

Books Alive, 1948

“Considering the evidence without prejudice,” wrote Christopher Morley in a memorable *enquete d’amour*, more than a decade ago, “the idea that Sherlock Holmes was at any rate partly American* is enticing.”

Later investigators have labored the point with enthusiasm—American investigators, that is to say; the British, I believe, find the notion intolerable and reject it with equal enthusiasm.

It is not inconceivable that one, at least, of the detective’s parents was American, and there is some reason to believe there was a distant connection with the Holmeses of Cambridge, Mass., whose distinguished scion, the late Justice Holmes, is known to have read the “Adventures of Sherlock Holmes” with unconcealed pleasure.

One welcomes, therefore, the discovery by Allen Robertson, of Baltimore’s “Six Napoleons,” of an early American Holmes who may be part of the missing record. In a letter notable for a fine frenzy of unrestraint, Mr. Robertson reports that, in 1839, the Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis, then in need of a pastor, “called” the Rev. S. Holmes of New Bedford, Mass., who, for a reason that is not revealed, declined the honor.

Obviously it will be awkward if further research shows the clergyman’s given name to have been Samuel or Samson, and I urge Mr. Robertson to quit while he is ahead; but for the moment I understand his excitement. If the name proves to have been Sherlock, I shall send Mr. Robertson a medal suitable inscribed and a sedative recommended by my doctor.

Mr. Robertson’s strongest point, he believes, is that when the Rev. S. Holmes declined the Indianapolis pulpit, the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher was called, and accepted. Scholars will recall the Beecher incident in the Holmes saga and the unframed portrait of that clergyman in the Baker

* Christopher Morley’s essay “Was Sherlock Holmes an American?” was first published in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, July 21 and July 28, 1934. It was reprinted in the anthology Starrett edited, *221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes*. New York: Macmillan, 1940, reissued in a limited edition of 350 copies by The Baker Street Irregulars, Inc., Morristown, New Jersey, 1956. It was reprinted in Morley’s collection *Streamlines*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Doran, 1936, in Steven Rothman’s anthology *The Standard Doyle Company: Christopher Morley on Sherlock Holmes* (1990), and in *The Baker Street Reader*.

Street rooms. I regret that I cannot share Mr. Robertson's imaginings at this point. Whatever he may be thinking of the episode of the rival clergyman it appears to be based on the assumption that the Beecher portrait belonged to Sherlock Holmes; but as I read the relevant paragraphs the portrait was Watson's.

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, February 1, 1948)

* * * * *

Two recent additions to the Sherlockian bibliography are noted in "An Irregular Chronology of Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street," by Jay Finley Christ (Fanlight House), and "Client's Case-Book," edited by J.N. Williamson and H.B. Williams, a symposium privately printed for the Illustrious Clients of Indianapolis, scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars. Both brochures are limited editions and once out of print will be difficult to obtain.

Mr. Christ's "Chronology" is a new and devilishly ingenious attempt to establish a time-table of the cases attributed to the great detective by his biographer, an exercise that has taxed the wits of Sherlockians in number. Watson's carelessness in the matter of dates is one of the soundest of our certainties; it has produced a literature that is completely fascinating to students of the Saga and completely mad, I fancy, to readers who prefer Proust, Henry James or the "Five Little Peppers and How They Grew."

"I have not forgotten," says Mr. Christ, "that Watson was not too good at arithmetic, so that his figures may not be valid; if none of them can be accepted, all speculation is idle. But even then I should not be too sorry, for it is upon his very shortcomings (which the Sherlockian work pretends to deride) that our world is chiefly supported. Irregularity is planted in and thrives upon the blessed carelessness of Dr. Watson."

That is a tribute to John H. Watson that should warm a Sherlockian heart to its deepest cockle.

* * * * *

“Client’s Case Book” is an amusing miscellany of fantasy and conjecture, in prose and verse, with an introduction by the editor of this column that is somehow not as amusing in print* as it looked on the typewriter.

(*The Chicago Sunday Tribune*, February 15, 1948)

* * * * *

A notable contribution to Sherlockian scholarship appeared recently in *Punch*,[†] the English humorous weekly, which I am happy to pass on to students of the Holmes cycle. Under the deceptive title “A Ramble on Dartmoor,” E.V. Knox—writing over his familiar pseudonym “Evoe”—asserts his considered belief that the well-known criminal romance called *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was originally written in verse, and may even have been intended for grand opera.

Why we have the narrative in its present form he is unable to say; possibly, he conjectures, the author despaired of success too soon or, perhaps, he could find no suitable composer.

As a piece of realistic fiction, Mr. Knox contends, the story will not bear a moment’s scrutiny. Obviously the choice of a disused tin mine on the moors as a place of concealment for a dog kennel is a fancy that belongs to the “highest realms of poetic imagination rather than to the pathway of credible romance”; and even more operatic is the conception of a gigantic phosphorescent hound.

But apart from all such consideration, the critic shows that many traces of the original poetic form of the composition remain unchanged. For example, the magnificent words uttered by Mrs. Stapleton about her husband after the great peripety[‡] of the drama:

* Jerry Williamson was reluctant to let the material in *Client’s Case Book* out of his hands. In those days before Xerox machines, he had only one copy of the essays he wanted to publish. Starrett, therefore, had to write an introduction to a book whose contents he had not seen. He wrote “In Lieu of a Foreword” in which he gave a short Sherlockian pastiche, which he had published in “A Line O’Type or Two” on September 9, 1946 (included in this book and later reprinted in *Book Column* as “The Adventure of the Lost Pants”). Starrett ended his foreword with this paragraph:

Kind friends and gentle Sherlockians: This was to have been an introduction, based on a reading of the printer’s proofs of this first *Case-Book of the Illustrious Clients*, Indianapolis scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars; but a stubborn deadline interfered with the plan, and I have been unable to see the contributions intended for publication. The table of contents is exciting. I look forward to the book with pleasure and with confidence.

† E. V. Knox’s essay “A Ramble in Dartmoor” appeared in *Punch* in the issue of January 21, 1948.

‡ a “peripety” or “peripeteia” is a sudden change of events, especially in a literary work.

“How can he see the guiding wands tonight?
We planted them together, he and I,”

which may be compared with

“In such a night
Stood Dido with a willow in her hand
Upon the wild sea-banks and waft her love ...”

It is upon the actual rhyming portions of the narrative, however, that Evove rests his case; for instance, the poet’s description of the eccentric Frankland:

“The least appearance of opposition
Struck fire out of the old aristocrat.
His eyes looked at me malignantly
And his grey whiskers bristled
Like those of an angry cat.”

The rhythm there is admittedly a bit sprung,* but in other instances it is faultless. Toward the close of the tale, for example, when Holmes is smacking his lips over his meditated coup, the following memorable couplet occurs:

“I hope before the day is past
To have the upper hand at last.”

And a little later Watson carols:

“The night was clear and fine above us.
The stars shone cold and bright.
While a half-moon bathed the whole scene
In a soft uncertain light.”

In certain isolated lines—such lines as “Poor Mortimer will never see his pet again,” and “Down in the foul slime of the huge morass,” and the inimitable “It is our friend Sir Henry’s missing boot”—the critic finds an arresting power and beauty that seems to him to establish his

* “Sprung rhythm” was a term coined by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844–1889) in his preface to *Poems 1876–89*. Essentially, this is poetry which counts stresses rather than syllables. In this poetic scheme, feet consist of from one to four syllables, with the stress always on the initial syllable. The resulting poetry has an irregular feel, much closer to spoken language than to poetry with a more regular meter. In such poems as “The Windhover: To Christ Our Lord” (written in 1918) Hopkins actually indicated some of the syllables he wanted stressed. That poem, probably Hopkins’s most famous, is in sprung rhythm with five stresses to a line. Hopkins’s poetry was given to the world thirty years after his death by Robert Bridges (1844–1930), a poet and colleague of Hopkins at Oxford University, who published the poems of Hopkins in a slim volume in 1918. For further discussion of sprung rhythm, see Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*, Beckson and Ganz, *Literary Terms*, and Deutsch, *Poetry Handbook*.

hypothesis beyond all reasonable doubt. If he is right, one can only hope that some day the manuscript of the original ballad or libretto will come to light.*

* * * * *

So many letters have come to me in recent weeks, urging another column about Sherlock Holmes and his admirers, that this may as well be it. I can't decide, however, whether Vincent Sheean is an admirer or just an opportunist in the following lines, borrowed from "The Thirteen Bus." At any rate, the excerpt is work saving:

"Baker Street Now this is a really curious phenomenon: a street so huge, so crowded, so lined with shops and humming with the purposeful din of a lot of people going after what they want, suggests to most Americans one thing only, and that is Sherlock Holmes. For all I knew, it might have been a cavernous place deserted of all living, the haunt of bats by night. A forgotten corner between yesterday and the day before: the place where Sherlock Homes and Dr. Watson had "rooms." In that far-off period when I read and reread the chronicles of the great detective, I probably thought of it as a permanently darkened street. Such very peculiar things used to happen there, things that had no place in the ordinary light of day. Every ring at the door meant that somebody had been done to death in a mysterious manner; the postman brought nothing but clues; there were jewels in the gutter. And there it lies before us, straight, bright and noisy, for all the world like lower Fifth Avenue, a street which has forgotten its ghost."

Mr. Sheean's scholarship is seriously at fault, and if he believes Baker Street has forgotten its ghost, he is gravely mistaken. He should have asked his bus conductor, or the man who sat beside him or the first person he met after alighting. Mr. Sheean would be an acceptable convert, however; a fellow worth saving. At his leisure, I shall hope to hear that he is again rereading the Saga with all the old delight.

* * * * *

Commenting on my own comment that Sherlock Holmes may have been related to the Holmeses of Cambridge, Mass., Mr. John W. Curran—if I have correctly deciphered his signature—writes to suggest that I

* The best we are likely to see is Evelyn Herzog's "The Cento of the Baskervilles" (DeWaal C6910), a "verse epyllion" (small epic) published in *The Baker Street Journal*, Volume 25, no. 1 (March 1975), reprinted in Shreffler, ed., *Sherlock Holmes by Gas-Light* (1989).

compare the portraits of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, as they appear in “The True Conan Doyle” and “Yankee from Olympus.” Certain features of the men, he believes, suggest a common ancestor.

* * * * *

James Keddie, Jr., of the Speckled Band, Boston’s scion society of the Baker Street Irregulars, writes me that the remarkable collection of Sherlock Holmes literature left by the late H. W. Bell has been given to the Band as a permanent memorial to Mr. Bell, one of the greatest of all Sherlockians, and the author of two standard works of exposition. A princely gift!

(*The Chicago Sunday Tribune*, March 28, 1948)

* * * * *

[The following piece appeared in “A Line O’Type or Two” column on April 24. It was signed “Shandy Gaff.” I assume it was written by Vincent Starrett because it sounds so much like other pieces⁶ he wrote about Baker Street and because *Shandygaff* was the title of a book published in 1918 by Starrett’s great Sherlockian friend Christopher Morley. “Langdale Pike” was Jay Finley Christ, who often contributed to “A Line O’Type.”]

A STROLL ALONG BAKER STREET

The irrepressible Langdale Pike, with his theories and deductions concerning the activities of Sherlock Holmes in Baker Street, casts a sinister shadow over that innocent thoroughfare and makes a stranger to that spot in London regard it as a hotbed of intrigue and mystery. Yet if you walked down Baker Street today searching for signs of Sherlock Holmes you would be disillusioned.

For this busy little street that leads from Oxford Street to Marylebone is devoid of drama. You’ll search in vain for Sherlock’s home; the number 221B is not known. But other things you’ll find ...

Across the way you’ll see where Pitt once lived and further on the house of Bulwer Lytton’s birth. That old gray building—Portman Rooms, it’s called— was frequented by Beau Brummel. And in that

* For instance, the chapter “No. 221B Baker Street” in *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*, the “Epilogue” to *The Private Life*, and his introduction to Edgar Smith’s *Baker Street and Beyond* (1940).

house you're passing now resided the composer, Balfe.

You wander out to Marylebone and there, against the sky, looms the old parish church where Byron was baptized and Browning married and Wesley buried; and just beyond you can see the house where Dickens lived when he was writing about Copperfield and Chuzzlewit and Little Nell. Not much of crime in this; no sign of Holmes or anything "irregular" here ...

But stay! What's this? Mme. Tussaud's, where the famous and the infamous of the world are immortalized in wax! So here our quest is ended. Here, in the "chamber of horrors," within the shadow of Baker Street, are criminals in effigy ... But none was tracked to earth by Sherlock Holmes.

(Shandy Gaff, "A Line O'Type or Two,"
The Chicago Daily Tribune, April 24, 1948)

* * * * *

Brilliant as is the conjecture of Prof. Jay Finley Christ, the University of Chicago's Sherlock Holmes specialist, that the island of Uffa, celebrated in one of the untold tales of Dr. Watson, is a concealment shrouding the merged identities of the Hebridean islets Ulva and Staffa—an identification first proudly bruted in this column*—the subject is not and must never be regarded as closed, writes Christopher Morley in a protesting letter to your master of ceremonies. Mr. Morley, just back from England, has tardily discovered Prof. Christ's ingenious solution of a famous literary mystery, but is still inclined to fancy one of his own.

"Briefly, there are in England many 'islands' not surrounded by water," asserts the Gasogene-cum-Tantalus of the Baker Street Irregulars. "The Isle of Ely is the most famous. Particularly in East Anglia[†] any region rising above fens or meadows, even an isolated hilltop or woodland surrounded by open country, is often known as an island.

"There was—I think in the 10th century—a king of East Anglia

* in "Books Alive," August 5, 1945.

† This region of eastern England was the ancestral home of the Morley family. Christopher Morley's father, Frank, was born in 1860 in the town of Woodbridge in Suffolk. Felix Morley (1894–1982), Christopher's younger brother, linked the family name to the local topography of East Anglia in his autobiography *For the Record* (1979):

Morley is simply a derivative of Moor-lee, the sheltered parts of the East Anglian terrain on which my Angle ancestors settled when they stormed over from what is now Schleswig-Holstein, after the collapse of Roman rule in Britain.

In his letter to Starrett, therefore, Chris Morley was asserting a family connection to an unrecorded adventure of Sherlock Holmes.

named Offa or Uffa; his name is preserved in both forms. Just outside Woodbridge, in Suffolk, is the ancient village of Ufford, named for Uffa's Ford (across the river Deben) ... The 'Island of Uffa' to any student of East Anglia and Anglo-Saxon history, will irresistibly suggest some region of hilly ground rising above the tides and meadows of the Deben at Ufford. You will find just such country north and northeast of Woodbridge. It is a neighborhood rich in ancient associations and relics. We know Holmes's interest in ancient British barrows and early English charters.... Myself, I would be inclined to think that Market Hill, Woodbridge itself, was the island of Uffa. The late Mr. V.B. Redstone, in his little volume, *Bygone Woodbridge* (1893), says:

“Upon the hill, now Market Hill, first arose the dwellings of the Saxon serfs around the conspicuous burial ground of their departed chief, probably Uffa.”

But there are other possibilities, Mr. Morley points out. There are in England such things as “traffic islands.” And there is an Ufford Street in Lambeth and Southwark; perhaps the Grice Patersons took refuge there, on a traffic island, to escape the roaring “goods lorries” of that district. Or possibly the Patersons—the principals in the adventure—were conspirators for Irish Home Rule. Uffa might then have been U.F.F.A. or United Fenian Freeman's Associations. Or—

But Mr. Morley's letter is too long to quote in full and no doubt some day it will be an article in a book.* One final note of caution, however: The East Anglican king, named, perhaps, Offa, is not to be confused with an earlier Offa, the “Strong Man of Mercia,” who built Offa's Dyke from the Dee to the Wye, to keep out the wild Welsh. Authority for not confusing them, says Mr. Morley, is the scribe Geoffrey de Fontibus— see footnote (p. 139) of “Lives and Legends of the English Saints”(1903), by W. H. Hutton.

(*The Chicago Sunday Tribune*, May 2, 1948)

* * * * *

Special issues of *Clue*, the new monthly guide to mystery, I am told, will include Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe numbers that should become collector's items for the detective story fan. As of now the

* Morley's argument for an East Anglican location of Uffa appeared in *The Baker Street Journal* (NS), Volume 1, no. 2 (April 1951), reprinted in Rothman, *The Standard Doyle Company*, pages 354-6.

journal is being issued from Mamaroneck, N. Y. (219 N. Barry Av.), the home of the editor, Clayton Rawson, who doubles in brass as art director, advertising salesman, production manager, copy boy, shipping clerk, publicity and promotion director, and writes all unsigned copy. Only a magician could do that and Rawson is a good one. His little magazine has been needed, and I recommend it heartily.

* * * * *

John Bennett Shaw, Tulsa bookseller and bibliophile, is the subject of a recent article by Martin Gardner of Chicago, in the Tulsa Magazine, that strikes me as very amusing. According to Gardner, Shaw collects books, sells books, and lets the customers fall where they may.

As a bookseller, Gardner says, Shaw's sense of humor sometimes urges him to unorthodox practices. He once had in the shop a copy of a book by H.V. Kaltenborn, one of his pet aversions. The book would not sell, so he cut the price in half, then to a quarter of the publisher's figure, and finally marked it 10 cents. When it still remained unsold, he wrote on the inside cover: "Five cents will be given to anybody who buys the book."

A few days afterward a well-dressed man approached with the despised volume in his hand. Whether he had seen the penciled note inside is still a mystery, for without a moment's hesitation Shaw snatched the book from him, wrapped it with scrupulous care, handed him a nickel from the cash register, and watched the stranger depart—flabbergasted.

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, May 9, 1948)

* * * * *

André Maurois, according to Word Study, Funk & Wagnalls' pleasing little publication, reports that the atmosphere within the French Academy remains unchanged. The same men, he says, are working at the same dictionary, and have progressed from the word "agresseur" to "ardeur" in seven years. Sherlockians cannot fail to be reminded of a certain Mr. Jabez Wilson, who was set to copying the Encyclopaedia Britannica because he had the right kind of red hair. In eight weeks he had progressed pleasantly through Abbots, Archery, Armour, Architecture, and Attica and was hoping with diligence to get into the B's before long. Then something surprising happened that drove him to the rooms of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson in Baker Street. You may read the whole episode in a story called "The Red-Headed League" in

the “Adventures of Sherlock Holmes”

Dr. Edward Wagenknecht, incidentally, would call the French dictionary workers romantics equally with Mr. Jabez Wilson and Sherlock Holmes; and he would be right. Ah, romance!

(*The Chicago Sunday Tribune* May 23, 1948)

* * * * *

In his excellent volume of reminiscence, “Some Literary Recollections” [London, 1884] —a pretty well forgotten book, as its author is a pretty well forgotten novelist — James Payn tells a delightful story of his early days in London, when he knew all the great ones of the day including Charles Dickens. The yarn might be the opening pages of an adventure of Sherlock Holmes, except that it is chronologically too early.

Payn was returning home one summer night, through a fashionable street out of Piccadilly, when a violent thunderstorm came up, forcing him under a portico for shelter. It was very late; there was not a hansom cab in sight. Across the street, in one of the great houses, he noted, a ball was in progress; the bow window of the drawing room stood open and now and again figures flitted across the aperture. Dance music made itself heard above the storm.

* * * * *

After a time the novelist noticed another lurker in the street, also under a portico — a man who looked like a beggar, for he was dressed in rags. Suddenly the stranger ran across the street in the rain and stood under the open window, at which had appeared a woman in “ball dress” carrying a bouquet. The gilt handle of the bouquet glittered in the gas-light as she threw it down to the beggar in the street. He muffed it, but picked it up quickly, nodded twice to the woman in the window, then ran off at full speed through the pouring rain.

That was all; but it made an indelible impression on Payn the writer, and he mentioned it to Dickens the next time he met the older novelist. He asserted his belief that the man in rags was the woman’s lover in disguise — a delightfully Victorian notion. Dickens, however, disagreed. “No,” he said positively, “he was not her lover. He was merely a messenger waiting for the bouquet to be thrown to him, a signal that had been agreed on beforehand.

* * * * *

I am no authority on the numerous novels of James Payn; perhaps he used the incident in one of his stories. It would be more interesting if Dickens used it; but I have no memory of any such gambit in his fiction. If anybody can direct me to the conclusion of the incident I shall be grateful. But I can't help wishing it had been Dr. Watson who waited for the hansom under the portico near Piccadilly.

(*The Chicago Sunday Tribune* May 30, 1948)

* * * * *

Students of the detective story, an enthusiastic brotherhood, are pretty well agreed that it was invented by Edgar Allan Poe, whose masterly tale, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," appeared in *Graham's Lady's and Gentleman's Magazine* for April, 1841. It introduced the world's first full-fledged analytical detective, the Chevalier C. Auguste Dupin, to an apathetic public, and is today properly called the world's first detective story in our modern meaning of the words, i.e., as a literary form.

There was, however, an incunabular period, so to speak, in which scholarship now likes to discover the seeds that came to flower in the great stories of Poe. These have been found in the earliest folklores, in all the literatures of the East. They have been plucked from the pages of Aesop, Herodotus, Cicero, Vergil, and the authors of Apocryphal Scriptures. One of the best detective stories ever written, in this prenatal sense, is the account of Daniel's superb sleuthing in the story of "Bel and the Dragon,"* in which the prophet anticipates Sherlock Holmes by many centuries.

Mediaeval literature yields relevant tales and legends in the writing of Boccaccio, Chaucer, Murzer, Juan Manuel, and others, and pertinent examples may be found in the "Arabian Nights." Most striking of modern prototypes is a famous chapter in Voltaire's "Zadig," in which the sagacious hero describes a lost horse and dog, although he has seen neither, by pure Holmesian deduction.

Among American writers of the pre-Poe period who flirted with the genre but turned away, was Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose delightful mystery tale, "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe," preceded Poe's "Rue Morgue" by a number of years; it comes close to being a detective story in the purest sense. (*The Chicago Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1948)

* This is included in Dorothy L. Sayers's *Omnibus of Crime* (1929) along with "The History of Susanna," also from the Apocryphal Scriptures.

* * * * *

And Miss Esther Longfellow, after a vacation, writes: “Well, and I long to go back again to Monterey and Carmel, for they say it is always more beautiful than one believes is possible. I wish I might have a little bookshop tucked away under a cypress tree, and that Mr. Vincent Starrett would some day walk in with a preoccupied air and take down a book from a shelf.”

If Miss Longfellow’s good fairy will provide the bookshop, Mr. Starrett will try to be equally obliging.

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, June 27, 1948)

* * * * *

Keeping the name of a great man before an apathetic public is this department’s duty no less than its pleasure, for which reason occasional reference is made to Sherlock Holmes, consulting expert in crime detection, now retired to bee-keeping on the Sussex Downs. Mr. Holmes, at 94, is still perhaps the first citizen of England, a distinction that even admirers of Winston Churchill will hesitate to dispute.

This week two items of news concerning the old master command preferred space at the top of the column. First, friends of Mr. Holmes in this country will rejoice to hear that he is less crippled by rheumatism than formerly, the result of exposing himself to bee-stings in therapeutic doses. A desire to test this old fashioned remedy was the secret reason for his retirement, now revealed for the first time. Tidings of his partial recovery come to me indirectly, but from a source that I believe to be trustworthy.

* * * * *

The second item adds substance to an old inquiry. For years one of the most persistent myths associated with the detective’s celebrity has been his alleged addiction to drugs. This is a romantic exaggeration with a slim basis of fact; it is clearly of record that his companion and biographer, Dr. Watson, weaned him from the habit long before his retirement to the bee-loud glade.* But the notion persists, and with it a

* A reference to the first stanza of “The Lake Isle of Innisfree” by William Butler Yeats (1865–1939):

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,

vulgar line of type in the apocryphal texts. It is still confidently believed by those who know nothing about the matter that, in moments of stress Sherlock Holmes called for assistance from his physician in the following words: "Quick Watson the needle!"

It is unnecessary to remind literate Sherlockians that Holmes never used this disagreeable locution; they know it is not to be found anywhere in the Authorized Writings. But where did it originate and what is the [illegible word] st of its enormous popularity? One theory, long held by the present writer, is that Fred Stone used it first in his Holmesian burlesque, "The Red Mill." More recently I have played with the fancy that its widespread currency resulted from its use as a gag-line in the mouth of some newspaper comic character, and have suggested T.A. Dorgan ("Tad"), the old Hearst sports cartoonist, as a possible inventor. It is the latter notion that has just received surprising confirmation from the head of a well-known advertising agency. In a letter to a fellow-Sherlockian he writes.

"Vincent Starrett's belief is correct. The phrase was a recurring motif in a series of daily cartoons by Tad, called 'Daffydils,' published about 1910 or thereabouts. The series was peopled by little linear figures, like the Dancing Men in the Sherlockian code, but in sprightlier attitudes. They featured deliberately outlandish puns, topped off with a non sequitur exclamation which more often than not was 'Quick Watson the needle!' A variant of this, I remember, was 'Quick, Watson, the necessary implement!' Other catch-phrases in the series were: 'Officer he's in again.' 'Whoops, my dear!' 'Take 'em off, we know you!' 'Sic 'im, Prince, he bit your father!' and so on. They became part of the language of the day."

This is splendid and flattering to my subconscious memory; and it is possible that in the late Mr. Dorgan we have at last discovered the author of the notorious line. But the question may still be open. Just when, I would ask, did Tad first use the line? Was it subsequent to its use in some theatrical production? In short, did he invent it himself or pick it up someplace? "The Red Mill" antedated the remembered cartoons, I think, by some years; but it is not certain that the line did appear in the "The Red Mill." In any case, an interesting contribution has been made to the history of a literary myth that has become a part of American folklore.

All of which, as a friend observes, strikingly betokens the survival

And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
 Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honeybee,
 And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

value of error.

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, August 1, 1948)

* * * * *

By this time, it may be supposed, all Sherlockians worthy of the name will have read “The Case of the Man Who Was Wanted” perhaps the most looked forward to short story of our day. Lost to the world since 1922, when Sir Arthur Conan Doyle placed the manuscript in a hatbox and consigned it to a bank vault, its discovery a few years ago was an event of the first literary importance. Since that time admirers of Sherlock Holmes have existed in large part only to read the tale when and if it should appear in print.

First reports asserted starkly that the incredible surviving Doyles had decided against publication. The story was “not up to the standard set by others” they said. Considerable opposition to this pious point of view developed. It was pointed out that more than half the “others” fell below the standard set by the very best — inevitably, since no writer can be constantly at the top of his form. Fierce words, reckless words, imploring words were hurried across the Atlantic at the rock-ribbed Brothers Doyle.

* * * * *

Now after seven years of waiting, we have the story. Some miracle of solicitation turned the trick. Perhaps American dollars had something to do with it. At any rate, “The Case of the Man Who Was Wanted” is a leading feature of the August *Cosmopolitan*, and students and critics may form their own opinion of the tale— probably the last story about Sherlock Holmes that we shall ever see.

It is not a bad story, but one understands why Sir Arthur laid it aside. No doubt he intended to return to it some day, to give it the extra vitality, the special flavor that would bring it to satisfying stature among the other adventures. As it stands, the tale lacks incident and pace; but the idea is ingenious, and there are passages that remind one of some of the best episodes in the saga; in particular the early paragraphs of banter between the detective and Dr. Watson, involving a spot of typical Holmesian deduction. Watson is the narrator of the adventure and the foiled Scotland Yarder is our old friend Lestrade.

Sherlockians in number should be grateful to the editors of the *Cosmopolitan* for bringing them this lost chapter of the Homeric chronicle; for which, by the way, Robert Fawcett has made two stunning

pictures in the best tradition.

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, August 15, 1948)

* * * * *

Still sadly needed by the fiction writing fraternity, a large and influential body of exhibitionists, is a concise one volume textbook of elementary information on matters in which writers of fiction are not, it would appear, too well informed, I am not thinking of politics or theology, which are matters of opinion and debate. There should be chapters on the weather, the seasons, the common phenomena of the day and night (with special attention to the phases of the moon). The flora and fauna of our jolly little planet (with particular emphasis on zonal distribution) and a little simple science in the field of, say, medicine and physics.

Possibly there should be a brief chapter of law and a chronology of important historical events with dates. For male writers a section on feminine wearing apparel would be useful. Certainly there should be a few pages of colored maps indicating the relative position of the nations of earth; France, Spain and Portugal can be very confusing if there is no Atlas handy. Above all, I think there should be hundreds and hundreds of pictures showing people doing things— all sorts of things—as illustrating the simple details of work and play that make up the joyous spectacle of life. Nothing gives a writer of fiction more trouble than describing some familiar proceeding with which he happens to be unfamiliar. [...]

And Dr. Watson's appalling ignorance of simple moon lore has been embarrassingly revealed by Prof. J. Finley Christ in his Sherlockian pamphlet, "Gleanings by Gaslight." In 14 Holmes stories there are 19 references to the moon, nearly all of them inaccurate.

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, August 29, 1948)

* * * * *

Reactions to "The Case of the Man Who Was Wanted" the "lost last story" about Sherlock Holmes, recently published, have been pouring in for some weeks. Everybody seems to have read it avidly and nobody seems to like it. At any rate, nobody liked it much. Some notable Sherlockians are pretty severe. Joseph Henry Jackson thinks the story "falls flat on its face." Russell McLauchlin inclines to the belief that it was written, a few years ago, by Adrian Coman Doyle, son of that Mr. Arthur who was, as we all know, Dr. Watson's literary agent. H.B. Williams thinks the two Doyle boys, Adrian and Denis, may have found

the tale in fragmentary form among their father's papers, and have completed it as best they could. Jeremiah Buckley declares the work to be a forgery and its perpetrator an American. Prof. Finley Christ also hints at forgery, and so the game goes on.

This is all excellent fun and I have enjoyed it; but isn't it just all just a little ungrateful too? We were told years ago by the Doyle estate, when the story was discovered, that "The Man Who Was Wanted" was not "up to standard" and had been discarded by its author. Hesketh Pearson, who saw the story in manuscript, echoed the criticism in his biography of Conan Doyle. But for the most part we were unwilling to accept these judgments. We knew an unpublished Sherlock Holmes tale had been discovered and we screamed for its publication. Now we have it and find that it is precisely what Sir Arthur's sons and Mr. Pearson told us—an inferior specimen. Speaking for myself, I am happy that the "lost" story has been found and has been published. I should never have ceased to abuse the younger Doyles if they had not released it; and others too, in number, would have upbraided them. A great writer will always be judged by his finest performances, not by his poorest.

As for "The Man Who Was Wanted" there is enough of the old magic in it to justify its publication. It would be enough for this old sentimentalist if Holmes and Watson no more than came together again in Baker Street and smoked a pipe on the doorstep with no word spoken.

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, September 19, 1948)

* * * * *

Exciting tidings of Japan's return to the cultural arts of peace and progress have reached this department from Walter Simmons, Tribune correspondent in Tokyo, who reports the formation of a Nipponese chapter of the Baker Street Irregulars on Oct. 12 last. The new scion society will be known as the Baritsu chapter for reasons hereinafter set forth.

Charter members of this first far eastern group of Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts are Richard Hughes, the Australian news correspondent, long known in his own country as "Dr. Watson, Jun"; Edogawa Rampo (a pseudonym transliterated from Edgar Allan Poe), Japan's leading mystery writer; George F. Blewett for Philadelphia, Tojo's attorney; Lindsay Parrott, New York Times correspondent; Mr. Simmons himself, and an number of Japanese editors and writers. Count Makino, the distinguished Japanese elder statesman, unable to attend the inaugural meeting because of his advanced age, contributed an interesting paper to Holmesian scholarship, which was read by his

grandson, Kenichi Yoshida.

As to the name selected to identify the Tokyo chapter, students may recall the passage in the “Adventure of the Empty House,” in which Sherlock Holmes, explaining his return from the dead, credits his escape from Professor Moriarty to his knowledge of “baritsu, or the Japanese system of wrestling,” which enabled him to pitch the master criminal to destruction in the Reichenbach Fall. The word has puzzled Sherlockians since its first appearance in print, but was assumed to be another Japanese word for the more familiar jujitsu. In point of fact, the word baritsu does not exist in the Japanese language, Count Makino asserted; its use in the Holmes saga is simply another of Dr. Watson’s numerous errors.

“The confusion with jujitsu is of course obvious,” wrote the Japanese scholar. “What Holmes actually said was: ‘I have some knowledge of jujitsu, which includes the Japanese system of wrestling,’ or perhaps, ‘I have some knowledge of bujitsu, including especially the Japanese system of wrestling.’ Bujitsu is the Japanese word for the martial arts, which in addition to jujitsu embrace the study of archery, fencing, spearmanship, pike-thrusting, long and short swordsmanship, military fortification, and the firing of cannon, muskets and small arms. Sherlock Holmes’ proficiency in all these highly specialized arts is well known. We know his weakness for pock-marking the walls of his apartment with patriotic initials; his knowledge of airguns was at least equal to that of Col. Sebastian Moran; we have a glimpse of his acquaintance with pike and spear in the “Adventure of Black Peter,” in which he attempted to harpoon the dead pig in Allardyce’s butcher shop. We know also that he was ‘a bit of a single stick expert,’ while some of his early adventures among the medieval moats, turrets, and drawbridges of the English aristocracy would naturally have attracted him to study of military fortification.

“Only in Japan,” concluded Count Makino, “do we find one comprehensive science which includes all these studies. Only in Sherlock Holmes do we find a westerner who combines a notable skill in all of them. For us Japanese there is intense satisfaction in the foundation of this first Tokyo chapter of the Baker Street Irregulars, under a name perpetuating that complex and subtle Japanese art which saved the hero of the West and of the East for further unforgettable adventures.” Bonsai!

* * * * *

Meanwhile, I have been in touch with a namesake of the indestructible

detective, recently discovered in Shelburne, Nova Scotia, by Quin Ryan of radio fame, who communicated his discovery to Charles Collins' "Line o' Type or Two." Sherlock Holmes of Shelburne is a fisherman, he tells me and —- incredibly —- he has never read a line of Sherlockian literature. "Detective stories never have interested me," he says, "but I've had some odd experiences because of my name. Some people won't believe it is genuine. Once I sent a check to the bank, by a friend, and they refused to cash it until they had verified my identity through my army office. Similar things happen from time to time, but I don't feel that my name is any more peculiar than that of others."

He is of English descent, but has no habits in common with the Baker street phenomenon; he doesn't even smoke. During the war he served as quartermaster sergeant in the army for more than five years; this was in the water transport department. After his discharge he purchased a fishing boat and in the family tradition began to follow the sea. He was named Sherlock, he says, because an old lady who was a friend of the family asked that he be given that name. "I am sure she never heard of Sherlock Holmes the detective," he writes; but somehow I doubt this. I think the innocent old person had a twinkle in her eye and an attic bursting with old numbers of the Strand magazine.

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, November 21, 1948)

* * * * *

If you have ever invented a new word to take care of the obvious inadequacy of language to the emotions that produce it, and if your word is reasonably printable, send it along to this department and I will pass it on to the G. & C. Merriam company, the Webster's Dictionary people, who are collecting such coinages. Under the title "Who Makes Up the New Words?" a recent issue of Word Study, their interesting little monthly, features a number of letters from professional writers revealing their favorite contributions to this form of culture. [...]

It is now a quarter of a century, says Christopher Morley, since he invented the word "kinsprit" a contraction of "kindred spirit," which seemed to him to fill a need and it is more than that since George Jean Nathan coined the word showright to serve drama criticism as a term opposed to playwright for the fashioner of musical show books

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, November 28, 1948)

* * * * *

Pretty special, too, and considerably less expensive, is the first

publication of the Baker Street Irregulars, Inc., a book described by Christopher Morley, who writes the introduction, as a “Christmas story without slush.” It is Dr. A. Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” edited by Edgar W. Smith, illustrated by Sidney Paget, designed by Paul McPharlin, and introduced (as aforesaid) by the excellent Mr. Morley, who believes the tale to be a finer work of art than Dickens’ “Christmas Carol.”

Two editions of the masterpiece are noted, one limited to 1,500 deluxe copies, at \$5,* and a trade edition at half that figure. This department has ordered both. Calix meus inebrians quam praeclarus est!†

(The Chicago Sunday Tribune, December 12, 1948)



* Five dollars in 1948 would be worth approximately \$45 in 2009 (www.minneapolisfed.org).

† The cup that inebriates me runneth over. Starrett may have gotten the phrase from Arthur Machen. In *Born in a Bookshop* (page 256), Starrett wrote, “Calix meus inebrians quam praeclarus est, as Machen liked to proclaim, rolling out the sonorous syllables like his beloved Samuel Johnson.” Starrett’s essay entitled “Calix meus inebrians quam praeclarus est” appeared in *The Baker Street Journal* in January 1946 and was reprinted in *Sherlock Holmes by Gas-Light: Highlights from the First Four Decades of The Baker Street Journal* (1989).