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

Issue XX

*Holmes for the Holidays*

for the Holidays

We finally got *Holmes for the Holidays* edited by Martin H. Greenberg, Jon L. Lellenberg and Carol-Lynn Waugh back from the friends we loaned it to -- providentially in time for a Christmas theme newsletter. It acknowledges Dame Jean Conan Doyle's permission to use the Sherlock Holmes characters, Not all do.

As Jon Lellenberg writes in his introduction, "'The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle' is a Christmas story that has stood the friends of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. John H. Watson in good stead for over a century now. But there is no denying that it is only one Christmas of the many the two great friends and companions shared. Perhaps the stories in this volume are some of the others."

Christmas, 1963, is one of my all-time favorites, because that's when my parents gave me *The Complete Sherlock Holmes*.

"The Watch Night Bell" by Anne Perry begins in the sitting room with Millicent, a lady apparently in distress over her father Col. John Bayliss's life being threatened by her own sister, Alyson. Ah, but you'll have to read it to find out how Holmes saves the colonel's life and proves who the threat is.

In "The Sleuth of the Christmas Past" by Barbara Paul is the interesting bit of dialogue:

WATSON: "Ah, then you intend to celebrate Christmas this year?"

HOLMES: "I always celebrate Christmas, but not always at the same time as others do. Christmas is a state of mind, Watson!"

This story involves Holmes and Watson in a theft from the Christmas Charities Fund, a murder and a forged will -- but a happy ending nevertheless.

"A Scandal in Winter" by Gillian Linscott, as the title suggests, has a connection with "A Scandal in Bohemia", but takes place 13 years later in 1910, set in Switzerland.

In "The Adventure in the Border Country" by Gwen Moffet, Holmes deftly -- and gently -- destroys poor Watson's theorizing that the client's request for assistance for his neighbor in a matter too delicate for the police implies blackmail. He does so with an analysis of the handwriting of the man, "not a rake who has formed an embarrassing liaison with his wife's maid". Indeed it proves much a more serious situation in "the wild border country, where rapine and pillage were commonplace until a few generations ago". (Which reminds us of Holmes' Jonathan Wild ["The Valley of Fear" 2:66-70], "the hidden force of the London criminals" "1750 or thereabouts" and written of by Fields and Defoe.)

"The Adventure of the Three Ghosts" by Loren D. Estleman, author of *Sherlock Holmes vs. Dracula*, involves Devil's-foot and the interesting Lord and Lady Chistlehurst; "The Adventure of the Canine Ventriloquist" by Jon L. Breen, a Christmas seance.

"The Adventure of the Man Who Never Laughed" connects Holmes to Charles Fort [See our Fortean Mysteries SIG newsletter, *Mpossibilities*] -- and less significantly to Freudian psychoanalysis -- during Christmas '94, "one that is marginally less tedious than the rest". That would have been after Fort's short-lived editorship at *The Independent* of Queens and before his attempted round-the-world tour, long before his heyday at the New York Public Library (1906-15) and the British Museum (1920-28). Still we'd consider this a candidate for deuterocanonicality since it only claims to be by John H. Watson, discovered by J. N. Williamson.

"The Yuletide Affair" by John Stroessel, author of *The Vatican Affair*, *The Oyster Affair* and *The Vladivostok Affair*, features quite a cast of characters: MacDonald, Mrs. Hudson, Dr. Watson, Vinny Shadwell, Lestrade, Jones, Gregson, Rance and Holmes, last and for a change least.

"The Adventure of the Christmas Tree" by William L. DeAndrea features Mycroft and quotes Holmes saying, "Evil takes no holidays, Watson. Therefore, neither can those who would stop it." in this case against the duke of Balleshire, 1889.

"The Adventure of the Christmas Ghosts" by Bill Crider involves Franklin Scrooge and a not so tiny Timothy Cratchit.

"The Thief of Twelfth Night" by Carole Nelson Douglas has the interesting twist of being the revelation of a mystery (or two)'s solution which Watson took part in unawares while at the Olivers' of Belleforest, 1883, the attempted theft of the Epiphany emerald. Naturally it features "the Woman" of her four novels beginning with *Good Night, Mr. Holmes*.

In "The Italian Sherlock Holmes" by Reginald Hill, Holmes guides Count Leonardo Montesecco to *la veritá*, the truth about Giuseppe Strepponi, "the tale [Watson would] not be able to tell for a hundred years."

In "The Christmas Client" by Edward D. Hoch, it's 1888 and the client is none other than Charles Lutwidge Dodgson being blackmailed by fellow mathematician James Moriarty, yet still with quite a few surprises.

The final case in this colletion is "The Adventure of the Angel's Trumpet" by Carolyn Wheat dealing with Sir Wilfred Carstairs' murder trial with "the legal pettifogger who succeeded against all reason in convincing a jury of twelve good men and women to disregard [Holmes'] testimony, the man who held [him] up to ridicule before that same jury, the man who holds the fate of Charmain Carstairs in his dishonest hands", barrister Kevin O'Bannion. O'Bannion pleads with Holmes, "Only you can unravel this tangled skein of evidence and help me prove Miss Carstairs did not poison her grandfather."

100 Years Ago

1898 was a year with a black rain in Ireland and a skyboom in Arizona, the beginning of the Spanish-American War and the annexation of Hawaii and in that year Sverdrup reached a point less than 230 miles from the North Pole.

Doyle got "The Brazilian Cat", "The Story of the Lost Special" and "The Story of Man with the Watches" published. Books published in this year were: *Angels in Art* by Clara Ersine Clement, *Book of the Dead* by E. A. Wallis Budge, *History of the Jews* by H. H. Graetz, *Inscriptions Mandaïtes des Clover* by L. Housman, *Through New Guinea and the Cannibal Counties* by H. Cayley-Webster, *Vondel's Lucifer* tr. by Leonard C. Van Noppen, articles "The Testament of Solomon" tr. by Frederick G. Conybeare.

Comments on DANC and REDC

by "Amber Mouthpiece"

Holmes' link 1 in his initial deduction about Watson in "The Adventure of the Dancing Men", "You had chalk between your left finger and them when you returned from the club last night" (DANC 14:2), implying that Watson dis wash at the club, but hastily. [Edgar W. Smith thought it hard to believe the good doctor hadn't washed his hands.] Link 3, "You never play billiards except with Thurston." implies that there was something special about this Thurston." Watson's tipster friend may or may not have been from the family that produced John Thurston, billiards champion and billiards table manufacturer, who flourished somewhat earlier 1814-69.

Ridling -- not Riding -- Thorpe Manor (DANC 21:1) of Hilton Cubitt derives its name from the same word elements as nearby Redlington (*Readleahingtun*, "red-soil meadow family farm settlement") and Edingthrorp (*Ecgingthorp*, "swordsman's son's farm settlement"), Norfork [Christopher Morley] or the pun with "riddling" was just too tempting? Walcott (*Walcot*, "walled village") is identified by Shirley Sanderson as the village nearest Ridling Thorp Manor and that of E. Ruston [*Roustun*, "red-haired one's farmstead"] nearest Abe Slaney's hideout, Elridge's (*Eahlric*, "divinely inspired ruler"?).

The Russell Square (*Rousel*, "red-haired one's farmstead") where Cubitt visited Vicar Parker (*Pearrocere*, "hunting forest custodian") is associated with the homes of the Shelbys (*Scelfbyr*, "village on a ledge") and Osbornes (*Asbjorn*, "divine bear") written of in Thackeray's (*Thacere*, "roof thatcher") *Vanity Fair* (1848) and so too the adventuress Becky Sharp, the suicide Sir Samuel Romilly (1818), painter Sir Thomas Lawrence (fl. 1805-30).

As for the Dancing Men cipher itself, it is not a simple substitution even though, as Baring-Gould notes "a number of Sherlockian scholars have amused themselves by devising complete alphabets in the Dancing Men cipher [See the *Norbury Chronicle* 3:2 and 4:2.] since the character for "V" in Message IV is "P" in Message V and in some editions "C" in Message VI is the same as "M" throughout and not the same as "C" in Message III. It's possibly related to the Alphabet of Hermes in *Encyclopedia of Freemasonry* by Albert Mackey (1874).

In 1953 Cornelius Helling suggested in "The True Story of the Dancing Men" that Gavin Brend's contention was wrong that G. J. Cubitt of Hill House Hotel, Happisburgh, Norwich, had invented the Dancing Men cipher c. 1903 when Doyle visited there. Helling's counterprpposal is that Doyle and Watson together invented the opublished cipher -- and so muddled the "V", "P", "C" and "M" as noted. The code of the father of "Elsie Patrick Cubitt" or whoever the true inventor was must have been something quitedifferent, though a code still passable as a child's scrawl.

Fletcher Pratt noted that the multiplication of the numbers of leg and arm positions by either the upright or upside-down positions yields 1,568 possible characters, exactly the same number as the Great Cipher compiled by Rossignol for Louis XIV -- Rossignol, Russell, Ruston, hmm?

The Cubitt case takes place at the climax of the case of the two Coptic patriarchs (REDC 19:2), within two years of his retirement in 1896, rather than within two of his marriage early in 1897. (REDC 15:1-2, 4)

The identity of the singer "Carina" however remains mysterious, but the link to the subconstellation of Argo, "the keel", seems to us the most fruitful, containing as it does the stars: eta (Tseen She), iota (Scutulum/ Turais/ Aspidiske), but particularly its brightest star, Canopus. Could Carina be a pet form of Catherine? Or perhaps reminding Holmes of *Catriona* by Robert Louis Stevenson (1893), the sequel to *Kidnapped*? This supposes, of course, that Holmes had improved or disguised his knowledge of and interest in astronomy and/or literature since Watson first evaluated it.

The story's also notable as the first reference to Holmes' use of a telephone (REDC 60:2) and his reference to 1 Colossians 14:40. (REDC 103:2) Holmes also notes therein that :Amberley excelled at chess -- one mark, Watson, of a scheming mind.", prompting Harold Schonberg to speculate that Holmes may have schemed to play championship chess as "Harry Nelson Pillsbury" in the Hastings tournament in 1895. It also refers to the intriguing character Cecil Barker (*Barkere*, "tree bark stripper")and the hard-to-reach Little Purlington [*Purcelleahingtun*, "piglet meadow family estate"?] near Mossmoor [*Mosmor*, "marsh at the head of a moor") (REDC 72, 84:1) Did Elman have some connection to the Coptic patriarchs?

Mr. E.'s Mysteries

[back by popular demand, i. e., one person asked about them]

Discovering what appeared to be a lost dog in the woods, Mr. E. quickly identified it by simply locating its nearby owner, small game hunter Orville Wright Vasquez.

It looked like the lovely lady snake handler Constance Stricker had been poisoned by her animal partners, that is, until Mr. E., while nonchalantly opening his lunch, reminded the investigating policeman of an important fact.

[SREWSNA: ELLIVROEUQSABEHTFODNUOHEHTESRUOCFOSAWTI, ANANABSIHDIDERMEKILDOOFRIEHTEZEEUQSLLASROTCIRTSNOCSRECIRTSEINNOC]