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Sample file

# INTRODUCTION, by Christopher Redmond

I used to say that my favourite Sherlock Holmes story was “The Red-Headed League.” But in those days my own hair was red; now that it’s gone white, and now that I reflect more soberly on the cartoonish characters of Jabez Wilson the gullible pawn-broker and John Clay the self-important con man, I have had to look further.

In 1978, in my first orally presented Sherlockian paper, I sang the praises of “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” especially by holding it up to the checklist provided long ago by Monsignor Ronald Knox, who gave scholarly Greek names to the eleven essential parts of the ideal story. My exposition of the matter was mechanical and dull, but there was no doubt, “Boscombe Valley” had almost everything the reader might look for, from the prone detective peering at the grass, to the presumptuous detective acquitting the criminal.

Still, I must have had doubts, because it was as the result of that presentation (subsequently edited for publication in the *Baker Street Journal*) that I first had the idea of a collection of essays presenting the merits of one story after another from the Canon. Indeed, why not all 56 short stories and, for that matter, the four novels? I thought for a while about writing the case for each story myself, but the cognitive dissonance such a project would have required was a greater deterrent even than the labour itself.

Finally, decades later, it occurred to me that the work could be divided, and that sixty different minds would take sixty different approaches to sixty stories that vary dramatically in date, style, familiarity, length, and (by conventional criteria at any rate) literary merit. The Sherlock Holmes stories were, after all, published over a forty-year period, and it would be astonishing if the novel *A Study*