix fact and fiction, for the results of such idle speculation can be shown to be harmful indeed, to none other than the creator of Sherlock Holmes. Has not the playing of the Sherlockian game contributed to denying Arthur Conan Doyle his rightful place in the history of letters? Have not some of the best minds turned away from a serious consideration of Conan Doyle's place in literature, as Harold Orel has recently suggested? For if even Conan Doyle's most devoted acolytes deny his very existence as a writer, preferring instead to believe that he served merely as Watson's literary agent, why should literary critics and historians take up his cause?

The era of Charlie Peace and that of Sherlock Holmes most definitely overlapped, but they were parallel worlds rather than the same world. The one was real, the other fictional. Is it not enough to remember the fact that Peace's activities were known to Conan Doyle (who served as medical assistant in Sheffield for three weeks during the summer of 1878, not long after Peace lived there), and that the red fruit of Charlie's crime may well have surfaced in Holy Peters, John Clay, Baron Adelbert Gruner, Charles Augustus Milverton, Colonel Sebastian Moran, and Professor Moriarty?
Newgate Calendar

**Marshall Berdan—A Study in Scarlet Journalism: The Curious Noncorrelation Between Late Victorian Criminals and Those Depicted by John H. Watson, Popular Author**

A statistical analysis of early 20th century British criminals reveals some rather significant demographic and motivational discrepancies between malefactors who plagued the Metropolitan Police Force and those who populate the pages of Dr. Watson’s narratives.

Marshall Berdan is a public relations/political consultant in Washington D.C. who also publishes human interest pieces, travel articles and tracts on Virginia history. He is a member of The Red Circle of Washington and the Six Napoleons of Baltimore. He is the proud author of a Sherlockian monograph actually banned in Baltimore.

**Carole Nelson Douglas—Bohemian Scandals**

"Bohemian Scandals" will show how Ms. Douglas used character clues and inconsistencies about Irene Adler in "A Scandal in Bohemia" to create "a truly original perspective of the one whom the great detective himself dubbed ‘the woman’...Readers will doff their deerstalkers." (Publishers Weekly) Illustrated by examples from the Doyle story, the three Irene Adler novels, and the forthcoming Back to Bohemia (’94).

Carole Nelson Douglas grew up in Minnesota where she received degrees in Speech and Drama from The College of St. Catherine in St. Paul. She worked as a reporter and feature writer at the St. Paul Pioneer Press for 16 years. Her first book, Amberleigh, was published in 1980 and since then she has had 26 books published. Most recently Ms. Douglas has been continuing her series of successful Irene Adler and Midnight Louie novels.

**Harold Orel—Conan Doyle’s Sense of Justice**

Sherlock Holmes once said that he read nothing but the criminal news and the agony column. Conan Doyle, who read the entire newspaper, reacted strongly when he came across cases of social or judicial behavior that transgressed what he believed to be the rules of fair play. The range and intensity of his opinions are astonishing, and well worth remembering at this conference.

Dr. Harold Orel, Distinguished Professor of English at the University of Kansas, has edited two studies of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Interviews and Recollections (St. Martins, 1991) and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle: Critical Essays (G. K. Hall, 1992.) Dr. Orel received his M.A. and PhD from the University of Michigan and did post graduate work at Harvard University. He has taught overseas in Germany, Austria and England.

Dr. Orel has published extensively on Victorian and Nineteenth Century literature, including Thomas Hardy and Rudyard Kipling, among other subjects. His books include Thomas Hardy’s Epic Drama: A Study of The Dynasts (1963); The Final Years of Thomas Hardy, 1912-1928 (1976); Victorian Literary Critics (1984); The Victorian Short Story: Development and Triumph of a Literary Genre (1986); The Unknown Thomas Hardy: Lesser Known Aspects of Hardy’s Life and Career (1987) and A Kipling Chronology (1990).

He has also edited books on a wide range of topics:


Dr. Orel lives in Lawrence, Kansas with his wife, Charlyn.
Newgate Calendar

**John Pforr—Those Bars of Gold: Inhabitants and Proprietors of the Opium Dens of London. Tales From London’s East End.**

John Pforr is Gasogene of the Six Napoleons of Baltimore and a member of many other scions including The Sherlock Holmes Society of London and The Franco-Midland Hardware Company of England. His paper, “The Love-Hate Relationship between Sherlock Holmes and Scotland Yard” was expanded upon by Philip Weller and published through the auspices of the Franco-Midland Hardware Company. Mr. Pforr is a retired United States Secret Service agent having spent 25 years in that capacity.

**Alvin E. Rodin—Murderous Trio - Roylott, Palmer and Pritchard**

In comparison with Dr. Grimesby Roylott, other murderous physicians had a rather pleasant social demeanor. Prime examples of other doctors who had gone “wrong” are Palmer and Pritchard. Along with Roylott, they could be considered as psychopathic and/or criminally insane.

Dr. Al Rodin has recently changed his semilucrative occupation to that of the financially sparse one of full-time writing and lecturing. He is “Palmer” in the Baker Street Irregulars.

**R. Dixon Smith—Charlie Peace-A biographical account of his nefarious activities.**

R. Dixon Smith attended the University of Connecticut, where he received his BA and MA degrees. He has lectured on early cinema at numerous colleges and universities. Mr. Smith is the author of *Jeremy Brett & David Burke An Adventure in Canonical Fidelity*, a biography of writer Carl Jacobi, *Lost in the Rentharpian Hills*, and *Ronald Coleman, Gentleman of the Cinema: A Biography and Filmography*. He has been a member of the Norwegian Explorers since 1975.

**Marina Stajic—The Most Winning Women**

Of dubious and questionable memory, these *femmes fatales* were probably known to Sherlock Holmes as the deadliest things under a bonnet on this planet.

Dr. Marina Stajic is the Director of the Forensic Toxicology Laboratory at the Office of Chief Medical Examiner, New York City, where she more than just dabbles with poisons a good deal. She is a Baker Street Irregular (“Curare”), an Adventuress of Sherlock Holmes (“Lady Francis Carfax”) and a member of several other scion societies.