

“I AM AN OMNIVOROUS READER”

Book reviews by CARRIE CHANDLER, NICHOLAS UTECHIN, JEAN UPTON and ROGER JOHNSON

Dangerous Work: Diary of an Arctic Adventure, by Arthur Conan Doyle, British Library 2012. 368pp, £25.00 (hbk)

Dangerous Work is not just an exciting new insight into the life of Arthur Conan Doyle: it is itself a thing of beauty. Anyone who attended our March meeting this year, where we were proud to announce its imminent publication, will know that many of us were really looking forward to this book. It has lived up to the hype. Its main attraction is a stunning facsimile of Doyle's personal diary written during his voyage as a ship's surgeon on the *Hope*, an Arctic Whaler, in 1880. This diary was put up for auction by Christie's in 2004 but did not reach its reserve price and was retained by the Conan Doyle Estate who, under the editorial guidance of Jon Lellenberg and Daniel Stashower, have published it through the British Library and the University of Chicago Press.

Those who, like me, enjoy sleuthing in the archives will know the joy of feeling closer to your subjects through reading their handwriting. Doyle's diary of his whaling adventure is deeply personal and was never intended for publication by its author, which allows for a real sense of voyeuristic intimacy (there is a wonderful moment where he records his anger on discovering one of his shipmates has been reading his entries). The self-editing that might be apparent in his letters to his mother, for example, is absent from this record and the reader is made party to Doyle's private anxieties and dreams.

In addition to his writing, there are many hand-drawn images by Doyle and other members of the crew, beautifully reproduced in full-colour. These range from technical drawings of the whaling ships and their movements to cartoons of day-to-day life on board – including a strange episode where Doyle adopts a sea snail and gives it the rather suggestive name “John Thomas”. What comes through in both the writing and the drawings is the personality of a vigorous young man with a great sense of humour and a love of adventure.

Many of Doyle's drawings are noticeably tinged with red. The work of the *Hope* was both dangerous and bloody, and Doyle threw himself into all the ship's activities without restricting himself to the role of ship's surgeon. This included such barbaric work as seal clubbing and, of course, the deadly hunt for the whale. What is striking about Doyle's descriptions of these activities is how much empathy and fascination he has for all the animals he encounters.

Doyle turned twenty-one during the voyage, and this is very much a coming-of-age adventure. Whilst he enjoyed the masculine pursuits of boxing and pipe-smoking during the vast periods of free time on board, he was also reading widely, having deep conversations with his shipmates (especially Captain Gray) and contemplating his future. Here we have a complete

snapshot of the author as a young man. This is also evident in his writing which, although intended for personal use only, is already incredibly literate. These diaries are the work of a man who already knows how to tell a tale and, at times, it is easy to forget that this is a true record and not a novel.

An annotated transcript follows the facsimile, and contemporary photos of Doyle and the ship's crew have also been reproduced along with some of the author's arctic writings (“The Adventure of Black Peter” is there, though sadly without the Sidney Paget illustrations). One quibble I have is that the book could have included more general contextual information about the practice of whaling in the 1880s and the animals that were hunted (of which not a single photo is included). But arguably my hunger for more information is a good thing. The book left me with a list of new avenues to explore through research and writing, and I am sure the same will be true for many scholars both Doylean and Sherlockian. *Dangerous Work* is an essential volume for any Doylean's collection, but it will also excite anyone with a taste for Victorian adventure and provide an inspiring source for scholars working on the life and times of Sherlock Holmes and his creator.

CC

The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany by Roger Johnson & Jean Upton. *The History Press* 2012. 223 pp. £9.99 (hbk)

How nearly Roger and Jean achieved that target of 221 pages! But how successfully they *have* achieved their main target: that of providing a delightful and information-packed *aide-memoir* to all things Holmesian, in neat and compact form.

In his generous Foreword, Gyles Brandreth has it absolutely correct: “It has got all the stuff in it that you would expect — and so much you wouldn't.” Here tyros will find what they need to know about Bell and Gillette and Reichenbach and Rathbone; but aficionados can also discover the truth about Bearlock Holmes (a teddy bear), Carey Blyton's “Sherlock Holmes Suite” for brass quintet and forty-eight new Sherlock Holmes stories dramatised for South Africa's Springbok Radio from 1979 to 1985.

The authors are nicely opinionated, and usually right, when called upon. The Holmes-Watson relationship in BBC TV's 2002 version of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* was “all wrong”; some of the last Granada Brett-Hardwicke episodes were “truly unfortunate”; when one has the opportunity to see the work of Sidney Paget, “his original watercolours are often far superior to what ended up on the printed page”.

This *Miscellany* is very strong on the continuing, ever-expanding, life of the Sherlockian movement — this extraordinary hobby of ours that holds a tighter grip over far more people than ever it did in the so-called “Golden Days” of the '30s, '40s and '50s. The modern triumphs of *Sherlock* and the two Ritchie Hollywood blockbusters are

rightly highlighted, as are the multi-platform ways in which the study of Holmes is constantly being enhanced on the web.

And I am so glad that Roger and Jean agree with me as to how the name “Lestrade” should be pronounced.

NU

The Autobiography of Sherlock Holmes – by Sherlock Holmes, edited by Don Libey. *Campbell & Lewis (San Francisco and London) 2012*. 132 pp. \$15.00 (pbk)

Do you know, I am not absolutely certain that this *is* Holmes’s autobiography. It is certainly somewhat shorter and more accessible than that discovered by Michael Harrison in 1977 (*I, Sherlock Holmes*). But the number and regularity of Americanisms lead me to believe that Mr Libey (a Society member and resident of Sonoma County, California) has found a pup! And there are curious inaccuracies which cannot have come from Holmes’s own pen: for example, “Father belonged to the Diogenes Club in London where Mycroft would succeed him in later years”. Well no: Mycroft himself was a *founder* member. Not one single Oxford college has on its premises “specialty (sic) laboratories”. Incredibly, Sherlock decrees that the years of his absence from London that we deem the “Great Hiatus” were 1889-91. Apparently he and Watson never lived at 221B Baker Street, but 47 Montague Street. Mrs Hudson was, in fact, the interestingly named Mrs Vestal Hunter (who, amazingly, had a daughter Violet, who later became a governess!) We do, however, learn of a series of hitherto unknown treatises from the Holmesian pen, including *Toxic Plants and their Efficacy in Murder* — and apparently he did indeed publish *Practical Handbook of Bee Culture* with Hodder & Stoughton (it sold well).

Actually, this is an intriguing little book which no Holmesian *has* to have on their bookshelf, but which contains enough left-field ideas of what might have been to justify a peek.

NU

Oscar Wilde and the Murders at Reading Gaol by Gyles Brandreth. *John Murray*. 2012. xxvi + 325pp. £18.99 (hbk)

The Oscar Wilde Murder Mysteries just get better and better with each subsequent addition, and this is the best so far. The author knows his subject inside out and has captured the cadence and rhythm of Wilde’s manner of speech, providing absolute credibility to fictitious conversations. Anyone who has read a biography of Oscar Wilde will recognise many of the incidents that took place during his time in gaol, but Gyles Brandreth has carried out such extensive research that the reader now has a compelling, detailed understanding of what day-to-day life was like in prison in the 1890s, and how soul-destroying it was for an intellectual, artistic and humane man such as Wilde. The first four Mysteries were narrated by Robert Sherard, and the fifth by Arthur Conan Doyle, but only Wilde himself could tell the story of the two years in which he endured hard labour and the iniquitous “separate system”, of the deprivations, the temptations, the small kindnesses, the conspiracies and the cruelties. When an unpopular warder

is killed the prison governor reluctantly requests Wilde’s help, only to reject his suggestions. But then the prison chaplain is murdered...

It’s a shame that this series will inevitably draw to a close with Wilde’s early death. Perhaps Mr Brandreth will consider a series of short stories presented as memoirs?

JU

Mrs Hudson’s Diaries — A View from the Landing at 221B by Barry and Bob Cryer. *The Robson Press*. 2012. 187 pp. £12.99 (hbk)

Back in 2001 the Guest of Honour at our Annual Dinner was the brilliant writer and comedian Barry Cryer, who proved to be a real devotee of the great detective. He’s proved it again with *Mrs Hudson’s Diaries*, written with his son, actor and writer Bob Cryer. Given Cryer senior’s record, you might expect a farcical pun-fest, but that’s not what this nice little book is about. (And it’s not one of those that have Mrs H as the true Baker Street detective, either.) There’s plenty of humour here, but it arises partly from the contrast between Mrs Hudson’s sometimes uncomprehending but always down-to-earth reports and our knowledge of events as recorded by Dr Watson, and partly from the po-faced self-important annotations by one “Oliver Philpott” — who could be related to Charles Pooter. Sarah Hudson herself is not a comic character: she’s a real and very likable personality, whose life extends beyond the pages of the Canon into the world outside. Her story is sensational only in passing and it’s told with affection and great charm.

Amazing and Extraordinary Facts: Sherlock Holmes by Nick Utechin. *David & Charles*. 2012. 141pp. £9.99/\$12.99 (hbk)

At about the same time as Jean and I were commissioned to write *The Sherlock Holmes Miscellany*, Nick Utechin was signing a contract for this volume in the *Amazing & Extraordinary Facts* series. Inevitably the two books cover much of the same ground, but the treatment and the emphasis in each case are individual. Nick’s approach is broadly chronological, beginning with “The Doyle Family” and concluding with “Holmes in the 21st Century”, and no passage (they aren’t called chapters) is longer than three pages — but nothing is rushed and nothing is too condensed. Among the passages are illuminating snippets about, for instance, the Langham Hotel, portrayals of Mycroft Holmes, and Basil Rathbone’s frustration at being typecast. The very brief observations on each of the sixty stories are pithy, pertinent and sometimes debatable — was the theft of part of the Beryl Coronet not a real crime? And how about the forced marriage of Violet Smith? The writing throughout is, of course, exemplary. I’d never really thought deeply about the effect that the first short story must have had on its readers when it appeared in *The Strand Magazine*, but Nick Utechin has, and his assessment is masterly. (Watson tells us, though, that Irene Adler was a contralto, not a soprano. And, on a different matter, I’d love to know Nick’s authority for giving Lestrade the first name George.) The illustrations,

sadly, don't match the quality of the text. Otherwise this is as attractive a pocket volume as you could wish — an excellent introduction for the novice with plenty to engage and inform the experienced aficionado.

Sherlock and Transmedia Fandom edited by Louisa Ellen Stein and Kristina Busse. *McFarland & Co.* 2012. 241pp. \$40.00 (hbk)

"Sherlock" and Transmedia Fandom is the first of two timely volumes of essays from McFarland, the American academic publishers. It isn't exactly a snip at \$40.00, but there's lots of interest here. The contributors, mostly female, compare the characters and milieu of *Sherlock* with those created by Conan Doyle, and examine the relationship between what you might call the Holmesian or Sherlockian establishment and the suddenly very significant devotees who happily call themselves fans — a term that doesn't spring naturally to the lips of many older admirers of the great detective. (It's firmly established among science fiction enthusiasts, though, and there's a long history of shared interest there.) Other essays cover *Sherlock's* place in the tradition of television adaptations, international interpretation of the series, and a good deal more.

Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century: Essays on New Adaptations edited by Lynnette Porter. *McFarland.* 2012. 211pp. \$40.00 (hbk)

The second McFarland title, *Sherlock Holmes for the 21st Century: Essays on New Adaptations*, puts Guy Ritchie's phenomenally successful cinema films under the microscope as well, but the papers are not limited to screen adaptations of Holmes. One essay considers his influence on the image of the scientific detective (in the series *Bones*, not shown on a major UK channel), and others look at recent attempts to write new stories, by Laurie King, Anthony Horowitz and others — but not, curiously, Andrew Lane — and, perhaps more interesting, new fiction inspired by Holmes but not actually about him, such as Steve Hockensmith's tales of Big Red and Old Red. Essays that particularly appeal to me are those dealing with "cinematic tourism" in London, and the sometimes curious editing that *Sherlock* undergoes to render it acceptable to American viewers.

The Philosophy of Sherlock Holmes edited by Philip Tallon & David Baggett. *University Press of Kentucky.* 2012. 206pp. £35.50 (hbk)

The Philosophy of Sherlock Holmes is not to be confused with *Sherlock Holmes and Philosophy*, reviewed in the last issue. Among the fifteen contributors I recognise just one, Dorothy L Sayers. The others are all a) American and b) alive. Sayers included her paper "Aristotle on Detective Fiction" among the "Studies in Sherlock Holmes" in her 1946 book *Unpopular Opinions*, but it's been rather unfairly neglected since and its appearance here is welcome. Her light but authoritative touch is echoed and exaggerated in the book's introduction, which, except for the brief abstract of each essay, is a complete spoof. It shows that the editors can take their subject seriously without being unnecessarily solemn or elitist, and it's good to see that

all the essays that follow are both intelligent and accessible.

56 Sherlock Holmes Stories in 56 Days by Charlotte Anne Walters. *MX Publishing.* 2012. 184pp. £9.99/\$16.95/€12.99 (pbk)

After submitting her novel *Barefoot on Baker Street*, Charlotte Anne Walters set herself the task of re-reading all the short stories in the Canon, one a day, and writing about each of them on the same day for her blog at <http://barefootonbakerstreet.wordpress.com/>. For the book publication she has added her observations on the four long stories. Her remarks are often amusing, occasionally thought-provoking (why so little protest about the uncanonical back-story for Mary Morstan in Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*? I suspect it's because so much else in the film is defiantly uncanonical), and always personal and entertaining. She seems unaware that the text in the *Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* is American, and differs in several instances from what was (and ought still to be) the standard British text. And I can assure her that marriage between first cousins was and is perfectly acceptable in British law — and church law, if it comes to that. Royalties from the book go to the Undershaw Preservation Trust.

Doctoring the Novel: Medicine and Quackery from Shelley to Doyle by Sylvia A Pamboukian. *Ohio University Press.* 2012. xiv + 207pp. \$39.96 (hbk)

In *Doctoring the Novel* Professor Pamboukian examines nineteenth century fiction, from *Frankenstein* to the anonymous *Vernon Galbray, or, The Empiric: The History of a Quack Dentist*, to reveal what she calls "the gray area" between legitimate medicine and quackery — something that exists even today but was perhaps more obvious then. The chapter on Conan Doyle is in two parts. The second contrasts the evil Dr Grimesby Roylott in "The Speckled Band" with the good Dr Watson and almost-doctor Sherlock Holmes. The first looks at the novel *The Stark Munro Letters*, which recounts in fictional form the newly qualified Conan Doyle's misadventures with that complex fraud Dr George Turnavine Budd. *Doctoring the Novel* throws light on a strangely neglected aspect of Victorian society.

Saratoga Studies: Unraveling Threads from "Silver Blaze" and "The Greek Interpreter" edited by Candace J Lewis & Roger Donway. *The Baker Street Irregulars.* 2012. xi + 76pp. \$14.95 (pbk)

This very nice 76-page volume, illustrated in full colour, was published for the Sixtieth Anniversary running at Saratoga Springs of the BSI's "Silver Blaze" race. The stimulating essays cover the connection between *A Study in Scarlet* and the Derby (the celebrated Mrs Beeton, whose widower founded the *Christmas Annual*, grew up at Epsom racecourse); that "simple" calculation about the speed of a train; the delay that led to the death of Paul Kratides; the art in the Holmes family's blood; and, the identification of Holmes's grandmother — the last by Roger Donway, who understandably, but to my mind mistakenly, believes that Sherlock's father was raised in the United States.

The London of Sherlock Holmes by John Christopher. *Amberley Publishing*. 2012. 96pp. £14.99 (pbk)

The London of Sherlock Holmes by John Christopher is a handsome and splendidly illustrated book. The text is pithy, if shallow, and the several persistent misspellings (“Mary Morston”, “Sydney Paget”, “Cadogen West”) could be forgiven if it weren’t for the numerous careless errors. Baron von Herling wasn’t “an alias for Sherlock Holmes”. Holmes did use an outdated term when he spoke of going to Doctors’ Commons, but that institution was in Knightrider Street in the City, not in Lambeth. In “Silver Blaze”, Holmes and Watson don’t return from Dartmoor to Victoria Station: they’re coming back from Winchester races. The Sherlock Holmes Museum wasn’t “granted a change” of address “to the out-of-sequence 221B number in 1990”. Its address is still 239 Baker Street — the “221B” on the door being the name of a company set up for the purpose. (It’s a pity Mr Christopher didn’t consult the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.) This is a good-looking book, but *caveat lector*.

Return to the Reichenbach: A Sherlock Holmes Swiss Account Book edited by Carrie Chandler, Bob Ellis and Guy Marriott. *The Sherlock Holmes Society of London*. 2012. vi + 114pp. £17.50 UK/£20.00 or €50.00 Europe/\$25.00 (pbk)

Published in conjunction with our Society’s recent momentous pilgrimage to Switzerland, *Return to the Reichenbach* is a splendid volume, handsomely illustrated in colour and black & white. It opens with Tony Howlett’s 1948 account, reprinted from *The Sherlock Holmes Journal*, of how he found the true site of the fatal duel at Reichenbach, followed by Ronald De Waal’s memories of a 1974 trip to Europe, reprinted from *The Baker Street Journal*. John Doubleday creates a statue of Holmes in ice. There are pieces on Alpine transport, Corporal Schiess VC, possible originals for Moriarty and Gruner, spies at Interlaken, “The Final Problem” on the screen, and much more, concluding with a fable by Auberon Redfearn in which Holmes tells Watson what really happened at the Falls. *Return to the Reichenbach* maintains and enhances the tradition of excellence for which our handbooks are rightly loved and respected.

How Sherlock Holmes Deduced “Break the Case Clues” on the BTK Killer, the Son of Sam, Unabomber and Anthrax Cases: With Analysis on the Mad Bomber and the Unsolved LI Gilgo Beach Murders by Tom Walker. *iUniverse*. 2012. x + 125pp. \$13.95 (pbk)

It’s a very long title for a fairly short (but fascinating) book. The author is a retired NYPD Captain of Detectives (and a long-time Sherlockian who won \$32,000 answering questions on Holmes on a TV quiz show) but the cases covered here — not, perhaps fortunately, in gruesome medical detail — are, with the exception of “Son of Sam”, not ones that he was directly involved in during his police career. Mr Walker says: “Let me study the clues on paper: the letters sent, the information on the bomb, the return addresses on the

envelopes, the telephone conversations that might have been taped, the clues found at the scene by the assigned detectives, etc.” If that makes him a Mycroft, remember that Mycroft was even more brilliant than Sherlock. These accounts demonstrate the value of what you might call armchair detection. And who’d have suspected a connection between *Portrait of Jennie* and the “Anthrax Killer”?

Sherlock: The Casebook by Guy Adams. *BBC Books*. 2012. 160pp. £14.99 (hbk)

With *Sherlock: The Casebook* Guy Adams really comes into his own. Material from the six cases to date is presented in the form of John Watson’s written notes, with photographs and other documents in full colour throughout — Mr Adams attempted something similar a few years ago in *The Case Notes of Sherlock Holmes*, but this time it works. One reason is the sarcastic notes from Sherlock (“Only old ladies and pre-pubescent girls keep scrapbooks.”) and John’s replies (“It’s not a scrapbook. I’m collecting papers relevant to the cases. And it was locked away in my desk drawer.”). If that were all, the book would be nothing more than a very handsome way of novelising the television series, but there’s also an account of how the series came about, how each film relates to its source in the Canon, and how other dramatic presentations have treated the material. And I love the description of Sherlock as “the Mozart of criminal investigation”. I should point out, though, that Mrs Hudson, as imagined by Conan Doyle, was always the landlady, never the housekeeper. And *Victoria Regina* does *not* translate as “Victoria reigns”.

The Hound of the Baskervilles: A Sherlock Holmes Play by Simon Corble. *MX Publishing*. 2012. vii + 109pp. £7.99/\$10.95/€8.99 (pbk)

The Hound of the Baskervilles doesn’t easily lend itself to the theatre, but dramatists seem unable to resist the challenge. I’ve not had the chance to see it performed, but Simon Corble’s play is pretty close to the top of my list of favourites. It was written to be performed out of doors, with the audience following the actors from place to place. Mr Corble boldly adapts the story rather than simply dramatising, and the result is clever, witty, exciting — and refreshingly intelligent. David Stuart Davies contributes an appreciative foreword, and the text is enhanced by a dozen photographs and a superb atmospheric cover, using photos taken during a production at Brimham Rocks in North Yorkshire.

Young Sherlock Holmes: Snake Bite by Andrew Lane. *Macmillan Children’s Books*. 2012. 312pp. £12.99 (hbk)

At the end of the fourth novel, *Fire Storm*, Sherlock woke from a drugged sleep to find himself on board a ship bound for China. *Young Sherlock Holmes: Snake Bite* sees him separated from his friends and family, a stranger in a strange land, facing baffling mystery and deadly danger. Mr Lane somehow devises adventures for the youngster that sit comfortably within the precise period setting, that are suspenseful, thrilling and intelligent, and that credibly contribute towards the

development of his character. It's no mean feat to write so convincingly of young Holmes in Shanghai, solving the problem of apparently impossible murders by snake venom, foiling a plot to destroy an American warship, learning oriental martial arts the hard way, and confronting one of the vilest criminals imaginable – and we can believe that all this contributes towards his becoming the man Dr Watson will later meet at Bart's Hospital. A cracking good read, as ever.

The 1895 Murder by Dan Andriacco. *MX Publishing*. 2012. 227pp. £9.99/\$16.95/€12.99 (pbk)

The title of *The 1895 Murder* refers neatly to a play based on “The Bruce-Partington Plans”, written by Professor Sebastian McCabe of St Benignus College, Erin, Ohio. As he proved in *No Police Like Holmes* and *Holmes Sweet Holmes*, Mac is a devoted Sherlockian and a highly skilled detective, so when a man is shot dead outside the theatre where he's playing Mycroft Holmes, he and his brother-in-law Jeff Cody are pleased to help find the killer. Well, mostly. Jeff's mind, naturally, is on his impending wedding and the need for diplomacy with his fiancée's rather unpredictable parents. It's a pleasure to visit Erin again and to watch the solving of a particularly baffling mystery.

The Adventures of Miss Boston: The First Female Detective by Antonin Reschal, adapted by Nina Cooper. *Black Coat Press*. 2012. 306pp. £14.99/\$22.95 (pbk)

Miss Boston: La Seule Détective-femme du Monde Entier was not among the great creations of the fin de siècle French pulps — and Ethel Boston certainly wasn't the only female sleuth in detective fiction. The people at Black Coat Press have done their usual nice job with *The Adventures of Miss Boston: The First Female Detective*, but whereas the exploits of, say, Fantômas, Judex and even Arsène Lupin may be deliberately fantastic, Miss Boston's, which take place in a New York that never existed, are unintentionally so, and they're important mainly as curios. Twenty were published in 1908 and 1909, of which eleven are translated here, including the first, “The Murder of the World's Most Famous Detective”. Sherlock Holmes has been killed while investigating a kidnapping, and Miss B takes it upon herself to find his murderer.

The Consulting Detective Trilogy, Part 1: University by Darlene A Cypser. *Foolscap & Quill*. 2012. 324pp. \$14.99 (pbk)

In her intensively researched and lovingly written novel *The Crack in the Lens*, Darlene Cypser wrote of the boyhood of Sherlock Holmes. She continues the story in *The Consulting Detective Trilogy, Part I: University*, which covers the years from December 1871 to January 1875. Like Dorothy L Sayers, Ms Cypser sends the young Holmes to Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, but his experiences there, apart from his unusual introduction to Victor Trevor and the tale of the Gloria Scott, come mostly from her own powerful imagination. We learn how he was introduced to drugs and to tobacco, how he became an expert swordsman, and how — and why — he set about becoming a

detective. *Part II: On Stage* will follow in 2013, and *Part III: Montague Street* in 2014.

Steampunk Holmes: Legacy of the Nautilus by P C Martin. *Noble Beast/MX Publishing*. 2012. 141pp. £7.99/\$14.95/€8.99 (pbk)

I suppose the combination of Sherlock Holmes and Steampunk was inevitable. Guy Ritchie's first Holmes film had elements of Victorian super-science, but the true hybrid flowering is in *Steampunk Holmes*. Full details are at www.steampunkholmes.com, but for the less elaborately electronically enabled, such as me, the first adventure is now available in its most accessible form: i.e. a book. *Steampunk Holmes: Legacy of the Nautilus* places Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson in a world where electricity has yet to be developed, the internal combustion engine is irrelevant, and steam power has been developed to the highest degree. Holmes's favoured transport is a powerful motorcycle. Watson sports a mechanical right arm. And Mycroft Holmes is Sherlock's beautiful, devastatingly intelligent sister. The story, as you'd expect, involves Captain Nemo and his famous submarine, cleverly working them into a re-imagining of “The Bruce-Partington Plans”. With character portraits by Daniel Cortes and a superb cover by John Coulthart, it's very stylish — though for the best of Mr Cortes' illustrations you'll need to check the website.

Sherlock Holmes and The Giessbach Fall by Helmi Sigg. *Verlag Agentur Sigg*. 2012. xii + 91pp. SFR22.00 + postage – PayPal accepted (pbk)

Herr Helmi Sigg, in the persona of Mr Neville St Clair, took part in this year's jaunt to Switzerland and introduced the other pilgrims to his very attractively presented novella. For me and no doubt for others, the story, given in both English and German, brings back happy memories of the Society's visit to the Grandhotel Giessbach in 1987, and I can't do better than to quote Jonathan McCafferty: “Congratulations are due to Helmi Sigg for a thoroughly entertaining Sherlock Holmes pastiche. In *Sherlock Holmes and the Giessbach Fall* Helmi Sigg has achieved the difficult task of recreating the language and style of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Even more, he has given the Holmesian world a great story in a wonderful setting of the grandest hotel in Switzerland at the height of its Victorian magnificence. There is much for both the general reader and the Sherlock Holmes enthusiast to enjoy in this rich and complex yarn.”

Anomalous: The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes featuring Jack Johnson and Alphonse Capone by Samuel Williams Jr. *MX Publishing*. 2012. 220pp. £9.99/\$16.95/€12.99 (pbk)

Surprisingly few writers have tried to imagine what sort of things Holmes got up to, and what sort of people he met during his years living as the disaffected Irish-American, Altamont. He began his “pilgrimage” in Chicago, so it's natural that he would run into Diamond Jim Colosimo's criminal organisation and encounter one of its youngest members, Al Capone. Natural too that he would visit the Café de Champion on West 31st Street, to

meet its famous owner, Jack Johnson, the first black world heavyweight champion. The great boxer is actually the central character in Samuel Williams's powerful novel, *Anomalous*. Johnson's turbulent fortunes bring him to London, where two very different people, both black, have important rôles to play in a struggle to save both Johnson's life and the security of the realm. You'll recognise their names, I'm sure: Lucy Hebron and Steve Dixie...

The Baskerville Inheritance by Teresa Collard. *Collard* — available from www.lulu.com. 2012. 250pp. £7.99 (pbk)

The death of Jack Stapleton, alias Vandeleur, alias Baskerville, is presumed, not stated as fact. In *The Baskerville Inheritance* by Teresa Collard we learn that he did not perish in the Grimpen Mire, and that he still intends to destroy his cousin Sir Henry Baskerville. But Sherlock Holmes faces another challenge: the arrest of his brother Mycroft for treason proves to be just one move in a deadly plot to overthrow the Queen and place her grandson the Kaiser on the British throne. The trail takes Holmes and Watson to the heart of Government, to the Diogenes Club, to a rather more sinister establishment, the Hanover Club, and to Dartmoor Prison, where the two investigations intersect. Not only must Holmes foil the now insane Stapleton: he has to defeat a still more dangerous foe, one Professor James Moriarty. *The Baskerville Inheritance* is a real page-turner. It grabs your interest from the first page and keeps you absorbed to the very last.

A Study in Scarlet read by Derek Jacobi. *AudioGO*. 4 CDs. 2012. £15.00; **The Sign of Four**. read by Derek Jacobi. *AudioGO*. 4 CDs. 2012. £15.00; **The Hound of the Baskervilles** read by Derek Jacobi. *AudioGO*. 6 CDs. 2012. £15.00; **The Valley of Fear** read by Derek Jacobi. *AudioGO*. 6 CDs. 2012. £15.00

AudioGO rounds off its complete recording of the Sherlock Holmes canon, with the four long stories, *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of the Four*, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *The Valley of Fear*, all superbly read by Derek Jacobi. It's a pleasure to be reminded just how good Conan Doyle's narrative and dialogue sounds. It's more formal than today's norm, but never stuffy or pretentious. Sir Derek is one of our great vocal actors. Every character is distinct, with no straining for effect, and he knows just when to let the words do the work. This complete Sherlock Holmes is a magnificent achievement, ranking with David Timson's wonderful readings for Naxos, and it confirms my opinion that *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is the greatest of the long stories, but *The Valley of Fear* is inarguably the best.

In brief

Shortly before leaving her post as Conan Doyle Projects Officer at Portsmouth last year, Fiona-Jane Brown wrote a Sherlock Holmes play, *The Prima Donna's Last Aria*, which was staged as part of the city's "Lost Hour" celebrations, marking the start of British Summer Time. Since her return to Scotland, Dr Brown has written another play, *Sherlock Holmes & the*

Adventure of the Jacobite Rose (MX Publishing; £7.99/\$10.95/€8.99) a clever and entertaining drama ideal for youth groups and schools. The first performances will take place later this year or early next, at Sir Christopher Hatton School in Wellingborough, Aberdeen College, and Lake View High School in Chicago. The script is available from Amazon, Waterstone's and other sources; performance rights are available from the publisher at www.mxpublishing.co.uk.

David Ruffle follows his entertaining volumes *Sherlock Holmes & the Lyme Regis Horror* and *Sherlock Holmes & the Lyme Regis Legacy* with a sweet, sad novella called *Holmes & Watson: End Peace* (MX Publishing; £6.99/\$9.95/€7.99) — the punning title doesn't really do it justice. Nearly fifteen years after his "last quiet talk" with Sherlock Holmes, Dr Watson lies motionless in a hospital bed, conversing with a visitor only he can sense. The narrative consists entirely of dialogue — a bold and remarkably successful choice.

Few of Conan Doyle's contemporaries are still read for pure pleasure, but among them, surely, is H G Wells. The title of *Sherlock Holmes: The Army of Dr Moreau* by Guy Adams (Titan Books; £7.99) tells us that its main influence is *The Island of Dr Moreau*, Wells's tale of a megalomaniac attempt by surgery to create human beings from living animals. What Wells didn't say was that Moreau was working under the auspices of the British government, and that Mycroft Holmes knew it. As in *The Breath of God*, Mr Adams draws on more than one source. Sherlock Holmes's investigation into a series of literally bestial killings is variously helped or hindered by Professor Challenger, Professor Lindenbrook (*Journey to the Centre of the Earth*), Mr Cavor (*The First Men in the Moon*) and Abner Perry (*At the Earth's Core*). The result is a rich plum-pudding of good scary fun.

Things are rather less fantastical in *Sherlock Holmes & the Case of the Poisoned Lilly* by Roger Riccard (The Irregular Special Press; £7.50). Lillian Fields, under the stage name of Loraine Fontaine, is a beautiful and successful actress — and she has an unknown and deadly enemy. Fortunately she also has a good friend in Mary Watson, who justifies Holmes's comment: "I think she is one of the most charming young ladies I ever met and might have been most useful in such work as we have been doing. She had a decided genius that way" — which should please readers who regret that Mrs Watson disappears so quickly from the canon. In Mr Riccard's clever plot Holmes and Watson encounter Henry Irving and Leo Dryden backstage at the Lyceum Theatre, visit Bart's Hospital and the National Rose Society at St Albans, and meet the female detective Loveday Brooke at Scotland Yard.

Sherlock Holmes & the Plague of Dracula by Stephen Seitz was first published in 2007. Now there's a new and improved edition from MX Publishing (£9.99/\$18.95/€12.99). This isn't the first time that the detective and the vampire have been pitted against each other, and it won't be the last, but it has a good deal going for it. Other writers have shattered Holmes's disbelief in the supernatural, but Mr Seitz assaults the credulity of Dr Van Helsing and others of Bram Stoker's characters — without diminishing the excitement of the

conflict. And (hurrah!) he doesn't try to make Count Dracula a Byronic romantic hero.

Joe Riggs is a mentalist, like Derren Brown and the Amazing Kreskin. In *The Real Sherlock Holmes: The Mysterious Methods and Curious History of a True Mental Specialist* (MX Publishing; £6.99/\$9.95/ €7.99) he packs a surprising amount of information into 60

pages. The connection with Sherlock Holmes is actually rather tenuous, but Mr Riggs's exposure of methods used by con artists is valuable, and I suspect that if we could follow his own methods for training ourselves to observe, to reason and to remember we'd achieve some of the qualities that we admire so much in the great detective.