



Sherlock Holmes

C O L L E C T I O N S



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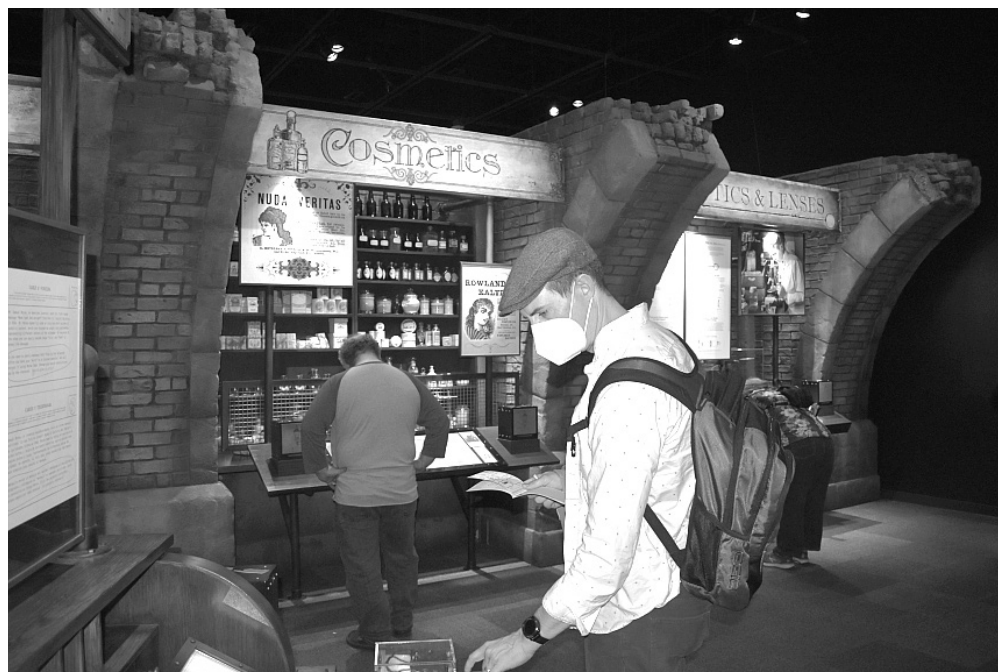
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“Your merits should be publicly recognized” (STUD)

Sherlock Holmes: The Exhibition at the Minnesota History Center

The Minnesota History Center is currently hosting *Sherlock Holmes: The Exhibition*. The concept was developed by Geoffrey M. Curley + Associates (GMC+A), who worked with Amy Noble Seitz and her staff at Exhibits Development Group (EDG), a Saint Paul firm, to pull it together. Geoff got in touch with Jon Lellenberg in 2010 through the Conan Doyle Estate. Jon, in turn, introduced Geoff to many great Sherlockian people and resources; representatives at libraries in Marylebone, Portsmouth and Toronto, people at Warner Brothers and CBS, as well as Dan Stashower and Tim Johnson. Curley and EDG also worked with Jon, the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry, the Museum of London, and the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) to develop the exhibit. Geoff wrote a remembrance of Jon for the September 2021 issue of this newsletter (vol. 25 no. 3).

GMC+A developed incredible sets, evoking the feeling of stone arches in the London Underground from 130 years ago. There is a room where a mysterious event has taken place which attendees can work to unravel. Dan Stashower wrote the mystery, which is entertaining for people of all ages. A nicely produced sitting room at 221B gives the visitor



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YEARS AGO

In 1922, A.A. Milne published “The Red House Mystery.” Milne wrote the book for his father, who was a fan of mysteries, and dedicated it to him. In the book, Antony Gillingham is the amateur detective and Bill Beverley is his friend and loyal assistant. The choice of these names indicates that Milne was not writing a pastiche of Holmes and Watson, but his use of Holmes and Watson in the book may indicate that it is at least a homage. A review of other writings by Milne, however, may imply the book is a parody of the Holmes-Watson relationship.

The book relates an English country house murder. The title and setting may be inspired by Holmes’s statement in *The Red Circle* that the signal station is a “High red house with white stone facings.” Mark Ablett is the owner of the red house and, having inherited a sum of money, is a patron of the arts. Mark has been entertaining a party made up of a widow and her marriageable daughter, a retired major, a willful actress, and Bill Beverley, a young medical student. Antony Gillingham arrives at the house in hopes of connecting with his friend Bill. Since the house guests are out playing golf, the only person beside the staff Antony meets is Mark’s cousin Mr. Cayley, who manages Mark’s house, staff, and affairs. Mr. Cayley “was not quite secretary, not quite land-agent, not quite business-adviser, not quite companion, but something of all four.”⁽¹⁾ Together Antony and Mr. Cayley find the very recently murdered Robert Ablett, Mark’s long-lost brother.

After Antony makes several comments about the scene of the crime, Mr. Cayley observes that Antony seems to know the house quite well after only a short time. Antony responds, “Oh, well, I notice things, you know. I was born noticing.”⁽²⁾ Once the police

arrive, Antony has an opportunity to think about the situation and makes more observations that raise questions in his mind. Milne writes,

He laughed suddenly, and lit his pipe.

“I was wanting a new profession,” he thought, “and now I’ve found it. Antony Gillingham, our own private sleuthhound. I shall begin to-day.”

Whatever Antony Gillingham’s other qualifications for his new profession, he had at any rate a brain which worked clearly and quickly. And this clear brain of his had already told him that he was the only person in the house at that moment who was unhandicapped in the search for truth.⁽³⁾

Mark’s long-lost brother Robert was the black sheep of the family and had just returned from Australia. Not only had Robert been found dead, shot through the head, but Mark Ablett had disappeared.

As Antony prepares to solve the mysteries, he recruits Bill to be his Watson in the chapter titled “Do You Follow Me, Watson?”

“Are you prepared to be the complete Watson?” he asked.

“Watson?”

“Do-you-follow-me-Watson; that one. Are you prepared to have quite obvious things explained to you, to ask futile questions, to give me chances of scoring off you, to make brilliant discoveries of your own two or three days after I have made them myself — all that kind of thing?”⁽⁴⁾

This light-hearted banter continues throughout the rest of the book as Antony tries to channel Holmes in order to find the murderer and discover what happened to Mark. The dialog contains references to Watson, Watsonish, Holmes, Sherlock, and Sherlocky. When Bill asks Antony how he knows Mr. Cayley has the key to the office, Antony responds, “You’re the perfect Watson, Bill. You take to it quite naturally. Properly speaking, I

oughtn’t to explain till the last chapter, but I always think that that’s so unfair. So here goes. Of course, I don’t really know that he’s got it, but I do know that he had it. I know that when I came on him this afternoon, he had just locked the door and put the key in his pocket.”⁽⁵⁾

After Antony states another of his conclusions, Bill asks, “How on earth —” Antony careless states, “You don’t really want it explained . . . you’re just being Watsonish. It’s very nice of you, of course, and I appreciate it.”⁽⁶⁾ In the last chapter Bill complains, “You were so damn Sherlocky yesterday all of a sudden. We’d been doing the thing together all the time, and you’d been telling me everything, and then suddenly you become very mysterious and private and talk enigmatically — is that the word? — about dentists and swimming and the ‘Plough and Horses,’ and — well, what was it all about? You simply vanished out of sight; I didn’t know what on earth we were talking about.”⁽⁷⁾ As was the case for Holmes in many stories, Antony is Sherlocky and reveals some of his methods and solutions in the last chapter.

Antony, like Holmes, often criticizes himself for his mistakes. Bill’s questioning of Antony causes Antony to reconstruct a scene and he exclaims, “The shadow on the wall! I was looking at the shadow on the wall. Oh, ass, and ten times ass!”⁽⁸⁾ Later, Bill’s questioning leads to another revelation and Antony says, “Oh, most super-excellent of Watsons! Oh, you lamb, you blessing! Oh, Gillingham, you incomparable ass!”⁽⁹⁾

In 1920, Milne published the book *If I May* which contained the essay “The Watson Touch.” In the essay, Milne expressed a desire to write a detective story “if only I could think of something which nobody else would think of while I was thinking of it . . .”⁽¹⁰⁾ Milne begins the essay by writing that he had just finished rereading the stories in *His Last Bow*. Milne comments, “Reading them now — with, I suppose, a more critical mind than I exhibited twenty years ago — I see that Holmes was not only a great detective, but a very lucky one.”⁽¹¹⁾ He then goes on to point out that Holmes’s deduction at the beginning of “The Disappearance

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YEARS AGO

2022 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary* by D. Martin Dakin.⁽¹⁾ Since this volume, along with so many others of a Sherlockian nature, resides in the collection at the University of Minnesota, it is appropriate that this essential work receives some attention. While not as prolific as some contributors of Sherlockian Higher Criticism, Dakin certainly earned his place on the short list of the most readable and reliable. Before a discussion of this essential volume, a few words must be given about this most interesting player of The Game.

David Martin Dakin (1908-1979) was born the son of a Nonconformist minister in Yorkshire, England. No doubt this influenced Dakin to major in theology at Queen's College, Oxford. He went on to teach at several schools throughout England, with a specialty in religion.⁽²⁾ His other specialty was clearly Sherlock Holmes. A member of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London since its inception in 1951, Dakin was a frequent contributor to its publication *The Sherlock Holmes Journal* (SHJ). Amongst his contributions were two highly critical articles on the *Case-Book*, "The Problem of the *Case-Book*"⁽³⁾ and "Second Thoughts on the *Case-Book*"⁽⁴⁾. Dakin theorized that several of the stories in that collection were clearly forgeries, and that others possibly were as well. In particular, he disavowed "The Three Gables," "The Lion's Mane," and "The Blanched Soldier." In addition to his many articles in *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, Dakin was a prolific letter writer to several British newspapers, author of the Biblical volume *Peace and Brotherhood in the Old Testament* (1956)⁽⁵⁾, and a Sherlockian poet with *Holmesian Clerihews* (1975)⁽⁶⁾. A clerihew is a four-line biographical poem. The subject's name is the first line, the rhyming scheme is AABB with irregular line lengths, the rhymes are often forced, and theoretically the poems are whimsical.⁽⁷⁾ Here is an example By Mr. Dakin⁽⁸⁾:

Mr MYCROFT HOLMES
After adventure never roams:
He much prefers to lodge in ease
In his armchair at the Diogenes.

And, perhaps most interestingly, Dakin parlayed his knowledge of Sherlock Holmes (and other subjects, to be sure) to become the first overall champion of Brain of Britain in 1954⁽⁹⁾ (a radio quiz show that is still on the air). He appeared on other quiz shows, as well.⁽¹⁰⁾

John Bennett Shaw placed D. Martin Dakin's *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary* at the number thirteen spot on the list of one hundred titles of a basic Sherlockian library.⁽¹¹⁾ This marks the book as an essential "writing about the writings." And, frankly, it does not take long upon studying the volume to see why. In Dakin's own forward, the author describes the book as "my observations on a number of major and minor problems occurring in the Sacred Canon, on which I felt I had something new to put forward." He acknowledges William S. Baring-Gould's *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* (1967) as a significant influence.⁽¹²⁾

Dakin takes each novella and short story of the Canon (as well as two apocryphal tales) in the order of their appearance in book form, giving each tale its own short chapter. In general, each chapter begins with a discussion of the chronology of the tale. As an admitted chronologist myself, this alone makes me a fan. And since I have already exposed myself to derision by non-chronologists (the VAST majority of Sherlockians), I will take this compliment one step further: Mr. Dakin may well be the most reliable of all the chronologists. His conclusions are typically based upon facts, whether upon the world within the Canon or the world at large. While a consummate player of The Game, Dakin does not overdo it in establishing dates (that is, he does not make up facts out of whole cloth, like some other chronologists). He takes into account comments from Watson, mentions of previous cases, statements about Watson's current lodgings, weather, and so on. I am particularly fond of Dakin's theories as to Watson's inaccuracy with dates: "the blame has been placed variously on his memory, his careless proof-reading or his execrable medical handwriting."⁽¹³⁾ This last reason makes me, as a practicing pharmacist, smile from ear to ear.

If a story has a major controversy, Dakin will tackle that even before the date. Examples include the differences in text between the British and American versions of "The Yellow Face," which university did Holmes attend in "The 'Gloria Scott'," and what precisely is the title of "The Reigate Squires." Then, after the date of the story, Dakin breaks down issues and controversies of each tale. If a story has many issues to tackle, such as "A Scandal in Bohemia" or "Charles Augustus Milverton," the chapter will be longer. But stories that only present a few topics Dakin feels require examination, such as "Black Peter," will get merely a couple of pages. Examples of topics that Dakin found worth examining: Tonga's poison in *The Sign of Four*, the Foreign Office in "The Naval Treaty," Holmes's laughter in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and Porlock in *The Valley of Fear*.

One of the aspects of Dakin's writings that really sets him apart is his humor. Yes, that might seem in conflict to some given his religious background (which also caused him to live as both a vegetarian and a teetotaler)⁽¹⁴⁾, but it can be seen quite easily. In his commentary on "The Empty House," Dakin questions Watson's description of the aged bookseller (really Holmes) carrying at least a dozen books under his right arm. "He must have meant half a dozen..."⁽¹⁵⁾ In "The Priory School" Dakin states "We observe with regret that this story, perhaps more than any other, is overloaded with nineteenth-century snobbery..."⁽¹⁶⁾ And in "The Dying Detective" Dakin quotes Watson's description of Holmes's attitudes toward women: "he disliked and distrusted the sex" and then observed that this "ought to be discouragement enough for those commentators who persist in inventing a love life for him."⁽¹⁷⁾ So, while no Noel Coward, Dakin added enough pithy observations and snark to make his writing "pop."

Other features of *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary* that set it apart can be found in the appendices of the volume. There is a nice table of the chronology of the stories (for those who merely want to see the dates according to Dakin (without the reasoning behind how he fixed those dates). There is also a rather funny chart of all the beards and moustaches that appear in the Canon. This appears to be written because Ernest Bloomfield Zeisler

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From the President

Involvement with Bouchercon

Bouchercon, the annual mystery and detective fiction convention, was held in the Twin Cities on September 8-11. On September 7th there was the opportunity for attendees who signed up for it to tour the Elmer L. Andersen Library. Several members of the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections and the Norwegian Explorers assisted with directing people to the available transportation and welcoming them to the Library. People were shown some highlights of the Collections selected for viewing by Tim Johnson, and had the opportunity to see the book storage area in the caverns.

Recent Sherlockian Events at the Minnesota History Center

“Sherlock Holmes: The Exhibition” is at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul, Minnesota through April 2, 2023. The Sherlock Holmes exhibit is open from 10:00 AM until 4:30 PM and costs \$12 or free to MHS members. For more information: <https://www.mnhs.org/historycenter/activities/museum/sherlock> A free one-day live conference was held on October 22 at the Minnesota History Center’s 3M Auditorium. The conference (“The



Photo by Julie McKurras

Bouchercon attendees viewing Collections materials



Photo by Gary Thaden

Bouchercon tour in the storage cavern

Timeless Sherlock Holmes”) was held in conjunction with “Sherlock Holmes: The Exhibition” at the History Center.

In addition, the Minnesota Historical Society’s Annual Meeting was held on Wednesday, November 9th. In addition to the normal annual meeting actions, the Historical Society interviewed local author Larry Millett (*Sherlock Holmes and the Ice Palace Murders*, *Sherlock Holmes and the Rune Stone Mystery*, and other titles, including his latest *Rafferty’s Last Case: A Minnesota Mystery featuring Sherlock Holmes*) and the Historical Society’s Senior Public Historian Chantel Rodriguez. You can view the interview on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emlpB9-w7jU>. The exhibit was open for a private viewing by MHS members.

Visiting the Collections

The Collections are open. The collection itself is housed in our secure underground storage area and is generally not available for viewing on a tour, but if you are interested in seeing particular items from the Sherlock Holmes Collections, please consult the online catalog (<https://www.lib.umn.edu/collections/special/holmes>) or other finding aids to locate particular items of interest, then contact Tim Johnson (johns976@umn.edu) for an appointment.

Membership and donations!

Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections membership is \$30 annually. Any contribution you can make above and beyond that to the Sherlock Holmes Collections would be most welcome and encouraged. <https://give.umn.edu/giveto/sherlock> 🐾

Gary Thaden
President, Friends of the
Sherlock Holmes Collections

Musings

With the name of the group that this newsletter represents, the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections, I often focus on the word “friends.” In the last newsletter we made the annual request for donations and enclosed a letter from Gary Thaden and a remittance envelope. The word “friends” is what comes to mind as I read through the list of contributors. There are so many names that I recognize of Sherlockian friends who are willing to support the Collections. Whether I know your name or not, you are a friend of mine, and your friendship and support of the Sherlock Holmes Collections is truly appreciated.

And continuing the theme of friends, I would like to express my appreciation

to Mike McSwiggin and Mike Eckman for their articles in this issue. We reached out to Mike McSwiggin because of his knowledge of D. Martin Dakin, and he quickly responded positively with willingness to write an essay for the 50 Years Ago column. We also sent out a request to the Friends board members and Mike Eckman replied, interested in writing an article on A.A. Milnes’s *The Red House Mystery*.

And there is one more friend-related item to mention. Steve Mason, friend of the Collections and a large number of Norwegian Explorers, made a trip from Texas to Minnesota. He had made arrangements with Tim Johnson



Photo by Tim Johnson

Steve Mason and Rusty Mason

to view some of the materials while he conducts research on one of his upcoming projects. It is nice to have the Collections materials used for good causes. 🐾

Phil Bergem, BSI

An Update from the Collections

Excitement continues as we move into the extended run of “Sherlock Holmes: The Exhibition” at the Minnesota History Center in Saint Paul. Our one-day mini-conference, “The Timeless Sherlock Holmes,” on the opening weekend (Saturday, October 22nd) was a success. As mentioned elsewhere, there were presentations by author Daniel Stashower, playwright and screenwriter Jeffrey Hatcher, and Steven Swenson from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension. It was a special joy for me, as part of the festivities, to co-present with Matthew Dacy from the Mayo Clinic on Mary and Philip Hench.

As a part of his presentation, Professor Dacy shared a recently produced short film, “Finding Substance X: The Team That Created Cortisone.” I can’t describe the thrill I felt on hearing Dr. Hench’s voice for the first time. You might think that as curator that I’d come across a recording of Dr. Hench in the Collections. Indeed, there may be one there which I’ve not yet discovered. I’m now taking a closer look at our tape recordings. But the Mayo film was a first for me. You can find and view this half-hour film by searching online for the title or go to their website, <https://history.mayoclinic.org/>.

The Minnesota Historical Society is providing additional programming in conjunction with the Exhibition. Shortly after the opening, Dr. Ann McClellan (Plymouth State University) spoke “on the history of Sherlock fandom and the seemingly endless capacity for adaptation that Sherlock Holmes has had since the late 19th century.” Her talk is now available on the Historical Society’s YouTube channel. You can find it under the title “Sherlock Fandom Through the Ages.”

On November 9th the Society held its 173rd Annual Meeting. A portion of the evening featured a conversation between popular local writer Larry Millett and the Society’s Senior Public Historian, Dr. Chantel Rodriguez. Their conversation was moderated by Dr. William Convery, director of research at the Society. Together they

delved “into the world of Sherlock Holmes and the art of deductive — and historical — reasoning.” This recording also is available online at the Society’s channel under the title “History as Detective Work: Writing, Research and Sherlock Holmes.”

Over the Thanksgiving holiday the Society offered showings of “The Great Mouse Detective,” a chance for children to create their “own Mad Libs-style mystery book cover, and to explore the wider Sherlock universe.” Other programming will be offered over the next months. If interested, I invite you to consult the Historical Society’s events calendar (<https://www.mnhs.org/calendar>). I am extremely grateful to the Society’s staff for organizing interesting and engaging programming in conjunction with the Exhibition, and for highlighting the Collections during these events.

It may be fair to say that the Twin Cities will be the center of the Sherlockian universe beginning in February. Following captivating runs at the Grolier Club in New York City and the Lilly Library at Indiana University, we are delighted to announce that the University of Minnesota Libraries will host Glen and Cathy Miranker’s stellar exhibition, “Sherlock Holmes in 221 Objects” in the galleries of Andersen Library. The exhibition will open February 13, 2023 and run until May 5, 2023. Glen was the featured speaker at this year’s Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota annual meeting and dinner in early December. Plans for additional programming in conjunction with “Sherlock Holmes in 221 Objects” are being made. We will announce these events as soon as possible.

Closer to home, I’m pleased to work with English Honors student Alexandra (Lexie) Erickson on her senior thesis, a history of the Sherlock Holmes Collections. Lexie studied abroad during a part of her academic career at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England and is described by her advisor, Dr. Katherine Scheil, Professor of English, as “passionate about Sherlock Holmes.” Lexie “also is planning to go

to library school” so I am thrilled on a number of fronts. In one of our early meetings, as we discussed her project, I told her that she need not be worried if I’ve already written a few things on the history of the Collections. I told her: “I want you to find out if what I’ve been saying is true!”

Lexie’s work fits in perfectly with our preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Collections in 2024. My thoughts turn more and more to what such a celebratory exhibition might contain and so I urge you, again, to share your thoughts on specific items, objects, or artwork you might like to see featured in such an exhibit. Your suggestions will also be useful as we work on a commemorative volume or catalog.

Finally, I am pleased to report that my article, “What Happened at the Reichenbach Falls?” appeared in the recent issue of *Caxtonian*, a publication of the Caxton Club in Chicago. This issue is currently available for online viewing at the Club’s website, caxtonclub.org.

During this season of Thanksgiving I want to take this time, in a special way, to offer my sincerest thanks for your ongoing support of the Collections through your financial and material support. Our Friends — you — have been a significant part of the Collections from the very beginning. I never want to lose sight of this fact. You touch our work in so many ways and help make dreams come true. Thank you! You are the best!

I hope to see many of you in New York during the Baker Street Irregulars Birthday Weekend or at other venues in the New Year. My desire is that you have a joyous and wonderful holiday season and that this peace and joy will follow you into the coming year. Following Dr. Watson’s lead in “The Blue Carbuncle,” I wish you (and Mr. Holmes) compliments of the season. ♥

*Timothy J. Johnson, BSI
E.W. McDiarmid Curator of the
Sherlock Holmes Collections*

Sherlock Holmes: The Exhibition... *Continued from Page 1*

the feel of being with Holmes and Watson. There are numerous items from the stories in the room, and attendees have the opportunity to find them all.

Tim Johnson worked closely with Geoff and the folks from EDG and was involved from the very beginning, providing expertise and answering questions. He selected nearly 100 items from the Special Collections to lend to the group, making sure that proper procedures were followed to safeguard the items and ensure that they will return in good condition. As Julie McKuras wrote in an article for this newsletter's December 2013 edition (vol. 17 no. 4), "some of the highlights are [a] facsimile edition of *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, an original manuscript page from *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a first edition of *The Sign of the Four*, copies of *Collier's*, original illustrations by Sidney Paget and Frederic Dorr Steele, various books and journals, plates, door knockers, puzzles, card games, foreign language editions of the Canon, cigarette cards, toys, books owned by the last Czarina of Russia, nut-crackers, cookie jars, and teapots." The purpose of this assortment is to indicate the various forms in which Sherlock Holmes can be found. Other items on display include props from BBC's *Sherlock*, CBS's *Elementary* and the Warner Brothers movie *Sherlock Holmes*.

The display, known as the *International Exhibition of Sherlock Holmes* prior to coming to Minnesota, premiered at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry in Portland on October 9, 2013, and Julie McKuras was able to attend along with Jon Lellenberg. Among other places where it has been shown are Columbus, Ohio; Edmonton, Alberta; Seattle, Washington; Sydney, Australia; Houston and Dallas in Texas; Jersey City, New Jersey; and Miami, Florida. There was a push by members of the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections and the Norwegian Explorers to get the exhibition to Minnesota, and local Sherlockians should be thrilled at their success. As Julie told me, "for those who knew about it from the beginning, it was amazing to see 'the fruit of pensive nights and laborious days.'" (LAST)

Tim Johnson has visited it at several locations to check on the handling and condition of the items lent by the Collections.

* * * * *

The Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections (FOSH), along with the University of Minnesota Libraries and the Norwegian Explorers of Minnesota started hosting conferences every three years. Our last one was held in 2019, but the schedule was altered due to COVID. Considering the number of events that were planned for 2020 and 2021 that had to be rescheduled, the decision was made to hold our next conference in 2024 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the start of The Sherlock Holmes Collections with the acquisition of the James C. Iraldi Collection.

Richard Sveum, former president of FOSH, came up with the idea of holding a mini-conference, "The Timeless Sherlock Holmes," to serve as a placeholder for the conference schedule. The event was held on Saturday, October 22nd. Dick worked with Jacob Rorem, Public Programs Associate with the History Center, to coordinate speakers, using some suggestions from EDG. While Dick worked on inviting speakers, he and Julie McKuras publicized the event and encouraged attendance from out-of-state people. Notifications also went out to local Norwegian Explorers.

The chosen speakers gave a wonderful series of presentations that were well-received by the audience of 80 people. The four presentations were scheduled early enough that people had time to view the exhibit after they concluded. The first was by Dan Stashower, who wrote the text for the explanatory captions on display in the exhibition. Dan highlighted Jon Lellenberg's involvement and how the exhibition was developed. Matthew Dacy (from the Mayo Clinic) and Tim Johnson spoke next. Matthew talked about Philip Hench's role at the Mayo Clinic and showed a film about the development of cortisone as a treatment for arthritis. (Tim Johnson mentions more about this elsewhere in this

newsletter.) Tim spoke about Philip Hench and Mary Kahler Hench, their explorations of Meiringen, the plaque that was placed there in 1957, and the eventual donation of their collections to the University of Minnesota. After a break for lunch, Steven Swenson, from the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, showed how modern technology is used in forensic evaluation of a crime. As preparation, he had previously digitally scanned the auditorium, taken photographs of the room with a drone, combined them on computer, and used the results to show the audience how the BCA could investigate a (fictional) murder that taken place in the room. The results were a fascinating look into modern forensic science. Playwright Jeffrey Hatcher closed the program with an engaging, informative talk on various actors who played Sherlock Holmes in movies and on stage.

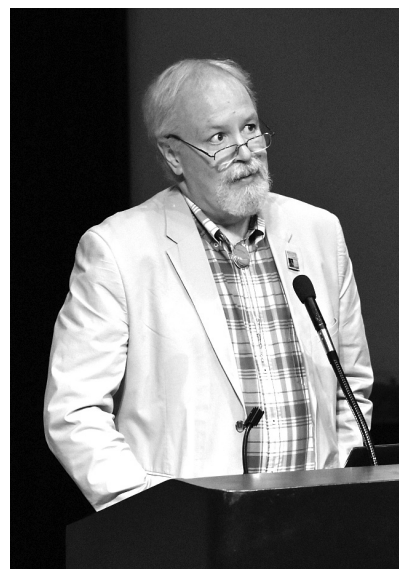


Photo by Phil Bergem

Tim Johnson presenting at "The Timeless Sherlock Holmes"

Sherlock Holmes: The Exhibition at the Minnesota History Center is highly recommended for any Sherlockian who has not yet seen it but is able to get to Saint Paul before April 2nd, 2023. 🖤

Phil Bergem, BSI

100 Years Ago... Continued from Page 2

of Lady Frances Carfax” that Watson was at a Turkish bath was “Marvelously lucky” as there were other possible explanations for the condition of Watson’s boots and trousers.

Milne observes, “But that must be the best of writing a detective story, that you can always make the lucky shots come off. In no other form of fiction, I imagine, does the author feel so certainly that he is the captain of the ship.”⁽¹²⁾ Milne as captain of his ship does make the lucky shots come off for Antony in *The Red House Mystery*.

In the pastiche “Dr. Watson Speaks Out,” which is actually a review in *The Nation* of a collection of Holmes stories, Milne has Watson revealing that his published stories made Holmes appear smarter than he really was. In fact, Watson was not at the Turkish bath in “The Disappearance of Lady Frances Carfax,” but “It was a matter of habit with me by this time to admiringly admit the correctness of [Holmes’s] deductions, and to ask for the explanations which he was longing to give.” Watson hid the truth because “to have told Holmes so would have destroyed his confidence in himself, and to have told the public so would undoubtedly have detracted from the financial value of the stories.”⁽¹³⁾

In the introduction to *The Red House Mystery*, Milne argues for an amateur detective to solve the crime and that the detective must have a Watson. “Let us know from chapter to chapter what the detective is thinking. For this he must watsonize or soliloquize; the one is merely a dialog form of the other, and, by that, more readable.”⁽¹⁴⁾

The Collections has ten copies of “The Red House Mystery” and eight of them have John Bennett Shaw’s bookplate. In several of the John Bennett Shaw copies of the book in the Collections, Shaw made a note to draw attention to the chapter “Do You Follow Me, Watson?” and added the further note “and several more mentions” in one copy. One of Shaw’s copies is in French and the note about the “Do You Follow Me, Watson” chapter is, of course, the French: “Me Suivez-Vous Watson?”

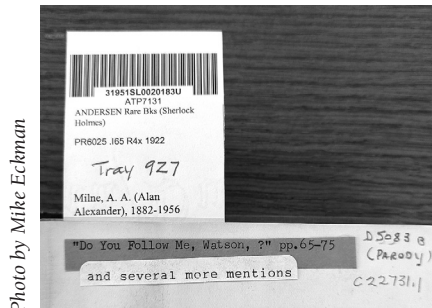


Photo by Mike Eckman

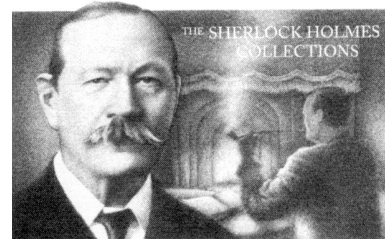
The last lines in Milne’s book might imply that he was thinking of a sequel. Bill is going to the Barringtons to join what he thinks is a fairly large party. Antony tells Bill, “Well, if any of ’em should happen to be murdered, you might send for me. I’m just getting into the swing of it.”⁽¹⁵⁾

The Collections also has Shaw’s copy, with bookplate, of a play, dramatized by Ruth Sergel, based on the book. In the character descriptions, Sergel describes Antony as “a clean-cut, clean-shaven young man of thirty, alert and quick-witted” and Bill as glib, cheerful, and a medical student without much money.⁽¹⁶⁾

Sergel makes significant changes to the story and has only a few references to Holmes and Watson. Antony asks Bill to play Dr. Watson to his Holmes. “I mean, have me point out how smart I am — at your expense, of course.”⁽¹⁷⁾ Bill obliges by calling Antony “Holmes” twice in the play. In Sergel’s dramatization the closing scene has Antony proposing marriage to Angela Norbury just as Holmes did to Alice Faulkner at the end of William Gillette’s *Sherlock Holmes*. Was Angela’s last name a Canonical reference?

It is clear that Milne was intrigued by the Holmes-Watson relationship and Watson’s part in making Holmes look so smart and effective as a detective. *The Red House Mystery* is an example of an author setting his amateur detective up for success, just as Watson could have done for Holmes. Taking Milne’s other writings on the relationship into account, *The Red House Mystery* may be considered a parody of the Holmes-Watson relationship as Watson must act the fool in order to make Holmes look so smart and effective. ♡

Michael V. Eckman



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Notes

1. A.A. Milne, *The Red House Mystery* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1967) 12.
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6. *Ibid.*, 101.
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50 Years Ago... *Continued from Page 3*

had a significant undercounting of them in a previous publication. (18) And in a very grainy photograph of Dakin that I found from 1958 from a quiz show panel, Dakin was sporting a moustache. In addition to a short bibliography, the book has an extensive index. The lack of an index in an otherwise well-written Sherlockian reference book often eliminates the usefulness of the book. In this instance, the index is thorough and robust.

Like most “writings upon the writings,” readers may have the most enjoyable experiences with this reference book when taking in only one story at a time. This is no criticism of the volume itself. Rather, it is the nature of a commentary that divides each story into its own discussion. A commentary that takes broader strokes on its subject matter, such as a chapter on Holmes before Watson and a different chapter on the criminals that Holmes allows to escape, is an entirely different experience. If one is leading

a story discussion for a Sherlockian group, or perhaps preparing a quiz, then this volume is an invaluable resource. My preparation sequence is typically rereading the story itself, going over the annotations (I leave it to the reader to choose which annotator), and reading the applicable chapter from Dakin.

While this volume can be found in the collection at the University of Minnesota, you may want it for your own collection for easy reference. Although this book was printed a few times in the early 1970s, it has been out of print for many decades. Luckily, used copies can easily be found in the \$20-30 range. And rather surprisingly, the title can be purchased as an e-book. While I personally prefer print books, a title such as this on a tablet might prove valuable at a contentious moment during a Sherlockian discussion. ♡

Mike McSwiggin, BSI

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In supporting the Sherlock Holmes Collections, many donors have made contributions either in honor or in memory of special persons.

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