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FROM WATSON'S SCRAPBOOK

When it comes to acts of hubris, *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine* might well earn its staff assignment to the lower ridges and clefts of Mt. Purgatorio. After all, it is published in America, where aficionados of the Great Detective call themselves Sherlockians, not Holmesians, as we do in England. Whereas I have had my share of pleasant encounters socially and professionally with the Baker Street Irregulars (BSI), Holmes bridles at what he has termed “characteristic Yankee familiarities,” and therefore these pages will embrace the adjective employed on this side of the Atlantic pond: *Holmesian*.

When I began chronicling my friend's career, I had no idea my efforts would ultimately engender a host of adaptations, and sometimes distortions. My business agent, a Scottish gentleman named Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, was unable to stem this flood of inaccuracies, so let me set the record straight on a few points.

First, a long overdue confession: Conan Doyle, a splendid novelist who on occasion effectively assumed the role of detective himself, had *considerable* to do with writing up and polishing my case notes!

Next, this slanderous business concerning Holmes's use of drugs ... it is a fact that my friend used to inject himself with a seven per cent cocaine solution of cocaine, and although it is a habit that I, as a physician, deplore, please understand that in those days it was neither illegal nor even deemed socially disreputable. Holmes abandoned the practice altogether, but let me also point out that his seven per solution was comparatively mild. A therapeutic dose of cocaine in those days was set by British pharmacologists at ten per cent. Another nettle is Irene Adler ... nothing infuriates Holmes more than to be portrayed mooning about like a love-struck adolescent. Romantics pounce upon that line I wrote in *A Scandal in Bohemia*: “To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman.” But apparently they skip over the paragraph that directly follows —

“It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was the most perfect

reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen: but he never spoke of the softer passions save with a gibe and a sneer.”

Now, gentle reader, can you tell me the street address of the rooms that I shared with Sherlock Holmes? Many Holmesians (and probably most of the ‘Sherlockians’) would reply, “221 B Baker Street?” But you see, Holmes and I lived one flight up in *Apartment B*. Thus, our proper street address was 221 Baker Street.

In spite of these noted exceptions, I generally enjoy the Holmes pastiches, plays and films. It irritates both Holmes and Mrs Hudson that I am often portrayed as a bumbling Colonel Blimp, but I don’t really mind. The royalties elicited from producers buffer my pride marvelously. As for Holmes, he has scant tolerance for actors who play him, though he has the grace not to mention names. Yet for all that, he has a prima donna’s ego and when pressed, begrudgingly admits his manner and inflection were effectively captured by Mr. Rathbone.

Well, now, I’ve had my say for this issue, so I shall turn over the residuum of this column to the editor, Mr. Kaye.

—John H. Watson, M. D.

* * * *

It is both a pleasure and a heavy responsibility to assume the editorial duties of a second Wildside Press periodical, the first being *H. P. Lovecraft’s Magazine of Horror*; now approaching its third issue (or rather, fourth, since we actually did an issue 1.5 as a special extra for subscribers.) This magazine is an assignment I relish, though I am well aware that I am perhaps standing in for that peerless Holmesian scholar, the distinguished Parker College (PA) professor J. Adrian Fillmore, whose intimate knowledge of the mind and character of Sherlock Holmes led him to edit the St. Martin’s Press anthologies, *The Resurrected Holmes* and *The Confidential Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*. Unfortunately, Professor Fillmore is on an extended sabbatical and cannot even be reached by e-mail; some concern has been expressed about his health since his own Holmesian adventures, but a recent communiqué from the estimable Professor Harold Shea assures us that Fillmore is still actively involved in new literary worlds and vistas. (Regrettably, Shea could not resist a gratuitous observation about his colleague: “*Gad, what a name!*”)

My own contributions to Holmesian literature began in 1971 when Luther Norris published a now-rare edition of 300 copies of *The Histrionic Holmes*, my study of the Great Detective’s acting skills, which brought a most gratifying encomium from the late great John Dickson Carr. In

1979, Holmes played a role of some importance in my humorous fantasy, *The Incredible Umbrella*, but came front and center in 1994 when I edited a large Holmesian anthology, *The Game is Afoot*, for St. Martin's Press, a book followed by the two above-cited works that Professor Fillmore's labours helped bring about. I also wrote and produced a play of the same title as my first anthology, and my theatre company, The Open Book, is helping to produce Carole Buggé's new musical, *Sherlock Holmes*.

My non-Holmesian credits include five Hilary Quayle and two Marty Gold mystery novels; teaching mystery writing for more than twenty years at New York University (am very proud of the many students who entered the profession and sold successful novels and at least one screenplay); serving as a judge for the Edgar Awards of the Mystery Writers of America, and chairman of the judging committee for many years for the Nero Award offered by The Wolfe Pack, the national Nero Wolfe society.

* * * *

Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine has a few things in common with *H.P. Lovecraft's Magazine of Horror*: both are quarterlies, both pay homage to two famous genre names, but neither are limited to pastiches and parodies of their titular progenitors. While *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine* will always reverence the Holmesian Canon, the mutual intention of its editor and publisher is to create a new mystery magazine with as great a scope as its contributors enable us to offer.

Thus, while Watsonian pastiches and spoofs will appear as often as the merit of such submissions deserve, they will be counterbalanced by new mystery stories, period pieces, tales of murder and other crimes, puzzle/riddle tales if anyone still writes them, and in short, mysteries set in the present, past, and possibly even the future. Science fiction is less likely in these pages, but superior SF crime stories and mysteries have been written by authors such as Isaac Asimov, Alfred Bester, Lloyd Biggle, Ray Bradbury, and Harry Harrison, so I plan to keep an open mind about this.

When I was a Nero Award judge and since then, I have become increasingly concerned that today's mystery novels are really crime stories. To me, a genuine mystery story is one that provides clues and red herrings, is reader-solvable (or at least creates that illusion!); that is, in short, an example of the fiction championed by Arthur Conan Doyle (sometimes!), by Rex Stout, Ellery Queen, Craig Rice, Clayton Rawson, Agatha Christie, John Dickson Carr, etc. I am afraid that modern writers have either grown lazy, or are at a loss as to the techniques of forging sleuth-driven mysteries ... a term I am gratified to attribute to the publisher of *Sherlock Holmes*

Mystery Magazine, John Betancourt, who is himself a thoroughly capable mystery writer.

I worry that we will not receive submissions of the old school of mystery, though even if we do, *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine* will strive not to earn any labels like “retro” or “throwback.” We will never exclude that excellent writing that so many of the newer authors are capable of (I am especially impressed by Lia Matera).

What I hope to create is a balanced mix of mystery fiction and articles, highlighting, I hope, what Ellery Queen once called the “Grand Old Game.”

* * * *

I hope that the contents of this initial issue constitute a modest attempt to exemplify our hopes for the shape, direction and future of *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine*. In addition to insights into issues both Holmesian and ratiocinative from our estimable columnists Kim Newman and Lenny Picker, the nonfiction portion of *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine Vol. 1, No. 1* includes an interview of the awesomely prolific Ron Goulart and a letters column by no less a personage than Sherlock Holmes’s landlady Mrs Hudson, who fervently hopes that readers of this first issue will write to her promptly about any care and concern of the heart, head, stomach or wherever, for as she puts it, “One grows with the times, and what a relief to escape the strictured mores of the Victorian and Edwardian eras. I doubt, though, that dear Dr Watson shares my views.” (Yes, she and Watson ... and of course, Holmes ... still live. But *didn’t you know that?*)

For those readers (if such exist) who are not familiar with the original sixty Sherlock Holmes adventures, cases and memoirs, *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine* intends to reprint one each issue, beginning with *The “Gloria Scott,”* which was published in 1894 in the fourth Holmes book, and second of the short story collections, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. The fourth of the tales in that volume, it is offered first in this magazine because it is, in effect, Sherlock Holmes’s very first case.

The nautical theme of *The “Gloria Scott”* is echoed in the other Holmes tale in these pages. “The Strange Case of the Haunted Freighter,” a brand new Holmes adventure with occult overtones that was written especially for *Sherlock Holmes Mystery Magazine* by Carole Buggé, author of numerous Sherlock Holmes tales, including two critically acclaimed novels, *The Star of India* and *The Haunting of Torre Abbey*, from St. Martin’s Press; she is, in my estimation, the hands-down best Holmes pastiche writer since Ellery Queen’s *A Study in Terror*.