"I AM AN OMNIVOROUS READER"

Book reviews by ALISTAIR DUNCAN, HENRY JACOBSON, MARK JONES, PAUL THOMAS MILLER, MARK MOWER, SARAH OBERMULLER-BENNETT, JOHN SHEPPARD, JEAN UPTON and ROGER JOHNSON

The Baker Street Journal Christmas Annual 2021: "The Dean of British Sherlockians" — A Celebration of the Life and Work of S.C. Roberts edited by Nicholas Utechin, with Roger Johnson and Guy Marriott. *The Baker Street Irregulars*, 2021. 72pp (pbk)

2021's *BSJ Christmas Annual* marked the ninetieth anniversary of the appearance of *Doctor Watson: Prolegomena to the Study of a Biographical Problem*, with a careful curated examination of its author, S.C. Roberts. Comprising four chapters in all, it is as skilfully put together as one would expect from the names associated with it.

Nicholas Utechin provides an overview of Roberts' Holmesian involvement, which was kick-started when he read Ronald Knox's "Studies in Sherlock Holmes". Utechin takes us from his response to Knox, "A Note on the Watson Problem", through Roberts' own Sherlockian accomplishments, such as *Holmes and Watson: A Miscellany,* all the way up to his final piece, an essay for *John O'London's Weekly* entitled "The Cult of Sherlock Holmes".

This is followed by Roger Johnson's examination of his involvement in the Sherlock Holmes Society of London and his pastiches. We learn how Roberts was initially against the idea of reviving the 1934 Sherlock Holmes Society, but eventually became the President of the current society when it formed in 1951. It is interesting to learn here how Roberts was viewed by his contemporaries, and to learn something of the early days of our society. Johnson then goes on to discuss all four of Robert's pastiches, including his one act play *Christmas Eve*. Happily, this then leads to a reprint of the hard-to-find short pastiche "The Missing Quarto", a delightful little story which I was glad to be introduced to. In many ways, this can be considered a companion piece to Vincent Starrett's "The Unique Hamlet" and was almost certainly influenced by it.

Rounding off the publication, Guy Marriott provides a well-written biography of Roberts, taking us through what little is known of his early life, through his experience of two world wars, a career with the Cambridge University Press and all the way up to his twilight years of semi-retirement.

I can highly recommend this little volume, especially to members of our society as it does a splendid job of introducing modern Holmesians to our Society's first President — however reluctant he may have been to accept the role.

PTM

[As Nicholas Utechin has mentioned more than once — and it bears repeating — the Christmas Annuals *are available only to subscribers to* The Baker Street Journal. *Which we heartily recommend anyway. The necessary information is at https://bakerstreetirregulars.com/the-baker-street-journal/. Ed.]*

Sherlock Holmes in 221 Objects: From the Collection of Glen S Miranker, curated by Cathy Miranker & Glen S Miranker. *The Grolier Club*, 2022. 168pp. $80.00 (hbk)

You've read Mark Jones's description of the exhibition. For those of us who were unable to visit the Grolier Club, this beautifully presented catalogue is surely the next best thing. Large format: 12½″ x 9″, profusely illustrated in full colour, with mouth-watering descriptions, the book is a treasure in itself. A few years ago Glen Miranker loaned some of his precious items to the Museum of London for *Sherlock Holmes: The Man Who Never Lived and Will Never Die*. Even though the 221 objects represented only a fraction of Glen's collection, the exhibition in New York enabled the visitor to appreciate the extent and the cohesive nature of that collection. Certainly that's how the catalogue impresses me. The text that accompanies the illustrations is replete with fascinating detail. (I hadn't known that Glen actually owns *two* first editions of *The Adventures* in their original dustwrappers: both the first and the second printing, and the story of the former, hinted at in Mark's report, is extraordinary.) Like the exhibition itself — which will be at the Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington from August to December — the catalogue is a thing of surpassing quality.

RJ

Referring to My Notes: Music and The Sherlockian Canon, edited by Alexander Katz & Karen Wilson. *The Baker Street Irregulars*, 2021. 181pp. $39.95 (hbk)

As Catherine Cooke observes in her article "Vague Memories in Our Souls", Conan Doyle was no great musician or connoisseur (his dismal operetta with J.M. Barrie, *Jane Annie*, is proof enough). Fortunately, he gave us enough musical references in the canon to inspire this rich and diverse collection of essays. In the foreword, Nicholas Meyer conveys his own interest in Holmes's musical talents, a subject amply explored in the first three essays covering the Master's tastes, abilities and his beloved Strad. Jens Byskov Jensen's pleasing deduction that Holmes, composing from his restrictive armchair, would have experimented with new sounds makes the great detective sound like the Victorian equivalent of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. But there is more than just Holmes and the fiddle to enjoy. Essays explore Irene Adler's career and her alter-egos, the phonograph, the motets of Lassus (which are always polyphonic — take note, ACD), Sarasate, and the music inspired by the canon. Amid all the classical allusions and influences, I was pleased that Roger Johnson brought us back to earth with the music that would have surrounded our heroes: the street musicians, bands and music hall. Paul Singleton's piece on three Sherlock Holmes works for stage is worthy of note as he does a good job of capturing an aspect of Sherlockiana that is inherently ephemeral. Katz and Wilson have done an excellent job of curating new and interesting insights into a topic one might have thought exhausted by Warrack in the 1940s. But Sherlockians are nothing if not inventive and the body of contributors are to be credited for this worthy addition to the scholarship.

MJ

A Masterpiece of Villainy: A Facsimile of the Original Manuscript of "The Norwood Builder" by Arthur Conan Doyle, with Annotations and Commentary, **e**dited, with an introduction, by Ross E Davies, BSI. *The Baker Street Irregulars*, 2021. 254pp. $39.95 (hbk)

It's always interesting and instructive to read the manuscript of a favourite work — and a pleasure too, when the author's handwriting is as clear and legible as Conan Doyle's. This is the fifteenth in the BSI's Manuscript Series, not counting the volume centring on G.K. Chesterton's previously unpublished illustrations. Phillip Bergem's annotated transcription clarifies the deletions and alterations in the MS, and advises of changes made to the various published texts. Randall Stock recounts the history of the manuscript. And eleven more papers examine specific aspects of the story, including London's crime rate at the time, the price Dr Verner might have paid for Watson's practice, what crimes Jonas Oldacre could have been charged with (the answers are rather surprising), and how Holmes recognised that the charred bones weren't human. Catherine Cooke's piece, confirming the late John Weber's identification of The Nook on Gipsy Hill as "Deep Dene House" makes me want to explore the area for myself. (Just one quibble: Carlina de la Cova should know that it was Dr Mortimer, not Sherlock Holmes, who spent a day of "pure amusement" at the Museum of the College of Surgeons.)

RJ

The Sherlock Holmes Review: 2021 Sherlockian Annual, edited by Steven Doyle. *Gasogene Books*, 2021. 128pp. $24.95 (pbk)

In recent years Gasogene has published two volumes that reprint the early issues of Steven Doyle's excellent independent Holmesian journal *The Sherlock Holmes Review*, which ran from 1986 to 1996. Now Steve has revived the *Review*, as an annual, and it's as entertaining and stimulating as ever. Leslie Klinger interviews Robert Doherty, showrunner of *Elementary*. Ross E Davies looks at the game of cricket. Paul Chapman examines possible reasons why Conan Doyle wrote "The Cardboard Box" and then excluded it from *The Memoirs*. Ray Betzner considers crime as a mathematical puzzle — was that the attraction for Moriarty? There's much more, including Nicholas Meyer's account of the promotional tour for his novel *The Adventure of the Peculiar Protocols*, shortly before the pandemic struck. I was particularly pleased to read Steve Doyle's tribute to our mutual friend Michael Cox. Strongly recommended!

RJ

Sherlock Holmes: A Study In Illustrations, volume 2 by Mike Foy. *MX Publishing*, 2022. 458pp. £24.99/$34.95/€29.99 (hbk)

Mike Foy's second book of Sherlockian illustrations has been a real eye-opener for me as it has exposed me to artists whose work I had seen (and some I had not) but didn't really appreciate. The book is best described as post-Paget. It is covering artists both UK and international that

were working on Holmes at the same time as Sidney Paget or after as a direct result of his death.

The one that amused me the most was Richard Gutschmidt who worked for German publications and seems to have spent a lot of his time simply copying the Paget illustrations. Page after page show Paget's originals alongside Gutschmidt's copies. How he was not sued is anyone's guess. That said, he did produce original illustrations when the occasion called for it, i.e. when he needed something that Paget had not produced. The style of the pictures in those cases being, in my opinion, discernibly different.

We then move to the US and the illustrator Graham Grinham whose style of drawings looks like he would have been perfect to illustrate Jeeves and Wooster ... something he shared with Raymond Pallier in France, whose style was even more so. A dramatic change in style can be seen in the work of Thomas Nicholl whose illustrations bear a passing resemblance to those of Charles Doyle.

Mixed in with all the international illustrators are Paget's successors in the UK such as Arthur Twidle whose work I much admire.

Many of the observations I made about volume one carry over to this book. The size means this is a not a book you can carry around, but it does have the advantage that it brings together the work of illustrators that I have not seen gathered together in any other tome. If your only exposure to illustrations has been Paget and/or Steele, this book will give you a great insight into the image of Holmes around the world and how it differs (or doesn't) from those more readily well-known artists.

Because of the artists covered, I would say that this is a superior book to volume one in so far as it is offering the purchaser something they cannot easily get elsewhere.

AD

On the Trail of Sherlock Holmes by Stephen Browning. *Pen & Sword*, 2022. 160pp. £20.00 (hbk)

Another guide to Holmes's London, nicely presented, pleasantly written, and illustrated with the author's own photographs and maps of the seven walks that he has devised. Each tour would be enjoyable and interesting, but I wish Mr Browning had suggested possible identifications for at least some of the locations given fictitious names in the stories — more to the point, I think, than a potted history of the BT Tower. A short chapter on places outside central London includes data from the appropriate stories, and even some details of screen adaptations, but no suggestions for specific sites to visit or routes to take. An interesting but rather irrelevant list of "notable actors" who have portrayed Sherlock Holmes includes Peter Cook, Johnny Depp, Henry Lloyd-Hughes and Peter O'Toole, but omits John Gielgud, Carleton Hobbs, Clive Merrison and John Neville. It's a nice book, but Arthur Alexander's *Hot on the Scent*, Alistair Duncan's *Close to Holmes*, and Thomas Bruce Wheeler's *The Mapped London of Sherlock Holmes* are considerably better.

RJ

Mr Crippen, Cora & the Body in the Basement by Matthew Coniam. *Pen & Sword*, 2021. 256pp. £25.00 (hbk)

Yes, *Mr* Crippen. Hawley Harvey Crippen did have a medical degree, but it was in homeopathy, and it didn't qualify him to practise as a physician in Britain. His story is well-known as the classic Edwardian murder case, and his name has become synonymous with murder. In Britain, anyway, where the surname is rare, though it's not uncommon in America, and H.H. Crippen was American. He came to England in 1900 and lived in north London with his wife Cora, a small-time Music Hall artiste better known by her stage name, Belle Elmore. Early in 1910 Cora disappeared. Crippen said that she'd gone back to America to see a sick relative, but he moved his mistress Ethel Le Neve into the house. She began to wear his wife's jewellery, which caused concern among Cora's friends, who informed the police. Detective Chief Inspector Dew visited the house, but Crippen said his wife had eloped with a lover, and a search revealed nothing untoward.

Then Crippen and Ethel went to Antwerp, where they booked a cabin, under the name of Robinson, on a ship bound for Canada. The house was searched again, and parts of a body were found buried beneath the cellar — only scraps of flesh, some hair and fragments of a pyjama jacket. Bernard Spilsbury, the famous pathologist, identified the remains as Cora Crippen's from an abdominal scar, and found traces of poison. It's a classic detective drama (at least two novelists have introduced Sherlock Holmes into the story). The fugitives were followed and brought back to England. Crippen, convicted of murdering his wife, was hanged. Ethel was acquitted

However, the detective work continued. Spilsbury was brilliant, but dangerously arrogant. The body in the basement was not Cora Crippen's: DNA tests have identified the remains as *male*. The whole story becomes much less clear. We don't

know who the unfortunate man was, or what became of Cora, or what part her husband and his lover played. The truth may yet be found, though. Matthew Coniam's book would, I'm sure, have appealed to those seekers after truth, Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes.

RJ

In Re: Arthur Conan Doyle

There are good biographies of Conan Doyle, but a great writer's own account of his life and work should be of exceptional interest. The new edition of ***Memories and Adventures*** by **Sir Arthur Conan Doyle**, edited by Douglas Kerr (Edinburgh University Press, 2021) certainly is. It's the first to make use of the original manuscript and comparison of the various serialised texts, rather than simply reprinting the 1924 Hodder & Stoughton edition. Professor Kerr's introduction and his essays on the text are genuinely illuminating. But — and it's a *big* but — there's the price: a very steep £150.00. Your best move, perhaps, is to urge your local library to buy or borrow a copy.

There are good books too about Conan Doyle's first serious venture into criminal investigation, revealing the miscarriage of justice that saw an innocent man imprisoned for brutal maiming of livestock. In recent years I've recommended *Outrage* by Roger Oldfield, and *The Mystery of the Parsee Lawyer* by Shrabani Basu. You can read Conan Doyle's own record in *The True Crime Files of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*, and now, thanks to our distinguished French member Alexis Barquin, the other essential contemporary account is available as a paperback book. ***My Own Story: The Narrative of Eighteen Years' Persecution*** by **George E.T. Edalji** (The Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia, 2022; £10.00) collects the eighteen articles published in *Pearson's Weekly* from February to June 1907. It's a fascinating story, at times harrowing, inspiring both pity and admiration for the man who wrote it, and for those who took up his cause.

The Edalji case also features in ***The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle: The Read Life Sherlock Holmes*** by **Christopher Sandford** (The History Press, 2022; £14.99), a paperback edition of *The Man Who Would Be Sherlock*, of which Alistair Duncan wrote in the Winter 2017 SHJ: "If you are a student of Conan Doyle's life you're likely to have read a good deal about Edalji and Slater so you may be wondering what you'll get out of Sandford's book. Therein lies my problem. I thoroughly enjoyed the book but I'm not sure it will add a huge amount to what is already known. I'm still very glad I have it, and if you have no books in this area — go for it."

RJ

Sherlock Holmes in Song: Words and Music by Jim Ballinger edited by Mark Alberstat. *MX Publishing*, 2021. 274pp. £17.99/ €19.99/$28.95 (hbk), £12.99/€14.99/$18.95 (pbk)

Jim Ballinger attended meetings of the Society when he was lecturing at King's College, London, and he occasionally entertained us with his canonical ditties. He's now back in his native Canada, but this handsome large-format book is a good reminder of his talent to amuse — and an invitation to perform the songs for ourselves. Here's a musical synopsis of each of the sixty stories, plus one song, "Lasting Impressions", that sums up the eternal attraction of Holmes and Watson. As the blurb says: "The music encompasses a variety of styles from generic trad rock or folk rock to Victorian music hall, Gilbert and Sullivan patter songs, sea shanty ('Black Peter'), rhumba ('The Dancing Men', 'The Sussex Vampire'), bouzouki ('The Greek Interpreter'), country and western ('The Three Garridebs'), military band ('The Naval Treaty'), rugby song ('The Missing Three-Quarter'), and drinking song ('The Six Napoleons'). There's even some tasteful yodelling at the Reichenbach Falls in 'The Final Problem', and 'The Creeping Man' strays dangerously close to punk rock. Other influences include Cole Porter, Noel Coward, Tom Lehrer and Gordon Lightfoot." You can check that on Jim's YouTube channel, where you can hear and see him performing:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCHevjXVMSY-uviZ55e8mQqA/videos

RJ

Sherlock HO! A miscellany of Holmesian parodies and other minor crimes in prose and verse by S Subramanian. *Belanger Books*, 2021. 279pp. £29.95 / €35.95 / £39.95 (hbk), £14.95 / €16.95 / $19.95 (pbk)

Back in 2013, we published a joyful little parody in the *Journal*, by an author new to me. "Just Sherlock" caught the style of Richmal Crompton's tales of the unruly but well-meaning schoolboy William Brown perfectly, and applied it to the young Sherlock Holmes. Since then, Professor Subramanian has published *A Baker Street Dozen: Being Thirteen Further Cases from the Records of*

Sherlock Holmes — very good stories indeed, but I have a particular fondness for *Sherlock HO!* The tales and verses show a remarkably comprehensive knowledge of the work of P.G. Wodehouse, Sapper, Enid Blyton, A.A. Milne and others, as well as Conan Doyle and Richmal Crompton. The Professor writes convincingly in the style of each, and he can exaggerate that style, and apply it to a clever plot that the original author never imagined. (I contributed a foreword to *Sherlock HO!* — an indication of my respect for the author and my delight in his good-natured literate humour.)

RJ

The MX Book of New Sherlock Holmes Stories — Part XXVIII: More Christmas Adventures (1869-1888), Part XXIX: More Christmas Adventures (1889-1896), *and* **Part XXX: More Christmas Adventures (1897-1928),** edited by David Marcum. *MX Publishing*, 2021. 460pp (Part XXVIII), 452pp (Part XXIX), 500pp (Part XXX). Each £28.99 (hbk), £17.99 (pbk)

This three-volume collection contains fifty-seven stories, set at a variety of stages in Holmes's life between 1869 and 1928. The Christmassiness of the stories varies wildly — some revolve closely around the season while others are simply adventures which happen to take place around late December, but they all make good seasonal reading. The varying scenes of festivities at 221B especially appealed to me — whether Mrs Hudson was laying on a massive feast for a host of Holmesian regulars or Holmes was resisting Watson's attempts to instal a Christmas tree in their rooms, they all brought a little holiday cheer along with their mysteries.

I found it interesting that the vast majority of the authors imagine that Holmes was not a fan of the festive period, but that is the only strong common thread, and the stories are incredibly diverse, ranging from clear COVID-19 allegories to seasonal sushi sessions.

My only concern is the lack of proof-reading in Volume XXVIII. In one story the font suddenly changes for no good reason. In another Mr Holmes briefly becomes Mrs Holmes. Almost every story in this book has at least one missing or misplaced word, some awry punctuation or a sentence that makes no sense. While the stories are enjoyable, these repeated errors do jar. I sincerely hope this was a one-volume glitch and that the next collection returns to the previous quality, as I confess that I am a big fan of them.

This slight hitch aside, I heartily recommend these books. The stories certainly enhanced the season for me, with Marcum's own "The Father Christmas Brigade" being my personal favourite — a well-constructed and charming chunk of fun.

PTM

One Must Tell the Bees: Abraham Lincoln and the Final Education of Sherlock Holmes by J Lawrence Matthews. *East Dean Press*, 2021. 553pp. £12.98 (pbk)

This is the author's first novel, and what a debut! A sizeable undertaking, packed with an expansive plot in which we hear the narrative voices of both Holmes and Watson. Purporting to be Holmes's first case, *One Must Tell the Bees* sees our young hero travel to America in May 1864. His work takes him into the White House of President Abraham Lincoln, from which he becomes embroiled in the pursuit of John Wilkes Booth, accompanied by a freed slave named Abraham.

Set against the backdrop of the seismic social, military, economic and political changes occurring in the United States at the time, this novel is full of fascinating period detail and neat references to the original Canon. The unfolding drama begins with Watson taking possession of a pivotal manuscript written by Holmes and entitled: *The Art and Science of Rational Deduction*. This sheds light on the detective's formative years, and we learn that lots of the things we thought we knew about Holmes's childhood are, in fact, erroneous! There are some fascinating insights too — my favourite being Holmes's apparent ability to see colours while listening to music (what we now know as *chromesthesia*).

The book is beautifully written and immediately engaging, and the historical characters are brought to life with great care and affection. With clever plot twists and a wealth of unexpected encounters, the story is endlessly entertaining. I eagerly await a follow-up!

MM

The Keys of Death by Gretchen Altabef. *MX Publishing*, 2021. 262 pp. £17.99 (hbk)

In his introduction, Mattias Boström describes himself as an "embracer" of Holmes in his many forms, and issues the invitation to "shake up Sherlock". In *The Keys of Death*, Holmes, if not shaken, is certainly stirred into life. Taken from the perspective of journal entries by Mrs Hudson, Dr Watson and others, we start with a mysterious and lamented death. This leads us into the introduction of the fledgling consulting detective and his soon-to-be landlady. Watson soon joins the gathering at

Baker Street, paralleling the events of *A Study in Scarlet*. This telling, however, presents a much more considerate portrayal of the young Mr Holmes. Mrs Hudson too is much younger than the version many of us may have in our minds, which is no bad thing. With different characters narrating each chapter, Altabef achieves the difficult task of keeping the voices distinct. Through their eyes, we learn of the birth of an enduring friendship — I was much taken with the charming vignette of Holmes and Watson undertaking a cigarette-smoking experiment for the former's research purposes. Overall, an original and refreshing exploration of the early days of the Baker Street triumvirate, with solid historical research and unexpected entries by other characters who will be well known to the readers.

SO-B

A Study in Crimson: Sherlock Holmes 1942 by Robert J. Harris. *Polygon Books. 2022*. 290pp. £8.99 (pbk)

Mr Harris's earlier books include the excellent Artie Conan Doyle series for younger readers, which I thoroughly enjoyed myself! I was therefore very enthusiastic to read the author's first full-length pastiche. The promise of a time-shifting plot, in which Holmes and Watson appear in wartime London — as something of an homage to the Universal films featuring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce — also helped to whet my appetite.

The plot of *A Study in Crimson* sees our heroes tracking down a serial killer known as "Crimson Jack", who is killing his victims on dates which replicate the 1888 murders of the notorious "Jack the Ripper". The action comes thick and fast, and the mystery is well judged from start to finish. I particularly enjoyed the attention to detail, reflecting the "Blitz spirit" of wartime Londoners and the deprivations of a population under the constant threat of aerial bombardment. Atmosphere is certainly not lacking.

The portrayal of Holmes felt reassuringly familiar, and the author has sensibly avoided casting Watson in the buffoon-like mould which all too often categorised the character in the original Universal films. Other characters are equally well-drawn and recognisable — particularly that of Inspector Lestrade.

The book is very well written, well-paced, and extremely entertaining. I look forward to reading more in the same vein.

MM

Dark Arts, Dark Acts: The Redacted Sherlock Holmes by Orlando Pearson. *MX Publishing*, 2021. 256pp. £9.99 (pbk)

Describing a 248 page story as a novel was already a bit of an exaggeration. This particular story is also double-spaced and has been printed in an oversized font. Had it been printed normally, it would have fitted on half as many pages. With a £9.99 cover price, the value for money here is cast immediately into doubt.

That said, the story itself is interesting enough. Watson, writing the story up in 1947, tells how he and Holmes travelled to Germany in 1940 and helped Goebbels catch a serial killer in exchange for the release of English prisoners of war, and then moved on to broker a treaty with Stalin.

In the early pages the writing suffers, perhaps, from a lack of editing, making for some very clumsy prose. Heavy-handed references to Canonical cases frequently interrupt the flow of narrative. Similarly, there are moments when the story seems to dwell on historical information purely to demonstrate the fruit of the author's research rather than to move the story on. However, if one perseveres, the author eventually seems to find his feet and the overall result is an enjoyable enough read which provides some insight into how World War Two shaped the world we live in today.

HJ

Beasts of London by Janina Woods. *MX Publishing*, 2021. 321pp. £16.99 (hbk)

Ms Woods lives in Switzerland, apparently not far from the Reichenbach Falls. She is a game designer and VR coder, those two quintessentially 21st century occupations, as well as an author. The story she tells in this book is fantastical and magical, but by no means in a Disneyesque way. I have seen this book described as an example of Metaphysical Visionary Fiction, apparently a growing but little-known genre.

Frankly, I found it barely comprehensible, and it was difficult to make out what was really supposed to be happening. I assume that such feelings may well be exactly what the author was intending to create. As for its being anything to do with Holmes, Watson, and our beloved Canon, whilst plenty of familiar names are employed, that is where it ends. I could say that they are our favourite characters but not as we know them. Holmes would have dismissed it briskly, as he did the subject of vampires, "rubbish … it's pure lunacy." As for my opinion, the book is fluent and seems well written,

and those with the taste for this sort of thing will, I am sure, enjoy it .

JS

In brief

The Sherlock Holmes Escape Book: The Adventure of the Analytical Engine by **Charles Phillips and Melanie Frances** (Ammonite Press, 2022; £9.99) is the third title in this clever series of escape books in which the reader takes on the role of Sherlock Holmes. Intrigued by an invitation from mathematician Charles Babbage to view his newly completed pioneering contraption, Holmes becomes imprisoned in a magnificent London villa, where tricks, traps and illusions aim to divert him from uncovering the true purpose of the reimagined Analytical Engine. Using the Code Wheel which is set into the book's cover, riddles, logic puzzles, timed challenges, mathematical brain-teasers, maps and mazes must be solved in order to escape.

Rafferty's Last Case by **Larry Millett** (University of Minnesota Press, 2022; $25.95) is the ninth and final episode in the popular Minnesota mysteries, featuring the now-elderly detective and bar-keeper Shadwell Rafferty. When news of Rafferty's death reaches Holmes and Watson, they rush to Minnesota to hunt for their friend's killer. Set in 1928 St Paul, Millett's impeccable knowledge of local history takes the reader into a case that is reminiscent of "Charles Augustus Milverton", including vivid glimpses of the high society and sordid underworld of the turn-of-the-century Midwest.

JU

The Essential Sherlock Holmes, Volume One: Origins (Belanger Books, 2021; hbk £37.95/pbk £18.95) begins a series, subtitled *The Most Important Sherlock Holmes Stories with Scholarly Commentary*. The editor, **Dan Andriacco**, explains that the stories chosen are not necessarily "the most famous or even the best", but "the most significant in terms of Holmes's life story". So this first volume gives us "The *Gloria Scott*", "The Musgrave Ritual" and *A Study in Scarlet*, atmospherically illustrated by Brian Belanger. Dr Andriacco and six other Sherlockian scholars have contributed thought-provoking essays. I'm particularly taken with Rich Krisciunas on "Growing Up as Sherlock Holmes", David Leal on the effect of social changes on Reginald Musgrave and Sherlock Holmes, and Ashley Polasek on adaptations of *A Study in Scarlet*. I look forward to the subsequent volumes.

Each year **The Sound of the Baskervilles**, our friends in the greater Puget Sound region of western Washington, USA, publish ***Beaten's Christmas Annual***. The 2022 edition [sic] features a cornucopia of essays, stories, jokes and illustrations in its eighty-two pages. Particularly interesting for me are the answers to Nancy Holder's survey, asking members what, in their opinion, interpretations of Holmes and Watson get right, and what they get wrong, but there's much, much more. There may still be some of the 120 copies available, at $10.00 each, from www.soundofthebaskervilles.com.

Mr Doyle's Class Presents "A Study in Scarlet" (The Conan Doyle Collection, Portsmouth City Council, 2020; £10.00) is a very neat and engaging short graphic novel, adapted from you-know-what by **Matthew Hardy** and illustrated by **Russell Mark Olson**. Mr Doyle says that in drama anyone can be anything they want, and for the school play he casts a girl, appropriately named Scarlet, as Holmes. She and James, who plays Watson, are somehow mentored by the real detective and doctor, whose presence seems perfectly natural in a drama that moves easily from a school stage to a Victorian street to a life-size chessboard and back, The youngsters almost become Holmes and Watson as they act out their rôles and uncover the solution to the mysterious death at Lauriston Gardens. My only problem is that the lettering is very small — but of course the book is intended for younger eyes than mine, and I do have a magnifying glass by my desk!

Sherlock Cat and the Missing Mousie by **Heather Edwards**, illustrated by Amanda Downs (MX Publishing, 2022; £8.99) is, of course, aimed at young readers. Spot and Fluffy live with five-year-old Mary and her parents. Having listened to Mary's father reading stories of the great detective, Spot reckons that he's cut out to be a feline Sherlock, with Fluffy as his faithful Watson. His first experiments cause some disruption, but he settles in to the rôle, and decides to investigate the unusual happenings next door. The ensuing adventures are exciting and funny, enhanced by the attractive illustrations. The lines of text are unnecessarily widely spaced, but that apart it's a charming book.

The Hound of the Baskervilles has been interpreted as farce in two hugely successful current plays. Now the Australian dramatist and Holmesian **Cenarth Fox** offers his own comic twist in ***The Hound of the Basketballs*** (Fox Plays, 2022) — and it suits both professional and amateur

theatre. You can read the script (and download it) at https://www.foxplays.com/two-act-plays/ — but remember that it is copyright: for rehearsal material and a licence to perform, write to admin@foxplays.com. (I especially like the Post-master's line, assuring Watson that his letter to Holmes "will be in the addressee's hands before you can say Bertram Fletcher Robinson.")

Besides novels and short stories, **Orlando Pearson** writes off-beat plays about the great detective. ***The Redacted Sherlock Holmes: The Stage Plays*** (MX Publishing, 2020; £9.99) contains six, though both "A Case of Complex Identity" and "The Bruce-Partington Diptych" dramatise a canonical adventure *and* give it a non-canonical sequel. Mycroft Holmes's diplomatic intrigue is to the fore in "The Sleeper's Cache", which follows "The Bruce-Partington Plans", and in "A Perilous Engagement", whose main characters include a Miss Jean Leckie. "A Scandal in Nova Alba" takes Shakespeare's Scottish play in a different direction. "The Baron of Wimbledon" links the pre-war German tennis star Gottfried von Cramm, who defied the Nazis and suffered for it, to "the Count Von Kramm". And Holmes's client in "Mr Devine's Original Problem" is the most illustrious of all. These imaginative and deeply thoughtful plays have proved successful in performance.

Sherlock Holmes' Little Book of Wisdom: How to Deduce What on Earth Is Going On by **Glenn Dakin** (Eaglemoss Publications, 2021; £11.99) shows how the great detective's methods can help us in our everyday lives. Be wary of advertisements that exploit your fear or your ambition. Memorise the things that are important to you: if your watch was stolen, could you describe it accurately? Know how to ask the right questions… It's pithy and very sensible, and the author's witty cartoons are a nice bonus. We should remember, however, that although Holmes warned against filling one's brain-attic with irrelevant data, he later said: "All knowledge comes useful to the detective."

RJ

***The Sherlock Holmes Journal*,**
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