**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 5 August '89



The publication of the *Norbury Chronicle* has been taken over by Hierogamous House. The name comes from the Greek roots meaning, as the Greek interpreter could tell you, "holy" or "sacred" and "marriage" or "union". It refers to the union of opposites beyond expectations. The union of the British, dull, slow, faithful, romantic Watson and the clever, tricky, secretive, Amerophile Holmes is an example of such a union.

Martha Porter Dead at 100

"Her dark, clear-cut face was handsome, even in death," one observer commented. Miss Martha Porter had been a very beautiful girl, the beauty of the neighborhood. She grew into a lady that wouldnhave graced any assembly in the world, yet chose to remain in the rolling moors, lonely and dun-colored at the further extrmity of the Cornish peninsula.

As a young girl she worked with her grandmother, also named Martha Porter, housekeeping for the ill-fated Tregennis family of Tredannick Wartha. The mystery of their deaths and the madness caused by the so-called Cornish Horror, it will be remembered, was not revealed until December, 1910, in "The Adventure of the Devil's Foot".

Strong-willed and beautiful young Martha was the "freak", the rare flower of the downlands, that caused the story to finally be released. She was at that time engaged to the promising archeologist, Jack Tregennis, who died apparently of "the Horror". A disguised version of this episode in her life appeared in Liberty in 1926 as "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane". Already knowing Sherlock Holmes since his secret retirement to the coast in 1903, she became good friends with the reclusive detective. Between 1912 and 1914 she even worked with him as housekeeper to von Bork, the German spy.

Her experience with disguise and long-term impersonation served Miss Porter well as a secret agent for Great Britain through both World Wars. She never married, she said, because with every would-be suitor she thought, "I love and am loved by a better man than he." She never revealed who that secret lover might be, but certainly qualifies as one of, if not, the greatest adventuresses of the century.

Publication Announced

Mohamad Bazzi, president of the newly formed scion society The Young Sherlockians of Jackson Heights, NY, plans to publish The Sherlockian Tabloid, which will feature the work of members.

The publication will be available -- in signed and numbered copies -- if ordered before September 30 at $3 per copy. Orders will be handled through the Norbury Chronicle as a society correspondent, so please respond promptly and our editorial staff will do so as well.

Porlock's Puzzles

The cryptogram in the agony column in last edition, Box 401, simply reversed letter pairs. Elementary! "It is a formidable difficulty and I fear that you ask too much when you expect me to solve it."

It illustrates the principle that often the simplest technique can produce the most difficult codetexts. The class of diary codes, for example, are designed for easy encoding and difficult decoding, simply by changing the writing direction from left-to-right downward to some other pattern and inserting nulls and spaces.

"Celebrated H's birthday today and Twelfth Night with Champagne Reichenbach 1891" would turn out to be possibly: "br'sday lfhtche nb91zeah hyaaetg anrea8q !lt bt dnwhiwhmgehclx ceedirtodt nitpaich."

Perhaps the doctor used such a code to record confidential material. Perhaps he sometime forgot which pattern he had used years latter.

Letters

Michele Lynn Kaminski writes: "I enjoyed the *Norbury Chronicle*, especially the lead article. [That would have been in issue 4, "Sarasota Remembered" on the celebrated violinist and the Twelfth Night by the Baker Street Irregulars.]

Peter Blau writes: "Your mention of 'worst' pastiches reminds me of another candidate: Edmund Aubrey's Sherlock Holmes in Dallas (1980), in which a geriatric Holmes attempts to solve the assassination of Pres. Kennedy."

[Which brings to our mind the question of Holmes' age. the argument usually goes that being a man of sixty in 1914 he must have been born in 1854. It must be remembered however that he was in disguise. With such logic one could say he was an old man when Watson saw him on the street in '94.

We propose that he was a self-educated child prodigy who went to the University say as a teen, young enough to play roughly with bullpups. He could have been about 50 in '14 and 100 in '63. Isn't it easier for a young man to impersonate an older one than vice versa? But then didn't the Master in his last case before "retirement" say someone else would surely discover the youth serum his old prof had not?]

Peter also writes:

"And I'm curious about the suggestion the "The Sign of the Four" appeared before it was published in *Lippincott's Magazine* -- "A Study in Scarlet" is described in *Beeton*'s as a reprint, but what's the evidence for something similar for SIGN?

[In the preface to The Case Book of Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur, he writes: "As a matter of cold fact, Holmes made his debut in "A Study in Scarlet" and in "Sign of the Four", two small booklets which appeared between 1887 and 1889."]

Roxanne Spencer writes: "I've always liked Holmes and mysteries and in fact, I took a class on Holmes last semester. I've included a SASE and 50¢ for a sample newsletter. Thank you."

[Perhaps Roxanne or our other readers would like to share about the Holmesian studies in universities. Our own has been self-directed study since about 1963. We have learned much since we started the *Chronicle*.]

100 Years Ago

In mid-August "some three months" after the death of Sir Charles Baskerville in May and five years after James Mortimer left Charing Cross the adventure of "The Hound of the Baskervilles" began.

75 Years Ago

In early August -- "the most terrible August in the history of the world" until the one in 1945, Holmes and Watson "chatted in the intimate converse for a few minutes, recalling once again the days of the past", likely the anniversary of 25 years before or the August *Collier's* revealing the next issue's "return of Sherlock Holmes" in '03.

In Tibet

Richard Wincor in his 1968 work *Sherlock Holmes in Tibet* reprints (pp. 7-45) a pamphlet he claims to have found in van Wych's bookshop on Museum St., London. This apocryphal document, "Notes on the Tibet Episode" by Sherlock Holmes makes interesting reading even if "somebody's account of the missing details", as he thinks.

It seems to be the notes of one "Ole Sigerson" on a lecture to visiting Westerners in Lhassa by gupka (i. e., red-hatted lama Kunzang Nordup). Kunzang reveals in the course of his lesson that two of the eight in the room are *tulpa* or imaginary beings. One seems to be "Cornelius Dimitriev", who shortly reveals himself as the dead ex-professor James Moriarty.

Other possibilities for the second *tulpa* are Kunzang himself, the unnamed Vice-Chancellor of Lhassa, Col. H. Bagby Holland-Bennett, Prof. Horst Hummel, Julio Chavez and Rick Weaver.

Yet another possibility not mentioned in the "Notes" is that of *yang-tul* or *nying-tul*, the secondary and tertiary manifestations of *tulpa*. These phantoms are the imaginary companions of the original imaginary creature. That a ghostly Moriarty might continue to organize deviltry after death, claiming knowledge of *tobiwaza*, the Japanese art of falling, is made quite plausible.

~~Holmes~~ Sigerson triumphs over this pseudo-Moriarty, but one wonders if he continued studies at the Gupka lamastery? Did he acquire *mngonshes*, supernormal perception abilities? Did he already have them? Did he find his way to that intermediate state *bardo*, "some humble corner of such a Valhalla", in the fairy kingdom of romance.

Indexing

Holmes' *Index* has puzzled Holmesian scholars for years. Now researchers at Camford University have found a clue in the so-called Tip-of-the-tongue (TOTT) phenomena. they found that when subjects tried to remember a phrase of word they could most easily remember the initial letter -- hence the alphabetical system of indexing. The next most easily remembered characteristic was the number of syllables.

Being the acute observer of people that he was Holmes would have likely been well aware of this. Examples from his *Index* proves this, if not conclusively, at least highly suggestively.

Voy-age of the Glor-i-a Scott (8 syllables), Vic-tor Lynch the for-ger (6),Ven-om-ous liz-ard (5), Vit-tor-i-a (4), Van-der-bilt (3)

and in reverse order (zeewyexically): Vi-pers, Vig-or and Vam-pires (2)

The Wings of Dawn (part 1)

by William Sigerson

Adventure and wanderlust came tome naturally. My mother was the circus belle Vittoria and my father the explorer Sigerson. They happened to meet by chance in Florence in the spring of 1891. My mother dropped her show business name and soon become Victoria Regina Sigerson. Father did not find out about his son until his return from Tibet in '93 via N. Africa.

Even at an early age I showed signs of wild talents. In '94 we moved from the Riviera to Christiana (present-day Oslo), while father arranged his financing with his brother in England. Mother too had a sister, Violet, in England, but no other relatives. They were the last survivors of the old Saxon family the Hunters.

We found rooms just round the corner from the British Museum in '95. While father was off on expedition I took to delivering messages at the district office and clubs in Pall Mall. Before winning a scholarship to prep school in Hallamshire, I gained an even better education as a street Arab. It was there that I made the acquaintance of Jay Gibson, an American.

Classifieds

**COLLECTIBLES**

Greeting! As an avid collector of Sherlockian memorabilia you are aware of the difficulty of locating such items. Working from my private collection I have reproduced several that are sure to be of interest: Silver Blaze or Holmes (i. e. Rathbone as) buttons, HOUN centennial pin, Sherlock Holmes cigar labels (2 kinds), bookplate, lobby card ("Adventures"), Postum ad (1914), Turf cigarette cards (1926), letterhead sets, wine glasses, postcards (Gillette as Holmes)

Send orders to: Charles Kovacic, 18307 Burbank Bl. #49, Tarzana, CA 91356

**PERSONALS**

LOST: Large African cat, not declawed or neutered, but probably hungry, may answer to the name Saraha Queen -- Box 501

FOUND: Silver pin with six black pearls, inscribed on the back with "To Mary from John" -- Box 502

244524443521452315232422231544452433143543451134131524344523151143453521141545151345243435453512151112231545354315133522342461153551453521134513312154335212111134544532324132311431524341324141534451132113414532324132352244511323545231543532444155535514315341543225511341411454515343524353433514445115142444442441114515142434443515111435211215243422133534131534454311451514

-- Box 503

YOWU YOWO XUYA WUYIZU YIYOYEYIZUWOWU YOXIWAXI ZU ZAWIWU XUYA ZOZUWU ZIWUYOXUXO WUXU ZEZU AZEXEZU WUXU WIZUZIXIYEXOYOQAZU, XUVAWU XAYA ZA XOVAXIZEZUWI XUYA ZAZAZIWUWO, VIYIYOZIXA ZAWIZU VEYOWUZAXE. XAWUYIZUWIVIYOWOZU VUXAXAWI ZUXOZUWIYEVU ZAXIZO ZAWUZUZO YOXOWOWOYOWAZAWUZUZO YOXOWOWUZUZAZO XUYA ZEZUYOXOYE ZIXUXOZIZUXOWUWIZAWUZUZO. -- Box 504