Frederic Dorr Steele: The Definitive Illustrator

In the chapter titled "The Evolution of a Profile," Vincent Starrett wrote of Frederic Dorr Steele’s illustrations for the Sherlock Holmes stories:

What illustrations they have been! No happier association of author and artist can be imagined... For Mr. Steele was destined for his task as surely as Watson for his Sherlock Holmes. An ardent lover of the long detective, even before he undertook the drawings, his work has been from first to last a labor of affection... Sixty tales, in all, comprise the saga of Sherlock Holmes; and Steele has illustrated twenty-nine. While yet he lives and loves, and lifts his pencil, will he not do the other thirty-one? To some Sherlockian friend among the publishers, one offers the suggestion—a Definitive Edition—with all the stories pictured by Mr. Steele. (183-84.)

Starrett wrote this in The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes, published in 1930. It would be nine years before George Macy of The Limited Editions Club contacted Steele about undertaking these illustrations, thirteen before the commission was approved and twenty years before the first of the Limited Editions Canon was published.

Frederic Dorr Steele was born to an artistic family on August 6, 1873 in northern Michigan, and lived in Wisconsin and Vermont before moving to New York City in 1889. He found employment in an architect’s office before moving on to Harper’s and Illustrated American. His fine-lace work throughout his career was featured in Life, Scribner’s, Harper’s, Century, The Metropolitan Magazine, The Delineator, The American Magazine, Redbook, Hearst’s International, Liberty and McClure’s.
In April 1902 Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens 1835-1910) published A Double-Barrelled Detective Story. He began writing this burlesque using grotesque violence and melodrama concerning revenge and spoiling detective fiction. The double-barrel of this story is by theme and structure closer to A Study in Scarlet. The first barrel is a story of revenge with a man possessing the ability to track like a bloodhound. The second barrel, also about revenge, makes fun of Sherlock Holmes’ detective ability. The final seven chapters are set in Hope Canyon, California where Sherlock Holmes visits his nephew Ferlock Jones. The story is subheaded, “We ought never to do wrong when people are looking.” Chapter 4 contains the famous purple prose passage with “far in the empty sky a solitary oesopagamus slept upon motorless wing,” which later reprints was further spoofed with similar footnotes and quotes from newspapers.

The Sherlock Holmes Collections has both states of the American first edition of A Double-Barrelled Detective Story.

The Bibliography of American Literature lists it as number 3471 with the difference in states of undetermined sequence being the end papers and the location of the highest peak in a three-paned picture. The Harper & Brothers Publishers edition had Lucius Hitchcock’s illustrations with green borders, which appear with red borders in the first English edition by Chatto & Windus. Bernard Tauchnitz also published an edition in 1902 in Leipzig of his collection of British and AmericanAuthors vol. 391. John Bennett Shaw had collected several early translations of the story including a 1910 French edition, a 1914 Danish edition and a 1920 Spanish edition. Mark Twain’s A Double-Barrelled Detective Story was adapted for the stage by Robert St. Clair in 1954 and published in a paperback edition.

At the time Twain wrote this story, he and Arthur Conan Doyle had not yet met. Conan Doyle, along with many British authors, signed the telegram sent to Twain in 1905 for his 70th Birthday celebration at Delmonico’s Restaurant in New York City. They finally met in England in 1907 and shared an interest in the CocoGordo Reform Association. In 1979, Cyril Clemens, editor of The Mark Twain Journal, reported that Arthur Conan Doyle had been a member of the Mark Twain Society at the end of his life.

Richard J. Swurm, M.D., B.S.I.
References
Frederic Dorr Steele  Continued from Page 1

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Much has been written about Steele. Featured here are several of Steele’s drawings from the collection of Philip S. Hinch, M.D., that are now a part of The Sherlock Holmes Collections. For more information on Steele, Andrew Malec’s The Frederic Dorr Steele Memorial Collection is available on the Web site for the University of Minnesota Libraries at http://www.smm.edu/.

Julie McKaras, A.S.H., B.S.I.

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His career declined during the 1930’s and a commission for The Limited Editions Club was a promising one. The Archival History of the Baker Street Irregulars, edited by Jon L. Lellenberg, B.S.I., gives a detailed account of the years, problems and efforts that went into publishing this edition. In the series, portions of the November 1930 – June 1944 correspondence, which consists of Macy’s originals and Steele’s draft copies, are cited. (These letters were donated to the University of Minnesota in 1986 by Steele’s three children.)

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The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections had the opportunity to recognize and thank our Charter Members in the Newsletter. About one third of current membership has been with us since 1997 when we started the Newsletter, and we look forward to maintaining that connection. We are always looking to increase our membership while recognizing the invaluable support we receive from groups such as The Occupants of the Empty House who annually contribute proceeds from their auction. In the words of my daughters’ Girl Scout song, “Make new friends, but keep the old, one is silver and the other gold.”

Theofanis G. Stavrou, President of the University of Minnesota Friends of the Library, was honored at the Annual Dinner on April 18, 2002. The University Friends of the Library hosted the Gala Grand Reopening of Walter Library on June 5, 2002. The Walter Library building was third home of the University Library when it was completed in 1924, and the Arthur Upson Room located in the Walter Library was the original home of Special Collections and Rare Books.

Don Terras and Richard J. Sveum

The new Walter Library will contain the Science and Engineering Library along with the new Digital Technology Center. The exterior of the Roman Renaissance building with red bricks and Bedford limestone trim and colonnaded portico was preserved along with some interior architectural detail, the rest is very high tech. If you can’t visit in person you can visit their website at screwbib.umn.edu.

The University Library’s Capital Campaign will conclude in 2003. The Sherlock Holmes Collections is encouraging everyone to donate to the E.W. McDiarmid Curator Endowment. With your help we can reach our goal to be the World Center for the study of Sherlock Holmes. Richard J. Sveum, M.D., B.S.I.

Acquisitions

David Hammer continues his ongoing donation of his Sherlockian library to the Sherlock Holmes Collections. Mr. Hammer recently forwarded three large boxes to add to those previously received. One of the newly arrived boxes contained manuscripts, papers, ephemera and pamphlets and the other two boxes contained books.

The STUD dinner, held on May 4, 2002 in Chicago, was the perfect opportunity for Jerry Terras to present the 30th Anniversary poster of the Cimmeron Bar Association to Friends President Richard J. Sveum. In addition to the various images of Holmes on screen, the poster lists past presidents and the founders of the society.

The University of Minnesota Friends of the Library Association annual meeting in Atlanta. You may wonder at this point at the recitation of this end-of-year calendar. Not all of these events deal with the Sherlock Holmes Collections. That is true. But it is also true that all these events allow me the opportunity to at least mention Holmes in passing and to give him his proper indication of the depth and breadth of the world’s largest collection relating to the consulting detective. And who knows? Maybe among the middle school students will come another member of the Friends and the Norwegians Explorers. Maybe among those at lectures or receptions will be another donor who takes an interest in keeping forever green the memory of the Master. What will the rest of the summer bring? Who can tell? But we have the sense that whatever comes it will be both interesting and relaxing. May this find you well in all your summer endeavors.

From the President

I am proud to announce that Steven Doyle, B.S.I. (“The Western Morning News”) has accepted an invitation to be the guest speaker at the annual meeting of The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections. Mark your calendars for this exceptional program to be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, September 19, 2002 at the Elmer L. Andersen Library.

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Having been both a Scout and a Scout leader, I particularly enjoyed Dick Sveum’s reference to the Girl Scout song “Make New Friends, but Keep the Old.” I believe we could reword that to “Write new articles, but remember the old ones” to apply to the previous issue of this newsletter. Two fine Sherlockians took time to comment upon different articles from the March issue.

Andrew Malec, B.S.I. referenced the law case brought by Charles Frohman against the producers of “Sherlock Holmes, Detective: or The Sigh (sic) of the Four” and pointed to the December 1975 and March 1976 issues of the Baker Street Miscellanea. John Nieminski’s December article covered the brief but tumultuous run of the play written by John Arthur Fraser. Nieminski wrote that “A stock company effort presented jointly with a group of vaudeville acts lasted for but four of its six scheduled performances, all in Chicago in May 1901. The run was terminated on May 10 as a result of a court injunction stemming from a suit brought by Charles Frohman…The Hopkins Amusement Company, Fraser’s producers, appealed the Circuit Court action to the First District, but lost the case in October 1902.” The District Court opinion, quoted in the article, states: “It is apparent that the latter [by Gillette] may suffer in reputation by the production of an inferior play under a name so closely identified with that produced by appellee.” Mr. Nieminski cited reviews which left no question as to the inferior quality of the play, including: “Mr. Fraser has taken pains to excuse every vestige of existing material in the tale and has formed his play of the uninteresting incidents in a crude and unskillful fashion.” The March 1976 editorial comments gave further credence to the merciful cessation of the play. Having now read the script, the commentator wrote: “…the shade of Thespis assuredly heaved a sigh of gratitude when Charles Frohman’s injunction rang down the curtain.” Our thanks to Andrew for this information.

Jon Lellenberg, B.S.I. has also contributed an article in response to the John Bennett Shaw-Jack Tracy letters that Christopher and Barbara Roden donated to the Sherlock Holmes Collections. I would like to thank him for his additional clarification as to the ‘good and the bad’ aspects for those of us who did not know Tracy. Also, as you will note in both the lead and the 50 Years Ago articles there are references to the BSJ History series, edited by Jon. The first three volumes of the archival series are hard to locate. If you don’t want to go through the agony of trying to find books you know you should have purchased while they were still available, check the web site www.bakerstreetjournal.com where Volume 4, Irregular Proceedings of the Mid Forties (including postage, $31.95 U.S./$32.95 outside the U.S.) and Volume 5, Irregular Crises of the Late Forties ($37.95/$38.95) remain available.

We are truly pleased to have Peter E. Blau author our 50 Years Ago article. He brings his extensive personal knowledge of The Limited Editions Club as well as his unique storytelling ability to this piece. As you can see from Tim Johnorris’s update, Special Collections and Rare Books has been a busy place this spring. Dick Sveum has given us an overview of the activities of the Friends of the Library as well as the 100 Years Ago article about Mark Twain. What connections we have in this issue: Mark Twain was a neighbor of William Gillette, whose portrait as Holmes was drawn by Frederic Dorr Steele, who illustrated one of Twain’s works. And all three of them belonged to the Players Club.

Lastly, in doing preliminary research for this issue, we came upon the 1952 pamphlet The Sherlock Holmes Faqs by Pope Hill, Sr. This short pamphlet was but a piece of his original lengthy manuscript which apparently was never published. If anyone has any information about this manuscript, please contact me. We would love to solve the mystery of what happened to it.

Julie McAuras, A.S.H., B.S.I.

An Extraordinarily Nasty Reply

I n March’s newsletter, Richard Sveum wrote about Barbara and Christopher Roden donating the John Bennett Shaw-Jack Tracy correspondence that they acquired from the auction of Tracy’s effects by the Nevada county where he died intestate. I was sorry to see, toward the end of the article, Tracy telling Shaw that he had written to Dame Jean Conan Doyle about including “The Stonor Case” (a version of the “Speckled Band” stage-play) in his book Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha, and claiming that he had “received an extraordinarily nasty reply, categorically denying permission to publish.” Not everyone knew Jack Tracy or Dame Jean Conan Doyle. I knew them both, and I knew which one was and which one was not capable of an “Extraordinarily Nasty reply.” It may be foolish to let something written by Tracy in 1978 annoy me in 2002, especially since both he and Jean have been gone for some years. But I knew her for 20 years, represented her literary interests in America, and find it impossible to let Tracy’s remark stand unchallenged.

Thanks to Chris Roden, I have a copy of Jean’s May 8, 1978, letter to Tracy. She was answering his of April 17th, in which he informed her of his plans for the Apocrypha and asked to include “Angels of Darkness” (Conan Doyle’s unfinished play based on the American episodes in A Study in Scarlet) and the “Stoner Case.” Jean replied:

There have been several enquiries regarding “The Angels of Darkness,” but my father did not want it published, nor did my brothers, and nor do I. He wrote to apologize for the ‘Angels of Darkness’ she doesn’t consider the book at all offensive. All your elaborate doomsaying gone for naught.”

I do not see anything “extraordinarily nasty” in this reply.

In 1978, I was putting together the system to recapture the U.S. Conan Doyle copyrights for Jean under the new Copyright Act in effect that year, and to represent her when recapture took effect. I was also, with misgivings, informally advising Tracy in his editorial plans, including the creation of his own imprint, Gaslight Publications. So I corresponded with both of them frequently. But a check of my letters from Tracy turns up no complaint about Jean’s reply re: “The Stoner Case.” Instead, his letter of June 3 told Jean, discussing Gaslight’s forthcoming Centennial Series of early Conan Doyle novels, remarked “Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha will be published by Houghton Mifflin next month.” I know you’re not in sympathy with the project, but if you will allow me to present you with a copy I’m sure you will find that the approach at least is serious and respectful.” And so it was, on the whole — though marred for me — for Jean by some gratuitously spiteful comments in Tracy’s introduction.

Sir Arthur was his own worst critic: — in more ways than one, because his self-judgment was not always good. He bitterly resented the unauthorized publication of those works he considered unworthy, and following his death in 1930 his children became even more protective, aggressively limiting which of their father’s writings might reach the public. For nearly forty years Sherlockians railed helplessly and politely, at these ‘recalcitrant heirs,’ but recently the copyrights were sold, and the new proprietors are more open to reason.

I informed Tracy with some asperity that the copyright sale to which he referred had in fact occurred seven years before, and was about to be ancient history — for at that very moment, Jean was in the process of recapturing her father’s copyrights.

I could hear his gasp of dismay all the way from Bloomington, Indiana. But, as others can testify, admonishment seldom had much effect on Tracy. In my files is the subsequent September 12, 1980, letter that I received from him, which he wrote ‘happy to hear that since we spoke last, I’ve received two gracious letters from Dame Jean about the Apocrypha, and while he did not want a ‘more published’ ‘Angels of Darkness’ she doesn’t consider the book at all offensive. All your elaborate doomsaying gone for naught.”

Jean always acknowledged Tracy’s devotion to her father’s work. “I’m so sorry that Jack Tracy has turned out to be rather a disappointment to you,” she wrote to me on November 5, 1980:

He wrote to apologize for the remark in the Apocrypha, indicating that he’d had a reprimand from her. In reply I passed it off lightly, as I’m all for freedom to express one’s opinion, however much one disagrees with it.
"An Extraordinarily Nasty Reply" Continued

however, privately I thought it revealed his ignorance of the true facts, insensitivity, and a certain falseness of character. I thought of what he had said to me and felt that I might prevail upon Dame Jean to write an Introduction to the new edition. More worsewise was her dislike of his (also never fulfilled) plan to write a novel about her father. “Dame Jean hates the idea, of course, which is understandable,” he told Blau on August 5, 1981, “and won’t review the manuscript, but perhaps she’ll be soothed when the book comes out and people tell her it ain’t half bad (unless Leliebigel gets to her first).” By now I was the villain of the piece, but I wasn’t the only one telling Tracy that Jean didn’t care for the idea, judging from Tracy’s letter to Blau on October 5, 1981:

Your comment about Dame Jean in your August 9 card is the second time you’ve suggested that she might freeze out me or Gaskill because she is in disagreement with some of your projects or statements. Such a thing is utterly foreign to everything I’ve ever heard about her and to my own experience with her, including even after the appearance of the Apocrypha.

Which is a far cry from the idea of Jean Conan Doyle as a writer of extraordinarily nasty replies:

“I don’t know why people insist on assuming my novel is in any way critical of Spiritualism.” Tracy wrote farther to Blau on October 19, 1981.

It isn’t. Quite the reverse. Indeed, Dame Jean has told me the main reason she won’t read the book is because as a historical novelist I can’t help but get little things wrong, and that would disturb her. I don’t think the Spiritualism angle is the issue. She just doesn’t like today’s trend of writing about the recent past — pointed out Brian Garfield’s Paladin as a particularly distasteful book. A lot of people seem to be claiming to speak for Dame Jean these days (I don’t mean you). She speaks rather well for herself, and I think I’ll take her at her word.

So now we see Tracy as Jean’s defender (and of course, she’s the one at the same time). What Jean actually told him, in a July 2, 1981, letter that illustrates both her views and her personal distaste, was this:

After all the reasons for thanking you, and having agreed with you over so much, it’s with sadness that I have to tell you that I am utterly opposed to your latest venture — writing a fictional story about my father. I’ve always had the deepest distaste for this modern innovation — the production of famous people, living or dead, at the centre of works of fiction. The plays about Churchill, for instance, disgusted me and one was border on question the author’s motives. In these times when all moral standards seem to be slipping over the horizon, and to make money is put before moral considerations, taking such liberties with the characters and lives of real people seems to be some- thing that should be resisted. It is a dangerous blurring of the margin between what is true and what is false. My views may seem very old fashioned to you, but I know my father would have shared this type of “literature.” He brought me up to have a deep respect for “facts” and for truth, so it follows that “fiction” is an anathema to me, as it is to many others, I’m glad to say. I appreciate your book would reflect the admiration you feel for my father, but however accurately you may think you are portraying him, his family life, and his Spiritualistic lecture tours, you would be bound to get much of it completely wrong. How could it be otherwise when you never knew him, or us, and were not around at the time? Of course you will have had the advantage of reading Our American Adventure and Our Second American Adventure, which will have given you some of the facts. It’s true, as I remember clearly, that the New York press was extremely brash, by British standards at that time, but the vast crowds which came to the lectures were not, and my father was given a wonderful reception wherever he went in public. I remember that, as a family, we were very happy on the tour, occasional controversies were only to be expected, but both my parents felt the tours were immensely successful. So many accounts of my father and Spiritualism, Houdini etc tell only half the story — writers’ research lacks depth. I’ve too much on my plate to correspond about Spiritualism, a subject which cannot be dealt with in a few pages, let alone paragraphs, but whenever I hear someone say they do not believe in it, I wonder how many years they have spent in practical investigation. It took my father many years before he was convinced. He said that if a photographer takes a whole roll of films and only one comes out the case for photography is proved; that it’s the same with Spiritualism, one may get many false messages from the “departed,” come across many coincidences and defacements, but you never have to take the bad with the good from Jean Conan Doyle, who was a woman of firm views but also of unfailing courtesy, even when she did not agree with you. It had not always been so among Conan Doyle’s children — so how fortunate it was for us that the last of them was her.

Tracy helped make Conan Doyle not only respectable but the focus of serious interest in Sherlockian circles, and Jean was grateful to him for that. “Thank you very much for your letter and the Afterword for The Form of Gnosticism which I found interesting, reading,” she’d written to him on October 6, 1980:

As I wrote to you before — how interested, and flattered, my father would have been to read your criticisms of factual approaches to spiritualism, insensitivity, and a certain effrontery that we could prevail upon Dame Jean to edit and publish an edition of her. I don’t think the Spiritualism angle is an issue. I’ve too much on my plate to correspond about Spiritualism, a subject which cannot be dealt with in a few pages, let alone paragraphs, but whenever I hear someone say they do not believe in it, I wonder how many years they have spent in practical investigation. It took my father many years before he was convinced. He said that if a photographer takes a whole roll of films and only one comes out the case for photography is proved; that it’s the same with Spiritualism, one may get many false messages from the “departed,” come across many coincidences and defacements, but you never have to take the bad with the good from Jean Conan Doyle, who was a woman of firm views but also of unfailing courtesy, even when she did not agree with you. It had not always been so among Conan Doyle’s children — so how fortunate it was for us that the last of them was her.

From the above you will have gathered that I do not want to be associated with your book in any way whatsoever, or with the publishers, however well intentioned your book may be. This letter is far longer than I’d intended but I felt that your past courtesies to me and the great interest you have in my father’s works, deserved more than a curt denial of any co-operation, and of my fundamental opposition to fictional novels about my father (which I cannot overlook) and therefore my personal distaste for your project.

As Tracy noted, Dame Jean spoke very well for herself. And the "extraordinarily nasty reply" he claimed to have received from her evaporates upon examination.

Why then did Tracy say such a thing to John Bennett Shaw? People who knew Tracy probably require no explanation. It was a way of dealing with his feelings about Spiritualism, a subject which cannot be dealt with in a few pages, let alone paragraphs, but whenever I hear someone say they do not believe in it, I wonder how many years they have spent in practical investigation. It took my father many years before he was convinced. He said that if a photographer takes a whole roll of films and only one comes out the case for photography is proved; that it’s the same with Spiritualism, one may get many false messages from the “departed,” come across many coincidences and defacements, but you never have to take the bad with the good from Jean Conan Doyle, who was a woman of firm views but also of unfailing courtesy, even when she did not agree with you. It had not always been so among Conan Doyle’s children — so how fortunate it was for us that the last of them was her.

"An Extraordinarily Nasty Reply" Continued

Continued on page 7

1 Tracy quotes from this letter in his introduction to Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha (Houghton Mifflin, 1980): “The unpublished Apocrypha remain so. ‘My father did not wish it published, nor did my brothers, and nor do I.’ Dame Jean Conan Doyle, the last surviving direct descendent, has written to us.”

2 In 1947, Dame Jean finally agreed to a B1 edition of “Angels of Darkness” with a scholarly apparatus that would present the work in context, and the executors of her estate, following her death at the end of that year, also agreed to the B1 edition that was published this year.

3 “For 60 years the Doyle estate repressed efforts to anthology the six pieces, from the band of Sir Arthur, collected here for the first time,” opened the promotional flyer sent by Houghton Mifflin to Baker Street Journal subscribers at the end of September 1980: “For the most part, they are known to only a handful of Holmes experts — but recently the copyrights were sold — and the new proprietors have finally granted permission to make this collected edition possible.”

Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections
"An Extraordinarily Nasty Reply" Continued

however, privately I thought it revealed his ignorance of the true facts, inexactitude, and a certain tastelessness. All the same, I thought he was right to write his letter. I hope he will be pleased with the result. I have put his letter in brackets, both to show the style of his writing and to give him the satisfaction of seeing it published here, for I think it is a fair representation of his attitude at the time. I have also put his letter in the same context as the others that I have published, in order to give a balanced view of the whole affair.

Tracy helped make Conan Doyle not only respectable but the focus of serious interest, and the Firm of Girdlestone was the publisher's publicity for the British Centennial Series novel, The Firm of Girdlestone, and they were good productions. The Firm

By now the Apocrypha have been published, and it is clear that we could prevail upon Dame Jean to write a novel about her father. "Dame Jean hates the idea, of course, which is understandable," he told Blau on August 5, 1981, "and won't review the manuscript, but perhaps she'll be soothed when the book comes out and people tell her it ain't half bad (unless Lellenberg gets to her first)." By now I was the villain of the piece, but I wasn't the only one telling Tracy that Jean didn't care for the idea, judging from Tracy's letter to Blau on October 5, 1981:

"Your comment about Dame Jean in your August 9 card is the second time you've suggested that she might freeze me out or GASlight because she is in disagreement with some of my projects or statements. Such a thing is utterly foreign to everything I've ever heard about her and to my own experiences with her graciousness even after the appearance of the Apocrypha."

I don't know why people insist on referring to her as a spiritualist, since she is certainly the only real person who ever claimed to be one, and she is certainly the only person who ever claimed to have seen someone else's spirit. She is certainly the only person who ever claimed to have seen someone else's spirit in the presence of a large group of people. She is certainly the only person who ever claimed to have seen someone else's spirit in the presence of a large group of people and to have had that experience repeated by other people. She is certainly the only person who ever claimed to have seen someone else's spirit in the presence of a large group of people and to have had that experience repeated by other people and to have had that experience repeated by other people and to have had that experience repeated by other people.

The Centennial Series titles were in the public domain in America, but Tracy also pursued projects where Jean's permission was required. One goal of his was to edit and publish an edition of Conan Doyle's autobiography Memories and Adventures. On February 20, 1981, he wrote to Peter Blau about seeking a commercial publisher for it, remarking that "what's in Dame Jean's interest may not necessarily be in GASlight's, although I hardly think that's actually the case." Four days later he assured his editor at Houghton Mifflin that he was "reasonably confident that we could prevail upon Dame Jean..." to write an introduction to the new edition. More worrisome was her dislike of his (also never fulfilled) plan to write a novel about her father. "Dame Jean hates the idea, of course, which is understandable," he told Blau on August 5, 1981, "and won't review the manuscript, but perhaps she'll be soothed when the book comes out and people tell her it ain't half bad (unless Lellenberg gets to her first)." By now I was the villain of the piece, but I wasn't the only one telling Tracy that Jean didn't care for the idea, judging from Tracy's letter to Blau on October 5, 1981:

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Which is a far cry from the idea of Jean Conan Doyle as a writer of extraordinarily nasty replies. "I don't know why people insist on assuming that this novel is in any way critical of Spiritualism," Tracy wrote farther to Blau on October 19, 1981: "It isn't. Quite the reverse. Indeed, Dame Jean has told me the main reason she won't read the book is because it is a historical novel that I can't help but get little things wrong, and that would disturb her. I don't think the Spiritualism angle is the issue. She just doesn't like today's trend of writing about the recent past — pointed out Brian Garfield's Paladin as a particularly distasteful book. A lot of people seem to be claiming to speak for Dame Jean these days (I don't mean you). She speaks rather well for herself, and I think I'll take her at her word.

So now we see Tracy as Jean's defender (and of course, subtly, his own at the same time). What Jean actually told you, and having agreed with you over so much, it's with sadness that I have to tell you that I am utterly opposed to your latest venture — writing a fictional story about my father. I've always had the deepest distaste for this modern innovation — the writing of famous people, living or dead, at the centre of works of fiction. The plays about Churchill, for instance, disgusted me and one was bound to question the author's motives. In these times when all moral standards seem to be slipping over the horizon, and "to make money" is put before moral considerations, taking such liberties with the characters and lives of real people seems to be something that should be resisted. It is a dangerous blurring of the margin between what is true and what is false. My views may seem very old fashioned to you, but I know my father would have deplored this type of "literature." He brought me up to have a deep respect for "facts" and for truth, so it follows that "fakery" is an anathema to me, as it is to many others. I'm glad to say I appreciate your book would reflect the admiration you feel for my father, but however accurately you may think you are portraying him, his family life, and his Spiritualistic lecture tours, you would be bound to get much of it completely wrong. How could it be otherwise when you never knew him, or us, and were not around at the time? Of course you will have had the advantage of reading Our American Adventure and Our Second American Adventure, which will have given you some of the facts. It's true, as I remember clearly, that the New York press was extremely brisk, by British standards at that time, but the vast crowds which came to the lectures were not, and my father was given a wonderful reception wherever he went in public.

I remember that, as a family, we were very happy on the tour, occasional controversies were only to be expected, but both my parents felt the tours were immensely successful. So many accounts of my father and Spiritualism, Hoodin, etc tell only half the story — writers' research lacks depth. I'm too much on my plate to correspond about Spiritualism, a subject which cannot be dealt with in a few pages, let alone paragraphs, but whenever I hear someone say they do not believe in it, I wonder how many years they have spent in practical investigation. It took my father many years before he was convinced. He said that if a photographer takes a whole roll of films and only one comes out the case for photography is proved; that it's the same with Spiritualism, one may get many false messages from the "departed," come across many fraudulent mediums, but one may get many false messages from the "departed," come across many fraudulent mediums. I hope the tours were immensely successful. It took my father many years before he was convinced. He said that if a photographer takes a whole roll of films and only one comes out the case for photography is proved; that it's the same with Spiritualism, one may get many false messages from the "departed," come across many fraudulent mediums, but one may get many false messages from the "departed," come across many fraudulent mediums.

As Tracy noted, Dame Jean spoke very well for herself. And the "extraordinarily nasty reply" he claimed to have received from her evaporates upon examination.

Why then did Tracy say such a thing to John Bennett Shaw? People who knew Tracy probably require no explanation. After a while, most of us who dealt with him shrugged and went our own way; we were able to take the good with the bad, for, whatever his personality, his work was first-rate, and his own writings and his presentation of other people's work (including mine) were first-rate. But you never had to take the bad with the good from Jean Conan Doyle, who was a woman of firm views but also of unfailing courtesy, even when she did not agree with you. It had not always been so among Conan Doyle's children — so how fortunate it was for us that the last of them was her.

Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections

Continued on page 7

"An Extraordinarily Nasty Reply" Continued

Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections
Musings

HAVING BEEN BOTH A SCOUT AND A SCOUT LEADER, I particularly enjoyed Dick Sveum’s reference to the Girl Scout song “Make New Friends, but Keep the Old.” I believe we could reword that to “Write new articles, but remember the old ones” to apply to the previous issue of this newsletter. Two fine Sherlockians took time to comment upon different articles from the March issue.

Andrew Malec, B.S.I. referenced the law case brought by Charles Frohman against the producers of “Sherlock Holmes, Detective: or The Sigh” and pointed to the December 1975 and March 1976 issues of The Baker Street Miscellanea. John Nieminski’s December article covered the brief but tumultuous run of the play written by John Arthur Fraser. Nieminski wrote that “A stock company effort presented jointly with a group of vaudeville acts…lasted for but four of its six scheduled performances, all in Chicago in May 1901.” The run was terminated on May 10 as a result of a court injunction stemming from a suit brought by Charles Frohman. The Hopkins Amusement Company, Fraser’s producers, appealed the Circuit Court action to the First District, but lost the case in October 1902. The District Court opinion, quoted in the Baker Street Miscellanea, is that “if you wonder who invented the Sherlock Holmes play, go ask Playwright Julius Henry Frazer. The fact is that your Frazer never wrote a word of the Holmes materials.”

Jon Lellenberg, B.S.I. has also contributed an article in response to the John Bennett Shaw-Jack Tracy letters and has donated to the Sherlock Holmes Collections. I would like to thank him for his additional clarification as to the “good and the bad” aspects for those of us who did not know Tracy. Also, as you will note in both the lead and the 50 Years Ago articles there are references to the BSI History series, edited by Jon. The first three volumes of the archival series are hard to locate. If you don’t want to go through the agony of trying to find books you know you should have purchased while they were still available, check the web site www.bakerstreetjournal.com, where Volume 4, Irregular Proceedings of the Mid Forties (including postage, $31.95 U.S./$32.95 outside the U.S.) and Volume 5, Irregular Crises of the Late Forties ($37.95/$38.95) remain available.

We are truly pleased to have Peter E. Blau author our 50 Years Ago article. He brings his extensive personal knowledge of The Limited Editions Club as well as his unique storytelling ability to this piece. As you can see from Tim Johnstons update, Special Collections and Rare Books has been a busy place this spring. Dick Sveum has given us an overview of the activities of the Friends of the Library as well as the 100 Years Ago article about Mark Twain. What connections we have in this issue: Mark Twain was a neighbor of William Gillette, whose portrait as Holmes was drawn by Frederic Dorr Steele, who illustrated one of Twain’s works. And all three of them belonged to the Players Club.

Lastly, in doing preliminary research for this issue, we came upon the 1952 pamphlet The Sherlock Holmes Fiascos by Pepe Hall, Sr. This short pamphlet was but a piece of his original lengthy manuscript which apparently was never published. If anyone has any information about this manuscript, please contact me. We would love to solve the mystery of what happened to it.

Julie McMurra, A.S.H., B.S.I.

"An Extraordinarily Nasty Reply"

Investigated by Jon Lellenberg

In March’s newsletter, Richard Sveum wrote about Barbara and Christopher Roden donating the John Bennett Shaw-Jack Tracy correspondence that they acquired from the auction of Tracy’s effects by the Nevada county where he died intestate. I was sorry to see, toward the end of the article, Tracy telling Shaw that he had written to Dame Jean Conan Doyle about including “The Stonor Case” (a version of the “Speckled Band” stage-play) in his book Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha, and claiming that he had “received an extraordinarily nasty reply, categorically denying permission to publish.”

Not everyone knew Jack Tracy or Dame Jean Conan Doyle. I knew both, and I knew which one was and which one was not capable of an “extraordinarily nasty reply.” It may be foolish to let something written by Tracy in 1978 annoy me in 2002, especially since both he and Jean have been gone for some years. But I knew her for 20 years, represented her literary interests in America, and find it impossible to let Tracy’s remark stand unchallenged.

Thanks to Chris Roden, I have a copy of Jean’s May 8, 1978, letter to Tracy. She was answering his of April 17th, in which he informed her of his plans for the Apocrypha and asked to include “Angels of Darkness” (Conan Doyle’s unfinished play based on the American episodes in A Study in Scarlet) and “The Stonor Case.” Jean replied:

There have been several enquiries regarding “The Angels of Darkness,” but my father did not want it published, nor did my brothers, and nor do I. The reason is that it was a very early effort and does not fit into what became the Holmes-Watson concept. My father only kept it as a curiosity and, since his death, this is what we, his family, felt about it. I see that Pierre Nordens feels very differently and would be interested to know what you have in this issue, you will agree that to publish these works could hardly be described as “putting some of (my father’s) most interesting works in print at last.” It is because they were not worthwhile pieces of work that they were not published in my father’s lifetime. I do not see anything “extraordinarily nasty” in this reply.

In 1978, I was putting together the system to recapture the U.S. Conan Doyle copyrights for Jean under the new Copyright Act in effect that year, and to represent her when recapture took effect. I was also, with misgivings, informally advising Tracy in his editorial plans, including the creation of his own imprint, Gaslight Publications. So I corresponded with both of them frequently. But a check of my letters from Tracy turns up no complaint about Jean’s reply re: “The Stonor Case.” Instead, his letter of June 13, 1980, to Jean, discussing Gaslight’s forthcoming Centennial Series of early Conan Doyle novels, remarked “Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha will be published by Houghton Mifflin next month. I know you’re not in sympathy with the project, but if you will allow me to present you with a copy I’m sure you will find that the approach at least is serious and respectful.” And so it was, on the whole — though marked for Jean by some gratuitously spiteful comments in Tracy’s introduction.

Sir Arthur was his own worst critic: — in more ways than one, because his self-judgment was not always good. He bitterly resented the unauthorized publication of those works he considered unworthy, and following his death in 1930 his children became even more protective, aggressively limiting which of their father’s writings might reach the public. For nearly forty years Sherlockians railed helplessly and politely, at these “recalcitrant heirs,” but recently the copyrights were sold, and the new proprietors are more open to reason.

I informed Tracy with some asperity that the copyright sale to which he referred had in fact occurred seven years before, and was about to be ancient history — for at that very moment, Jean was in the process of recapturing her father’s copyrights. I could hear his gasp of dismay all the way from Bloomington, Indiana. But, as others can testify, administration seldom had much effect on Tracy. In my files is the subsequent September 12, 1980, letter that I received from him, in which he wrote: “I was so happy to hear that since we spoke last, I’ve received two gracious letters from Dame Jean about the Apocrypha, and while I did not feel quite so ‘Angels of Darkness’ she doesn’t consider the book at all offensive. All your elaborate doomsaying gone for naught.”

Jean always acknowledged Tracy’s devotion to her father’s work. “I’m so sorry that Jack Tracy has turned out to be rather a disappointment to you,” she wrote to me on November 5, 1980.

He wrote to apologize for the remark in the Apocrypha, indicating that he’d had a reprimand from you. In replying I passed it off lightly, as I’m all for freedom to express one’s opinion, however much one disagrees with it.

Continued on page 6
**From the President**

I am proud to announce that Steven Doyle, B.S.I. (“The Western Morning News”) has accepted an invitation to be the guest speaker at the annual meeting of The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections. Mark your calendars for this exceptional program to be held at 7 p.m. on Thursday, September 19, 2002 at the Elmer L. Andersen Library.

The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections had the opportunity to recognize and thank our Charter Members with the last Newsletter. About one third of current members have been with us since 1997 when we started the Newsletter, and we look forward to maintaining that connection. We are always looking to increase our membership while recognizing the invaluable support we receive from groups such as The Occupants of the Empty House who annually contribute proceeds from their auction. In the words of my daughters’ Girl Scout song, “Make new friends, but keep the old, one is silver and the other gold.”

Theophras G. Stavrou, President of the University of Minnesota Friends of the Library, was honored at the Annual Dinner on April 18, 2002. The University Friends of the Library host the Gala Grand Reopening of Walter Library on June 5, 2002. The Walter Library building was third home of the University Library when it was completed in 1924, and the Arthur Upson Room located in the Walter Library was the original home of Special Collections and Rare Books.

The new Walter Library will contain the Science and Engineering Library along with the new Digital Technology Center. The exterior of the Roman Renaissance building with red bricks and Bedford limestone trim and colonnaded portico was preserved along with some interior architectural detail, the rest is very high tech. If you can’t visit in person you can visit their website at scweb.lib.umn.edu.

The University Library’s Capital Campaign will conclude in 2003. The Sherlock Holmes Collections is encouraging everyone to donate to the E.W. McDermid Curator Endowment. With your help we can reach our goal to be the World Center for the study of Sherlock Holmes.

Richard J. Sveum, M.D., B.S.I.

**Acquisitions**

David Hammer continues his ongoing donation of his Sherlockian library to the Sherlock Holmes Collections. Mr. Hammer recently forwarded three large boxes to add to those already received. One of the newly arrived boxes contained manuscripts, papers, ephemera and pamphlets and the other two boxes contained books.

The STUD dinner, held on May 4, 2002 in Chicago, was the perfect opportunity for Jeremy to present the 30th Anniversary poster of the Cimmerian Bar Association to Friends President Richard J. Sveum. In addition to the various images of Holmes on screen, the poster lists past presidents and the founders of the society.

Don Terras and Richard J. Sveum

Hugo Koch donated The Frozen Pool, by W. Clark Russell, published by The Battered Silicon Dispatch box in 2001. The book carries the note “This edition is dedicated to the late Cameron Hollyer who first introduced the author to the publisher and to Hugo Koch whose Christmas offering first suggest-ed the idea to the publisher.” Mr. Koch previously donated his referenced monograph, privately printed for Christmas 1999.

John and Margie Pollack donated a copy of the playbill from ‘Sherlock Holmes & The Curious Adventure of the Clockworks Prince,” described as “A Victorian Romp” written by Cleve Haubold with music composed by James Alfred Hin. The play ran from April 5 thru May 4 this year at the Spirit of the North Theater in Duluth, Minnesota.

Leslie Klinger recently sent the manuscript material for The Hound of the Baskervilles: The Sherlock Holmes Reference Library. This is the latest in the series of Klinger’s reference libraries.

**An Update from the Collections**

The end of the academic year brings with it a final flurry of activity. This year has been no exception. For the most part we have the same patterns, although we sometimes catch ourselves coming and going (but hopefully not double-booked) as we move through the springtime days. Some of this year’s frenzy is connected with our massive migration to a new integrated library system. I’ve received notice that our fiscal-year-end programs ran successful-ly. This is a cause for some celebration, as this year’s fiscal close came early so that our business office (and the rest of us) might continue to prepare for the move to the new system scheduled to be operational at the beginning of July. Lake any move, this one has been accompanied by a bit of stress. Happily that stress has (and continues to be) mitigated by a number of source presen-tations, conference, and classes through which we have the opportunity to talk about the Sherlock Holmes Collections and in general enjoy work-ing in the midst of such a library and all its wonderful collections.

On April 5th, we enjoyed a visit from Marshall Blankenhip and his wife and had the chance to show them the Andersen Library and the Holmes Collections. This was followed a few days later by a James Ford Bell Library public lecture by the noted writer/pro-ducer James Burke and an end-of-week meeting in St. Cloud with other librarians on the subject of leadership develop-ment. The following weeks in April were equally exciting: a visit from UF Beijborn from the Swedish Emigrant Institute (a colleague from my days working with Swedish materials in Chicago), a retirement party for the University archivist, a visit from Walter Hammady of the Perishable Press, a presentation and tour to a group of Twin Cities libraries and programs and a session presentation to a symposium for library paraprofessionals and support staff.

May continued in the same lively fashion, beginning with a visit from Markell Weber from the Brooklyn book artists’ cooperative in Brooklyn, New York. (It is a good sign that these months both began with visits from Marshall!) This was quickly followed by a three-day conference involving about 300 archivists, for which we played host. Two days later we hosted a reception for Cornell West as part of the University’s “Great Conversations” series. Two days after that we had the double treat of a visit during the day with about 60 students from Minnetonka West Middle School (during which we capped our presenta-tion with a view of the Hound manuscipt) and an evening lecture by recently retired Bell Library curator Carol Urris. The week ended with the annual Festival of Greek Letters and a lecture by Professor Andreas M. Karazias from the Universities of Wisconsin and Athens.

On May 14th I was the luncheon speaker for the St. Paul chapter of the American Association of University Women. My topic for the day was “Sherlock Holmes and Minnesota.” The next day I attended a reception at the Science Museum of Minnesota for the exhibit “Mesopotamia in Minnesota: Cuneiform Texts in Twin Cities Collections.” We had some of our tablets on loan for this exhibit. The fol-lowing week I attended an all-day col-lection development symposium and then a meeting the next day with an expert from Indiana on copyright. There was a brief respite for the Memorial Day weekend (with some added days off thrown in) and then an end-of-month lecture by Julian Plante entitled “Documenting the Minnesota Book World.” My highlight for June will be the opportunity to speak at the “Sub-Librarians” in the American Library Association annual meeting in Atlanta.

You may wonder at this point at the recitation of this end-of-year calendar. Not all of these events deal with the Sherlock Holmes Collections. That is true. But it is also true that all these events allow me the opportunity to at least mention Holmes in passing and to give him some indication of the depth and breadth of the world’s largest collection relating to the consulting detective. And who knows? Maybe among those middle school students will come another member of the Friends and the Norwegian Explorers. Maybe among those at lectures or receptions will be another donor who takes an interest in keeping forever green the memory of the Master. What will the rest of the summer bring? Who can tell? But we have the sense that whatever comes it will be both interest-ing and relaxing. May this find you well in all your summer endeavors.

Tim Johnson

[Photo by Julie McKuras]
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Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections

Frederic Dorr Steele
Continued from Page 1

The Monthly Letter of The Limited Editions Club

YEARS AGO

“I suppose the only way we can keep our subscription list complete is to force our subscribers not to meet each other.”

- George Macy

The Limited Editions Club, founded in 1929, was a place for subscribers to receive twelve books a year, often illustrated by renowned artists. The Club’s first book was The Scarlet Letter, and this unique publishing model continued for decades.

Frederic Dorr Steele Memorial Collection

Frederic Dorr Steele, an illustrator known for his work in The Limited Editions Club volumes, died on July 6, 1944. Steele was a member of the Baker Street Irregulars and met and corresponded with many of the most prominent Sherlockians of the day. His illustrations and the volumes he illustrated are still celebrated.

But it was his drawings for Collier’s that began and insured his place in Sherlockian history. His illustrations of the Great Detective graced the pages of the magazine for the 1903-1905 series of The Return of Sherlock Holmes. He would eventually illustrate “twenty-six of the last thirty-three Sherlock Holmes stories for their initial American periodical appearances.”


The Club’s 1944 prospectus for the Canon indicated that seventy new illustrations by Steele would be featured. But as the saying goes, time waits for no man. Frederic Dorr Steele died on July 6, 1944, leaving his project unfinished but a number of new drawings as well as reworked illustrations ready for inclusion in The Limited Editions Canon. Edgar W. Smith notified the Baker Street Irregulars on July 8 of Steele’s passing, stating in a note that was reprinted in the Fall 1991 Baker Street Miscellany.

“I was Frederic Dorr Steele, and not Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who gave to millions of Americans their conception of Sherlock Holmes. That fact, one feels, is all the monument that Freddie Steele would want.”

Much has been written about Steele. Featured here are several of Steele’s drawings from the collection of Philip S. Hench, M.D., that are now a part of The Sherlock Holmes Collections. For more information on Steele, read Malec’s Frederick Dorr Steele Memorial Collection.

The subscriber who received that letter in 1930 was my mother. My father remained a subscriber, of course, and I grew up in a house where books were meant to be read. Limited Editions Club volumes were donated to the Minnesota Libraries, 1987.

The Limited Editions Club set finally appeared in 1930 and 1932, and it certainly deserves to be celebrated fifty years later. There were eight volumes, edited by Edgar W. Smith, illustrated by Frederic Dorr Steele and other artists (Steele had died in 1944, with many fine writers to write prefaces, including George Bernard Shaw for Great Expectations, G. K. Chesterton for Vanity Fair, Fletcher Pratt for Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, and Ray Bradbury for The Mysterious Island.

There was discussion of a Limited Editions Club Sherlock Holmes as early as 1935, and hopeful correspondence, and in 1943 George Macy announced that the Club would publish a five-volume set, edited by Vincent Starrett and illustrated by Frederic Dorr Steele. But there was a problem. It was a dual problem, actually: Denis and Adrian Conan Doyle. The story of their campaign against the Sherlockian world in general, and against the Baker Street Irregulars in particular, has been told by Jon L. Lellenberg in his excellent Baker Street Irregulars archival history, and his Irregular Crises of the Late Forties (1990) includes a detailed account of the trials and tribulations that George Macy faced and eventually overcame.

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“I was Frederic Dorr Steele, and not Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who gave to millions of Americans their conception of Sherlock Holmes. That fact, one feels, is all the monument that Freddie Steele would want.”

Much has been written about Steele. Featured here are several of Steele’s drawings from the collection of Philip S. Hench, M.D., that are now a part of The Sherlock Holmes Collections. For more information on Steele, read Malec’s Frederick Dorr Steele Memorial Collection.

The subscriber who received that letter in 1930 was my mother. My father remained a subscriber, of course, and I grew up in a house where books were meant to be read. Limited Editions Club volumes were donated to the Minnesota Libraries, 1987.

The Limited Editions Club set finally appeared in 1930 and 1932, and it certainly deserves to be celebrated fifty years later. There were eight volumes, edited by Edgar W. Smith, illustrated by Frederic Dorr Steele and other artists (Steele had died in 1944, with many fine writers to write prefaces, including George Bernard Shaw for Great Expectations, G. K. Chesterton for Vanity Fair, Fletcher Pratt for Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, and Ray Bradbury for The Mysterious Island.

There was discussion of a Limited Editions Club Sherlock Holmes as early as 1935, and hopeful correspondence, and in 1943 George Macy announced that the Club would publish a five-volume set, edited by Vincent Starrett and illustrated by Frederic Dorr Steele. But there was a problem. It was a dual problem, actually: Denis and Adrian Conan Doyle. The story of their campaign against the Sherlockian world in general, and against the Baker Street Irregulars in particular, has been told by Jon L. Lellenberg in his excellent Baker Street Irregulars archival history, and his Irregular Crises of the Late Forties (1990) includes a detailed account of the trials and tribulations that George Macy faced and eventually overcame.
In April 1902 Mark Twain (Samuel Langhorne Clemens 1835-1910) published A Double-Barreled Detective Story. He began writing this burlesque of Sherlock Holmes in August 1901 and it appeared in Harper’s Monthly for January and February 1902. Since 1902 the story has been reprinted in various forms. Mark Twain’s A Double-Barreled Detective Story was adapted for the stage by Robert St. Clair in 1954 and published in a paperback edition.

At the time Twain wrote this story, he and Arthur Conan Doyle had not yet met. Conan Doyle, along with many British authors, signed the telegram sent to Twain in 1905 for his 70th Birthday celebration at Delmonico’s Restaurant in New York City. They finally met in England in 1907 and shared an interest in the Congo Reform Association. In 1979, Cyril Clemens, editor of The Mark Twain Journal, reported that Arthur Conan Doyle had been a member of the Mark Twain Society at the end of his life.

Richard J. Swem, M.D., B.S.I.

References
Dahlinger S.E. “The Sherlock Holmes We Never Knew” Baker Street Journal #9 (September 1900): 7-27.

The bibliography of American literature lists it as number 3471 with the difference in states of undetermined sequence being the end papers and the location of the highest peak in a three-paneled picture. The Harper & Brothers Publishers edition had Lucius Hitchcock’s illustrations with green borders, which appear with red borders in the first English edition by Chas. W. Windus. Bernard Tauchnitz also published an edition in 1902 in Leipzig of his collection of British and American Authors vol. 391. John Bennett Shaw had collected several early translations of the story including a 1910 French edition, a 1914 Danish edition and a 1920 Spanish edition.

Mark Twain’s A Double-Barreled Detective Story was founded in 1888. He had previously employed detectives in his books such as Paul Revere (1894) and Tom Sawyer, Detective (1896). The popularity of Sherlock Holmes in America by way of the original stories, parodies and stage productions encouraged Twain to write his story. The Mark Twain Encyclopedia references Twain’s letter of September 6, 1903 to Henry H. Rogers, in which he writes that he had read the first installment of The Hound of the Baskervilles, which appeared in the Strand Magazine in August 1901.

A Double-Barreled Detective Story is really a novella or condensed novel of some 20,650 words in 10 chapters divided into two parts. It is an outrageous burlesque using grotesque violence and melodrama concerning revenge and spooling detective fiction. The double barrel of this story is by theme and structure closer to A Study in Scarlet. The first barrel is a story of revenge with a man possessing the ability to track like a bloodhound. The second barrel, also about revenge, makes fun of Sherlock Holmes’s detective ability. The final seven chapters are set in Hope Canyon, California where Sherlock Holmes visits his nephew Ferlock Jones. The story is subitled, “We ought never to do wrong when people are looking.” Chapter 4 contains the famous purple prose passage with, “far in the empy sky a solitary oesopagus slept upon motorless wing,” which in later reprints was further spoiled with sexual footnotes and quotes from newspapers.

The Sherlock Holmes Collections has both states of the American first edition of A Double-Barreled Detective Story.

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were published. The first volume was again reprinted in 1971, and the second and third volumes in 1972. And Sandglass, the Heritage Club’s monthly newsletter also is a collectible: it reprinted in smaller format and as “Elementary, my dear Watson” and “You know my methods, Watson” the earlier Limited Editions Club newsletters.

Macy, who received his Investment ("The Bruce-Partridge Papers") in the Baker Street Irregulars in 1931, died in 1936, having brought to press and to the public (well, at least some of the public) an edition that was both attractive and well edited, and Sherlockians are greatly indebted to him.

There were, eventually, many Sherlockians who wanted to read all those fine new introductions, but either couldn’t find or couldn’t afford to buy the Limited Editions Club set; Edgar W. Smith reprinted his “Notes on the Collation” and all of the introductions in 350 copies of Introducing Sherlock Holmes in 1939, along with other interesting introductions from earlier editors of the Sherlock Holmes stories.

George Macy’s wife Helen had continued his work, but sold the company in 1971, when it began a slow and then precipitate decline. Eventually it was rescued and resurrected as the Easton Press, which now is reprinting older titles and publishing new ones. The Easton Press reprinted the Heritage Press edition in 1987 as the Complete Sherlock Holmes 100th Anniversary Edition in three leather-bound volumes, with full-color frontispieces by Frederic Dorr Steele. And the Easton Press issued a “Collector’s Edition” in 1996, again in three leather-bound volumes, but with all of the Limited Editions Club introductions (and with a new portrait of Arthur Conan Doyle by Richard Spark as the full-color frontispiece of the first volume).

There are, of course, more stories to tell about the Limited Editions Club set, but space for only one. Observant readers will have noted, perhaps, the illustration that accompanies this essay, and recalling that Frederic Dorr Steele began illustrating the Canon in 1903 in Collier’s, they may be wondering how there can be a Steele illustration for The Hound of the Baskervilles. There were in fact four Steele illustrations for the story in the Limited Editions Club set, which noted for each one that they were “drawn especially for this edition.”

Not quite: two illustrations, including one this, are signed and dated “Steele 1939” and were drawn for Twentieth Century-Fox, which published them in a full-color supplement in the Motion Picture Herald (Mar. 18, 1939); the supplement was available to theaters to publicize the film, and one Boston newspaper used them, noting that “if the detective doesn’t bear a very close resemblance to Basil Rathbone, the screen prototype—with full-color frontispiece by Frederic Dorr Steele illustrated. Lew David Feldman assembled the trip-tych for Hinch, who framed and displayed it that way. Treasure trove indeed . . .

The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections is a quarterly newsletter published by the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections which seeks to promote the activities, interests and needs of the Special Collections and Rare Books Department, University of Minnesota Libraries.

Mail editorial correspondence to:
Julie McKerras
13512 Greenland Ave.
Apple Valley, MN 55124
952-431-1914
952-431-9863 Fax
mckerras750@uol.com

Editorial Board
John Bergquist, Timothy Johnson, Jon Lellenberg, Richard J. Swem, M.D.

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Frederic Dorr Steele: The Definitive Illustrator

In the chapter titled “The Evolution of a Profile,” Vincent Starrett wrote of Frederic Dorr Steele’s illustrations for the Sherlock Holmes stories:

What illustrations they have been! No happier association of author and artist can be imagined…For Mr. Steele was destined for his task as surely as Watson for his Sherlock Holmes. An ardent lover of the long detective, even before he undertook the drawings, his work has been from first to last a labor of affection…Sixty tales, in all, comprise the saga of Sherlock Holmes; and Steele has illustrated twenty-nine. While yet he lives and loves, and lifts his pencil, will he not do the other thirty-one? To some Sherlockian friend among the publishers, one offers the suggestion – a Definitive Edition – with all the stories pictured by Mr. Steele. (183-84.)

Starrett wrote this in The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes, published in 1930. It would be nine years before George Macy of The Limited Editions Club contacted Steele about undertaking these illustrations, thirteen before the commission was approved and twenty years before the first of the Limited Editions Canon was published.

Frederic Dorr Steele was born to an artistic family on August 6, 1873 in northern Michigan, and lived in Wisconsin and Vermont before moving to New York City in 1889. He found employment in an architect’s office before moving on to Harper’s and Illustrated American. His free-lance work throughout his career was featured in Life, Scribner’s, Harper’s, Gentry, The Metropolitan Magazine, The Delineator, The American Magazine, Redbook, Hearst’s International, Liberty and McClure’s.