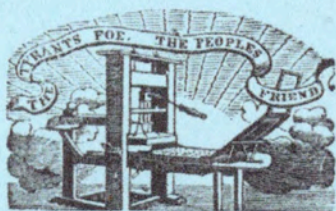


Vol. 11, No. 1
(New Series)



January, 2020

The Vermissa Herald

A Publication of The Scowlers & Molly Maguires of San Francisco





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January, 2020

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The Scowlers & Molly Maguires
San Francisco, California

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The Vermissa Herald

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Stanger's Corner

Another issue is out at last and it has only been nine months since our last issue. The truth is that there has been a lot of work in relocating this year and a lot more work in bringing this place into what I want it to be. But, now I actually have an area where I can work on the Herald.

As I mentioned last issue, the archives that I had are now gone. However, I have been informed that we have a number of articles that were submitted for the Dean Dickensheet Award but have never been published. They will finally begin to be printed. Hopefully, each future issue will have new articles, as well as one of these past presentations. That, of course, will depend upon your contributions.

Contributed articles will also help to determine how frequently we can publish the Herald.

Now, let us turn our attention to what is in this issue.

We begin with Ken Gallegos' article about how he became a

Sherlockian. It is a personal story and I am very appreciative that he chose to share it. I do hope that others will share their stories about how they discovered Sherlock Holmes or how they first joined a local Sherlockian society.

The next article, by Bruce Dettman, investigates the Holmes/Dracula connection. So many books have matched Sherlock Holmes against foes such as Jack the Ripper and other notorious villains, however, the Sherlock Holmes Vs. vampires seems to be its own special genre.

Bruce has done an excellent job in selecting and analyzing specific examples of these stories.

Bruce has also contributed several more book reviews for this issue. I always look forward to these reviews and I hope they will remain a regular feature for the foreseeable future.

We conclude this issue with the answers to last issue's Who Hired Sherlock Holmes, and another brief quiz. This quiz is a selec-

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tion of random questions from the Canon. See how you do. As always, the answers will be provided next issue.

Please send any contributions for publication, questions or comments to:

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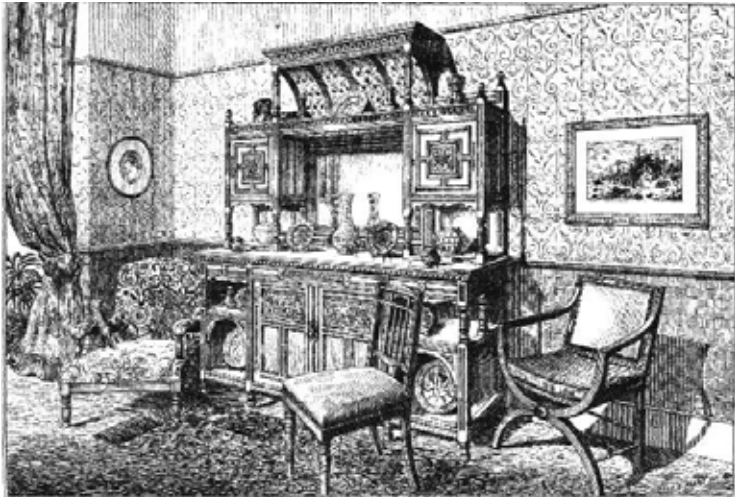
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I hope you enjoy this issue. So, until next time...

— James Stanger, Editor



The Sherlock Touchstone

By

Ken Gallegos

Whenever I attend a Sherlock Holmes event, be it a Scowlers meeting or those of another scion, as I scan the attendees, the first question that always pops into my mind is: How did my fellow attendees get interested in Sherlock Holmes? We all have our First Blush Sherlock stories and my guess is that there are similar themes and threads that animate our introductions to the world of The Great Detective.

Here is my story: My maternal grandmother was my first connection to residents of 221B Baker Street. Among Sherlockians, this is probably not so an unusual introduction, but if you consider the context of my Grandmother's life, this inspiration was unusual. My grandmother Petra Arroyos (nee Calderon) was born in rural Socorro New Mexico in 1894. She lived with her family until she was 13 and then, in an arrangement not unusual for

that time, place, and culture, she was married to my maternal Grandfather Juan Arroyos, who was 40 years old at the time. Her arranged marriage ended her rural school house education.

By 1908, Petra had the first of her nine surviving children. My mother, Elizabeth, born in 1936, was the last surviving child. In 1908, grandfather Arroyos decided to move to Los Angeles CA and though my grandmother did not want to move away from her home and family, her parents told her that she needed to go where her husband wanted her to go. So, she went, and for the rest of her life, until retirement in 1965 and her death in 1977, she worked and lived as a domestic servant in Los Angeles.

So, my guess is that my grandmother's life odyssey is not exactly the type of background that fosters your typical Sherlockian odyssey. However, even with the hard-

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ships that my grandmother faced throughout her hardscrabble life, she was always an avid reader and an even more dedicated movie goer. So, throughout the 40's, she was a big fan of the Sherlock Holmes radio and movie offerings of the team of Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. And she and my mother eagerly attended the release of their decidedly non canonical films. She also entered the literary world of Sherlock when she borrowed the Complete Sherlock Holmes by Arthur Conan Doyle at her local library and, as they say, she was off to the races.

Fast forward to 1966. It was then that she gave me and my older and younger brothers a newly purchased hardback copy of The Complete Sherlock Holmes with the following inscription,

“To Danny, Kenny, and Randy,

I know you're not old enough to read this book now but in a few years, I hope you will read and enjoy these stories. Love, Grandma”

It was also during that time period

that my grandmother would baby sit for my parents when they went out on Friday nights. On those evenings, I fondly remember that she would make us popcorn, darken the living room, turn on our old black and white Emerson, and we would watch, on one of LA's local television channels, the weekly Friday evening - then a few

years later, the weekly Sunday afternoon - presentation of the Rathbone-Bruce series. In a phrase, it was then that I was hooked and by 5th grade, I had read The Complete Sherlock Holmes in it's entirety.

That is my story on how I became a Sherlockian.

Unfortunately, due to traditional primogeniture rights, my oldest brother Danny has possession of Grandma Arroyos's 1966 gift of The Complete Sherlock Holmes touchstone copy but with my memories of my Grandmother every time I experience anything Sherlockian, I do not need the actual book copy to have both Petra and Sherlock close to my heart.



The Holmes/Dracula Connection

By

Bruce Dettman

I suppose the urge over the years has been too hard to resist, the awkward but to some minds extremely compelling marrying up of two of the world's most celebrated and colorful characters -- whose historical time-frames just happen to coincide so perfectly -- into one unified storyline. The Victorian period, both in its historical personage and its fictional representations, has produced a significant host of fascinating figures and our Sherlock has certainly met up with more than his share of them, most courtesy of a bevy of pastiche writers determined to conjoin Holmes with every famous or infamous figure who existed during the period, whether lifted from the pages of fiction or the colorful landscape of Victorian fact, from Queen Vic and Oscar Wilde to Jack the Ripper and Lewis

Carroll. It was probably inevitable, therefore, that Bram Stoker's famed Transylvanian bloodsucker would eventually be added to the list of interlopers.

Still, given Holmes' actual purpose for existing in the universe, the cold arena of logic and deductive reasoning which defines him and has made him so fascinating and unique to his world of fans, the introduction of a true supernatural element into this world -- in this instance vampirism -- is more than simply the implantation of an incongruous if not outrageous ingredient. It is a total violation of every scientific and philosophical tenet that the Great Detective so embraced. It is what defines him, what gives him form, texture and legitimacy of purpose. It is what makes him tick.

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For the record, the fusion of the world's greatest consulting detective and the world's most infamous hemoglobin guzzler is not all that new a concept. One can go back some 39 years to the year 1978 when both the prolific author Loren Estleman, best known for his detective novels and westerns, and fantasy author Fred Saberhagan independently came up with the idea of combining these two iconic figures in one story. Estleman called his tale **SHERLOCK HOLMES MEETS DRACULA** and Saberhagan, **THE HOLMES DRACULA FILE**.

Of late, however, several other writers have also taken it upon themselves to melt Dracula and Sherlock into one tall tale. The tally is not as great as Holmes' never-ending conflicts with Jack the Ripper has been -- last count about fifteen novels -- but it does seem to be growing, perhaps alarmingly so. In addition to full-length novels about Sherlock and the Count, there are numerous short pieces as well as comic book adventures depicting the two

pitted against each other, exploring every possible -- and usually stupendously absurd -- nuances of such an improbable entanglement.

Having explored the Holmes/Jack the Ripper connection a couple of years ago and waded through some rather unimpressive if not downright terrible co-mingling of Holmes and Saucy Jack, I thought I'd go ahead and check out the Holmes-Dracula arena as well. To this end, I found the five following novels devoted to this most peculiar relationship. This list is by no means definitive but it should provide some feeling for the sub-genre.

SHERLOCK HOLMES VS. DRACULA

by Loren Estleman (1978)

Estleman charts a course for Holmes' confrontation with Dracula by paralleling Watson and his efforts with those of the main characters in Stoker's original novel. The two groups never aid each other, in fact there is conflict between the two with the

The Holmes/Dracula Connection

intransigent and bombastic seasoned vampire hunter Professor Van Helsing actually warning Holmes off the case. But Holmes, of course, pays him no heed and pursues the thirsty Transylvanian in his own time and manner. When they do meet up, Dracula implies he is familiar with Holmes' reputation and the two spar both verbally and eventually physically with Watson along as his steady and trusty ally. For my money, although signs of his supernatural existence are pretty difficult to refute, Holmes accepts the paranormal a bit too quickly. Estleman has always been a good storyteller, however, and this can be an entertaining read. Perhaps the best the genre has to offer. Not that this is saying a great deal.

THE HOLMES-DRACULA FILES

by Fred Saberhagan (1978)

Author Saberhagan dishes up a stew with ingredients aplenty but sometimes too many offerings, particu-

larly strong ones, can spoil the taste of even the most well-intentioned potluck. The storyline has Holmes probing into the strange deaths of several Londoners which involves a plan to unleash a plague virus on the city unless a blackmailing demand is met. That would probably have been sufficient material for an acceptable storyline but Saberhagan also tosses the Giant Rat of Sumatra into this concoction as well as a remarkably empathetic Count Dracula who eventually -- and outrageously -- teams up with Holmes to put an end to the insidious plot. One more salient if not startling detail is eventually disclosed. Holmes is revealed to be the Count's nephew, moreover that Holmes also had a twin brother who ultimately became one of the undead. Mycroft cannot even discuss the issue. One can hardly blame him.

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE PLAGUE OF DRACULA

by Stephen Seitz (2006)

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No sooner had I recovered from dealing with the knowledge that Count Dracula had an avuncular connection with Holmes than I read Mr. Seitz's startling account which provides an even more unsettling array of thoroughly far-fetched disclosures. Watson's marriage to the former Mary Morstan is on the rocks and she takes up with Dracula. Holmes and Watson visit Transylvania where Holmes is attacked by the Count's vampiric wife and his two toothy daughters. Holmes temporarily grows fangs but he recovers and his old choppers return. In this novel Holmes absolutely refuses to acknowledge the existence of vampirism until the near conclusion when he once again becomes infected by the nosferatu. His sharpened canines return, although he continues to walk around Baker Street in his mouse-colored dressing gown and remains rational and analytical. Go figure. Reichenbach Falls also comes into the mix as does Moriarty who has brokered a deal with Dracula. The book actually

starts out in a subdued and controlled sort of way but as the author progresses and his story develops more twists and turns than Lombard Street, it is almost as if he loses all control of his material. The writing eventually owes a debt more to Mickey Spillane than Doyle as one absurdity is piled irrationally onto another. Just for the record, Watson saves the day and once again Holmes' natural teeth are restored.

THE TANGLED SKEIN

by **David Stuart Davis** (2006).

Less controversial and on a bit surer footing this is a short novel, compact and lean, which attempts to add our old friend Stapleton from THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES into the brew of Holmes coming up against Count Dracula and his minions. There are few surprises here. It's predictable and familiar territory with nothing much to recommend with the possible exception of its brevity. Dracula only shows up sporadically and these few occasions are neither noteworthy

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nor memorable. Holmes resists accepting the existence of vampires for only a couple of pages. Dracula's death is particularly silly.

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND COUNT DRACULA: THE ADVENTURE OF THE SOLITARY GRAVE

by **Christian Klaver (2014)**

While the narration of Watson by author Klaver is often well-handled, the storyline itself is preposterous with Count Dracula actually seeking out Holmes' help, Mary Morstan being vampirized and later biting both Watson and Mina Harker, the latter from the original novel. Toss in Moriarty with fangs and a smidgen of Lady Frances Carfax and you have a disjointed, topsy-turvy mess of a book. Even at only fifty or so pages it's insufferably stupid. Ignore it at all costs.

Conan Doyle and Bram Stoker were friends, of course, and ran in the same circles, so on some occasion it is not impossible to think that at a given point the two authors dis-

cussed the subject of vampirism. Doyle is on record as having read Dracula and even references Transylvania in his Holmes tale "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire." I quote from a letter he wrote Stoker on August 20th, 1897 shortly after the publication of Dracula.

"I am sure you will not think it impertinent of me if I write to tell you how much I enjoyed reading Dracula. I think it is the very best story of diablerie which I have read in many years. It is really wonderful how with so much exciting interest over so long a book there is never an anticlimax. It holds you from the very start and grows more engrossing until it is quite painfully vivid. The old professor is most excellent and so are the two girls. I congratulate you with all my heart for having written so fine a book."

We don't know whether Doyle and Stoker ever discussed how Holmes would have dealt with the Count but somehow, I rather doubt it. However, Doyle, who wrote dozens of short stories on a wide variety of

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subjects, did pen a few tales that have some marginal vampire themes. For the record, these have been collected in the anthology CONAN DOYLE'S VAMPIRE STORIES edited by Robert E. Howard and Martin Greenberg. Calling these all vampire yarns, however, would be quite a stretch.

Some authors and critics have gone on record as seeing Doyle's influence on Stoker and vice-versa. The story "The Case of Lady Frances Carfax", for example, is cited as an example where similarities in nomenclature appear, Carfax being both the titled character in the Doyle tale and the name of the London estate where Dracula moves to in the novel. There are a bevy of these to keep the conspiracy folks busy and excited and perhaps Doyle and Stoker were indeed having some fun with each other's works.

But again, for my money at least, the existence of supernatural entities in the world of Sherlock Holmes seems

an entire breach of the pragmatic and physically grounded universe on which the detective based his reasoning, vocation and total belief system. Such a wedding in this humble reviewer's mind simply does not wash and I have a strong hunch Sir Arthur, despite his own growing interest in the occult, would concur.

And a P.S., not actually germane to the subject of these attempts at mingling Holmes and Dracula on the printed page but perhaps of some interest.

Five actors have played both the Count and Sherlock on the screen, stage and radio. They are Christopher Lee, Frank Langella, Jeremy Brett, Richard Roxburgh and Orson Wells.

Make of that what you will.



Book Reviews

by

Bruce Dettman

THE WHOLE ART OF DETECTION: LOST MYSTERIES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

By Lyndsay Faye

Mysterious Press 2017

Every writer, even the unknown and failed ones, have a personal voice, a characteristic texture and resonance that is unique to them and nearly impossible to replicate. A few years ago, the award winning and much celebrated novelist John Banville -- who also writes mysteries under the moniker Benjamin Black -- was called upon to try his hand at writing a novel based on Raymond Chandler's icon private eye character Philip Marlowe. The result was not a bad mystery and to Banville's credit he did a fairly good job of trying to emulate Chandler's style, but there was nonetheless something missing, something in the fabric and tone, obscure but obvious all the same, in the writing

that was simply not Chandler. The reason being that there was only one Raymond Chandler.

In this respect, I feel pretty much the same about Conan Doyle. Obviously, some of those who have taken up the challenge of creating their own pastiches are better at it than others -- some, to be quite frank, have been awful -- and Lindsey Faye is undeniably one of the very best practitioners in the field. In my opinion, her novel DUST AND SHADOW is the finest attempt to forge a link between Holmes and the Jack the Ripper murders. She has a great ear for Sherlockian dialog, is a talented storyteller and a fine writer to boot.

THE WHOLE ART OF DETECTION is a collection of fifteen untold tales recounting further collaborative efforts of Holmes and Watson in cases that the good doctor never managed to chronicle for the public, well, at least until now. Some will sound familiar to the seasoned Baker Street

connoisseur, Vamberry the Wine Merchant, the Amateur Mendicant Society and Colonel Warburton's Madness to name just a few of the more well-known stories that Watson never got around to delivering the goods on for a variety of reasons.

All are admirable pastiches, certainly entertaining, although some are better than others and a few, to be honest, tread on parody.

But Ms Faye is a dedicated Sherlockian with much talent and a great love for her subject, all of which are reflected in these fifteen yarns.

It's not Doyle but then what is?

**MASTERS OF MYSTERY:
THE STRANGE FRIENDSHIP
OF ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
& HARRY HOUDINI**

By Christopher Sandford

Palgrave Macmillan, 2011

Labelling the relationship between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Harry Houdini as a genuine friendship is a tad misleading. Association might be a much more accurate term. Cer-

tainly, particularly in the beginning, there was sincere admiration and respect between these two giants on the great Victorian stage but this began to seriously unravel to the point that communication became nearly nil.

The cause of much of this developing friction was the great magician's on-going questioning and often totally dismissive position on many areas of spiritualism and various supernatural agencies that the aging Doyle embraced with such ardor and muscular, if not at times embarrassing, conviction. Eventually Doyle's excessive acknowledgment of blatantly bogus practitioners of the occult led Houdini to further expand upon what would constitute the growing rift between the two men.

Author Christopher Sandford carefully weaves the story of Doyle and Houdini's sometimes strikingly parallel lives, providing biographical profiles which temporarily merge until unreconcilable differences caused their unrepairable rift. In the end, even communication by formal

correspondence was pretty much impossible though Houdini seemed the less thin-skinned of the two, almost seeming to approach this business as an academic exercise, one occasionally fraught with humor, with Sir Arthur, the more emotionally impacted and intractable, never seeming to release or mitigate the seriousness of how he construed these paranormal issues.

VAMPIRE STORIES

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Edited by Robert Eighteen-Bisang & Martin Greenberg

Skyhorse Books, 2009

On the surface, the relationship between Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and vampirism might seem a bit tenuous. The author did include one story in the Canon linking Holmes with the legend of the blood-sucking undead, "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire," but the supernatural element in this tale turns out to be phony just as Holmes, a rabid debunker of the occult ("rubbish", he calls it) always knew it would be.

However, during his long tour of duty as a freelance writer -- which began years before he created Mr. Holmes and which continued well afterwards -- the prolific Scotsman turned numerous short stories of every sort: romance, adventure, thrillers, historical fiction and quite a number of horror and fantasy yarns as well.

Editors Eighteen-Bisang and Martin Greenberg have elected to assemble a group of the latter into an anthology of ten yarns which they feel demonstrate a partnership with vampiric themes, however marginal. And marginal indeed some of them are. Frankly, even providing for the elasticity of certain attributes which of late have contributed to greatly expanding upon the characteristics of the traditional vampire (psychic vampires, energy vampires, etc.) some of these stories are a monumental stretch in suggesting they have any true links with the mythology of the legendary creature.

They range from a yarn about a carnivorous plant seeking prey in the American west ("The Ameri-

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can Tale”), a driven seaman searching for a phantom lost love in arctic waters (“The Captain of the Pole Star”), to a strange and beautiful woman whose bevy of suitors come to very bad and mysterious ends (“John Barrington Cowles”), to a tale of a very dangerous mind-reader (“The Parasite”). The editors also include three entries from the Holmes Canon, the aforementioned “Sussex Vampire” and for minuscule reasons I find ridiculously obscure, grossly unconvincing and totally unacceptable “The Adventure of The Three Gables” and “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client.”

The book concludes with the non-Doyle -- and extremely contrived --

offering, “The Case of the Vanished Vampire” by Bill Cider in which Holmes ends up inadvertently aiding Bram Stoker in promoting the book DRACULA. The book also offers a bibliography of Holmes-Dracula related works.

Sir Arthur, in addition to chronicling Holmes’ adventures tales, was an entertaining and imaginative storyteller and produced some very pleasing yarns. Several stories in this collection are to be recommended. But the vampire connection in most of these are questionable if not at times totally non-existent.

Faulty advertising, I’d have to say.

—Bruce Dettman



Answers to last issues quiz

Who Hired Sherlock Holmes?

by Cade Deverell

Holmes' clients were an eclectic lot. They included

a.....

1. Banker - Alexander Holder/Beryl Coronet
2. Pawnbroker - Jabez Wilson/Red Headed League
3. Future Doctor's wife - Mary Morstan/Sign of Four
4. Lord - Lord St. Simon/Noble Bachelor
5. Governess - Violet Hunter/Copper Beeches
6. Suicidal woman - Eugenia Rounder/ Veiled Lodger
7. Engineer - Victor Hatherley/Engineer's Thumb
8. King - King of Bohemia/Scandal in Bohemia
J. Neil Gibson, The Gold King/Thor Bridge
9. Physician - Dr. Percy Trevelyan/Resident Patient
10. Typist - Mary Sutherland/Case of Identity
11. Stable owner - Colonel Ross/Silver Blaze
12. Landlady - Mrs. Warren/Red Circle
13. Foreign office clerk - Percy Phelps/Naval Treaty
14. Solicitor - John Hector McFarlane/Norwood Builder
15. Norfolk squire - Hilton Cubitt/Dancing Men

One point for the person who consulted Holmes.

One point for the title Watson gave to their story.

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A Closing Quiz

1. Who carved the wax bust of Sherlock Holmes?
2. Who wore a particular cut of whiskers and carried a “pink ‘un?”
3. Who was the unfrocked clergyman?
4. Who was the “non-conformist” clergyman?
5. What was Percy Phelps served for breakfast that caused him to utter a scream?
6. What was “Jem’s bird?”
7. Who was paid to witness a wedding?
8. How much was the payment?

1 point for each answer

1 point for naming each story



