The Adventure of the Deadliest Weapon: Part 4

An Original Pastiche by
SOB James Romnes aka Constable John Rance

We continue where we left off last month (see Ineffable Twaddle, Vol. 32, Issue 5, May 2013, Page 1), with Holmes & Watson hearing the sad tale of Contessa Sylvius. And, now the exciting conclusion to “The Adventure of the Deadliest Weapon”!

Again, her black eyes flashed with amazement, “You are wonderful! Paolo Venucci is my cousin and a better man has never walked the earth.

“My family and most of our village are dead from sickness and so Paolo became my protector. He followed us to this country and met with me secretly. I told him to beware of the Count, but he laughed and said here men didn’t have to die like unarmed peasants. Then I knew I must act before Paolo did.

“It was part of my humiliation to always carry the Count’s sealskin tobacco pouch and vestas. He would snap his fingers and I would fill his pipe and light it. But my weakness became my weapon.”

Holmes tapped the now cold bowl of his pipe on the hearth and said, “This isn’t without precedent: There was the 1828 assassination of the so-called Black Duke, Augusto IV by Terroza. Pray continue.”

“Yes, even the youngest child in my village knew how Terroza drilled the hole of a pipe’s stem wider so that a lead ball fit; how he packed gun powder, tissue paper, and then the lead ball and sealed it with wax. To save Paolo I prepared such a weapon. My only fear was that the Count would begin to carry his amber-stemmed pipe.”

“But of course, you couldn’t hide the lead ball in a translucent amber stem,” Holmes said.

She nodded. “The holy angels did not allow me to fail. Still, when the time came my will almost betrayed me. For a woman to kill her husband, even such a husband as he was, is a hard thing. “The Count somehow found out I was meeting with Paolo. He suspected vulgar intrigue because he is vulgar. He discovered that Paolo worked in the music hall and so went there to confront this supposed rival.

“When we arrived, he insulted me and struck me more than once with his riding crop. Then a devil’s smile came to his face. He snapped his fingers for his pipe because tobacco calmed him and helped him think his devil’s thoughts. My hand hesitated in the tobacco pouch until I saw Paolo.

“Brave Paolo was marching towards our cab. So I handed the pipe to the Count, lit it, and I left him to his fate.”

“Why Holmes,” I exclaimed, “the remark ‘this is a bitter business’ was the Count tasting tissue paper packing just before the gunpowder exploded, wasn’t it?”

“Excellent, Watson, you began slow on the cricket field but your game performance is steadily improving.”

“But how did you know of this Venucci’s ties to the Contessa?”

“The answer lies in a heap on my bedroom floor. The discarded porter’s clothes and greasepaint are all that remains of one Giovanni who has been of use to Scotland Yard’s investigations into subversive Italian societies.

“Now, I believe, Contessa, the medical inquest will show that the ball recovered from the malignancy that was the Count’s brain could not have come from Venucci’s Number 2 Webley. A .317 diameter bullet from Eley Brothers Ammunition would be too large for any pipe stem.”

Holmes placed the French briar pipe back in the piperack and... Continued on Page 2
**Librarian’s Corner**

“It is a great thing to start life with a small number of really good books which are your very own.”

— Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

As mentioned in past “Librarian’s Corners”, our Club purchased four books last year for the library. I’ve already written reviews of three of them. The fourth is Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle Locations: A Visitor’s Guide by Allan Foster (2011). Interestingly enough, the dedication is to the author’s mother—the granddaughter of a hansom cabbie. This book is divided into two parts: Scotland and England. Each entry in the many sections in each part is about places related to Doyle and Holmes. An example from Edinburgh is 61 York Place, St. Mary’s Cathedral, where Doyle’s parents were married and he was baptized. One could read a full biography of Doyle just in the entries here. The section on England is extensive, and one could also read an excellent biography of SH and JHW in its pages. An example is the entry for Simpsons-in-the-Strand with a quote from “The Adventure of the Dying Detective” and comments about Sherlock’s dining habits from information in other stories. Many places highlighted relate to the history of the area, tidbits about other famous residents, architectural sites, statues (even Fanny Pankhurst makes an appearance) and railway stations. Each entry has the history of the place, its relation to Doyle and Holmes, interesting sidelights and reference for further information. There are wonderful illustrations throughout. What an entertaining and rich resource for SOB Members. And there is lots of information for quizzes and puzzles. As you might expect, Lauren Stevens has already checked out this book.

Sheila Holtgrieve, SOB Librarian, sheilaholtgrieve@gmail.com

---

**Fetherston Treats SOBs to An Evening with Barrymore**

The June 16, 2013 Regular Monthly Meeting of The Sound of the Baskervilles will begin at 4:00 p.m. at T.S. McHugh’s Public House. The social hour starts at 3:00!

As noted in our March 2013 Ineffable Twaddle (Vol. 32, Issue 3), SOB Sonia Fetherston of Salem, OR was editor and sole contributor to the 2012 Christmas Annual edition of The Baker Street Journal, a publication of the Baker Street Irregulars. Released in January to BSJ subscribers—available by purchase to others online at bakerstreetjournal.com—the pamphlet is about the 1922 film, Sherlock Holmes, starring John Barrymore...a kind of behind-the-scenes look at how and why the movie was made, and how Barrymore stacks up against other Holmes actors.

At this Meeting, Sonia will treat the SOBs to an oral presentation of her thesis!! Don’t miss this once-in-a-lifetime event!

---

**BSI Weekend, 2013**

I attended my fifth BSI Weekend in New York City this past January 9 to 12, and each one is better than the previous!

I arrived Wednesday afternoon for the evening ASH Dinner at O’Casey’s, a short walk from the Roosevelt Hotel. I had the distinct pleasure of sitting between George VanderBurgh (Ontario) and David McAllister (Florida) and hearing them tell of their first BSI Weekends in the early 90’s. Both men are extraordinary raconteurs, and I was enthralled listening to them.

Thursday morning was the Christopher Morley Walk, led by Jim Cox (San Francisco) and Dore Nash (NYC). We started from the lobby of the Roosevelt and walked up and down half of Manhattan viewing Christopher Morley haunts. A surprise first was a stop at the Argus Bookstore, a traditional used bookstore the type of which are now too few in NYC. Many of us found something there to carry around with us the rest of the day!

Lunch after the Morley walk was at McSorley’s Tavern, a traditional Morley haunt. And after McSorley’s was the usual stop at the Strand Bookstore for a few more books, one of which for me was Christopher Morley’s “Ex Libris”.

---

**The Adventure of the Deadliest Weapon**

...reached for the meditative clay, “It wasn’t the ‘too ready availability of firearms’ which caused this death. The infantile fear of objects obscures the deadliest weapon, which is the human mind. We must not forget all the good firearms offer, or we will ultimately suffer a misguided curtailment of liberty. Perhaps our Union Jack might learn something here from the Stars and Stripes.

“Now, if you would be so kind, Contessa, as to accept the loan of Dr. Watson’s bedroom slippers, we will visit a soon-to-be-embarrassed Scotland Yard inspector who would be only too happy to consider leniency for any insights you might offer on your late husband’s involvement with at least a dozen murders. And, Doctor, here’s a first for your medical journals, a man killed by smoking a pipe.”
Things to See, Buy, Do & Know

- From SOB Webmaster Stu Nelan: Met a new connection at BSI Weekend, “Brenda”—one of the Chicago Sherlockians with some interesting Sherlockian info:
  ➞ During the BSI junket...I (Brenda) toured the Teddy Roosevelt house (from which 2nd floor, Teddy watched Abraham Lincoln’s funeral cor-tege). There is hanging at the exhibit a *Puck* magazine cover page from February 3, 1909, illustrating TR’s relationship with Congress, and entitled “The Adventure of the Crooked House.” *Teddy is wearing a deerstalker*, kneeling and peering into what TR is up to, is an elderly Congressman Uncle Sam/Watson standing behind him, “Some-thing devilish has been going on, Watson!” Peering above the transom, trying to get a look-see as to what TR is up to, is an elderly Congressman representing special privileges, aka earmarks. This was a slight diversion from the excellent Mor-ley Walk, but will no doubt appear on the 2014 itinerary.

From SOB Jim Nagle

You might be interested in this blog: http://peterhousehold.blogspot.com/2013/01/janesherlock.html.

Mr. Household says, in part: “Re-reading Pride and Prejudice last month, my interest was piqued by something I had previously missed. The reprobat Wickham having eloped to London with Lydia, Mr. Bennet attempts to track them down. He traces them from Brighton as far as Epsom, where, he finds out, they had transferred to a hackney-coach. Now comes the interesting bit: Mr. Bennet’s next move is attempting to discover the number and name of the hackney-coach Wickham had hired, in order to get what information he could from the driver. (Sadly this initiative was not crowned with success)...I was full sure that Sherlock Holmes was the first fictional character to detect using this method. But no, almost 90 years before the great detective tracked down a villain by means of a hackney carriage number, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Jane Austen anticipated this detection technique.”

BSI Weekend, 2013

...Saturday morning was the Vendor’s Room at the Roosevelt, where quite a few book dealers and others brought in their wares. Vinny Brosnan (SherlockinLA) was there from Oceanside; Steve Doyle (Gasogene Books and Wessex Press) from Indianapolis; Gary Lovisi (Gryphon) from Long Island; Peter Stern from Boston; and quite a few others in a room that quickly became quite crowded with enthusiastic buyers. I picked up a locket with the profile of Sherlock Holmes for Kamela—something I’m just sure she has wanted for years!

And I attended my first Junior Bloodstain (“The Clients of Adrian Mulliner”—*see visual at right*) meeting for those interested in both Holmes and P. G. Wodehouse later Saturday morning. I played Dr. Watson. I *(I’m being typecast!)* in a delightful puppet show “The Riddle of the Starving Swine”, written by Gayle Lange Puhl. The play was both Sherlockian and very funny, featuring the Empress of Blandings (a pig). Imagine a typical Wodehouse play with Sherlock Holmes thrown in and you will be pretty close! My schedule had me leaving NYC Saturday evening, so I missed the “Lost in New York with a bunch of Sherlockians” dinner Saturday night—a mistake I will not make next year! And although I’ve only been back home now a few days, I’m already looking forward to BSI Weekend 2014!
The Sound of the Baskervilles

By appointment of Her Majesty, Queen Victoria

I effable Twaddle

A monthly publication of
The Sound of the Baskervilles
A Scion Society of the Baker Street Irregulars since March 31, 1980
Serving the Greater Puget Sound Region of Western Washington

President: David Haugen, PFL, SOB, PSC
Treasurer: Allen Nelson (nelsonah46@yahoo.com)
Secretary/Editor: Terri Haugen (terri@soundofthebaskervilles.com)
Historian: Lloyd Hedberg (lloyd@soundofthebaskervilles.com)
Lending Librarian: Sheila Holtgrieve (sheilaholtgrieve@gmail.com)
Webmaster: Stuart Nelan (stu@soundofthebaskervilles.com)
Website: www.soundofthebaskervilles.com

Direct correspondence to:
6710 – 51st Street Court West
University Place, WA 98467
Phone: 253-460-2753
Fax: 253-460-2753
Email: david@soundofthebaskervilles.com

Things to See, Buy, Do & Know

Continued from Page 3

...for $130,000+. The one here, itself a scarcity, was the first full book
-form, with wood-engraved Charles Doyle illustrations. It was first
published in 1952 at Sotheby's for about $100 (post-WWII poverty).
It showed a light foxing and had been rebound, but the original wrap-
pers were pasted to the covers. The manuscript essay was written in
a 1927 Strand Magazine issue, prefacing a competition in which read-
ers were challenged to match Sir Arthur's selection of what he regard-
ed as the 12 best Holmes short stories.

- From SOB Elliott Black, Lincolnwood, IL: The British Library's
current featured exhibit (through May 12) is Murder in the Library:
An A-Z of Crime Fiction. Says the website (http://www.bl.uk/
whatson/exhibitions/murder/index.html) Classic locked-room myster-
ies, tales of murder and mayhem in quaint villages or gritty adven-
tures on mean city streets. Crime fiction, which currently accounts for
over a third of all fiction published in English, holds millions of people enthralled. Murder in the Library
will take you on a fascinating journey through the development of
crime and detective fiction, from its origins in the early 19th century
through to contemporary Nordic Noir, taking in the adventures of
Sherlock Holmes, the first appearance of Miss Marple and the fiend-
ish plots of Dr. Fu Manchu along the way. Reported The Telegraph
(telegraph.co.uk) in January, “The most thrilling exhibit for many crime aficionados will be the origi-
nal manuscript of the Sherlock Holmes story
The Retired Colourman by the Shakespeare of crime fiction, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—and it is
interesting to note that, like Shakespeare, he wrote fluently with scarcely any biots or corrections.

- From SOB Ann Deusenberry of Benicia, CA: Check out this website, where you’ll see 20 fonts
and the cats that clearly inspired them: http://www.
buzzfeed.com/paws/cats-as-fonts. The 20th
one is our own favorite, “Baskerville Old Face”.

- From Wessex

Press: The Strand Magazine and Sherlock Holmes: Two Fixed Points in a Changing Age
by Robert Veld (Gasogene Books, $24.95) is now available. In 1891, this first magazine if its kind be-
gan to publish the greatest detective stories of all time, inextricably linking them in the minds of Sher-
lockians forever. “Waste no time…plunge into the
first in-depth history of what Robert Veld calls
“possibly the greatest partnership in the history of
literature!”—Leslie S. Klinger. It “is a detailed and
carefully researched exploration of the many Sher-
lockian aspects of The Strand Magazine, including
its publisher, editors, and illustrators; it’s a grand
story, and told well indeed.”—Peter Blau.