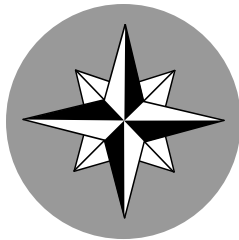




EXPLORATIONS



FROM THE (OUTGOING) PRESIDENT



Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

Inside this issue:

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Internet Explorations | 2 |
| Annual Meeting & Dinner | 3 |
| Explorer Travels | 4 |
| A New Take on Mrs. Hudson | 5 |
| Holmes and Plastic Man? | 6 |
| <i>The English</i> | 8 |
| A Toast to Mycroft | 9 |
| <i>Sherlock's Last Case</i> | 9 |
| Study Group | 10 |

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

In this last issue of *Explorations* for 2006 we recap our recent annual meeting and dinner, notable for a changing of the guard as Julie McKuras stepped down after an energetic nine years as president of the Norwegian Explorers. We are sure that our new president, Gary Thaden, will ably carry on in the tradition of Julie and all our past leaders, including our founder and Sigerson, the late E.W. "Mac" McDiarmid. We also note travels by Explorers to two recent conferences, both of which featured speakers from the ranks of the Explorers. We welcome Ray Riethmeier as a contributor to the newsletter by printing his fine toast

delivered at our annual dinner, joining frequent contributors Mike Eckman and Bob Brusica as well as Study Group reviewer Charles Clifford. Phil Bergem continues his Internet Explorations, and we look forward to an upcoming performance of a Sherlockian play.

Letters to the editor or other submissions for *Explorations* are always welcome. Please email items in Word or plain text format to john.bergquist@gmail.com ❖

John Bergquist, BSI
Editor, *Explorations*



FROM THE (INCOMING) PRESIDENT



Gary Thaden



“Audio books have their appeal, but lack the sound effects, modifications to lines and other dramatic effects which are required to hold a listener’s interest.”

INTERNET EXPLORATIONS

“He sits motionless, like a spider in the centre of its Web...”

For this issue I would like to highlight the audio side of Sherlock Holmes on the Internet. One site,

<http://www.cambridge-explorer.org.uk/HBWEB/VV341/VV341.htm>

provides details of the radio dramatizations of the Canon and a number of pastiches. The site, developed by Hugo Brown, has not been updated since 2004 but it is still of interest. It provides a great deal of information laid out in an easy-to-follow format with titles, broadcast dates and actors. This is useful to anyone who has an interest in the radio production of Sherlock Holmes stories.

On the subject of radio dramatizations, one of the best writers of Holmes-story dramatizations is Bert Coules. Bert adapted a number of the original stories for the BBC productions originally broadcast between 1989 and 1998. A radio dramatization is quite different from simply reading the story into a microphone. Audio books have their appeal, but lack the sound effects, modifications to lines and other dramatic effects which are required to hold a listener’s interest. Bert Coules and other writers adapted all 60 short stories and novels for the BBC series, the only time the full Canon was performed by the same actors playing Holmes (Clive Merrison) and Watson (Michael Williams). Bert has a site, <http://www.bertcoules.co.uk/>, which after a few appropriate clicks gets to the section that details the BBC series, including broadcast dates, background on the actors and pictures.

Bert’s site has a few sound files that can be downloaded. There is another website at <http://www.sherylfranklin.com/sh-sounds.html> that has a number of other sound clips from productions starring Jeremy Brett, Peter Cushing and Basil Rathbone. For those adept with computers, you can save these sound files and use them in place of the normal (and boring) noises your computer makes when it alerts you to various happenings. ❖

Phillip Bergem

ANNUAL MEETING AND DINNER



"Award-winning mystery author Sujata Massey charmed the audience as she recounted how she was influenced by the Sherlock Holmes stories of Arthur Conan Doyle."

The 2006 Annual Meeting and Dinner of the Norwegian Explorers was held on Thursday, December 7 at the Minneapolis Golf Club in suburban St. Louis Park. Club members Wade and Mary Manthie once again reserved the attractive facilities for us.

After exchanging greetings and charging drinks – and after Rev. Robert Brusich offered an appropriate invocation – we queued up for the British buffet. Good comments were heard about the shepherd's pie, Yorkshire pudding and English trifle. Dinner was punctuated by a series of toasts arranged by Phil Bergem: to Mrs. Hudson by Pj Doyle, to Mycroft by Ray Riethmeier (see p. 9), to Watson (a poetic toast with musical accompaniment) by Karen Ellery, to Dr. Watson's Second Wife by Ken Timoner, and to *The Woman* by Garry Peterson.

After dinner came the business meeting. Mike Eckman read the slate of officers and board members, all of whom were elected unanimously. The slate was identical to last year's with one notable exception:

Gary Thaden is the new president, taking over for Julie McKuras, who served ably for nine years – longer than any other president except for our founder and Sigerson, E.W. "Mac" McDiarmid. Gary presented Julie with a token of appreciation for her many years of service.

Dick Sveum presented a certificate for membership in the Sigerson Society to the Norwegian Explorers, who have pledged to give a total of \$10,000 over the next few years to the fund for the E.W. McDiarmid Curatorship at the University of Minnesota Library.

John Bergquist presented this year's Sigerson Awards to the following contributors to the 2006 Christmas Annual, whose theme is "Women in the Canon."

Essay: Sue Vizoskie for "Georgina"

Article: Dayna McCausland for "Victorian Villainesses"

Pastiches:

Julie & Mike McKuras for "The Luncheon"

Michel Eckman for "Finding Miss Hunter"

Robert Brusich for "The Wild West"

Regina Harris for "Moriarty's Reprise"

Toast: Stephen Cribari for "The Woman"

Poem: Ruth Berman for "Sherlockian Phantoms"

Puzzle: Francine Kitts for "Word Search"

Our evening's speaker was the award winning writer Sujata Massey. Sujata has written ten mysteries set in Japan featuring a young, female Japanese-American amateur detective named Rei Shimura. Sujata's first book was *The Salaryman's Wife*, published in 1997, and her most recent is *Girl in a Box*, published this year. Sujata charmed the audience as she recounted how she was influenced by the Sherlock Holmes stories of Arthur Conan Doyle. One of the values she picked up from Conan Doyle is that "the things that are routine are the things that are true and that are worth writing about." Sensationalism is not necessary for a compelling story. Like Holmes (at least usually), her detective solves mysteries through intelligence rather than the use of force. Pat Frovarp and Gary Schulz of Once Upon a Crime mystery bookshop had Sujata's books for sale at the dinner, and they seemed to do a brisk business. After her talk, Sujata sat and chatted with many book buyers as she graciously autographed their purchases.

Paul Martin did a "Stand Upon the Terrace" for the three members of the Explorers who passed beyond the Reichenbach since our last annual meeting: Allen Mackler, Bob Shultz and Maureen Green. Paul also noted the passing of Emerson Wulling, who while not a member of the Explorers was nonetheless instrumental in putting us on the map by way of his splendid printing of our fine-press publications over the years.

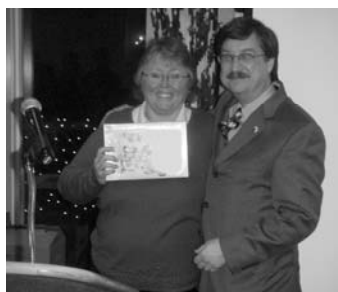
Julie McKuras led the quiz she had prepared on Canonical Women, and a person from each table read the gag captions and limericks they had composed for the Holmesian illustrations supplied by Bob Brusich.

Gary Thaden closed the gathering with a recitation of Bill Schweickert's "When I Spend a Long Evening with Holmes." ❖

John Bergquist, BSI



The buffet line



Julie and Gary



Sujata signs a book

EXPLORER TRAVELS

Several Norwegian Explorers were able to attend two major Sherlockian/Doylean events in October to hear their fellow members present talks. On the weekend of October 6-7, Julie and Mike McKuras, Dr. C. Paul and Carole Martin, Dr. Richard Sveum, and John Bergquist all traveled to Chicago for the Sherlock Holmes-Sir Arthur Conan Doyle Colloquium "Re-Collections" at the Newberry Library, home to the C. Frederick Kittle Collection of Doyleana. Among the speakers for the Saturday event was Paul Martin, who presented his talk "Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle: A Self Portrait." All had been invited the previous evening to the annual dinner of the Hounds of the Baskerville (sic), one of the longest-lived scion societies of the Baker Street Irregulars, where

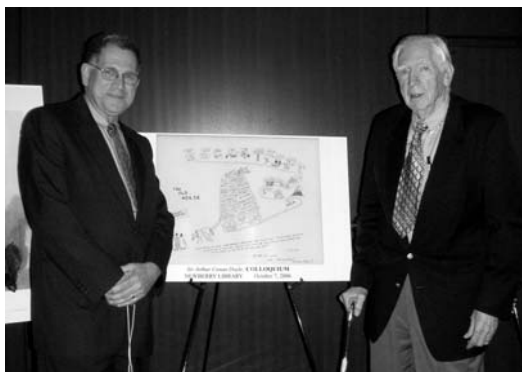
we enjoyed talks by Jon Lellenberg and Ely Liebow. After the dinner, Paul and his fellow colloquium speakers, Glen Miranker and Dan Posnansky, were interviewed over WGN radio.

A scant two weeks later, Paul, Dick, Julie, John, Gary Thaden, and Pat Nelson journeyed to Toronto for "ACD@35," billed by the organizers as "a celebration of the 35th anniversary of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection

of the Toronto Public Library and of Arthur Conan Doyle in his 35th year, at the height of his powers." Events ran from October 19-22 and featured a historic walk of Victorian Toronto as enjoyed by ACD, a showing of the Canadian-made Sherlockian film *Murder by Decree* with insightful commentary by Charles Prepolec, two full days of speakers, tours of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection, a festive Saturday-night banquet, and musical and theatrical diversions. Among the many informative speakers were Paul Martin, who reprised a variation of his talk "Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle: Creator



The organizing committee for "ACD@35" is to be commended for putting on a smoothly run, informative yet entertaining event.



Drs. C. Paul Martin and C. Frederick Kittle at the Newberry, with a reproduction of ACD's drawing "The Old Horse," the original of which is owned by Paul



Conference attendees touring the Arthur Conan Doyle room in the Toronto Public Library

and His Creations: A Self Portrait" and Dick Sveum, who presented his talk "A Duet: with occasional autobiography." An exhibition of treasures from the Collection was on display in the gallery on the main floor of the library throughout the conference. Chairman Cliff Goldfarb and the other members of the or-



Speakers at "ACD@35" Paul Martin and Dick Sveum flanking conference chair Cliff Goldfarb

ganizing committee are to be commended for putting on a smoothly run, informative yet entertaining event. I only hope that we can do as well with our "Victorian Secrets and Edwardian Enigmas" conference to be held next July 6-8 at the University of Minnesota. ❖

John Bergquist, BSI

WITHOUT A CLUE, TOO? A NEW TAKE ON MRS. HUDSON

In his book *Mrs. Hudson and the Spirits' Curse* (Berkley Publishing Group, New York, 2004), Martin Davies presents a worldly-wise Mrs. Hudson who teaches Holmes and Watson a thing or two. The story is an enjoyable pastiche, and instead of a full review I just want to note a few of Mrs. Hudson's more interesting contributions. If you have not read the book and prefer to be surprised when you do, I suggest you move on to the next article.

Mrs. Hudson and her protégée Flottie are recruited by Mr. Rumbelow, the property owner who has leased rooms to Holmes and Watson. In asking her to take the job as housekeeper, he states that "you are the only member of your sex that I can imagine being able to fill this post for even the shortest of tenures." In addition to the compliment, Mrs. Hudson is interested in Mr. Rumbelow's offer of employment since "the gentlemen are willing to agree to the most attractive terms with the individual they consider suitable. Quite enormously attractive, in fact."

Mrs. Hudson tells Mr. Rumbelow that "You may inform Mr. Sherlock Holmes that he has my permission to call." Since Flottie, who is the narrator of the book, is not privy to the conversation, there is no record of the interview. But Mrs. Hudson, as we all know, is engaged.

The very first night when all are in the new rooms, Holmes asks Mrs. Hudson to prepare a meal using the food that he had delivered fifteen days earlier. While Holmes is interested in the affect that time has on meat and vegetables, Mrs. Hudson is more concerned with what is salvageable.

"Don't worry, sir." Mrs. Hudson was now engaged in rooting out and discarding an extravagant selection of unrelated comestibles. "I've always said that when you have discarded the inedible, what remains, however unlikely, will have to be dinner."

Mr. Holmes paused as though he'd stepped on something sharp.

"Do you know, Mrs. Hudson, I believe you may have something there."



Later in the story, Holmes is surprised when Mrs. Hudson deduces that Watson is taking a trip to the country by noting what food he has removed from the larder. "Very simple, Mr. Holmes," returned Mrs. Hudson steadily. "One should never overlook the alimentary." Further drawing on her knowledge and experience with cooking, she surprises both Holmes and Watson in the following exchange that Holmes initiates.

"What is the second detail to which you want to draw our attention?"

"To the peculiarity of the cheese soufflé that Dr. Watson enjoyed this evening."

"But Mrs. Hudson," exclaimed Watson, "there was nothing at all peculiar about the cheese soufflé. It was quite perfect."

"That, Dr. Watson, is the peculiarity to which I allude."

In addition, Mrs. Hudson gives Dr. Watson advice that he clearly accepted and applied in recording Holmes's cases. He approached Mrs. Hudson with the idea of his documenting the case in which they had just participated. Mrs. Hudson responded that in order to keep readers away from the house, Dr. Watson should use of one of many "good-sounding ad-

(Continued on page 6)



"[This] Mrs. Hudson gives Dr. Watson advice that he clearly accepted and applied in recording Holmes's cases."

WITHOUT A CLUE, TOO? (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 5)

dresses that don't actually exist." In order to protect her future, Flottie could be portrayed as a pageboy. Mrs. Hudson tells Watson that "You could call him Billy. All pageboys seemed to be called Billy nowadays."

Last but not least, Mrs. Hudson argues that her role and the parts that others played in the case should not be mentioned, making Dr. Watson's recording of this particular case impossible. Instead, Holmes should be the focus of other narratives documenting cases that better demonstrate his talents. She points out that "my little scraps of domestic knowledge are hardly likely to interest the public, while his [Holmes's] scientific principles will surely prove a far greater inspiration."

Students of the Canon will agree that Dr. Watson took to heart Mrs. Hudson's words that "What the public really needs are cases that show off his genius. And a man of your strengths as a writer will surely be able to oblige." ❖

Michael Eckman



LOGIC, NOT PLASTIC, IS THE MATRIX FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES

Long ago, at an impressionable age, I was charmed by a comic book character called Plastic Man. This crusader for justice first appeared in 1941 during the so-called Golden Age of comic books. What fascinated me about Plastic Man was his ability to stretch and shape his body into any imaginable form. He was fantastically flexible, with metamorphic skills that always got the job done. Because of his unique powers he was regarded (by Batman, no less) as the single most powerful superhero. Plastic Man was everything I with fixed limbs could not be, although I whimsically wished I could take different shapes while serving the cause of truth and justice. In a sense Plastic Man and I have grown up together, for both of us are still active even after more than six decades (though my flexibility, naturally, remains considerably more limited than his).

I began thinking about this mutative being recently while trying to bring some order to my collection of Sherlock Holmes books. Whatever anyone might say about Plastic Man, Holmes, by any standard, is regarded as a towering figure in his own realm. In fact, he could rightly be called a superhero. He has endless stamina and a prodigious capacity for logical deduction. Once on the scent, the detective stretches every fiber of his being to the task before him. Moreover, his partner, John Watson, is more than a match for Plastic Man's knuckle-headed sidekick, Woozy Winks.

As I moved my books, the Plastic Man image continued to occupy my thoughts, forcing me to make further comparisons with Holmes. After all, Holmes's mind was flexible, able to bend and stretch at will. True, he could not assume the shape of an umbrella or a doormat like Plastic Man (though Holmes was, we know, a master of disguise). In a fit of fantasy, I was struck by the shapes imposed on the great detective *by the hands of others*, most often in the form of pastiche.

For example, Holmes has frequently been fashioned into other-than-human forms. Eve Titus created a character, *Basil of Baker Street*, in

(Continued on page 7)

"I was struck by the shapes imposed on the great detective by the hands of others, most often in the form of pastiche."

LOGIC, NOT PLASTIC, IS THE MATRIX FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 6)

which (to the reader's eyes) Holmes emerges as an amiable mouse. William Kotzwinkle has written a collection of Inspector Mantis mysteries, *Troubles in Bugland*, in which Holmes is a mantis-in-deerstalker. In *Sherlock Holmes, the Detective and the Collector*, Ruth Berman notes that the detective has been depicted variously as Freddie the Pig, as a floppy-eared hound dog, and as the popular Muppet figure, Sherlock Hemlock. Depending on authorial fancy, Sherlock Holmes can be molded into many configurations.

On other occasions Holmes himself has taken different shapes. As a time and space traveler, he roams the galaxy in Isaac Asimov's collection of science fiction tales, *Sherlock Holmes Through Time and Space*. In another dimension, Holmes accompanies Dr. Who in an adventure called *The All-Consuming Fire* by Andy Lane. And the sly detective celebrated his 110th birthday by flying to the United States to address the case of the Kennedy assassination in Edmund Aubry's *Sherlock Holmes in Dallas*. Even Plastic Man has not been able to stretch that far.

Holmes has also been cast into other roles, especially those of mentor or instructor. He is depicted as an apologist for evolution in *Darwin for Beginners* by Jonathan Miller. *The Strange Case of Mrs. Hudson's Cat* by Colin Bruce presents Holmes as physics instructor cum detective. He drily takes the part of sociologist in *Durkheim Is Dead* by Arthur Berger. And, with pen and magnifying glass in hand, Holmes adopts the role of cruciverbalist in Ruth Tepper's *The Sherlock Homes Crossword Puzzle Book*.

As with Plastic Man, the forms and shapes that Holmes takes (or has thrust upon him) are many and varied. Those described here are only a fraction of what we might irreverently call Plastic Holmes. In the end, though, that designation won't do. No matter what pasticheurs have done, we must acknowledge the role in which he is best known: the world's first and greatest consulting detective. No other shape

"We might admire Plastic Man; but it is 'Logic Man,' Sherlock Holmes, who is the single most powerful superhero."



truly fits or does him justice. As I shook off my fantasy and replaced the books in my library, I realized that Batman was wrong. We might admire Plastic Man; but it is "Logic Man," Sherlock Holmes, who is the single most powerful superhero. ❖

Robert Brusic

BOOK REVIEW: *THE ENGLISH: A PORTRAIT OF A PEOPLE*

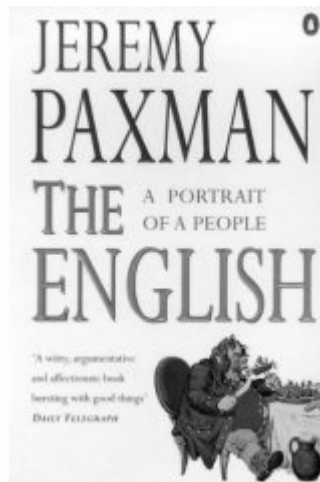
In *The English* (The Overlook Press, Woodstock, NY, 2000), author Jeremy Paxman argues that what some call misanthropy, the English call privacy. According to Paxman, privacy is one of the defining characteristics of the English. As an example, he refers to the Holmes Canon:

The abiding memory of the Sherlock Holmes adventures is not of the great detective solving any individual murder mystery but of him and his friend Dr Watson sitting in amiable dozes at home in Baker Street, when their peace is suddenly disturbed by a visitor desperate for help. That's the trouble with the outside world. It keeps on intruding on domestic peace.

Despite the fact that Homes and Watson were very English, they did not seem to mind the intrusions if the case were a good one.

Many of the characteristics that Paxman lists can be attributed to Holmes and Watson. The English, both rich and poor, long for a house with a garden. In addition, the homes often have names. The population also seems to have a prejudice against cities. In *STUD*, Watson describes London as "that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained." Holmes, as we know, wrote of his "withdrawal to my little Sussex home, when I had given myself up entirely to that soothing life of Nature for which I had so often yearned during the long years spent amid the gloom of London."

The English love language and the written word. Paxman argues that there are few great English artists, but the population enjoys books, newspapers, and crossword puzzles. Holmes and Watson certainly were at home with the written word. Although they did not take brush and palette in hand, Holmes and Watson were fans of and participants in the performing arts. Even Watson assumed the identity of "Dr. Hill Barton" for a short time.



Holmes's opinion of the board schools is that they are "Light-houses, my boy! Beacons of the future! Capsules with hundreds of bright little seeds in each, out of which will spring the wiser, better England of the future." Paxman, however, criticizes this typically English attitude.

Paxman reviews the importance of sport and playing the game for its own sake to the English. He also argues that the English prefer utilitarian things to ideas. He covers the impact of living on an island and reviews the English people's relationship to the rest of the world. The Second World War and its impact are covered in some detail. The book states that the greatest legacy of the English is their language, which is now preferred throughout the world.

As with most books of this type there is some hyperbole and humor in the analysis, and the humor is not always of the author's creation. For example, a list of village names reads as if it is from a P. G. Wodehouse novel rather than an atlas: "High Easter, New Delight, Kingston Bagpuize, Sleeping Green, Tiptoe, Nether Wallop...." Although not every English person has all of the characteristics and habits that Paxman lists, the book does provide some interesting background on the English. ❖

Michael Eckman

"What some call misanthropy, the English call privacy. According to [Jeremy] Paxman, privacy is one of the defining characteristics of the English."

A TOAST TO MYCROFT

(The following toast was given at the 2006 Annual Dinner and Meeting of the Norwegian Explorers on December 7.)

*Society. Scion.
Fraternity.
Brotherhood.*

Those of us who have brothers recognize the special bond that develops between two boys who share both a rivalry and a common admiration for the other.

For those of you who don't have a brother, I'll point out that we are all here due to our admiration for the Great Detective; we are bound together in society, in brotherhood, with others of like minds. The Norwegian Explorers is for us our own edition of the Diogenes Club, albeit slightly noisier.

Mycroft Holmes was the premier member, a founder of the Diogenes Club. Mycroft is cited by Sherlock as possessing the superior deductive faculties of the two, whose unique specialism was omniscience, as described by Sherlock Holmes (perhaps with a note of fraternal envy).

We join together here in an attempt to emulate a sense of brotherhood with Sherlock Holmes. We who wish to be as brothers with Sherlock Holmes today salute the deliberative, brilliant, perhaps lethargic Mycroft Holmes, the man whom Sherlock Holmes himself called brother.

He is one of us. To Mycroft Holmes! ❖

Ray Riethmeier

SHOWBOAT TO PRODUCE SHERLOCK HOLMES PLAY

In the last *Explorations* we mistakenly reported that the Minnesota Centennial Showboat, docked at Harriet Island Regional Park in Saint Paul, would be putting on a production next summer of William Gillette's *Sherlock Holmes*. The actual play being produced is *Sherlock's Last Case*, by Charles Marowitz, which will run from June 15 - Aug. 25, 2007.

The play had a run on Broadway with Frank Langella in the lead role.

A press release from the Colony Theatre Company of Burbank, California, says this about what it calls a "wickedly funny thriller": "Someone is trying to kill Sherlock Holmes. Now the greatest detective on earth must solve the case of his life. Come travel back to Arthur Conan Doyle's foggy Victorian London to witness hair-raising twists and turns, scenes of odd happenstance and outbursts of comic brilliance. As the sinister plot unravels, you'll be drawn inexorably to a stunning climax that will take your breath away. But will it also take our hero's...forever? Come guess who's who and what's what in ... this fiendishly clever thriller." Sounds like a good opportunity for a Norwegian Explorers night-at-the-theatre outing. ❖

John Bergquist, BSI



A "wickedly funny thriller" about Sherlock Holmes is coming to the Showboat next summer.

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

THE THREE GARRIDEBS

“The Adventure of the Three Garridebs” was not one of Sir Arthur Conan

Doyle’s best-written stories. We seem to be making similar remarks about many of the stories included in *The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes*, with the exception of “Thor Bridge” and “The Illustrious Client.” “The Three Garridebs” was first published in October of 1924, at a time when Doyle may not have been putting much effort into his Holmes stories, apparently recycling some plots. In this case, “The Three Garridebs” reminds us a lot of “The Red Headed League” and “The Stock-broker’s Clerk.”

Group members meeting at the Arlington Hills Library in St. Paul on October 28th, 2006 found the “Garridebs” plot less than plausible. Doyle would have us believe that a Chicago thug named “Killer” Evans would devise such an elaborate ruse rather than incapacitating or murdering the shut-in, Nathan Garrideb. It would seem that had Evans just slit the elder Garrideb’s throat, he would have had “days” in which to make off with the plates and counterfeit cash. I suppose Evans’s recent five year sentence might have been what deterred him from killing Garrideb; at any rate, it is a possibility. We also wondered how Scotland Yard would not have taken the apartment apart “board by board” given the value of Rodger Prescott’s treasure. We wondered why Holmes would not

have guarded the vulnerable Nathan Garrideb more carefully, considering the threat to him. The only explanation must be that Holmes was completely sure of Evans’ intentions. What

really seemed strange was that Holmes would make the reference to Dr. Lysander Starr of Topeka, Kansas, a character of Holmes’s invention. If Evans actually had been from Topeka, it would seem probable that Holmes’s ruse might have tipped him off that Holmes was “on to” his plot. Evans did not make this realization, but it seems a risky thing on Holmes’s part. Evans could easily have gotten skittish, disappeared for a while, then come back to murder Garrideb. Though Watson was apparently wounded twice in his military career, we could not think of another story during which Watson was shot, though this wound was “quite superficial.”

This episode does offer insights into the depth of the Holmes-Watson friendship. Watson states, “It was worth a wound – it was worth many wounds – to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain.” Then Holmes himself states, “If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive.” Some of us thought that Holmes would not have actually killed Evans in cold blood, but that he certainly was clever enough to do so and disguise his actions should he wish. We wished that Watson might have dispensed himself some “medicinal”

(Continued on page 11)



Illustrations by Howard Elcock

This may not be one of the best stories in the Canon, but it does offer insights into the depth of the Holmes-Watson friendship.”

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

(CONTINUED)

THE THREE GARRIDEBS (CONTINUED)

brandy, at any rate.

From a strictly legal perspective, Evans might not have gotten a long sentence for his actions, had he not resisted and shot Dr. Watson. Well, this point could be – and was – debated a bit. We had two lawyers in attendance, and the issue could probably have been given a long discussion, but given time constraints, we moved on. Evans did have a key, and he might have claimed that he was going to turn the plates and loot in for a reward. “Only attempted murder, so far as I can see,” was Holmes opinion, adding, “But that’s not our job. They take that at the next stage.” (Provided our beloved Watson has not been taken from us!)

We were brought back to the story’s short introduction. Watson begins, “It may have been a comedy, or it may have been a tragedy. It cost one man his reason, it cost me a blood-letting, and it cost yet another man the penalties of the law. Yet there was certainly the element of comedy.” Given Watson’s brush with danger, it was hard for us to see the element of comedy. We supposed the portrayal of this educated, elderly, eccentric collector being “sold” on this scheme might have been comedic in some sense of the word; more in the old sense of a “comedy” versus a “tragedy.” Coming at the beginning of the story, these statements confused us as readers but may have increased our curiosity. Many of us would have preferred a longer exchange and possibly a lesson in deduction, at Watson’s expense, but the Canon is a varying collection and thankfully not always the same. Our meeting closed with a mention of next month’s “The Illustrious Client” meeting, during which various members were to conduct a live reading of a dramatization of that story. Stay tuned. ❖

Charles Clifford

THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT

The University Club was the setting on November 18, 2006 for a discussion of “The Illustrious Client” (the Canonical story) and a reading of “The Illustrious Client” (a dramatization for radio, written by Michael and Mollie Hardwick). Helping with the reading were Steve Miller (Holmes), Phil Bergem (Watson), Karen Murdock (Kitty Winter), Tim Reich (Sir James Damery), Steve Cribari (Baron Gruner), Ken Timoner (Shinwell Johnson), Art Bergstrom (Newsboy), and John Bergquist (our host and narrator). Also in attendance were Karen Tritrud, Gretchen Rochon, Gene Hogenson, Tom Mundahl, Julie McKuras, Mary Brunn, Bill Turley, Cherie Miller, Doris Marquit, Joan O’Brien, and Charles Clifford.

“The Illustrious Client” was first published in 1924, but the events of the story occurred in 1902. The dramatization originated decades later. The Hardwicks left out portions of the short story, but thankfully added little. Their version was at least fairly true to the Canon. We missed the opening scene at the Turkish bath and the interview with Violet de Merville. We particularly failed to understand why they left out this latter scene, with its dramatic confrontation between Kitty and Violet.

(For the rest of my comments here, I will be referring to Doyle’s original version.) The hold that Baron Gruner held on Violet de Merville’s mind proved to be quite strong, although it ultimately was broken by the journal kept in his own writing. Gruner stated that he had used a “post hypnotic suggestion” on Violet. Whether or not this was true was never established by Holmes. Our discussion moved on without covering this issue in any detail; I’m sure entire books could be written on the subject.

Two other, very interesting, characters in this story are Shinwell Johnson and Kitty Winter. Both had fallen, but were attempting to raise themselves out of London’s underworld. Johnson had served time, but was passing critical information on to Holmes, not just in this case. We wondered how he was able to escape

(Continued on page 12)



We did something different at this Study Group session: a reading of a dramatization for radio of “The Illustrious Client” by Michael and Mollie Hardwick.

SHERLOCK HOLMES STUDY GROUP

(CONTINUED)

THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT (CONTINUED)



Two intriguing characters in this story, Shinwell Johnson and Kitty Winter, had both fallen — but were both attempting to raise themselves out of London's underworld.

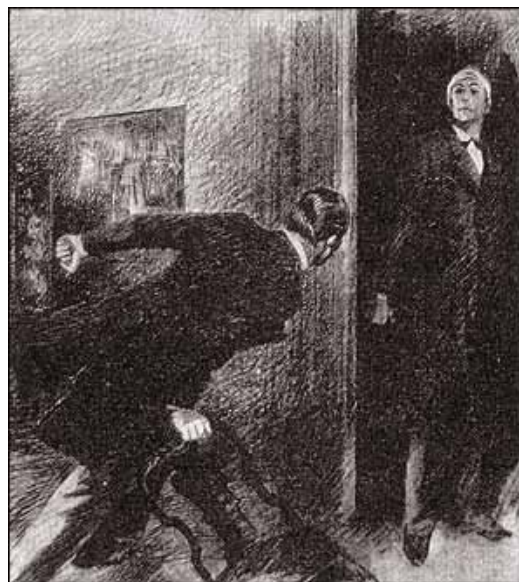


Baron Gruner's wrath. He was apparently quite the politician (not to confuse politicians with criminality, of course). Kitty Winter was preoccupied with getting even with Gruner. She had no prior relationship with Holmes that we know of. We do know that Holmes was able to manipulate her. Did Holmes merely bring her along so that she could point out the location of the "lust diary", or did Holmes put her in position to administer societal justice via her packet of vitriol? No mention was made of any "physical" disfiguration of Winter by Gruner, but we cannot rule that out. At a trial, we're sure any jury would show sympathy to her if she unveiled or otherwise showed what the Baron had done to her.

The group did not have a Ming pottery expert in attendance, but we did understand to varying extents how Gruner was compelled to meet with Watson, even though he probably would have known exactly which collection the saucer had come from. He certainly would have

paid a high sum, even if the piece had been stolen. Hopefully, any of us would be more honest if presented with some priceless piece of Sherlockiana. That Watson was a fraud, Gruner deduced in seconds. What if Gruner had broken the piece and handed it back to Watson? Regardless, Holmes needed just a few minutes, and Watson provided the diversion.

We also noted the severe price that Sherlock Holmes paid in this pursuit of justice: He was nearly beaten to death by Gruner's thugs. Holmes obviously was constantly threatened by the criminals he tracked. One altercation near a falls in Switzerland comes to mind. We know that Holmes was able to block out all emotion, so that just the reasoning portion of his great mind was able to function unhindered. Yet we have to admire his unselfish dedication to justice. Was he ever afraid? Watson, too, might have been heard from no more, had things gone less according to Holmes's plan. This pursuit of justice in the face of danger and the ad-



ministration of "physical" justice rather than "legal" justice probably had much to do with our group's agreement that "The Illustrious Client" is one of our favorite stories. ❖

Charles Clifford

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