



THE FREDERIC  
DORR STEELE  
MEMORIAL  
COLLECTION

by Andrew Malec



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This brochure has been published  
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given by Mrs. Anne Steele Marsh,  
Mrs. Zulma Steele Grey,  
and Mr. Robert G. Steele.

One thousand copies printed,  
of which 325 are presented to the  
Baker Street Irregulars  
and the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes,  
on 9 January 1987,  
by John Bennett Shaw, BSI,  
Senior Fellow, University of Minnesota



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□

*Frederic  
Dorr  
Steele*

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## FREDERIC DORR STEELE

(August 6, 1873—July 6, 1944)

FOLLOWING A BOYHOOD spent in Eagle Mills, Michigan and Appleton, Wisconsin Frederic Dorr Steele went to New York City in 1889 to pursue a vocation as a professional illustrator. He studied at the Art Students League and the National Academy while supporting himself for three years by working as an architectural draughtsman. Steele next gained valuable experience by serving a two-year apprenticeship in the art department of the Harper publishing firm. Then, following a year as an art editor of *The Illustrated American* ending in 1897, Steele ventured forth as a free-lance artist. This he was to remain for the rest of his career, save for a brief interval at the end of World War I. Success came easily to the talented newcomer and soon Steele was regularly contributing drawings to the three leading illustrated periodicals of the day, *Harper's*, *Scribner's*, and the *Century*, as well as to those of a more popular orientation, exemplified by *McClure's Magazine*. His future seeming assured, Steele married Mary Thyng in November 1898, and entered the new century with high expectations.

In 1901 Steele formed a connection with the periodical which was to bring him his greatest fame when, at the author's suggestion, he illustrated Richard Harding Davis's mystery novellette *In the Fog* for its serialization in *Collier's Weekly*. Conan Doyle's *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* series followed there between 1903-1905 and as the decade progressed Steele's career con-

tinued to blossom with his work appearing in the periodicals already mentioned as well as such others as *The Metropolitan Magazine*, *The Delineator*, and *The American Magazine*. As his reputation grew among the readers of these magazines Steele was also winning official recognition for his work, when a group of his pictures won a bronze medal at the Universal Exposition in Saint Louis in 1904 and another selection was prominently featured as part of a traveling exhibition on American illustrators sponsored by *Collier's* between 1905-1907. For relaxation, Steele spent what time he could with his family at their summer home on Monhegan Island, ten miles off the coast of Maine, and, back in New York, he joined *The Players* in 1905.

If the first decade of the twentieth century was the one in which Steele made his name as an illustrator, the second was a period for consolidation of the position he had attained. His art was now seen less frequently in such traditional illustrated periodicals as *Scribner's* and the *Century* but appeared regularly in many others including *Everybody's Magazine*, *The Woman's Home Companion*, and *The Associated Sunday Magazine* which was carried as a weekly literary supplement by a number of major metropolitan newspapers. Another highlight for Steele was a chance to meet Arthur Conan Doyle on May 30, 1914 at a luncheon given for the author by Mark Sullivan, then editor of *Collier's*. Steele described the encounter in an article he published in 1937:

Here I can tell you what Sir Arthur said to me the one occasion when I met him. . . . I was somewhat palpitant when my turn came to talk with the great man. Would he be kind to me? Would he commend my earnest efforts? I must be self-effacing, I thought; I will ask him about Paget first. "Young man," he began briskly, "do you know who did the best illustrations ever made for me? Cyrus Cuneo!" He began to tell me why; something interrupted; the interview ended. I had not needed to be self-effacing. Sir Arthur effaced me. I can make no explanation of his preference. Mr. Cuneo was notorious for committing the illustrator's deadliest sin, giving the plot away. If he had done the drawings for Watson's tales, I felt sure no cunningly hidden solution, no trick ending was safe.

Steele had had ample opportunity to observe his competitor's work in *Collier's*, *Everybody's* and elsewhere but in fact Cuneo made drawings for only one Conan Doyle tale, his "How it Happened" in *The Strand Magazine* for September

1913. The Cuneo illustrations would have still been fresh in Conan Doyle's mind, which may explain his apparent high regard for them.

In 1918 Steele accepted the post of Director of the Art Department of *Everybody's Magazine* and made an attempt to revive the fortunes of the then flagging periodical by attracting contributions from many of his fellow leading illustrators, including Henry Raleigh and N.C. Wyeth. This attempt at resuscitation was in vain. Steele found himself out of a job in 1919, and soon after *Everybody's* dropped its interior illustrations entirely.

The failure of the *Everybody's* venture was symptomatic of a number of difficulties and changes besetting the publishing world following World War I, which were first to hamper and later all but end Steele's career as a magazine illustrator. Some magazines, like *Collier's*, underwent postwar changes of ownership leading to the disappearance of old friends. Some illustrated magazines became smaller or, like *Everybody's*, eliminated artwork all together; this happened to *Harper's Monthly Magazine* when Steele was in the middle of illustrating a new series of G.K. Chesterton's Father Brown stories. The layouts of magazines began to change, sometimes resulting in the splitting of illustrations across two pages (a development Steele loathed) and the running of large parts of the stories back into the advertising section, giving greater readership to the ads but leaving less room for pictures. Gone as well was the era of the great editors and their leisurely correspondence with authors and artists. Competition had become more fierce and the great emphasis now was on speed and on producing a standardized product.

With a family to support (one now containing three children) Steele at first adapted himself to the circumstances, finding new outlets for his work like the *Red Book* magazine as well as *Hearst's International* and *Liberty* where he again drew pictures for the Sherlock Holmes tales. He also began to appear more frequently in newspapers including the *New York Herald-Tribune* where, beginning in 1928, he became one of the most regular contributors of illustrations to its theatrical section. Despite the scope of these activities Steele found himself with increasingly more free time as the decade progressed, time spent on Monhegan and at The Players where he rose to prominence by editing

their *Bulletin*, helping to design the programs for their annual revivals of classic plays, and through his enthusiastic participation in their many pool tournaments. In more reflective moments Steele engaged in two new artistic pastimes, sensitive portraits in red chalk or charcoal and etching.

The 1930s started out on a high note for Steele when he toured Europe with his wife for several months, but the artist returned to the United States to see his career enter a serious decline. His illustrations seldom appeared in the major periodicals and instead he had to accept commissions from such comparatively unimportant publications as *The American Girl Magazine* and *The Youth's Companion*. By the end of the decade, he was eking out a spartan existence by supplying the occasional theatrical illustration to the *Herald-Tribune*. His private life soured as well: in 1936 Steele separated from his wife and, though they were never divorced, they thereafter lived apart. Steele moved into his studio, eventually ending up in a poorly heated one at 717 Greenwich Street where he was to stay until his final illness, taking his meals at a restaurant around the corner.

Occasionally Steele enjoyed pleasant diversions from this depressing state of affairs: if magazine editors seemingly were no longer interested in his art, other people were. In 1935 he had a one-man show at the Contemporary Arts Gallery in New York, concentrating on the sketches he had made in Italy, which received favorable press coverage. Steele was approached by the Library of Congress in 1932 to give some of his original drawings to their newly-formed Cabinet of American Illustration which was designed to preserve the work of the many notable artists who had contributed to the field. When a number of Steele's donations were put on exhibit in 1937 he had the singular distinction of being the first living illustrator to be so honored by the Library. And in 1939 Steele was asked to speak before the Grolier Club in connection with a retrospective exhibition on American illustrators then being held there. His talk so pleased the editors of *The Colophon*, who had been in attendance, that Steele was persuaded to write it for publication in the book collectors' journal. It appeared as No. 3 of their New Graphic Series for September 1939 under the title "Veteran Artist Goes Reminiscent."



Sherlock Holmes continued to play a prominent role in Steele's life as well, as the artist became one of the first members of the Baker Street Irregulars, corresponded with Sherlockians, and contributed to a number of their publications. In 1943 Steele received a commission from The Limited Editions Club that promised to allow him to realize one of his greatest ambitions: to illustrate *all* of the Sherlock Holmes stories, including those he had not done before, for a new, definitive edition of the tales. But for Steele the commission came too late. He had neglected his health for years and shortly after beginning work on The Limited Editions Club project became gravely ill. He died on July 6, 1944 before completing more than a preliminary stage of the work for the new edition.

Frederic Dorr Steele's life and career were not devoid of irony. He established himself at a very young age in the first rank of American illustrators and had every reason to expect continued success. Yet, caught up in circumstances he could neither control nor, from his personal perspective, fully understand he found instead that his last years were to be filled with disappointment. Though his devotion to his craft and refusal to compromise his standards continued to win him recognition among his peers, he was prevented from doing what he most deperately wanted to do—work.

In the end, however, Steele's integrity has given him the final victory. He has left a rich legacy behind him, and his work, preserved for us in books, magazines, and newspapers, is as fresh and vital now as when he set it down on paper. By contrast, many of the stories he illustrated seem badly dated by today's standards. Literary fashions may come and go, but Frederic Dorr Steele will never be out of style.



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*A middle-aged  
Frederic Dorr Steele,  
on a visit to Texas*

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## STEELE AND SHERLOCK HOLMES

FREDERIC DORR STEELE ILLUSTRATED twenty-six of the last thirty-three Sherlock Holmes stories for their initial American periodical appearances. The most well-known of these drawings are the ones he did for the thirteen tales of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes* series which appeared in *Collier's Weekly* between 1903-1905. These illustrations gained even wider circulation when the *Return* series was syndicated in a number of newspapers with the Steele artwork and when some of them were used by P.F. Collier for its three-volume *Conan Doyle's Best Books* (1904), a collection of the earlier Holmes tales and other Conan Doyle stories then in the public domain which was published in a vast edition. Steele modeled his interpretation of the detective upon the features of William Gillette, at the time widely regarded as the definitive stage portrayer of Sherlock Holmes, but his drawings proved to be so influential that the artist frequently had to correct the misimpression that Gillette had based his makeup on them.

Steele drew pictures for four more of the Holmes stories in *Collier's*: "The Singular Experience of Mr. J. Scott Eccles" and "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans" in 1908, "The Adventure of the Dying Detective" in 1913 (also issued by *Collier's* that year as a Christmas keepsake with a Steele frontispiece), and "His Last Bow: The War Service of Sherlock Holmes" in 1917. But the other Steele-illustrated Holmes

tales appeared in different magazines, including "The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax" in *The American Magazine* (1911), and, in *Hearst's International*, "The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone" (1921) and "The Creeping Man" (1923). These were followed by the last six stories of *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes* series in *Liberty* between 1926-1927, the adventures of "the Blanched Soldier," "the Three Gables," "the Lion's Mane," "the Retired Colourman," "the Veiled Lodger," and "Shoscombe Old Place." Not all of the Holmes tales published during the period came Steele's way but the artist received some consolation in 1925 and 1927 when the North American News Alliance commissioned him to supply pictures for newspaper reprints of seven of the *Case Book* narratives: "the Creeping Man," "the Sussex Vampire," "the Three Garridebs," "the Illustrious Client," "the Blanched Soldier," "the Three Gables," and "the Lion's Mane." Steele drew an advertisement for the syndication of the seven and for each tale provided either an entirely new illustration or revised one he had used previously for the magazines.

Steele was also associated with a number of adaptations of the stories, as when he illustrated Carolyn Wells's parody "The Adventure of the Clothes-Line" for its appearance in the May 1915 issue of the *Century Magazine*. The parody is slight, but Steele's portrait of Holmes presiding over Raffles, Father Brown, the Thinking Machine, and the other members of the Society of Infallible Detectives featured in it is memorable. Of more importance was Steele's work for the farewell tour of Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes* (1929-1932). For the tour Steele prepared a four-page advertising leaflet, designed a lithographed poster, and put together an elaborate souvenir program. Included among his illustrations for these were reworkings of his cover illustration for "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder" in *Collier's* (showing Holmes examining the bloody handprint on the wall) and a portrait of Gillette drawn from life. Steele wrote an article for the program as well, "Sherlock Holmes: A Little History of the World's Most Famous Fictional Character." In 1935 Doubleday, Doran & Company used a revised version of this article and several of Steele's illustrations for the first trade edition of *Sherlock Holmes*; a facsimile of this edition was published by Helan



□  
Steele's illustration of Holmes presiding over *The Society of Infallible Detectives*, drawn for Carolyn Wells's "The Adventure of the Clothes-Line"

Halbach in 1974.

Nor was the Steele influence absent from movie adaptations. In 1922 a silent-film version of Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes* was made with John Barrymore in the title role. Steele happened to see Barrymore just off the train from Hollywood after completing the film and was greatly pleased when the actor told him that they had used his illustrations to help them with the set designs. Later, in 1939, Steele was commissioned by Twentieth Century Fox to draw several promotional illustrations for its version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* starring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. Steele created a number of excellent drawings in crayon for the studio but was keenly disappointed when Fox used them only in trade journals and not as part of its wider publicity.

Steele could not resist writing some Sherlock Holmes stories of his own, all of them in a humorous vein. The first of these was an illustrated parody entitled "The Adventure of the Missing Hatrack" which was published in *The Players Bulletin* for October 15, 1926 and was concerned with Holmes's investigation of the mutilation of a magazine in the club's library. The parody was

subsequently reprinted in *The Players' Book* (1938). Next came "The Adventure of the Missing Artist" which Steele wrote and illustrated in 1928 for his friend Alexander F. Victor, inventor of cameras and projectors for 16 mm. film. In it Holmes and Watson look into the mysterious disappearance of Frederic Dorr Steele, eventually discovering that the artist has run off to Monhegan Island to try out one of Victor's new movie cameras. This parody apparently remained unpublished until 1967 when James Bliss Austin issued it as his *A Baker Street Christmas Stocking* for that year. A Steele skit with a similar plot but sardonic edge, "The Adventure of the Murdered Art Editor," was featured in Richard Butler Glaenzer's anthology *Spoofs* in 1933; this time Steele had sequestered himself on Monhegan where he divided his time between etching and plotting the destruction of magazine art editors. Still another illustrated parody, in which Holmes prevents Steele and his partner Rollin Kirby from eliminating their competition in a pool tournament, was published under the title "The Attempted Murder of Malcolm Duncan" in the June 1, 1932 issue of *The Players Bulletin*.

Steele's other Sherlockian writings were of a serious nature. In the *New Yorker* for May 22, 1937 was published his significant article "Sherlock Holmes in Pictures," an account full of both Steele's personal recollections and his frank opinions on the relative merits of the other delineators of the master sleuth. Steele also touched upon his Sherlockian illustrations in his "Veteran Artist Goes Reminiscent" written for *The Colophon* (New Graphic Series No. 3, September 1939).

Steele was sought out by the early Sherlockians among the first of which was Dr. Gray Chandler Briggs of Saint Louis with whom the artist began to correspond in 1921. Briggs acquired a number of Steele's original Sherlock Holmes drawings and sent him photographs and a hand-drawn map relating to the identifications of possible originals for Holmes's lodgings and Camden House in Baker Street. Steele gave Briggs's now famous findings their first publicity in his article for the Gillette farewell tour souvenir program. In the 1930s Steele and Briggs engaged in a three-way correspondence with Vincent Starrett while the latter was writing his classic *The Private Life of Sherlock*

First page of Steele's article for *The Colophon*, with his famous self-portrait

FREDERIC DORR STEELE

## Veteran Illustrator Goes Reminiscent

**T**he *Colophon* is a collector's magazine, and maybe is such surroundings I can qualify as a collector. For, as far as I know, I am the only artist who ever has kept the work of illustrators (done for the magazine) — and kept it in order. I began to do this back in the twenties, when I was employed, with two or three other young artists, in the back room of the Harpers' art department down in Peck Street. Edward Penfield was my boss as Art Editor, and I daily saw Mr. Alden in his little cubby-hole, and sometimes watched distinguished visitors pouring up that famous winding iron staircase. And there really was an Editor's Easy Chair for Mr. Howells to sit in. Once or twice I saw Richard Harding Davis stopping at the cubby's window to get a big cheque, looking quite as magnificent as he did in his friend Gibson's drawings. Peck Newell sometimes borrowed my brushes to make astonishing little water-colors while waiting for Penfield to come back from lunch.

That time was the legendary "golden age" of American illustration. Following the earlier period when Durley and others worked on, or for, the wood block, new freedoms had been given by the development of the photo-engraving process. The development of the photo-engraving process. Fyfe, Abbey, Frost, Bliss, Pennell, Spaulley and Remington had come into their own as artists of an American school. I already knew and loved their work; as a small boy I had made war pictures in emulation of those in the *Century*; I had gleefully followed Frost's honey, natural coveys; and perched up in an old beech tree at my grand-mother's home in Vermont, I had made friends with Kerble's Hackberry Finn. Now I could consult magazine files, and buy back numbers for



a nickel. So my collection of illustrations — if I may call it that — began.

It continued to grow for twenty-five years, but at last it became a burden. I quit loved it, but it had grown too big — good grounds for divorce. I began to wonder what I could do with it. I could find a place where it would be safe and I could have a look once in a while? I wrote Mr. Wetton at the New York Public Library, and asked him about it. It wasn't a complete collection of all illustrators, I told him. I had kept Abbey and thrown away Frederick Dielman, even though Dielman was President of the National Academy. It was, after all, a personal selection. Would his Library care to buy such a queer item? He answered that he'd like to do so but there was no appropriation. Later he told the Salesmen's Club about it. They bought the collection, finished the binding, and still have it on their shelves. I've

*Holmes*; Steele was able to supply some details about several of the illustrators of the Canon.

Steele was present at the first official dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars on December 7, 1934 and attended many of the group's subsequent meetings. Starting in 1940, his illustrations appeared on the B.S.I.'s dinner menus and other memorabilia, a tradition which continues to this day. His prose and pictures were included in some of the Irregulars' early scholarly works and anthologies as well. Edgar Smith's *Baker Street and Beyond: A Sherlockian Gazetteer* (1940) featured a Steele Sherlockian frontispiece drawn expressly for the purpose. Also in 1940 came an anthology edited by Vincent Star-

rett, 221B: *Studies in Sherlock Holmes by Various Hands*, in which was reprinted a slightly revised version of Steele's article "Sherlock Holmes in Pictures." Reproduced in the volume as well were a two-minute sketch of Holmes Steele had once done for Starrett and the artist's 1929 portrait of William Gillette. For his frontispiece in Edgar Smith's 1944 anthology, *Profile by Gaslight: An Irregular Reader About the Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, Steele prepared a new version of the poster he had drawn for the farewell tour of the Gillette play. But Steele was most widely represented in another 1944 anthology, Ellery Queen's *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Appearing therein was a reprint of his parody "The Adventure of the Murdered Art Editor" headed by a variation of a self-portrait he had drawn for Charles Honce; two of his illustrations for Carolyn Wells's "The Adventure of the Clothes-Line," one used as a frontispiece to the volume and the other to accompany the parody itself; and still another version of Steele's poster design for Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes*. Steele also prepared an excellent drawing for the dust jacket of the Queen anthology.

Other Sherlockian drawings appeared in even more esoteric places. For the *Twenty Fifth Anniversary Year Book* of The Dutch Treat Club (1930), Steele supplied an illustration captioned "Sherlock Takes a Chance on a D.T. Lunch" to accompany the facsimile reproduction of some notes William Gillette had made for a talk delivered there. In 1935, for the catalogue of his exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Gallery, Steele drew a caricature of himself, canvas under arm, running away from the stern gaze of Sherlock Holmes; this picture was also used as the tail-piece of his article for the *Colophon*. And in 1937 he drew the self-portrait for Charles Honce noted above in which Steele was shown being examined through a magnifying glass by Sherlock Holmes. This rendition was prepared in connection with an Associated Press article Honce wrote on the occasion of the Steele exhibition at the Library of Congress. When Honce reprinted the article in his *A Sherlock Holmes Birthday and Other Bookish Stories Conceived in the Form of News* (1938) he used the Steele drawing as a frontispiece and the self-portrait appeared again on the catalogue for the Frederic Dorr Steele Memorial Exhibition held at the Morton Galleries of New York in 1945.

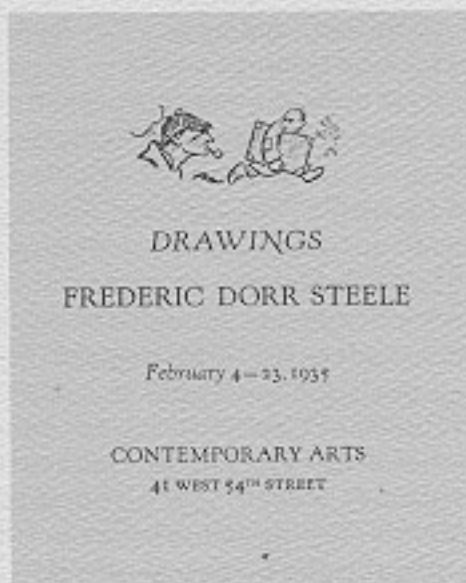




Frederic Dorr Steele

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*Steele's drawing for  
The Dutch Treat  
Club's Twenty Fifth  
Anniversary Year  
Book, 1930*



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*Catalogue for  
Steele's exhibition at  
the Contemporary  
Arts Gallery, 1935*

The commission Steele received from The Limited Editions Club in 1943 would have allowed the artist perhaps his greatest accomplishment in the Sherlockian sphere. The idea of a completely Steele-illustrated edition of the Canon had been in the wind since the early 1930s, giving him time to carefully lay out such a project in his mind. Though he knew it would be

too large an undertaking if he started from scratch, Steele thought he could lessen the work load by adapting many of his previously published Sherlock Holmes illustrations so that they would be better suited for reproduction in a book. Including his crayon drawings for the film version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, he had already illustrated thirty of the Holmes tales in at least some manner, and further believed that a number of his drawings for them had been of a sufficiently general character that they could be moved from one story to another. Taking this approach Steele thought that he could reduce the total of entirely new illustrations he would have to prepare to a manageable number. Thus, in the *Prospectus of the Fifteenth Series of the Fine Books Published by The Limited Editions Club, November 1943-October 1944*, came the announcement of the edition, one which was to include seventy illustrations by Frederic Dorr Steele.

When the go-ahead came from George Macy, Steele began to work rapidly, keeping at it through Christmas 1943 and into the new year. He gathered together as much of his old work as he could lay his hands on (including several of his illustrations for non-Sherlock Holmes stories which he thought would be suitable) in order to revise it for the new purpose. But the work was far from finished when Steele died. Owing to the lack of cooperation of the Doyle estate and other difficulties, The Limited Editions Club had to wait until 1950-1952 to publish the complete Sherlock Holmes in eight volumes. From the work Steele had managed to get done it was able to use fifty-eight illustrations. This proved to be an inadequate number so it also included in its volumes a representative selection of the work of other illustrators of the Holmes tales. The eight volumes were in turn reprinted as three by Macy's Heritage Club between 1952-1957. Ironically, it is the historical selection of illustrations which is now one of the most celebrated features of The Limited Editions Club edition. There can be little doubt, however, that the edition is but a pale reflection of what it might have been had Steele been able to fulfill his original intentions.



## STEELE'S OTHER WORK

THOUGH MOST WELL KNOWN for his association with Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes tales, Steele also illustrated stories by many other eminent authors of his and our day. Among them were Robert Barr, Arnold Bennett, Willa Cather, Richard Harding Davis, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Joseph Hergesheimer, Jerome K. Jerome, Rudyard Kipling, Frank L. Packard, Arthur Somers Roche, Frank R. Stockton, and Mark Twain. Even though Steele's drawings for periodicals were reprinted in the books of these authors in many instances, the artist did not often prepare illustrations specifically for book publication. Notable exceptions include the Century Company's new edition of Frank R. Stockton's *The Casting Away of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine* in 1898, which was Steele's first important book commission, and W. Somerset Maugham's *The Moon and Sixpence*, which Steele illustrated for George Macy's Heritage Club in 1941.

Steele's Sherlock Holmes work led to commissions to do drawings for a number of other mystery stories, including James Barnes's novel *Outside the Law*, Charles Wadsworth Camp's Garth stories, several Father Brown tales by G.K. Chesterton, E.W. Hornung's Crime Doctor series and Edward H. Hurlbut's collection of narratives concerning the newspaperman amateur detective Lanagan, as well as two short novels by Mary Roberts Rinehart. Steele also did a number of dust jacket illustrations for Doubleday's

Crime Club, especially for the Reggie Fortune books of H.C. Bailey. Steele even moved into the realm of true crime when he did cover illustrations for several of the articles in Arthur E. McFarlane's "The Business of Arson" series in *Collier's Weekly*. Steele came to believe that he was regarded as an artist suitable to illustrate detective fiction alone and attributed the decline of his career to such a perception.

Whether he became typecast as a crime story artist or not, Steele also managed to gain a reputation as an illustrator of children's stories. Among the authors for whose tales he did his most significant work were Owen Johnson, Myra Kelly, George Madden Martin, Lucy Pratt, Edwin L. Sabin, and Elinore Cowan Stone.

When Steele began to contribute illustrations to the *New York Herald-Tribune's* theatrical section in 1928 he may have thought only of supplementing the income from his magazine work. But the theater was soon to provide Steele with a second career of sorts and between 1928 and 1944 there appeared in the *Herald-Tribune* some 200 illustrations by the artist, representing nearly as many different plays. Few of the important actors and actresses of the day escaped Steele's pen, the list including Judith Anderson, Fred Astaire, Tallulah Bankhead, Ethel Barrymore, Shirley Booth, Nigel Bruce, Charles Coburn, George M. Cohan, Katharine Cornell, Noel Coward, Henry Daniell, Maurice Evans, Henry Fonda, Lynn Fontanne, William Gillette, Ruth Gordon, Sidney Greenstreet, Walter Hampden, Helen Hayes, Katharine Hepburn, Dennis Hoey, Leslie Howard, Walter Huston, Laurence Olivier, Gregory Peck, Clifton Webb, and Orson Welles. Among the plays represented were *Sherlock Holmes*, *Design for Living*, *Mary of Scotland*, *Ah, Wilderness!*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Rain*, *Seven Keys to Baldpate*, *Victoria Regina*, *Saint Joan*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Amphitryon 38*, *I'd Rather Be Right*, *The Sea Gull*, *Hamlet*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *Life With Father*, *Cabin in the Sky*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Watch on the Rhine*, *Blithe Spirit*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Porgy and Bess*, *The Moon is Down*, and *The Skin of Our Teeth*. Owing to the fragility of newspapers, Steele's theatrical illustrations are among the least known portions of his work today, yet many of them are as good as some of his best drawings for magazines.



## THE FREDERIC DORR STEELE MEMORIAL COLLECTION

THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND RARE BOOKS division of the University of Minnesota Libraries is pleased to announce the acquisition of a major collection of letters, manuscripts, photographs, printed and graphic materials, and other memorabilia relating to the life and career of Frederic Dorr Steele. The collection was generously donated to the Library in 1986 by the artist's children, Anne Steele Marsh, Zulma Steele Grey, and Robert G. Steele.

Among the correspondence is a group of early letters exchanged between Steele and his family giving details of his younger days. Later letters document the period Steele served as Art Editor of *Everybody's Magazine*, the evolution of his important article "Sherlock Holmes in Pictures," his relationship with the Library of Congress and its Cabinet of American Illustration which led to the establishment of an important Steele collection there, and his association with George Macy's Limited Editions and Heritage Clubs. Two carbon typescripts of Steele's "Veteran Artist Goes Reminiscent" show the transition of the piece from a talk delivered before the Grolier Club to an article printed in *The Colophon*.

In the photographs are featured several of Steele's ancestors in addition to the artist himself, his wife, and children. Particularly well covered is the tour of Europe Steele made with his wife between 1930-1931. Steele's memberships in various clubs and social organizations are well represented, particularly for The Players of

New York: there is a virtually complete run of *The Players Bulletin* (which Steele edited for a number of years) as well as copies of programs for many of The Players' revivals of classic plays, frequently containing Steele illustrations. There is also a file of catalogues, letters, and other materials pertaining to Steele's various exhibitions, with especially comprehensive coverage of the Memorial Exhibition held at the Morton Galleries of New York in 1945.

The graphic materials range from youthful productions such as a 54-foot long "Circus Procession" which Steele drew between July and October 1881 to three of his later Sherlockian sketches. There are also about two dozen of his portraits in red chalk or charcoal and more than a score of his etchings; as these portraits and etchings were usually done on commission or for family and friends they are among the least known parts of Steele's artwork.

Rounding out the bequest are about sixty books, including those containing Steele illustrations and other contributions, several volumes by Rockwell Kent with inscriptions reflecting his friendship with Steele, and a number of the works of Steele's maternal grandmother Julia Caroline Ripley Dorr, a respected writer of poetry, novels, and travel books. Highlights include Steele's own copy of the 1936 Doubleday, Doran edition of *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* with numerous annotations by the artist in addition to his personal copies of Gillette's play *Sherlock Holmes*, the Vincent Starrett edited anthology *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*, and *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes* edited by Ellery Queen.

The Frederic Dorr Steele materials now join the Library's other holdings relating to the artist. These include a large group of the illustrations he prepared for The Limited Editions Club project, drawings for other Sherlock Holmes books of the 1940s, and Sherlockian correspondence which are part of the Philip S. and Mary Kahler Hench Collection, and a fine group of letters from Steele to Gray Chandler Briggs previously donated to the Library by Dr. John P. Crotty of Saint Louis. The new bequest has been named *The Frederic Dorr Steele Memorial Collection* and will be maintained separately by the Library.

