**The Norbury Chronicle**

**newsletter of the Holmesian Studies SIG of American Mensa**

**since '88, Baker Street Irregulars scion since '95**

"Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed." (Mark 4:22)

Issue IV April '89

Sarasate Remembered

The celebrated violinist Pablo Martin Melitón de Sarasota y Navascués is still remembered by fans of his most celebrated fan, Sherlock Holmes, who with his friend Dr. Watson listened to "a good deal of German music" "at St. James Hall (REDH 133-5) in October, 1890. The musician's photo by "Watery, photographer to the Queen" appeared in the March, 1892, Starnd along with Watson's "The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb". It was reproduced in a card form prepared for the Annual Dinner of the Baker Street Irregulars January 6th, 1989 by Peter E. Blau.

The celebration of Twelfth Night by Holmesians began after the astrological charting done on Sherlock Holmes in 1933 and supported by the two quotes from the Shakespearean play of the same name.

Steven Lauria however in the *Baker Street Miscellania* No. 28 suggests that Shear Thursday was Sherlock's baptismal day. The octave of Shear Thursday for 1850 would point toApril 5th for his birthday. If this were so Sherlock's re-birthday (EMPT) would correspond to his fortieth birthday -- found significant by the scion, The Empty House.

Even if you celebrate in January, is there any reason not to do so again in April?

"What do you think..." (REDH 133:2)

Patiche Contest Continues

The entrance deadline for "The Giant Rat of Sumatra Contest" has been extended. So far the judges say that "The Giant Rat of Sumatra" patiche still leads "The Adventure of the Highgate Miracle" (i. e., the J. Phillimore disappearance case), which appeared in Exploits of Sherlock Holmes by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr.

A couple novel-length patiches have been nominated not for the best or most honorable imitation Holmes story but for the worst: *Prisoner of the Devil* by Michael Hardwick in which Holmes resorts to consulting a psychic and an unsuccessful rescue of Dreyfus from Devil's Island and *The Case of the Philosopher's Ring* by Randall Collins overdone with such characters as Annie Besant, Arthur Conan Doyle, Sigmund Freud, George Bernard Shaw, Robert Louis Stevenson and Oscar Wilde.

100 Years Ago

Sometime between about September 1888 and June 1889 John and Mary Watson gave birth to their first son James (TWIS 2:1, 9:3, ENGR 2:1), *Sign of the Four* came out in a limited edition booklet a year before appearing in *Lippicott's Magazine* in February 1890

Porlock's Puzzles

The one cryptogram in the classifies last issue was similar to the book code found in The Valley of Fear, but closer to the one suggested by Watson based on the King James Version Bible. As Holmes well knew the code he was working on then did not fit such a suggestion. One based on the Bible's one pangrammic sentence (namely Ezra 7:21) offers many possibilities. Such pangrammic system using sentences containing all the letters of the alphabet are very difficult to crack without the key sentence.

The cryptogram begins: "13-2, 2-1, 28-2, ...", which means the 13th word's 2nd letter of the Ezra passage, then the 1st of the 2nd and the 2nd of the 28th, and so on or "LIF..." With a key pangram with so many repeating letters and possible nulls this cipher would be nearly impossible to decipher without "And I, even I, Artaxerxes, the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river that whatsoever Ezra, the priest, the scribe of the Law of the God of Heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily."

There are 33 possible designations for "E" and even 2 for "X". Even if restricting the cipher to 3-digit designations (i. e., without using 4-10, 5-10 or 22-10), there are 257 nulls available to confuse the would-be decoder, enough to make frequency analysis meaningless.

A simpler cipher might use "The quick, brown fox jumped over the lazy, sleeping dog." or even an incomplete pangram. Without the hyphen the message would be quite cryptic.

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Letters

Dear Mr. Halm,

I am very interested in Sherlock Holmes (ever since I was young) and follow PBS's "Mystery" (tonight both Denver channels are showing "Hound of the Baskervilles".) You might also note that even a character on "Star Trek: The Next Generation" is a Holmes aficionado, L. Cdr. Data, an android, has a strong interest in him; in the episode that played tonight [Dec. 10], he accidentally programmed his computer to create a holographic Moriarty which gets access to the USS Enterprise computers and wreaks havoc (it was a cute/humorous episode, if one is not a purist.)

William N. Voharas

Dear Michael,

I was happy to receive No. 2 of *the Norbury Chronicle*. It is well done and I enjoyed the article on Jack the Ripper. I must confess I have never followed Jack's exploits to any great detail -- keeping up with Holmes has been tough enough. But recent issues of *Canadian Holmes* and *BSM*, which have been theme issues devoted to Saucy Jack leave little escape from all the details of the Ripper murders.

The letter from Mary Golden, Don Redmond and Ken Mayall were very interesting.

I did attend the BSI/ASH weekend in NYC and had a fine time talking with Sherlockians from all over the country -- nay, the world.

Jim Duval

Dear Michael,

I have been a Holmes fan and collector since I read my first story, "The Adventure of the Speckled Band", while in the fourth grade. If I can be of any help with the SIG, let me know.

Rick Barnhard

[We believe our first canonical story was SPEC too and at about the same age. We certainly would appreciate your help. The more we have contributed the more often *the Chronicle* will come out. Keep writing.]

Dear Mr. Halm,

Thanks for the No. 2 *Norbury Chronicle*, which came this week.

Mary Coutré

Books

Our local branch library has some literature out promoting both fictional and true crime stories, even some fictionalized true stories like: *Night of the Ripper* by Robert Bloch, *Two Mrs. Grenvilles* by Dominick Dunne, *Lizzie* by Evan Hunter, *Blood and Orchids* by Norman Katkov, *Executioner's Song* by Norman Mailer.

Under classic mysteries it lists: *The Benson Murder Case* by S. S. Van Dine (1926), *The Case of the Postponed Murder* by Erle Stanley Gardner (1973), *The Circular Staircase* by Mary Roberts Rinehart (1906), *A Family Affair by Rex Stout* (1975), *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* by Edgar Allen Poe (1841), *Sleeping Murder* by Agatha Christie (1976), *Whose Body* by Dorothy Sayers (1923).

And of course: *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by John Watson (1902), the first mystery to appear on a best-seller list.

There's also a listing of 19th Century mystery writers: Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, Anna Katherine Green, J. S. LeFanu, E. P. Oppenheimer, Edgar Allen Poe, Israel Zangwill and decade by mysterious decade thereafter: 1901-1910 G. K. Chesterton, Maurice Leblanc, Mary Roberts Rinehart, 1911-1920 E. C. Bentley, A. E. W. Mason, Sax Rohmer, 1921-1930 Earl Derr Biggers, John Dickson Carr, Leslie Charteris, Agatha Christie, Freeman Wills Crofts, John Carroll Daly, Mignon Eberhart, Ellery Queen, Dorothy Sayers, Arthur Upfield, Willard Huntington Wright.

There's even a listing of amateur detectives (Holmes' status after his "death" in 1891?): Dr. Charles Adams (Concord, Mass. dentist), Rev. Claire Aldington (ass't rector at St. Alselm's Episcopal Church, Manhattan), Gordon Christy (Vail, CO, veterinarian), Edward George (retired librarian), Fr. Robert Koessler (Detroit, MI, priest), Eugene Potter (New England widow and cooking teacher), Rabbi David Small (of Barnard's Crossing), John Putnam Thatcher (vice-president of a New York trust company) -- their exploits have been chronicles respectively by Rick Boyer, Isabelle Holland, Barbara Moore, Charles Goodrum, William X. Kienzle, Virginia Rich, Harry Kemelman and Emma Latham.

[If you, dear readers, have anything in the way of review on any of these, please write in -- or if you would like something reviewed write in - or just write in.]

Columbo Is Back

Lt. Columbo, the professional detective who adventures were chronicles on NB between 1968 and 1977, has returned to television. His method is to fuss over the small mysterious details of a murder until the murderer is revealed -- or more likely -- is driven to confess.

Lt. Columbo himself is a mystery. Could it be true that his name which has been revealed as not "Phillip", not "Joseph" and not "Frank" be "Lou Tennant"? Why the hiatus of twelve years? Why is there so little known about his wife and family? Perhaps myustery just surrounds mystery solvers -- and thank God that it does.

Classifieds

**PERSONAL**

TISIFAROIMADLBDEFIDFUCTLAYDNFIAETRAHYTUOSATKOOUMHCHWNEOYEUPXCEMTTESOLOEVTI -- Box 401

**LOST**

Reward for any information on the whereabouts or fate of heiress Dorothy Arnold, last seen in Manhattan, NY, December 12, 1910 -- Box 402

Reward: if information leading to the relocation of the lost ton of gold carried by the *Swordfish* reported trapped in the Antarctic ice by second mate, the sole survivor, who told Manton, owner of the *Black Dog*, according to Long can be found. -- Box 403

A bulldog pup last seen at a private hotel in the Strand, London, answers to the name of "Murray", high sentimental value, much thanks if found. -- Box 404

**TRAVEL**

Would you like to travel to exotic Tibet? Amuse yourself byvisiting the Dalai lama in the beautiful, old monastery of Lhassa? Or would you want to look in at Mecca and see the mosque? To visit the khalifa at Khartoum?

Mycroft Travel gency can arrange the whole itinerary -- a world tour. And always with the utmost tact and confidentiality. "You have only ione confidant ... Mycroft."

arrangements made in the Stranger's Room, Diogenes Club, Pall Mall, London