

**THE DETECTION
OF
SHERLOCK HOLMES**

by
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c 1993

PART ONE
THE CRIME

Chapter One

"Mr Sherlock Holmes in his very person!" The old man cried out, obviously recognizing me from the play, as he brought in a swirl of snow and a bitter cold blast of air through the stage-door of the St. Lawrence Theatre in Toronto. We had been sold out for the most part, but it was a surprise to me that any of the audience had turned up on that particular night - Canadians must be a hardier breed. There had been what any New Yorker, and I am one, would describe as a fully fledged blizzard earlier. Even so the house had been just about full, and here was this poor old soul who had taken the trouble to trudge round backstage to say something nice! I stopped trying to make myself a little less susceptible to the elements as he strode towards me with hand outstretched. Feeling quite flattered by his making the effort and by his style of greeting, I shook the old boy's hand quite cordially and was surprised by the strength of his grip.

"Patrick Horgan," I said, "and it's very kind of you, sir."

"No less than the truth," he replied, "and I am something of an authority after all these years. Yes, I do assure you. What an evening! There were even moments which took me back to other times..."

Sensing some long and boring theatrical reminiscence coming on I cut in with a hearty: "Thank you very much indeed, sir!" Of course I didn't want to be rude to an old man who had gone to the lengths necessary even to get to the theatre on a night like this, and then troubled himself to come backstage, but there was a tiny demon thought which asked how on earth he could have got round from the front of house quite so quickly - and all muffled up like that? Woollen scarf over chin, overcoat with collar up, furry hat pulled down almost to his eyes, nearly hidden in their deep sockets - a Scandinavian look about him, I thought, especially with the snow dusting his hat and shoulders. As a rule I like to get out of the "factory" as quickly as I can, a habit from early days in England when, if you didn't get out of your costume and makeup and into your street clothes before the audience had time to clear the house, there was no chance of getting a much needed pint before closing time at the local pub. No problem like that in Toronto nowadays, thank God, though it used to be just as bad.

But that night I had been particularly anxious about whether I was going to have to dig my car out of a snowdrift after trudging half a mile through the deep stuff to reach it, so I had put on an extra turn of speed. How could this chap have made it so quickly if he had actually seen the show? Perhaps he had skipped the curtain calls? Oh well, what did it matter! "Very kind of you," I said, "to bother coming round on a night like this." And I really meant it.

"You are, no doubt, eager to get into your car, and home to your pipe, but could you not spare a moment to sign my programme?" he begged. "I collect these things, you know, on special occasions. You would probably be most interested in my files." His look was not to be denied. "Ah thank you, thank you indeed," he murmured as I fumbled for something to write with. "I was

intrigued to discover from the short biographical note here that you went to Stonyhurst College in England."

"Yes, that's right," I admitted. Oh dear, was that the answer. Was he an old boy from my Alma Mater eager to exchange notes? It is not my favourite pastime, but I gave it a try. "It was the school Conan Doyle went to, you know," I said, while accepting the offer of a pen from the stage-door keeper in response to my fruitless search. He gave me a sympathetic wink as I took it.

"And then one might deduce from the fact you mention it in the programme that you are keen to boast of your deep interest in *Finnegans Wake*? Not just another dumb actor, eh? But pray, do not take my strictures amiss!" he added with a twinkle. "You're not offended, I hope?"

"Not at all. Is that your field perhaps, James Joyce?" I responded with more eagerness. "That's the reason for the programme note; I love to get in touch with other scholars."

"Not exactly a scholar, but I do have a connection. Oh, yes, by Joseph....Pore ole Joe..."

What do I do with this one, I thought? No sooner do we seem to have found something in common than he drifts off into senility. I handed him the signed programme as he rambled on: "It's about me, you see, quite largely, in a sense. Yes, the unbelieving look, but nevertheless..."

"Well, of course, given that the central character is 'Here Comes Everybody' it must be about each and every one of us."

"Quite so," he replied, unperturbed, "but old Joe is a special case, speaking in general way." He regarded me quizzically, and then suddenly seized me by the arms and gazed piercingly into my eyes. "Have you not ever thought," he whispered with passionate intensity, "that there was something in common between you?"

"In common?" This was getting silly.

"Do you not place the reference?"

"Well, we're all Here Comes Everybody. Is that what you mean?"

"No, there's more to it than that. What do you have in common with these two writers, Conan Doyle and Joyce?"

"Oh!" I said. "Well, we're all three of Irish origin - all expatriates - Jesuit education..."

"Yes, yes, yes," he cut in testily, "but what is the vital link, the only important thing?"

I stared back uncomprehendingly.

"How can you miss it?" He struck his brow. "Let me try another tack. You are dedicated to the game of solving puzzles, are you not?"

"Yes, certainly. Oh, I see what you mean. Joyce set this enormously complicated riddle in the *Wake*. And Conan Doyle had a reputation as a prankster..."

"A prankster!" he chortled delightedly. "What an evening this is! Don't you see that you're the one who is having tricks played on him?" He paused and regarded my still baffled expression. "Of course you don't. Otherwise they wouldn't be doing it." He lowered his voice and said: "Why don't you apply

your mind to the solution of the problem of Sherlock Holmes? It might stand you in good stead."

The "problem" of Sherlock Holmes? This was getting worse by the minute. I had no idea what he was talking about, and so replied rather huffily that I felt I was doing all I could in that area by playing the role here in *The Speckled Band*. "And I have been right through the text, you know, every single word of it!" I pulled on my hat with an air of finality, and started for the door.

"You never noticed anything out of the ordinary?" he shouted after me. "And what about the pen?"

That stopped me. "The what?"

"Your mind must be on other things, my dear sir. You have misappropriated this gentleman's pen." I had indeed. "Though I would have said that you did not have the forehead of a felon!" He chuckled away as I unbuttoned my coat to dig it out with a muttered apology to the stage-doorman.

"Come sir, don't be offended," said the old man as he walked to the door. He turned with his hand on the knob. "Had you never, tell me truly, thought of studying Conan Doyle's work?" He pulled it open with a flourish and stepped confidently out into the deep snow. "Let me accompany you on your way for a moment or two," he called back as I followed him out. The wind had dropped by now but thick flakes made it impossible to see even the bulk of the O'Keefe Theatre across the road. He turned left without hesitation, leading the way along the narrow line of footprints worn by other pedestrians that night, then left again at the end of the street. It was almost as if he knew where my car was, I thought.

Perhaps walking behind him made me feel less defensive than when held by the regard of those piercing eyes, because after a short while I found myself saying: "It's rather odd you should ask me about working on Conan Doyle. Just a few months ago a friend of mine made that same suggestion. He thought I should look at his work with the same sort of analytical eye I've been using these last few years on Joyce. It could be that Conan Doyle was doing the same sort of things."

"As Joyce? Why not the other way round?"

"Well, they're hardly in the same category, are they. Joyce is a giant, world class. He's recognized as far better..."

"Better! A value judgment." he pointed out sternly.

"Different in kind then?"

"But perhaps not. Each may have had his own channel, but belonging to the common flow. And you must consider that Joyce was later in point of time."

By now I was thoroughly at sea; fortunately, before I could respond, he changed the subject: "Who was it who made that suggestion?"

"It was a man I met a year or two ago who is also into Joyce.

Sam Rosenberg. He wrote a..."

The old man stopped dead and whirled to face me. "Sam Rosenberg!" he cried. "Of course. *Naked is the Best Disguise*. Yes, I read that with the greatest interest. Quite of a lot of it correct, though sometimes for the wrong reasons. You spotted that

I dare say?"

"I thought he had a very good point in saying that Conan Doyle made Holmes into a resurrected Christ figure," I temporized.

"He killed him off at Reichenbach Falls and swore he'd never write another word about him, but later when funds were running low, he brought him back to life again, using the Christian framework."

He gripped my shoulders fiercely. "The same old half answer. Why won't you think!" And he strode off leaving me standing, then paused to shout back: "Why won't you look at the evidence itself?"

"What evidence?" I muttered to myself. The stories have been read and re-read by millions of people all over the world. If there was anything there surely it would have been spotted. I started out after him, calling out: "What evidence do you mean?"

"Mr. Sam Rosenberg certainly found plenty that had been overlooked, and clearly he must have felt that there was more that he might not have noticed, or understood. That's why he consulted you." He strode on purposefully, letting that sink in, then added: "And have you not done anything yet about the case?"

"I wouldn't say that. For a start I went through the whole Canon when I played Sherlock Holmes in the Gillette play in New York last year. And I have studied *The Speckled Band* quite thoroughly. There hasn't been time to do much more, what with rehearsals and coming up here to Canada."

"Perhaps so. But rehearsals should have been a time for a fruitful comparison of the two texts, and of course what lies between them. Ah!" He stopped suddenly. "That must be your vehicle: New York plates, clearly parked somewhat earlier than the others, belonging to members of the audience no doubt. What a shrewd choice of position! The wind funnelling between those two buildings has prevented the snow from drifting."

Indeed it was as he said. My Subaru was standing on its own little windswept spot, not at all where I usually left it in the lee of the buildings, where the snow was now piled up several feet deep. Two cars were there for the night beyond question. I could not remember consciously making any such decision when I had parked, but was profoundly grateful nonetheless. My only worry now was whether she'd start.

"Can I help you on your way, sir?" I asked as I got in after freeing up the wipers. "It's a parky night."

"Parky! Indeed it is," he cried delightedly. "I haven't heard that expression for a while. Yes, you certainly may, and it is most kind of you. But first let us see how your motor has withstood the vicissitudes of the climate." Brave Sue roared into life on the second attempt. "Ah, the sound of wellbred horses," he murmured settling himself bulkily into the seat beside me, and we waited for the engine to warm up and the frost to clear from the windows.

"Where shall I drop you then?" I enquired.

"Oh, it is on your way, have no worry about that. Towards Yonge Street. But, and do pardon my persistence, we were discussing this matter of the evidence. You said that Mr. Sam Rosenberg had asked for your opinion. Did you discover anything

while so diligently studying your script during rehearsals?"

"I'm not sure what you're driving at. I learned the text, and tried to seek out the essential character of Sherlock Holmes..."

"Quite so. You were so concerned with one aspect of the thing that it became impossible to give any consideration to others. That is always the problem. After all naked IS the best disguise, is it not?"

"I suppose so. The thing in plain sight is hardest to see."

"Exactly. You will call to mind Mr. Gilbert Chesterton's Postman, invisible to all except the discerning eye of Father Brown?"

"So you are saying that there was something I should have noticed about *The Speckled Band* which would relate to....what? To Sam Rosenberg's work? Some evidence that I should have spotted?"

"That indeed is the case. There can be no substitute for methodical and painstaking examination of the evidence, and I would have thought that four weeks of rehearsal would have provided a capital opportunity for you to undertake such a study."

The car was warm enough by now, and I charged her through the deep snow, veering wildly, until we reached the comparative safety of the main road, where I turned right to head for my hotel. Feeling a bit more positive after this minor triumph over the elements, I tried to deal with his criticism: "You keep talking about this supposed evidence. Now I really do think I know the play as well as anyone, and I haven't come across anything like that."

"Nothing at all out of the ordinary?" he prompted. "Did nothing strike you as at all odd? Come now, I find that hard to believe. Especially from a self-confessed Stonyhurst man!"

I stopped at the light, and was able to concentrate on the problem for a minute. "Wait now, that does ring a bell!" I had indeed noticed something peculiar during rehearsals. "There is that scene where Holmes agrees to take on the case of Miss Enid Stonor and looks for a train in the timetable. Watson gives him the *ABC Guide* from the umbrella stand, and he reads from it: 'Stonehouse, Stowell, Stoke...' Enid tells him she knows her train, and Holmes replies: 'I was looking for mine.'" Cautiously I made my turn as the light changed. "It did strike me that he would hardly be likely to read out those stations in the wrong order alphabetically. If he starts with Stonehouse he must know that Stoke comes before it, yet he goes first to a later listing, Stowell. That's certainly not very logical."

"Bravo, Mr. Holmes!" my companion exulted. "It may have had to be dragged from you, but somehow I felt sure tonight that you had noticed the point, from the special emphasis you gave in your performance to those words."

"Yes, I do tend to play with them a bit. I just couldn't see why they should be out of order, unless perhaps Conan Doyle was playing with the idea of his old school, Stonyhurst, in relation to Stonehouse and the girl's name, Stonor. Then he goes on to name the place she lives at, Stoke Moran. The pairing of Stonehouse-Stowell I rather take to indicate Stonyhurst-Doyle you see."

"Quite so, quite so. Stonehouse-Stowell. Capital!" he cried. "So his destination, Stoke Moran, must in some way lie between the two?"

"I suppose so. Then there's another spot in the same scene earlier, when Billy announces the arrival of 'Miss Enid Stonor of Stoke Moran', and Holmes says: 'Now Watson, Stonor, Stonor, surely I associate that name with something'."

"It has again that hint of Stonyhurst about it, I agree, the seat of education, of training the mind. But going back to the other trains for the moment, does not the Railway Guide suggest a train of thought?"

"The ABC? Oh, I see. That's the answer. How incredible. And it's not even elementary. It's simple as ABC."

"You certainly have begun to solve the problem, but you are not yet seeing the wood for the trees." He paused for some seconds and then added: "And are they always wooden?"

"Well, family trees aren't," I laughed. He ignored that.

"Doesn't Dr. Watson seem to be saying something special about trains? You will recall that the villain's wife, Mrs. Roylott, once Mrs. Stonor, died in a train crash."

"I'm pretty sure that isn't mentioned in the play though."

"Yes, we do seem to keep coming back to these little discrepancies. Tell me about the basis of the play!" he demanded.

"Well, originally it was just a short story in a set called *The Adventures*, written in, let me think, 1891, just before *The Memoirs*, in which Holmes got bumped off."

"And when then...oh, turn right here if you please...what a most inclement night, is it not? When was the play written?"

"Oh, I checked up on that in New York. *The Annotated Edition* says that it was in 1910, and credits Conan Doyle with doing the job in just two weeks! Of course, if you think about it, that in itself would account for some little errors creeping in. I mean the lapse of memory over a period of twenty years would be understandable even in someone like Conan Doyle, who prided himself on his memory."

"Would they indeed?" he replied scornfully. "And what is the source for this information that he wrote the play in two weeks? Whose word do we have to go on?"

"I really don't know. Conan Doyle's, I suppose?"

"And you don't think he might have had a copy of his own story? Would he not consult his own text before going to work?"

I had to admit it was hard to imagine him doing anything else. Of course he would have read his own story first. "Yes. After all he wouldn't want thousands of eager readers pointing out the glaring mistakes."

"But there are glaring mistakes, as you choose to call them, and plenty of them." He was silent for a few moments. "And what conclusion did his readers come to?" He peered out at the snow, and then muttered disgustedly: "None at all, none at all."

I was quick to reassure him that I saw his point: "If there are any differences between the first version and the play they must have been deliberate. After all if they cannot be accidental we must conclude that Conan Doyle put them there for a purpose!"

"Exactly so! You are Mr. Holmes to the life!" he applauded.

"And turn right here again if you please." But as we reached the corner he laid a hand on my arm. "Perhaps it would not be advisable for you to come all the way with me. They have not ploughed the streets here yet, and it looks very deep. It is only a short walk."

I stopped the car accordingly with a brief skid, and he opened the door to step out. There were just a few gentle snowflakes falling now, but it did look as if I wouldn't make it too far down the unploughed street. After a slight struggle to get his legs out, the old man turned back to me. "Before I go may I enquire whether you have a copy of the short story with you for comparison purposes?"

"Oh yes, I've got *The Complete Sherlock Holmes* back at the hotel, the Doubleday Edition.

"A handy volume, if a trifle corrupt as to the Ur-text here and there. But may I draw your attention to the Introduction in which Mr. Christopher Morley gives a list of what he calls 'delicious minutiae' if memory serves. Why didn't he grasp that all these little clues constitute evidence of the most important kind? Moriarty's work on the Binomial Theorem, Watson's wound..."

"Yes, indeed!" I chimed in. "In the first story he is wounded in the shoulder, but later on he says that he has a game leg..."

"You should be able to see through that, Mr. Holmes. Just examine the evidence!" He strode off vigorously, and I backed the car a little to reach the cleared part of the road, where I paused for a moment to make sure he reached home safely. He stopped at the second house on the right and stood leaning on one of the guardian figures, a deer and a hound, which graced the stone steps up to the turreted Victorian building. "Examine the evidence!" he called. "You'll know where to find me when you have done so." With a wave he climbed the steps and disappeared in the gloom of the porch, over which a stone bird was perched, its spread wings lapped with snow.

Chapter Two

The following morning, in that strange state between sleeping and waking when the mind is at its most receptive or most creative, I found myself grappling with a line I had to say in *The Speckled Band*: "Let's see....it's R. Ranter, Romanez, Rylott. That's our man!" And I had an overwhelming feeling that the three names had something in common. But what?

At this point in the play Holmes is searching through his famous indexed files for information about Miss Stonor's step-father, Dr. Rylott, and it now struck me most forcibly that there was a relationship between this little puzzle and the one the old man had encouraged me to talk about last night, the one of the non-alphabetical listing in the *ABC Guide*: 'Stonehouse, Stowell,

Stoke'. Three names beginning with an R, and three places beginning with an S. How about the order of them? Do they occur in that order in the play? Yes, they are alphabetic as far as that goes. Holmes checks up on Dr. Rylott before talking to Miss Stonor, and it is at the end of that conversation that he consults the Railway Guide for his train.

My mind began to race. Three R's and three S's. But three R's is in itself a symbol of education. That led back to Stonyhurst once more, Conan Doyle's school and mine, where we had received our training along classical lines. Simple as ABC. Or should that be elementary, after all? In the Jesuit system used at Stonyhurst the various classes or grades were named for progressively more advanced stages of learning: Elements, Grammar Syntax, Poetry and Rhetoric. The line of thought seemed to peter out at that point, so I went back to consideration of the Ranter puzzle.

Holmes kept files of information about interesting cases or villains he had encountered in person or in print. Who then were Ranter and Romanez? And how do they connect with Rylott? I felt positive that their names were never mentioned in the regular "Canon", the sixty books and stories about Sherlock Holmes. So the question had to be asked, why did Conan Doyle choose to add these particular names to his earlier text? Why in any case does Holmes read aloud any more than the piece of information he seeks, the entry in his file on Rylott? Surely he is sufficiently intelligent not to need to vocalize the two previous entries. And furthermore it seemed highly unlikely that they would fall next to one another, or even close to one another, in most alphabetical lists. The gaps are far too large between Ranter, Romanez and Rylott.

Since the three S places were found to have an underlying theme, it would be logical to check for a similar association of ideas between the three R names.

What does Ranter suggest?

Certainly Rylott would fall into the ranter category, he is a loud-mouth in anyone's book. But then the words of an old song came into my head. Ranter appears in *D'ye ken John Peel*. How did it go?

"D'ye ken John Peel with his coat so gray,
D'ye ken John Peel at the break of the day,
D'ye ken John Peel, when he's far far away,
With his hounds and his horn in the morning.

Yes, I ken John Peel, and Ruby too,
Ranter and Ringwood, Bellman and True..."

The names of John Peel's hounds are as familiar to any English child as those of Santa's reindeer to an American. Still half asleep I remembered that the old man had been leaning on the figure of a hound on the steps of his house the previous night. Or had that all been a dream? No matter. Ranter was the name of a hound belonging to the great huntsman Peel....How odd! Dr. Rylott keeps a savage and deadly boar hound roaming loose in his garden to discourage prowlers. But surely in the original story he had kept a baboon and a cheetah, not a hound at all. Then the hound

and the name Ranter only occurred in the play?

What about Romanez then?

That would be a most uncommon name in England, but certainly there might have been a case involving a Romanez which drew the attention of Holmes enough for him to put him into the files. But his pairing with Ranter suggested another line of thought. The outdoor image of the hound connected with the open air life led by the prime suspects in that story. The Police thought the crime was committed by gypsies. Rylott hated his neighbours and was hated in turn by the local folk, in fact the gypsies were his closest friends. He let them camp on his land, and travelled about with them for weeks at a time, living with them in their tents. Gypsies are called Romanies. Romanez!

So the three R's represent Dr. Rylott and his companions, the guardian hound, Ranter, and the Romanies.

Which leads to another question. Why did this most untrusting man choose to be friendly with the gypsies of all people? On the face of it they make an unlikely combination. What do they have in common?

Lightning flashed. In the text he is described most specifically as an "Anglo-Indian Doctor". Was that not where the gypsies originated - India? It was time to get out of bed and set to work. A quick check revealed that the gypsies did indeed come from India originally, and that the Romany language had a Sanscrit base. What were they famous for? They are popularly associated with thievery, with music, particularly as violinists, they are great horse dealers and breeders, and their prowess at bare knuckle fighting is proverbial. The last two sports fall under the patronage of the heavenly twins, Castor and Pollux, the Roman Gods. Are we to think of Rome as well? Perhaps of Romulus and Remus, the twins who founded Rome?

Hang on a minute! Holmes may not ever appear as a horseman, but he is certainly a master thief, purloining Milverton's letters in the play with great skill; he is a master violinist; and he is a champion boxer....How very odd.

By now I was fully awake and making notes of all this confusion while the kettle boiled and my mind raced. The old man had been right then, and there was something worth searching for buried in the text. But wasn't this just more of what Sam Rosenberg had pointed out in his book? Well, it started out that way, but the implication was that these clues were supposed to lead to some inescapable deduction. A deduction about what? Sam had concluded that it was about the way Conan Doyle's mind worked.

But if one were to turn the problem the other way round, perhaps it is our own minds that we must examine to see if we can find out why Conan Doyle deliberately put these interconnected elements into his text. He must have wanted us to draw certain inferences from them.

I settled down with my cup of tea and the Complete Edition and began going through the story of *The Speckled Band* in *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Yes, I had been quite right in thinking that the R and S puzzles were not to be found in the short story, written in 1891-2. So what purpose did Conan Doyle have in adding them to the play in 1910 when he reworked his own

material? Surely not mere frivolity.

There was a striking relationship between the two puzzles, apart from their closeness alphabetically, which reminded me of my work on Joyce. In trying to elucidate the complications of *Finnegans Wake* I had found time after time that major clues were buried in the sort of passages one might be tempted to skip over.

There are frequent lists, rather like those to be found in Rabelais, which hardly seem worth the effort of attention, but these had proved to be most rewarding places to start digging. Where better to hide a word or an idea, something you would like your readers to have to search for and interpret as a detective does with a clue, than in a passage people would be inclined to skim through in order to get back to the "story". Always sift through the boring information was a lesson I had already learnt.

In this case of Conan Doyle's alphabetical puzzles one word of each is familiar: the three R's lead to Rylott, and the S's to his place of residence, Stoke Moran. It was interesting to find that the word "stoke" means just that, a "place". By way of a bonus the letters lie together in the alphabet, and the first set implies elementary education, or training, while the second is found in the *ABC Railway Guide*. But in both cases there was no need for Holmes to read them aloud; we just accept this being in the script for local colour without thinking at all about the implications. We should try to behave in Holmesian fashion by throwing out the speedy assumptions and combing through the stories with an eye subtly different from that of the average reader, eager to notice anything out of the ordinary, anything slightly jarring in the text.

By the time I had finished breakfast I had read through the story and found many differences between it and the later version for the stage. For a start there were the names of the characters: Dr. Rylott had been called Roylott originally, and his step-daughters had been twins at first, the Stoners rather than the Stonors. It would be hard to imagine how a man with Conan Doyle's prodigious powers of recall, and he prided himself on being able to remember character names from other people's books many years after reading them, could have forgotten the names of his own creations. Then too he is now putting them into a play, and he must expect his audience and his critics to be deeply puzzled at the very least by his daring to tamper with a text they know so well.

In the course of this reading I came across a passage of familiar dialogue, virtually word for word the same as in the play. Since this can hardly be thought of as a memorable conversation we must conclude that Conan Doyle did have a copy of the story on his desk as he re-wrote it for the stage. Here is the passage from the story (SBs); the two tiny alterations for the play (SBp) are indicated:

Holmes. "Where does that bell communicate with?"

(SBp "And this bell-pull...where does it communicate with?")

Enid. "It goes to the housekeeper's room. (SBp...I think)"

Holmes. "It looks newer than the other things?"

Enid. "Yes, it was only put there a couple of years ago."

Holmes. "Your sister asked for it, I suppose."

Enid. "No, I never heard of her using it. We used always to get what we wanted for ourselves."

Holmes. "Indeed, it seemed unnecessary to put so nice a bell-pull there."

"Look at the evidence," the old man had said. Surely this was what he meant. Why should this piece of dialogue be remembered? Presumably it must have amused him since "it seemed unnecessary to put so nice a bell-pull there." A bell-pull is after all something which is supposed to ring bells, in this case presumably mental bells. Conan Doyle clearly demonstrates that he is not writing rapidly from memory by including a whole chunk of the original text with only a few syllables added, yet elsewhere he makes complete alterations from story to play which we must deduce to be of great significance. By studying these changes we should reach an understanding of his deeper purposes. We must be supposed to notice them and draw conclusions from them. After all if we are reading a book about Sherlock Holmes and his uncanny ability to spot clues, which remain invisible to members of the "Regular Force", should we not be trying to follow the lead of our hero? We must throw out the impossible and sift through what remains for those few underlying grains of truth. We must discard the idea that the changes from story to play were accidental, mere lapses of memory on the part of a busy man writing a potboiler about a character he had come to hate.

So?

Well, I thought, if I am playing the part of Holmes, I must indeed follow his methods and begin with an orderly assessment of the "evidence". It took all morning, but the exercise was fascinating. First of all I noted what the two versions had in common and sketched out the most basic scenario:

R is the owner of an impoverished country estate in Surrey. In order to better his fortunes he becomes a surgeon and develops a flourishing practice in Calcutta. He kills his servant there. He marries the widow of Major-General S. who dies and leaves R as the guardian of her two daughters and their fortune. Miss S¹ dies under mysterious circumstances. Miss S² comes to Holmes for help, fearing for her own life. Holmes and Watson discover that R used a poisonous snake to kill the girl, introducing it into her room at night down a phony bell-pull. The snake is the "speckled band" of the title. They save Miss S² from a similar fate, but R dies bitten by his own messenger of death.

This is the common ground. The next task was to find the uncommon ground by listing all the major alterations Conan Doyle made when he turned his story into a play. As time sped by I became more and more surprised at the amount of detail involved. It certainly didn't fit with the idea that Conan Doyle wrote the play in just two weeks! But then how could anyone know that for a fact when the information had to have been supplied by the author himself? Had he been telling the truth? It appeared unlikely on the face of it. But if this was not a sloppy job flung together

at short notice to capitalize on Holmes' marketability, and the audiences' reaction to this play, as opposed to the one by William Gillette, reassured me on that point, then one would suspect that there was an attempt to mislead on Conan Doyle's part.

But why? What was he hiding?

Either he had a tremendous grasp of the material in order to turn out such a good play so quickly, in which case why change anything...

Or.....

He had given the matter considerable thought over a long period, and sought to disguise the fact. Ever since when....?

What was this all about? The presence of clues and evidence presuppose the existence of some subterfuge, of some crime...

There was much to raise speculation, but again I needed to take Holmes' advice. Never leap to conclusions before carefully examining all the facts. Feeling now much more like a Dr. Watson I drew up a table of comparisons between the *Speckled Band* story and the play:

<u>SB Story</u>	<u>SB Play</u>
1. The villain is Rylott.	Rylott.
2. The girls are Stoners.	Stonors.
3. They are twins, called Julia and Helen.	Not twins. Violet and Enid.
4. Helen asks Holmes for help because he had aided her friend Mrs. Farintosh to recover an opal.	Enid asks Watson to help as he had known the family in India. She seeks out Holmes on this basis.
5. Percy Armitage is Helen's fiancée. He is barely mentioned.	Percy Armitage is a baulky juror at the Inquest on Violet's death. He is the local grocer, a friend of Enid's; Rylott calls him her "rustic admirer".
6. Julia, the murdered girl, had been engaged to a half-pay Marine Major, who is barely mentioned. Helen, the survivor, was engaged to Percy Armitage from Crane Water, near Reading.	Violet, the murdered girl, had been engaged to Scott Wilson, who gives evidence at the Inquest. Enid, the survivor, was engaged to Lieutenant Curtis, a Naval Officer.
7. Rylott killed his servant after a series of robberies and served time in prison.	Rylott killed his khitmutgar and spent some time in a madhouse.
8. After the snake kills Rylott Holmes puts it carefully back in the safe.	After the snake kills Rylott Watson beats it to death with his stick.
9. Holmes examines the Rylott house without interference.	Holmes comes to the Rylott house disguised as the new butler, Peters. He has no chance to examine it.
10. The house is guarded by a baboon and a cheetah.	The house is guarded by a boarhound called Siva.

But now there appears a connection to another story entirely which also forms part of the basis for the play. The house of Charles Augustus Milverton is also guarded by a "brute", a "beast of a dog", like Rylott's, though Holmes relies on his blossoming relationship with the cook to keep it out of the way.

In order to flesh out the story of *The Speckled Band* into a play, Conan Doyle introduced a scene in the famous consulting room at Baker Street, in which Holmes interviews various visitors, clients and criminals. One of them is the notorious blackmailer Milverton, whose story was told in *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, the book which celebrates his reappearance after his supposed death at Reichenbach Falls in *The Memoirs*. Since another of these visitors is Miss Enid Stonor it can be seen that Conan Doyle combined a pair of stories, one before the death and another after the return.

The first set of comparisons led me straight to another, from the thicket to the jungle! But that was enough for one day. I looked over the differences between the story and the play as I had lunch and was amazed that they had not been commented on before. Or perhaps they had? The play had not been performed for many years. But why had nobody noticed in this production? Suddenly I was laughing. I was playing Holmes; I had read the story; I was doing the play. Why had I not noticed? All I had spotted was that silly little clue about Stonyhurst, and that for the most parochial of reasons. It was all rather embarrassing. To take my mind off it I spent the afternoon at that delightful movie of Gene Wilder's about Holmes' brother, and it worked beautifully.

The following morning I settled down again to a detailed comparison of the story of Charles Augustus Milverton, and the play version of it, and produced this tabulation:

<u>CAM story</u>	<u>CAM play</u>
1. Charles Augustus Milverton lives at Appledore Towers in Hampstead.	Charles Augustus Milverton lives at The Firs in Battersea.
2. He is killed by an unnamed titled lady he is black-mailing.	He is not killed. He is the blackmailer of titled ladies.
3. Holmes' client is Lady Eva Blackwell.	Holmes' client is the Duchess of Ferrers.
4. Holmes takes incriminating letters from the safe and burns them.	Holmes takes the letter and puts it on his mantel-piece.

This set of comparisons was very much like the previous one. A fairly cursory search had uncovered an astonishing amount of "evidence" of quite intricate complexity. But what was the point of it all? Yes, that was the difficulty.

If the Holmes stories were indeed self-reflecting, if they were designed to be detective stories that the readers were meant to interpret on another level entirely, then all these clues should enable me to solve the case of some crime. But neither

crime, nor alleged perpetrator, was anywhere in sight. How can you solve a crime when you don't know it has been committed?

Unless perhaps the evidence is designed to draw attention to the crime?

Speculation seemed quite fruitless, but there had to be some way past this barrier. This was a treasure hunt leading to a mystery, with no hint given even as to the correct starting point!

I decided to try to find some logical arrangement underlying all the alterations - some patient leg-work might perhaps pay off.

Just about all the names have been changed except those of Milverton and our two heroes. There were splendid complications with the girls and their various engagements - a lot of boring information there! Why do we need to know the names of these fiancés when the men involved have no relevance to the story? This definitely belonged to the Joycean list type of concealment, and since it had often been useful to lay out Wake mysteries in diagrammatic form, I tried this to see if it would stimulate some ideas. Here is the pattern of the engagements in the two versions of *The Speckled Band*:

<u>SB story</u>	<u>SB play</u>
Marine Major	Scott Wilson
Julia...dead.....	Violet
STONERS.....	STONORS
Helen	Enid
Percy Armitage	Naval Lieut. Curtis

What a lot of gratuitous information about these irrelevant engagements! We do not need to know their names, their origins or their professions at all. The only one of the four who appears in the limelight, and in his case quite literally, is Scott Wilson, who gives evidence at his fiancée's Inquest. And now I had to admit to myself that I had been exaggerating when I had said that I knew the play as well as anybody. The truth is that Holmes does not appear at all during the first act, so I had paid virtually no attention to what went on in it¹. What did Scott Wilson have to say for himself? He tells the Coroner that he was not on good terms with Dr. Rylott: "He struck me several times with his cane and he set his boar hound on me....I took refuge in one of the little village shops.." Immediately Percy Armitage (not the fiancé of the story) jumps up huffily to say that it was HIS shop.

Just a minute or two earlier he had indentified himself to the court as the grocer: "I own the big shop in the village."

This makes for a beautifully complicated intermingling of the two "Bands". Scott Wilson, fiancé of the dead girl in the play, meets Percy Armitage, fiancé of the survivor in the story, but now disguised as the owner of the big or little shop, depending on your point of view.

Next for consideration was the unnecessary information about

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□ I later set this right by playing the Coroner in the First Act as well as Holmes in the Second in Philadelphia.

professions and origins. There was a clear link between three of the men: Armitage from Crane Water, the Marine Major and the Naval Lieutenant are all connected with the element of water, which focuses attention on the fourth. Is it possible to link Scott Wilson with the sea? It was lucky at this point that I had the *Complete Holmes* open beside me at the Index page, because the answer was there staring me in the face. One of the stories in *The Memoirs* is called *The Gloria Scott*. This is the tale of Holmes' very first case and involves a man called Trevor who was deported to Australia on board the "Gloria Scott". But it turns out that Trevor is just an alias; his real name is James Armitage, and Wilson is a villain who poses as the chaplain of the vessel! Now that could hardly be an accident, so it must be concluded that the connection between Scott Wilson and Armitage stems from Holmes' first case.

Something else was stirring in my mind. Wasn't there some link between Australia and Wilson, something I had read about just recently? Suddenly it came back to me. I had just finished Conan Doyle's *History of Spiritualism*. It could have been that. A quick check of the Index revealed the answer on p.293 of Volume I. An Australian, Mr. James Curtis, wrote a book about the famous medium Slade's visit to his country in 1877, and he explained that circumstances had forced Slade to adopt the pseudonym of Dr. Wilson. The two fiancés in the play are Scott Wilson and Lt. Curtis, and the names connect to a medium, one which Conan Doyle expressed as water. These gentlemen needed a diagram of their own:

Marine Major

Scott Wilson

Percy Armitage

Naval Lt. Curtis

Armitage and Wilson link as hero and villain in the story of the "Gloria Scott". This diagonal is matched by the Marine Officer and the Naval Lieutenant. Then vertically we might pair the Major with the Armi- on the left side, furthermore Armitage comes from Crane Water. On the right side the Naval Lieutenant is provided with a ship, and Mr. Curtis wrote about Dr "Wilson". It began to appear that Conan Doyle was a most meticulous craftsman when it came to providing his readers with clues.

But it was time to get on down to the theatre for the matinée. I was feeling rather pleased with the morning's work, Sherlock Holmes to the life, as I entered my dressing room to get ready for the show. My ritual began with running over the lines very rapidly in my head while the first act Inquest was going on without me. I had only just begun when I had to stop and kick myself. I had not listed Holmes himself among the sets of courting couples. My very first entrance took place in disguise as a man who has come to fix the gas bracket at 221b Baker Street.

It turns out that Holmes has just come from wooing Mr. Milverton's cook, and stealing a letter from her employer. This gasman's name is not revealed in the play, but in the story he is called Escott. Now that name has a definite relationship with those of the two "escorts" in the play. By transposing the final

syllable one reaches "Cott-es", quite like Curtis, and a simple shortening provides Scott:

Scott Wilson He failed to save Enid's sister, Violet, and took refuge in Percy Armitage's shop.

Lieutenant Curtis He went off to the Mediterranean leaving Enid unprotected.

Escott Holmes in disguise takes over the job of protecting Enid from Dr. Rylott.

But now it was time to don my Escott wardrobe and pretend to be someone I was finding it difficult but rewarding to emulate.

Chapter Three.

After the matinée I decided to work some more on the evidence in my dressing room for an hour or so, while everything was fresh in my mind, and then have some dinner before the evening show. I had just begun to spread out my papers when there came a knock on the door, and in walked my companion of two nights ago. I greeted him warmly, delighted to have someone to discuss it all with, not to mention a chance to brag a little about my swift and unerring detection of the patterns.

"Do make yourself comfortable, Sir. You're more than welcome."

"You must pardon an old man's curiosity," he said, as he struggled out of his overcoat and settled himself in my armchair, looking, I thought with surprise, a good deal less bulky than I remembered, "but I simply could not help wondering whether you had made any progress along the lines I suggested?"

"Progress? I should think so," I said. "Do you know I woke up the following morning with it on my mind, and I've spent two days now tracking down all the evidence."

"All of it? That's capital, capital!" he cried, taking out a battered silver cigarette case. He opened it, and lighted one with an apology: "You will permit, I trust?"

"By all means." I fetched an ashtray for him.

"I notice that you do not smoke yourself except on stage, though you were once an addict like myself."

"How on earth did you know that? I quit smoking years ago."

"You just handed me the evidence. An unused ashtray simply could not exist in the dressing room of an actor who smoked, unless he was anal to the point of emptying and washing it after every performance; and the state of this room assures me that you are not. Secondly the manner in which you handle tobacco on stage could not be developed from mere observation. It takes years of

practice to do such a thing as fill and light a pipe without seeming to pay any attention to it. But this must be kindergarten stuff to you, Mr. Holmes. Come now, do tell me about your researches."

I set about recounting my adventures as a literary sleuth, while he listened, half nodding, to my recital. Or I should say that I could only hope he was listening, for it looked very much as if he had fallen asleep. At last as I came to the climax, the discovery of the courting couples, I was rewarded.

"Aha! Great Escott, eh?" he cried.

"Yes indeed. I can't understand how all this stuff can have gone unnoticed." I gave him the tables and diagrams I had drawn up.

"Not quite unnoticed," he replied, glancing at them, "let us just say rather that they have not been correctly interpreted. And what do you make of it all?" he demanded.

"Well, I haven't quite worked that out yet," I responded defensively. "The only thing I am quite sure about so far is that Conan Doyle did put all of this in deliberately."

"Oh, that goes without saying," he said with some asperity. "But why? Why was he going to all that trouble?"

I thought about that for a few moments. "I'm not sure really, but the sort of things he put in...you know, the style of it...that should give us a clue to the way his mind worked." He gazed at me quizzically as he lit another cigarette, so I stumbled on: "You know, starting from that glaring error of Holmes reading aloud from the ABC Guide with the stations out of alphabetical order, Stonehouse, Stowell, Stoke. And then the three names in his files.."

"What do they have in common?" he cut in sharply.

"Let me see. They are both in threes..."

"Hmm," he lay back now gazing up at the ceiling wreathed in smoke.

"They are both alphabetical..."

"Quite so."

"...and they are both about Rylott."

"And what is odd about Rylott?" he demanded.

It wasn't very easy to think under this constant pressure. Why did he keep asking me questions and then interrupting my train of thought? But I answered mildly enough that I couldn't quite see what he meant.

"My dear fellow, you cannot see the wood for the threes, can you?" He paused expectantly, and finally continued rapidly: "The two groups of three came from the *ABC Guide* and Holmes' files, both arranged alphabetically, as you point out. Surely then we can at least say with confidence that letters are involved? And does not Holmes make his first appearance in this play with a letter in his pocket?"

"Yes, he does. The one he just took from Charles Augustus Milverton."

"Purloined by stealth," he pursued, "a technical crime if you wish?"

"Well, technically I daresay, but after all Milverton was using it for purposes of blackmail."

"Yes, a misapplication of the letter, to put it in another way, an abuse of its true function. And who was the victim?"

"The Duchess of Ferrers."

"In the play, yes. But who was she in the story?"

"Lady Eva Blackwell."

"Do you not find this change of names most suggestive?" I fear my look must have been totally blank, because he went on almost at once: "And where did Milverton reside?"

"At 'The Firs' in the play; or at 'Appledore Towers' in the story."

"I must commend your grasp of the essential facts at any rate. And what do you now make of the conjunction in the play?"

"The Duchess of Ferrers and Milverton's house?" The penny dropped. "Ferrers and 'The Firs'! Ferrers-Firs. They're very much alike."

"Precisely. And the taking of the Ferrers' letter along with the oddity of Rylott - what conclusion do you draw?" He sat up and stubbed out his cigarette, then pointed to an entry in my table of the changes from story to play: "Royslott and Rylott."

"It's just as you said. It must be about the alphabet, about letters!" I cried. How could I have missed it? "Rylott has had a letter taken from him too, the letter O which he possessed as Royslott in the story. Yes, the alphabet must be the secret."

"And the alphabet is secret," he murmured, turning to another page of my notes. "Now bearing that in mind I am surprised that the residence of Percy Armitage did not arouse your suspicions."

"Now hang on a second," I objected, "I did go into that - the big-little shop in the village."

"No, no. The other Armitage?"

"He came from Crane Water, near Reading. I went into that as well. Look here!" I pointed to the entry. "The water links him to the other three fiancés."

"Quite right," he reassured me, "but if I tell you that there is no such town as Crane Water, can you explain what made Sir Arthur think of those particular birds?"

"Cranes? Crane Water, near Reading..." I thought feverishly.

"Come now, don't work quite so hard at it. After all it's as simple as..."

"ABC?" I really should have spotted that. He was talking about the origin of the alphabet; the idea that it came from the patterns cranes made when they flew. "Crane Water, near Reading. It's not the town of Reading, it's the act of reading the letters."

"That is entirely correct," he remarked approvingly, "and may I infer from your familiarity with this topic that you have made a study of that oddly inspired work by Robert Graves?"

"*The White Goddess*, yes. Well, hardly a study. It's very scholarly stuff."

"Indeed it is, but a most useful work nonetheless."

"Particularly about the alphabet?" He nodded, so I went on: "You're saying then that Conan Doyle was using the old Irish alphabet, with every letter standing for a tree, and a host of other things, birds, animals, times of year and so forth?"

"Do I detect a note of disbelief?" he chided. "It is an

ancient bardic tradition that he was following. And why should that surprise you in a master story teller with an Irish mother?"

"I see what you mean."

"He trained himself to have their vitally important grasp of multiple relationships." He stubbed out his cigarette savagely and gave a derisive snort. "Nowadays it is all relegated to the computers, more's the pity. What a dreadful loss to the science, the art, of detection! Still, you seem to have some knowledge of the subject so you must pardon my vehemence. Some features of this modern world do trouble me. People are so reluctant to use their faculties. What a waste!" He occupied himself with lighting another cigarette, then abruptly became the inquisitor once more. "So, given that Royslott becomes Rylott, and the Stoner girls become the Stonors, they must be receivers of stolen property."

"The O he loses?"

"Right. What value do you give to the letter O? And who is Royslott?" he leant back in the armchair with the air of one prepared to listen to a considerable discourse, one I was quite unprepared to give him. But fortunately I had searched the OED for a word like Royslott simply because the name was so unusual.

"Well, I did do some work on Royslott. I thought he might be a 'royalet', a petty king you know?" He nodded encouragingly. "And then the letter O..." He was expecting the broad grin which spread over my face as light dawned. "Of course! He's a king, and the letter O is his crowning circlet. He loses an O at the end of the story when the property falls into the hands of his step-daughter Julia. That means that in the play he becomes Rylott and the girls change into Stonors. So I daresay at the end of the play we should call him Rylett, and they are the Stoonors!" I finished with a laugh.

"A somewhat fanciful extrapolation, but relevant all the same. It is indeed a crowning shift, this movement of the letter O. But we must have more facts on which to base our chain of reasoning, eh? Now what is the tree of the letter O? That may well help in our enquiries."

I struggled with that for a minute before managing to dredge it up. "I think it was called Onn in Irish, but I can't remember what the tree was." A lot of so called trees weren't what we would think of as trees at all, and I felt fairly sure that this was one of them. Bramble? Gorse? Something like that...yes.

"Furze, isn't that it?"

"Indeed it is. Furze. And surely that rings a bell in the old tower?" he asked with a grin.

"Milverton?"

"Exactly."

"His house is changed from Appledore Towers, which suggests apple trees, to The Firs. He is blackmailing the Duchess of Ferrers. Firs, Ferrers and Furze, the letter O."

"I commend your swift comprehension. Now what do you make of this new trio, all beginning with the letter F?"

But I was too excited by all the possibilities even to notice his question. "Then you're saying that when Conan Doyle wrote the Milverton story in the first place he knew that he would be using

it again in an altered form?"

"An unlooked for conclusion leapt at, but one should certainly not discard that possibility."

"But that would imply....Good God!"

"Yes, the implications would verge on the improbable, though that need not discourage us from examining them carefully at some future time. For the moment though we are running on ahead too quickly without first marshalling the facts. Let us continue to focus our attention on the figure of Roylott-Rylott with an open mind. Is there any, - how did you so delightfully put it? - 'boring information' about him? I see that you have the Complete Edition here with you. Pray consult it for me." And with that he lapsed into reverie.

What a very strange man, I thought, as I found the story and started to scan the text for something worth quoting. "Ah! Here's something: '...the well known Surrey family of the Royslotts of Stoke Moran.'"

"Most useful," he observed, "though as with Crane Water that is not a place to be found in any Gazetteer. Do read on."

I continued with the story, the entrance of Helen Stoner, Holmes' brilliant deduction about her trip in the dog-cart, her introduction of herself. "Here's something. Stoke Moran is on the Western border of Surrey. That's a bit over specific, isn't it?"

"We progress," he murmured.

"Aha! And it goes on: 'the family was among the richest in England and the estates extended over the borders into Berkshire in the north, and Hampshire in the west....four successive heirs were of a dissolute and wasteful disposition, and the family ruin was eventually completed by a gambler in the days of the Regency.' The Regency," I repeated triumphantly. "That smacks of a Royalet, doesn't it?"

"Quite so. And the King is without power during a regency, which supports the royalet interpretation certainly. And throws a different light on the presence of so many pairs of 'courting' couples, since a King holds Court." He smiled, and then went on in businesslike fashion: "But let us concentrate on the trove of information about the location of this imaginary estate called Stoke Moran. He tells us exactly where to look for it."

"But you said that I wouldn't find it in any Gazetteer."

"True, but it is real enough for all that. What we require to solve the problem is a large-scale map of the area indicated."

He fumbled beneath his overcoat, which he had draped over the arm of the chair, and drew out a tube from which he extracted a rolled up map. "I took the precaution of acquiring this from the admirably stocked library of the University this morning, the relevant sheet, number 169, of the British Ordnance Survey. The County borders, as you can see, are clearly marked, and tracing them out we can easily find this central point where Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire meet, here at York Town. Do please confirm my observation."

I went over and crouched by his side to look at the spot he indicated. He watched my face as I did so, and noted my astonishment. "Familiar terrain from your military days in the

RASC, eh?"

It was indeed, the region of Aldershot, Ash Vale and Farnborough, where I had done my basic training. It took a few moments for me to realize the implications of his last remark. "Now come on! " I expostulated. "What made you think I had been in the Army?"

"The matter is one of great simplicity. From your biography in the programme."

"Yes, but there's no mention of the Army!"

"From which one might gather that you did not serve in one of the grander Regiments, in Korea, let us say," he replied. "The short bio tells of Stonyhurst and your medical studies. We then find a gap of two years before you appear as a member of the Old Vic company embarked on a new career. The missing years are 1950-2, during which the draft, or conscription as you would have called it, was in force. Clearly you are fit, and I would assume not stupid. Ergo, you would not have volunteered for an extra year or two in order to gain enlistment in the Navy or the RAF. Rather you opted for the Army?"

"You're quite right, but what made you think I was in the RASC?"

"Because you had left Medical School very recently, and your recruiting tests would be designed to find a suitable niche. Doubtless the Medical Corps was suggested, to which you firmly replied in the negative. What else were you fitted for? You had studied Chemistry to a considerable extent. You filled a role, shall I say, as a Petroleum Chemist in the Royal Army Service Corps. It is quite elementary, given some slight acquaintance with the English military system."

I could only shake my head in amazement. "Right, on every count!"

He gave a deprecatory snort and bent over the map once more.

"Now let us return to your old battlegrounds. Having due regard to the scale, we can imagine the estate of a very rich family. We are told that it covered parts of these three counties, so it may at one time have spread pretty much over this whole sheet. Now, however, it has shrunk to a mere few acres in Surrey. We may take it that the more valuable town properties were the first to go, so we must seek Stoke Moran in rural surroundings on the Western border of Surrey. We have a number of clues as to the vicinity."

Eagerly I scanned this area I had known so well. "Look! Right here by Ash Vale. This must be it. Furze Hill!"

"Furze and Ash," he echoed approvingly, "a most suggestive pairing. But cast your observant eye to the North-East across the Common and the Firing Ranges, and you will find another Furze Hill, here near Pirbright." He stabbed a triumphant finger on the spot. "And what do you make of this?"

"Stony Castle is right beside it. And just a couple of hundred yards away is the Basingstoke Canal."

"Stoke and Stony are juxtaposed, and we have plenty of Furze. This looks a most promising neighbourhood, does it not?" He rubbed his hands gleefully. "Let us recapitulate. Stony Castle. The widow of Major-General Stoner was rich. Roylott married her for her money, symbolically wishing to gain possession of the

Castle..."

"In a military area," I added, not to be outdone.

"Very good. An Army zone. And if a hermit lives in a hermitage, surely an Army must inhabit a what?"

"An Armitage," I supplied, laughing.

"Let us be serious," he rebuked me sternly, refusing to show by the merest twinkle that the pun had been of his own making. He peered at the map thoughtfully. "Let us attack the problem in another way by considering the possible derivation of this place, Stoke Moran. What image does that conjure up for you?"

"A sort of Hell? You know, stoke more on?" I suggested, trying to get into the spirit of the thing, and then realized that it was more than a joke from his expression.

"Very sound thinking. But there are some alternatives. A stoker could well be an Irish soldier; I believe you will find it in the OED spelled 'stokaghe'. Stoker Moran then is a warrior."

"Colonel Sebastian Moran," I cut in, "Moriarty's henchman. The chap who tried to shoot Holmes at the start of the Return."

"Exactly. Then we turn to the word Moran, which can be derived two ways. Legitimately it stems from the Irish word 'mughrin', a captive sea-lion, kept for fishing purposes. From this Mughrin-Moran we arrive at the correct Christian name: 'Seabest-ian', or Sebastian, that oddest of famous Martyrs. But on the other hand we could split the name Moran into two parts: the 'mor' is the Irish for big, and the '-an' is the suffix denoting smallness. He becomes big-little."

"Like Armitage's shop in the village."

"Indeed yes. We have the presence of duality, you see. Now let us turn again to the map and attempt to validate this model of Stoke Moran. We were looking at Stony Castle and Furze Hill beside the Basingstoke Canal." I stood by the chair watching his bony finger as it traced out the features on the map. "Since the Canal has the 'stoke' element, let us follow its course towards the County border. Nothing much of interest as it runs beside the railway line to the West," he murmured. "The Canal now turns to the South. And what's this?" he cried suddenly. "Mytchett Lake. A very small Lake with a double T..."

"A midget Lake. Yes, why not!" I agreed, crouching again to get a closer look, and following the course of the canal as it ran southward. "Look here. Greatbottom Flush! And right next to it is Stony Hill."

"The Stony element is quite common in these parts," he responded. "But you are right in that Greatbottom Flush and Mytchett Lake do seem to form a pair, and if you cast your eye at the area between the big and the little..."

It was incredible. We had found our way back to Furze Hill again, and this time I could not help but notice that right alongside was a Stony Hill. "Two Furzes and two Stony's lie right beside the Basingstoke Canal."

"Exactly." He pulled out an old briar which he slowly filled and lighted, then leant back in the chair and gazed at the map spread out on his knees. Puffing thoughtfully he began to tie the loose ends together. "We can begin to understand what these small clues lead to. The changes made from story to play were intended

to draw attention to features on this map, from which we may deduce the *modus operandi*. Doctor Conan Doyle was quite specific, almost overly so, a captious critic might deem him, about the location of Stoke Moran when he wrote the story. Later he realized that nobody had noticed the conundrum, so when he came to write the play he added clues of a more elementary nature, which could hardly fail to be observed by an enquiring reader." He regarded me with amusement for a moment, then tapped the map with his pipe. "This then is the piece of paper at which our young author was staring as the germs of the plot of *The Speckled Band* came into his mind. We can even deduce his train of thought as his eyes wandered over the map. There were features which reminded him of his years at Stonyhurst - the two Stony's and the Military Academy of Sandhurst. Then the school of Wellington would remind him of his successful play *Waterloo*, and the Railway Station of that name. That in turn would lead him to make the connection with the 'Greatbottom Flush'. Someone who went to Stonyhurst would never forget that the toilets there, the bogs to use the popular term, were politely alluded to as...?"

"The commonplace," I supplied. How did he know that?

"The commonplace," he echoed. "His eye was drawn to the adjacent Commons. Look at them! Ash Common, Pirbright Common, Claygate Common. What a wealth of material for his fertile imagination: Greatbottom Flush and Mytchett Lake, two Stony's and two Furze Hills, and finally and most importantly Ash Vale and Aldershot. You remember the significance of those two trees?"

"Ash and Alder? Yes, weren't they the ones which formed the mainspring of *The White Goddess*? There was an old bardic poem about the 'Battle of the Trees' which symbolized the takeover of the God's shrine by a newer form of worship, and they were the chief combatants. Let me see whether I can get them the right way round. Ash was the letter N, Nion, and it conquered the Alder, Fearn, the letter F. Oh yes," I added, as the details began to come back to me, "didn't the F take N's place in the alphabet?"

He regarded me with a slight frown. "The letter F, yes. You will recall that I remarked on the fact that the play version of *The Speckled Band* drew attention to the letter F. There were three of them."

"Ferrers. Firs and Furze."

"They would make a bard think immediately of Fearn, the alder which was defeated by the ash. The story tells us exactly where on the map to look, and anyone with a little bardic knowledge would be struck by this conjunction in a military area of the alder, 'shot' so to speak by the victorious ash, and the great number of ashes which surround it. Just look at them all!" His pipestem stabbed at them. "Ash, Ash Junction, Ash Vale, Ash Green, Ash Common. Then on the Common his eye is drawn to the pairing of the two Furze Hills, and his bardic mind translates Furze into the letter Onn. Immediately he is astonished by a very odd coincidence. As you said, following the famous Battle of the Trees when the God of the Alder was displaced in the hearts of the people by the worship of the new God of the Ash, the letters of these two trees were switched in their alphabetical order. Where the alphabet had begun BLFNS, now it started BLNFS, and just as F

and N had change places, so too the months to which they had been attributed were reversed from first to last in the bardic calendar."

"Yes, I remember something about that," I agreed.

"And what was the letter O in the calendar?" he paused with the light of triumph in his eye. "It was the Spring Equinox, the very day which falls between the Ash and the Alder."

"The day of the bardic New Year! And you think this is what sparked the idea for the story of Roylott?"

"My dear fellow, can there be any doubt of it? Why on earth should he have gone to such pains to tell us exactly where to look for this non-existent place he called Stoke Moran? He patted the spot on the map. "And then he even troubl'd to date both the story and the play in April, the month of the 'Alder-shot'. Clearly he supposed that his readers might get hold of a sufficiently large-scale map of the area where the three counties meet, discover this military zone, study it, and then draw some conclusions from what they found there."

I had to agree with him, but could not help realizing that there was a much larger implication behind all this. "Then Conan Doyle must have been writing a detective story on two levels? On the surface we are entertained to read about Holmes solving a case, but underneath that there is another case entirely for each of us to solve?"

"Precisely!" he said, and then hurried on. "Let us see whether it may be possible to follow his further train of thought as he gazed at this map. The pairings have suggested a story: an attempt to cross the Commons from Stony and Furze Hills near Ash Vale, to reach the other Furze Hill and the Stony Castle. Why? In order to gain an inheritance at the Castle, the crown of the letter O of the Furze. Next he must invent a cast of characters.

Let there be a heroine called Stony - no, that does not sound very real - her name should be Stoner. In view of all those pairings, let there be two girls, twins in fact, trying to reach the Castle from the Hill. What would stand in their way? The villain naturally." He pointed to a spot on the Common. "Who would prevent them?" he asked.

"Crown Prince Wood," I read from the map.

"The Crown Prince would! Exactly. So he sketches in a petty king, a royalet, who is a diabolic figure. His home is Stoke Moran, combining Basingstoke Canal with the captive seal, the mughrin-Moran. He alters the word royalet to Roylott, and then wonders what his Christian name should be."

"Grimesby," I supplied.

"And isn't that very much like a Northern fishing town?"

"Grimsby, yes."

"The element of water combines with fire suggested by the Stoke..."

"Duality?"

"Yes, duality abounds," he agreed. "Dr. Conan Doyle decides that Roylott will succeed in killing one of the twins, only to die himself in the attempt to kill the other. What shall be the method? He has the prize in mind, the crowning letter O. From the bardic alphabet his thoughts turn to the inventor of writing,

the Egyptian God Thoth, with his attendant dog-faced baboon..."

"He gives Dr. Roylott a baboon to guard his house in the story..."

"Strong supporting evidence. His thoughts continue in the Egyptian vein. He thinks of the snake-crown of Egypt, the Uraeus, and decides that will fit beautifully because the snake is also the symbol of Wisdom and of Medicine. Let the villain be a Doctor who uses a snake to kill the girl; the snake turns on him, and he acquires the crown, but not in the way he wanted. For all this speculation we have very definite evidence." He puffed contentedly at his pipe for a while before elaborating. "Roylott plans to kill the girls with his Indian 'swamp adder'; he puts it down through the ventilator; it glides down the bell rope and Violet dies. But when he tries to murder her sister he is foiled by the prompt action of Holmes. This time as Roylott sends the snake on its deadly mission, it is forced to turn back and strikes its master." And now I was amazed to hear the old man quoting the text with complete accuracy from memory: "'Round his brow he had a peculiar yellow band, with brownish speckles, which seemed to be bound tightly around his head...In an instant his strange headgear began to move and there reared itself from among his hair the squat diamond-shaped head and puffed neck of a loathsome serpent.' You remember the passage doubtless? And so Roylott gains the crown only to be slain by it."

"There's no doubt about it," I said, thinking about the many times I had seen this emblem in the movies, "once you spot the connection. Conan Doyle meant it to be the snake crown of Egypt with the head reared up in front."

"Yes, and now we are left only with the tiny riddle of why the snake should be called an Indian 'swamp adder' when there is no such beast?"

"What was the Uraeus snake, then? Wasn't it an asp?" I asked.

"It was. And an asp is an adder, but whence comes the swamp? What did he have in mind? You, as an actor trained along classical lines, should be able to provide the answer." He gave me a schoolmaster's mock frown as I shrugged helplessly. "The answer is bardic, and related to Stoke Moran, which you claimed as Hell with overtones of water..."

"Hell and water?" I floundered.

"One further clue. Your bard needs a river, and your birch a child."

Feeling very much like a favourite pupil who has been asked to recite for some Inspector on the one morning when he has not done his homework, I tried to tackle the problem. For an actor the first clue was simple enough, the Bard needed the River Avon to be read as Shakespeare. But what could I make out of the birch? It had to be related to the bardic alphabet. What was the birch tree? It was the first letter...Beth? Yes, that was it. Beth. Suddenly light dawned: "the birch needs a child". The son of Beth would be Mac-beth.

"The Scottish play!" I had got it at last.

"Aha! The old actor's superstition. You cannot mention the play or quote it correctly when working in the theatre." He

chuckled. "And now I'm sure you will remember the necessary lines?"

Indeed I did. Hell and water! It had to be the famous Witch scene. Carefully I misquoted the well-known lines from Act IV:

"Double, double, toil and trouble,
Fire burn and caldron bubble..."

"Fire water and duality," he confirmed sotto voce.

"Fillet of the fenny snake,
In the caldron boil and bake:
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,

Adder's fork and blindworm's sting.....There's your adder!" I cried.

"True enough, and had you chosen to continue you would also have reached: 'Cool it with a baboon's blood'. But I trust you did not overlook the 'fenny snake'?"

"A fenny snake - a snake from the fens - a swamp adder?"

"Precisely, a swamp adder. And do pray note the consummate artistry by which the 'fillet of fenny snake' becomes the fillet around the brows, the snake crown, which Roylott reluctantly wears."

"That does seem to prove that Macbeth was the prototype, a petty king who seized the crown which rightfully belonged to the two children of Duncan, and wound up dying when Burnham Wood came to Dunsinane."

The old man smiled as he rose to his feet. "You have it exactly!" He struggled into his overcoat. "But I fear I have taken up too much of your time."

"Not at all. It has been totally fascinating." I replied with great sincerity. "You must have made a very thorough study of this play."

"Thoroughness is the essential ingredient," he stated as he gathered up his belongings.

"I wonder if I could borrow the map for a closer look over the weekend."

"Oh dear no. It must be replaced before its absence is noticed, or else I shall lose a very good friend. But perhaps this little volume may prove useful to you?" He groped in his pocket and produced a rumpled paper bag.

"Why thank you," said I, taking it from him, much mystified.

"It should help you along the trail. This criminal is a slippery fellow, and the crime has yet to be discovered." He shook my hand and started for the door.

"The crime! What crime?"

He turned and regarded me with an expression of surprise.

"The Doctor's crime. He was a self-confessed criminal of blackest dye. You are the only person who can defend him." The door was almost closed when he opened it again and added: "But of course you'll have to accuse him first, won't you?" And with that he was gone.

Something about the finality of that statement stopped me from following him. I just stood there trying to make some sort of sense out of his words. What crime was he talking about? And was my mentor quite right in the head?

Somehow when he was sitting there, expounding in his rapid didactic way, everything he said sounded perfectly logical, but now that he was gone it seemed improbable that all this so-called evidence could have gone unnoticed for the best part of a hundred years. Unless of course it had been designed for the purpose. Everyone had looked at the text in the wrong way because that was what they were supposed to do. There was an underlying detective story which escaped detection. But if so then this man was the only one who was marching in step to the beat of Conan Doyle's drum, and he wanted me to join him.

To believe, or not to believe?

I opened the paper bag and found a rather dog-eared copy of a book about the Quest for the Holy Grail, Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, something I had been meaning to read for years.

On the fly leaf there was a scrawled inscription:

"To John Horgan. One for your shelf - but please do not shelve it! Sh.."

The last word was unfinished. How on earth could he have found out that my first name was really John? I was mystified - but completely hooked.

Chapter Four.

Sunday!

To most people an actor's life appears an easy one, but after eight performances in a tough part the day off is something one really enjoys. The total concentration given to the work while performing, the amount of preparation needed for it, and the necessity of doing it wholeheartedly even when not feeling up to it, physically or mentally, is a constant drain. I was profoundly grateful for the presence in my life of the Joyce work, something on which to focus with delight as a balance to the make-believe world, and now there was added the joy of a trail to follow on Joycean lines. This particular day then, with the sun shining brightly on the snow outside seemed to promise that a conspiracy was afoot to make life wonderful.

Over breakfast I went on with reading the Weston book, which I had started the night before. The first thing to strike me forcibly was the idea that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who had such a strong sense of his own ancient family ties, would certainly have made a thorough study of the Arthurian legends and the quest for the Holy Grail. Now I found from this little book that there were many versions of that story. At its most basic we have the Fisher King, an aging monarch, who is the Guardian of the Holy Grail, and whose lands have been laid waste by some mysterious agency. In order that the King and his domain should be made whole again some pure and perfect Knight must seek him out and ask the correct

question. This ritual is connected with far older traditions of those dying and reborn Gods one finds for instance in the pages of *The Golden Bough*, such as Attis, Tammuz, Adonis and Dionysus. It is basically a procedure that men felt was necessary for the continuation of the yearly cycle of the dying and reborn earth, which brings crops again to the barren wintery land.

I could see immediate connections with *Finnegans Wake*, but none at all with Sherlock Holmes. However I was slowly learning not to leap to conclusions. It would probably be a good idea to let the whole thing simmer for a while, take a walk and let the mind play with it undisturbed. As I was locking the door it struck me that my neighbour might like to keep me company. Jim Murdoch was a Professor of History from Trinity College, Dublin, now visiting the University of Toronto on some kind of exchange programme. Not only was he a most erudite man, who would certainly be full of information about the Fisher King, but his vitality was always a tonic. I knocked on his door and waited for the familiar battered face to appear. We had worked it out one night that I must have actually been there watching him fight during the Olympics in Melbourne while I was touring Australia, that incredible year when nearly everyone on the Irish team came away with a medal or at least a berth in the Finals. There were footsteps.

"Well, good morning, Patrick! I thought that all actors slept till long past noon. Come in, come in," he urged.

"Good morning Jim. Just for a moment then. I really dropped by to see whether you'd care to come out for a bit of a walk. It's a lovely day, and then we might have some lunch."

"That I cannot do, more's the pity. As you can see from my unwonted sartorial splendour I have been inveigled, into partaking of that hideous meal known as Brunch, with some local bigwiggery.

While copious quantities of the finest vintage champagne have been promised in return for my presence and perhaps sparkling conversation, I cannot help but suspect a latent streak of mendacity in my informant. Sit down therefore at once, and we shall prime ourselves with a glass of good ale!" He was pouring as he spoke.

"Sorry you can't come. I wanted to pick your brains about the Fisher King."

"The pursuit of the Holy Grail. Here is one not so holy, but full of goodness nonetheless, for you," he said, handing me a filled tankard. "So you're into the Arthurian legends now? How do they fit in with *Finnegans Wake* and your magnum opus?"

"It's not the Wake at the moment. I'm doing a little research on *The Speckled Band* actually, the play I'm in."

"Yes. I keep thinking to myself that I must come along and have a look one evening."

"Please do. I'll be glad to arrange tickets for you. They're none too easy to get."

"Ah, thanks, but don't bother yourself. I'd sooner surprise you."

His phone began to ring. "Excuse me a moment," he said, and I finished my tankard as he was answering it.

"Sorry about this. My hosts must have anticipated possible

backsliding on my part. They have despatched a limousine, no less, to convey me to my suburban fate. It awaits below. We'll descend together and your presence shall lend a certain dignity to my departure," and then added with a laugh, "which I for one hope will be lacking on my return."

As we rode down in the elevator we arranged to meet later on for dinner. What a character, I thought, as I made my way towards the park not far from the Waldorf where I was staying. Enviously I watched people having a great time on their cross country skis.

What a marvellous way to enjoy the snow and get some exercise. I suddenly remembered that Conan Doyle had been an ardent skier; in fact wasn't he the man who had introduced it as a sport at Davos after learning how to do it in Norway. How dumb it was of me to have come equipped only for downhill with my trusty old Fischers.

How frivolously the mind works. Here I am back again at Fisher, I thought. The Holy Grail and the Fisher King.

Wait a minute though! There was a King in the play. Grimesby Rylott was a Royalet, and Grimsby is a Northern fishing town, in fact that is all most of us know about the place.

Good. But how did that fit in with the legend?

I tramped on enjoying the crisp wintery air, and pondered the matter.

Were Rylott's lands laid waste, for instance? Well, yes, in a way they were. That was his whole problem. The huge estate of the Rylotts had been whittled down to a few acres because of the wastefulness of his ancestors. His attempt to recoup his fortunes failed because of his savage temper, and he spent time in a prison, or a madhouse, for murdering his native butler.

An aging monarch? Yes, that fitted too.

But how about the Guardian of the Holy Grail? That was harder to fit in, though he was most specifically the "guardian" of his late wife's two daughters and their considerable fortune.

Next there should be a hero, a perfect Knight, who must ask the question which will restore the land and the dying King. What was his name in the legends? In England he was Sir Galahad, but in Germany the pure fool's name was Parsifal; it always made me think of Percy fool. I stopped dead at the realization. It fitted Percy Armitage. In the story he had been a mere footnote, mentioned in passing as having been the dead girl's fiancé, but in the play his role is quite important. At the Inquest on Violet's death he is the man who asks the awkward questions, and courageously stands up to the terrifying Dr. Rylott. Yes, and he was also a man of quite unimpeachable character, "a Methodist and the son of Methodist", as he keeps insisting.

In this half of the play Holmes never appears, and it is Percy who virtually takes his place. In reading over the Inquest scene I had noticed the question he asks Rylott about his claim to have arrived in the corridor along with Enid to witness Violet's death. How could he have done so if he had to stop to light his lamp and put on his dressing gown, asks Percy most shrewdly. It is a telling point, and one worthy of Holmes himself. Then too we have his bravery. He says that he "fears no man as long as I am doing my duty. It may be just my nature, but so it is. I've got my own way of finding out, and I find out." This is what he tells

Enid before explaining that he thinks an attempt on her life is going to take place, and insisting that she get in touch with Holmes himself, "someone stronger than me", as he puts it. He says of Rylott: "Now I've come up to see your stepfather and to tell him, as man to man, that I've got my eye on him, and that if anything happens to you it will be a bad day's work for him." This is very similar to some lines that Holmes has later in the play: "My eye is on you, sir, and the Lord help you - the Lord help you - if any harm befall her. Now leave this room and take my warning with you."

So it all fitted very neatly with the legend. Clearly Conan Doyle built up the character of Dr. Rylott out of elements compounded from Macbeth and the Fisher King. Parsifal asks the right question and so restores the fortune of the girls under his guardianship, while at the same time, I realized with a start, giving the King a crown, the Uraeus snake, which puts him out of his misery. I could hardly believe it. I felt I had to make some note of all this before it slipped my mind, and searched in my pocket for something to write on. Quickly on the back of an envelope I sketched out the linkages starting from a centre of Dr. Rylott, the Fisher King of Stoke Moran:

Fishing Town	Grimsby	Grimesby Rylott	Royalet	King
		The Fisher King of		
Plaice	Stoke (means place)	Stoke Moran	Mughrin (captive sea- lion for fishing)	Fisher

The balance of the whole pattern, even to my half frozen eye, was quite startling, the way the two ends locked together, plaice from Grimsby, and the King-fisher. But it was time to get home and warmed up, and in any case I could hardly wait to get back to my apartment and find how it all fitted with what I had found yesterday.

Over lunch I looked over my notes and was delighted to find that this new diagram was very much like the one of the courting couples. Obviously Conan Doyle liked his creations to be symmetrical. How neatly the two patterns interlocked: Scott, Curtis and Escott share that C-T root, and they are all courting; but then a court card could be a King, or a Royalet.

So noticing that there were changes from the story to the play had only been a first step, and now it was time to try to analyse their nature. This complex pattern of interwoven courting couples suggested that a similar close investigation of the relationships between the girls might prove fruitful. The basic table came out like this:

<u>Story</u>	Julia.....dead.....Violet	<u>Play</u>
STONERS	Helen	Enid
		STONORS

The Stoner girls were called Julia and Helen. What do these names have in common? Not too hard. They are both famous classical figures: Julia was a Roman Empress, the daughter of Augustus (darn it, I thought, Charles Augustus Milverton is in the play), and Helen of Troy was a Greek, the star of Homer's epic, or of the Roman one of Virgil, the Aeneid. Ah! That must be the link. Aeneid leads to the name Enid. And wasn't Virgil a poet of the time of Augustus? Surely the Emperor had been his patron. It was all creeping back to me from my brief period of specialization in the Classics. Yes, Virgil wrote the piece to show the venerable origins of the Caesars, that they were descendants of Aeneas, who after the fall of Troy had wandered for many years, just like Odysseus, until at last he settled down and founded the city of Rome. And of course Helen had been the prime cause of the war. Then there was that other story about the founding of Rome, that it was the work of wolf-bred twins, Romulus and Remus. The Stoner girls were twins.

Things looked solid so far. Julia and Helen made a convincing pair. So did Helen and Enid. But how could I link Violet into the pattern?

What do Julia and Violet have in common? Is there a flower perhaps, called a julia? My dictionary did not think so. Could it be a colour then? Of course it could! If pronounced in the way of modern Latinists "Yulia" slips easily into yellow. And the contrast between yellow and violet is greater to the eye than that between black and white as any adman knows - or of course any eye specialist like Dr. Conan Doyle. So I produced an amended table:

ROME	Juliayulia-yellow	Violet	FLOWER
GREECE	Helencause of AeneidEnid	WOODLARK	(BIRD)

The secret seemed to be that he made changes with a view to extreme contrast, colour to colour, and heroine to book, running across the table; then vertically on the left, Rome to Greece, which necessitated a little more work on the right to find a pairing to match. My usual travelling Dictionary is Chambers, and it provided the answer. It turned out that Enid is a Welsh name derived from a word meaning a woodlark, so the contrast here is between flower and bird. Extreme contrast was the key to the puzzle.

I went back to my notes to search for more examples. Yes, Ash and Alder, the warring trees, led to the map from which we had learnt so much. Trees and letters were related, woods and words.

Then there was that change of Milverton's address from Appledore Towers in Hampstead, to The Firs in Battersea. This was a bardic clue but now I noticed something else, that radical shift from Hampstead in North London to Battersea South of the Thames. Then too in the play he survives, but in the story the blackmail victim kills Charles Augustus Milverton.

But Augustus was the father of Julia, the Empress.

And Augustus was also the father of....who? Sebastian Moran.

Now where did that little item of information spring from,

where was he to be found in the stories? Presumably in the first one of *The Return*, the *Empty House*, in which Colonel Moran tries to shoot Holmes. I soon found the place and a passage full of "boring information" taken from Holmes' index of biographies. He comments that his collection of M's is a fine one, and goes on to read this entry about Moran, which looks like so much space-filler to the casual reader, to the unobservant eye:

"Moran, Sebastian, Colonel. Unemployed. Formerly 1st. Bangalore Pioneers. Born London, 1840. Son of Sir Augustus Moran, C.B., once British Minister to Persia. Educated Eton and Oxford. Served in Jowaki Campaign, Afghan Campaign, Charasiab (depatches). Sherpur and Cabal. Author of *Heavy Game and Western Himalayas* (1881): *Three months in the Jungle* (1884). Address: Conduit Street. Clubs: The Anglo Indian, the Tankerville, the Bagatelle Card Club."

A careful reading of this little section revealed points of interest: Colonel Moran, like Dr. Watson, had served honourably in the Army during the Afghan Campaign, and his Anglo Indian Club links him to Dr. Rylott, who is called exactly that.

But the main thing was that I had not been mistaken. Colonel Moran's father was named Augustus, and so was Milverton, furthermore Dr. Roylott lived at Stoke Moran. So there must have been a link between *The Adventure of the Speckled Band*, in *The Adventures*, and the story of Milverton in *The Return*, even before they were joined together to form the play. It was embarrassing to find how easy it was to miss this evidence of a long range plan, despite the fact that Augustus is not such a common name.

It was necessary to take another much closer look at the table of contrasts between the two versions of the Milverton story. In the first he is killed, while in the play he survives.

In the story his guardian baboon and cheetah survive, whereas his hound is killed in the play. Holmes takes the letters from the safe and burns them, but in the play he brings them home to show to Watson.

That safe rung a bell. Dr. Rylott had one too, and of all things he kept his snake in it. In the story, as I remembered it, the snake lived on after killing Roylott, and Holmes put it back into the safe. This would suggest that a point is being made about the similarity of the snake to a letter, the crowning O in fact.

Armed with this fresh bundle of evidence I made a careful comparison of the Milverton and Speckled Band stories with their play versions, pencil in hand ready to note points of conjunction.

It was interesting to find, for instance, that both men had laurels growing in their gardens, the sacred trees of Apollo, enemy of Hermes (Hermes-Holmes?). Once one was fairly on the scent there was an incredible fascination to the hunt.

It took a couple of hours, but the painstaking work was worth the effort. How delightful to find that Holmes referred to Milverton as a snake in the story. He says: "Do you feel a creeping sensation, Watson, when you stand before the serpent in the Zoo and see the slithery, gliding, venomous creatures with their deadly eyes and wicked flattened faces? Well, that's how

Milverton impresses me." Then later on in the story we have the scene, witnessed by Holmes and Watson of the young lady, Milverton's blackmail victim, as she turns the tables on him. As she shoots him she cries: "Take that, you hound, - and that - and that - and that - and that!" Accordingly the snake-cum-hound Milverton is most thoroughly dead in the story, while in the play it is the snake and the guardian hound who are slain. On the other hand in the play Milverton lives on, and in the story it is the animals who survive.

The dog-snake linkage is found again surprisingly in the *Speckled Band* story just after Dr. Roylott's death: "As he spoke he drew the dog-whip swiftly from the dead man's lap, and throwing the noose round the reptile's neck he drew it from its horrid perch and, carrying it at arm's length, threw it into the iron safe, which he closed upon it."

My memory had not been at fault, Roylott's snake was indeed kept in a safe, which must strike one as odd in the extreme. Milverton uses his safe to store those incriminating letters, and it is described in rather reptilian terms as a "green and gold monster, the dragon which held in its maw the reputations of many fair ladies." But there was another shock in store for me when I discovered that the snake in *Speckled Band* and the letter in the Milverton story have something else in common. Holmes says in the play: "Down that bell-pull comes the messenger of death," referring to the snake. In the story we have: "The letter which had been the messenger of death for Milverton lay, all mottled with blood, upon the table." Now "mottled with blood" is a fine literary image, but it certainly does make one wonder whether this speckled appearance of the one messenger is tied in with that of the other, the snake. Letter and snake: in the early versions the snake lives, and Milverton and the letter are destroyed, but in the play the snake dies and both Milverton and his letter are preserved.

Extreme contrast: even to matters of life and death.

That conjured up another image from the play. Watson, ever the lively conscience, does not approve of Holmes' philandering with Milverton's cook, even for so lofty a purpose as the purloining (and that is technically illegal too) of the letter he is using for blackmail, but Holmes tries to reassure him: "It is a matter of life and death, and every card must be played." He must subvert the morals of the cook in order to save the honour of a Duchess. His comment then is: "A mad world my masters!" This had raised some interest during rehearsals because nobody could remember quite which Shakespeare play it came from. But one day in the Library I had remembered the controversy and managed to track down the quotation. It was not Shakespeare after all. The quote is known but the author is not. It is the title of a work by Nicholas Breton, his *Dialogue between two Travellers, the Taker and the Mistaker*. How very aptly that fits with the problem of the purloined letter.

The overall patterns were quite dazzling, but I was still no closer to finding out what the devil they all meant. Were they supposed to point the way to this crime the old man had insisted Conan Doyle committed? How on earth could they?

It was a mystery and no mistake. But if I could play Holmes in the theatre then surely I should be able to act the part in solving this puzzle. There was a huge heap of evidence. The only snag was that it did not seem to lead anywhere except to the inescapable conclusion that when Conan Doyle put it there he must have had some purpose in mind. It seemed to be an amorphous mass of little separate anomalies, but when the kaleidoscope was shaken all manner of patterns emerged. It might just be possible to build them all up into a logical whole.

First of all then it might be a good idea to analyse the clues and try to categorize their different types, so that they would spring more easily from the text when they cropped up again in other stories:

1. First of all there had been the alphabetical clues of the R's and the S's. This had led up to the bardic tree alphabet. Conan Doyle knew that letters were trees, and that they had a host of other symbolic interpretations.
2. Names of people and places may convey cryptic messages.
3. Names and relationships can be arranged into orderly patterns.
4. Conan Doyle made changes between the stories and the play he created from them, often of an extreme nature, involving life and death. The old man had said that duality abounded.
5. *Speckled Band* was based on classical models: Macbeth and the Fisher King.
6. Boring pieces of text provided a generous serving of clues. Sir Augustus Moran is a virtual footnote in the first story of *The Return*, but he links Augustus Milverton, from another story in this set, with Stoke Moran, the locale of *Speckled Band*, in another set entirely, *The Adventures*.

Yes. but where did I go from there?

The pieces remained obstinately impossible to assemble. It was very much like that customary moment in putting a jigsaw puzzle together when it is manifest beyond doubt that several pieces are missing. And in this case I could not even consult the picture on the box.

Did I have anything at all to go on? Just one point so far:

Conan Doyle was trying to draw attention to something. Well then, let me assume that he has succeeded. Was there anything about these points that struck me as peculiar?

There certainly was. The fact that two stories from *The Return*, the stories about the period after Holmes' revival after his supposed death, were linked to *Speckled Band*, which was written two books earlier.

Clearly then this particular book was deserving of a much closer study. That might solve things. Trusty magnifying glass in hand I must crawl through the thirteen stories of *The Return* and try to observe anything unusual about them. That was the technique of Sherlock Holmes, slow and thorough examination. Find the anomalies first, consider why they're there, throw out the impossible and draw conclusions from what remains.

Bearing in mind the few lessons I had learned of the nature of the kind of clues to be alert for, I went painstakingly through *The Return* making notes on the way, and by Wednesday had quite a

satisfactory pile of new evidence.

An important reward of this search was the discovery of a most encouraging passage which supported the notion that Conan Doyle had hidden a detective story within his text on another whole level. It occurs in *The Abbey Grange* (p.636) where Holmes is being critical of Watson:

"Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of as a scientific exercise has ruined what might have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations. You slur over work of the utmost finesse and delicacy, in order to dwell upon sensational details which may excite, but cannot possibly instruct, the reader."

Evidently the reader must change his stance entirely if he is to get any benefit, and look at things from a very different viewpoint, forgetting the "story" as such.

"What a blind beetle I have been!" I said to myself in the immortal words of Holmes.

Chapter Five.

1. NAMES AND DUALITY.

As you may imagine it took a while to go through the book noting all the names and places, and then filing them in alphabetical order, and it could easily have been boring work had there not been immediate rewards from this arduous dig. Having already concluded that Conan Doyle was not a lazy man how could one account for his repetition of sometimes quite obscure names? Charles Augustus Milverton lives at Appledore Towers in one story, but in another, *Priory School*, the Duke of Carston is married to Edith, daughter of Sir Charles Appledore. Two Charleses and two Appledores.

Then too the Ediths, for there was another one in this book, the one-time fiancée of the murdered man, Ronald Adair, in the first story. She is mentioned only once and we are informed that the engagement had been broken off. Why on earth then did Conan Doyle bother to tell us about her at all? Unless we are supposed to notice in some special way this Edith Woodley of Carstairs, and that other Edith, daughter of Appledore.

What do they have in common? Wood and trees. Then too doors are often made of wood. The letters of the alphabet are trees, and the letter D is a very special case of this, since in Hebrew Daleth is symbolised as a door. In Irish it is Dair, the Oaktree.

Once again I checked up on things in *The White Goddess* and found that Graves uses the old Irish spelling of Duir. The Roman God of the door, he tells us, was the familar two-faced Janus. The oak has a special value: "Its roots are believed to extend as deep underground as its branches rise into the air - Virgil mentions this - which makes it emblematic of a god whose law runs both in

Heaven and in the Underground world."

Darn it, I thought, no sooner do I get started on something simple, just arranging the names in alphabetical order, than I am sidetracked into some more of this bardic symbolism. There was a feature of the *Speckled Band* story that I simply couldn't ignore.

First of all it goes without saying that a door is a symbol of concealment, and quite naturally they abound in detective stories, generally mysteriously locked from within. But here is a strange door passage indeed. Just before Dr. Royslott arrives we have Holmes saying:

"... But what in the name of the devil?' The ejaculation had been drawn from my companion by the fact that our door had been suddenly dashed open, and that a huge man had framed himself in the aperture. His costume was a peculiar mixture of the professional and of the agricultural, having a black top-hat, a long frock-coat, and a pair of high gaiters, with a hunting crop swinging in his hand. So tall was he that his hat actually brushed the cross bar of the doorway, and his breadth seemed to span it from side to side."

Royslott, like the two-faced God Janus is a most dual person. He wears the clothes of farmer and doctor. And, in an era of large London houses, he virtually becomes a door, framing himself in the aperture. To add to his duality he carries a hunting crop, which many readers of the stories would recognize as Holmes' own favourite weapon.

Bardically then Royslott is a door, a Dair, an Irish Oak tree. In the calendar of the year the Oak is the month of the Summer Solstice, the middle or two-way point of the year, as Graves puts it, which is familiar to those who are into Astrology or Astronomy as belonging to the celestial house of Cancer, the Crab. Reading on in this story I was astounded to find confirmation in this description of Royslott's house:

"The building was of gray, lichen-blotched stone, with a high central portion and two curving wings, like the claws of a crab, thrown out on each side."

What an extraordinary piece of imagery, and what effrontery on Conan Doyle's part! I was mortified to realize that I had read this passage several times within the last few days without drawing any conclusion from it. Now the conjunction was inevitable: Royslott is an Oak King belonging the door-Dair faction. Like Milverton of Appledore Towers he has laurel trees in his garden sacred to the Sun and the Oak God, Apollo.

Appledore! Now the repetition of that most unusual name began to make some sense. Since door-Dair means oak we can also take the word appledore to mean the oak-apple. Oakapple Day celebrates the occasion when King Charles, during the Civil War, escaped from the pursuing Roundheads by hiding in an Oak Tree. This is commemorated in many English pubs by the sign of The Royal Oak. And Conan Doyle called his character Sir Charles Appledore.

Oh dear. It started out so simply, but I was beginning to have serious doubts about my ability to follow up the trails left by Conan Doyle's staggering erudition. If all the clues were going to be as abstruse as this one, I was out of my depth already. But there seemed to be no alternative. Perhaps, if *The*

White Goddess would only provide some of the trickier answers, just getting on with the donkey work might produce results. So I began to list these pairings between the different stories of *The Return* as simply as possible:

1. a) Edith marries the Duke of Carston.
b) Edith Woodley comes from Carstairs.
2. a) Edith, Duchess of Carston, is the daughter of Sir Charles Appledore.
b) Charles Augustus Milverton lives at Appledore Towers.
3. a) Edith is the daughter of an oak person: Appledore.
b) Edith Woodley was engaged to an oak person: Robin Adair.

At this point I became rather irritated with myself for putting down that last name incorrectly, a mistake I later found in Sam Rosenberg's book as well. He is not Robin Adair as in the famous ballad, he is Ronald Adair. Even though we read Ronald in the text, somehow Robin springs to mind, and that takes me back to Robin Hood who lived his legendary life in the Major Oak at Sherwood Forest, a spot I had often visited during my boyhood in Nottingham. It all seemed to be personally aimed at me!

This would never do, this popping off down sidetracks was most un-Holmesian. I must get back to the steady grind of listing all the names. In the final count it came out that there were 260 people in *The Return*, and I was astonished to find that over 40% of them, 105 to be specific, fell into pair groups. Now that could hardly be accidental.

Next I added to the table the more important examples starting from Edith Woodley, who paired with Edith, Duchess of Carston, and also makes a pairing with her surname:

4. a) Edith Woodley was engaged to Ronald Adair (Oak).
b) Jack Woodley, in another story *Solitary Cyclist*, is a "dreadful person - a bully" who lives at Charlington Hall, a building described as "bristling out from amidst ancient oaks."
(There's more than a hint of King Charles hiding in the oak tree here.)
a) Adair had been engaged to Edith Woodley of Carstairs, but the engagement had been "broken off by mutual consent some months before".
b) Jack Woodley, on the other hand, tries to force the hand of Miss Violet Smith of Chiltern Grange. The scene as he tries to make her marry him takes place "under the shadow of a mighty oak."
5. a) The "Solitary Cyclist" is Miss Violet Smith. Her father was James Smith, conductor of the orchestra at the Imperial Theatre. Her uncle Ralph emigrated to South Africa and found gold.
b) In *Golden Pince Nez* the corpse is that of Willoughby Smith. On the first page we get some boring information: Holmes dealt with the "famous Smith-Mortimer successsion case within this period." Then in the story we find that

the gardener is "Mortimer...an old Crimean man of excellent character."

6.
 - a) Miss Violet Smith's fiancé was Cyril Morton.
 - b) In *Missing Three Quarter* the Captain of the Cambridge Rugby team was Cyril Overton, and his missing player is the only man on the team capable of coping with the "Oxford flier Morton".
7.
 - a) Overton says that the missing player, Godfrey Staunton, was the "hinge" of the team. Here a little classical education is necessary: the Goddess of the hinge was named Cardea. Naturally hinges go with doors.
 - b) Godfrey Milner is an otherwise unmentioned card player who was at the table with the murdered Ronald Adair.
 - c) Holmes does not know the Rugby player: "There is Arthur H. Staunton, the rising young forger, and there was Henry Staunton, whom I helped to hang, but Godfrey Staunton is a new name to me."
 - d) Where else is there a Staunton? In the play of *The Speckled Band* Rylott's evil housekeeper is Mrs. Staunton.
9.
 - a) Godfrey Milner played cards with Adair, Colonel Moran and Sir John Hardy in *The Empty House*.
 - b) Sir Charles Hardy is a diplomat in *The Second Stain*.
 - c) John Vincent Harden is a well known tobacco millionaire.
 - d) Harding Bros. sell busts of Napoleon.
 - e) Morse Hudson retails these same busts.
 - f) Mrs. Hudson has to move the "bust" of Holmes in *The Empty House*. It was made by a Frenchman.
10.
 - a) Holmes and Watson watch this scene from Camden House (*The Empty House*), and Colonel Moran breaks the bust with a bullet.
 - b) In *Six Napoleons* Beppo breaks a bust of Napoleon, which he has stolen, in front of an empty house in Camden House Road.
 - c) The spy, mentioned in *Second Stain*, is given an address in *His Last Bow*; it is Camden Mansions, Notting Hill. He is French, as were the sculptors of the busts of Napoleon and Holmes, Devine and Oscar Meunier of Grenoble.
11.
 - a) Hilton Soames is a "tall and spare" College Professor, which seems to hint at S. Holmes.
 - b) Sir Cathcart Soames sends his son to *The Priory School*.
 - c) Hilton Cubitt is a bluff Norfolk Squire in *Dancing Men*.
 - d) Hilton Soames teaches Greek.
 - e) The Priory School headmaster is a Latin expert.
 - f) Cubitt can make nothing of hieroglyphs. It is all Greek to him.
12.
 - a) In *Dancing Men*: "I stopped at a boarding house in Russell Square because Parker, the vicar of our parish, was staying in it."

- b) Watching for Holmes to arrive back in London in *The Empty House* is "Parker, a garroter by trade, and a remarkable performer on the jew's harp."
13. a) The Policeman in *Golden Pince Nez* is called Wilson.
b) A notorious criminal, mentioned in *Black Peter*, is Wilson, the Canary Trainer.
14. a) Milverton tries to prevent the engagement of Miss Miles to Colonel Dorking.
b) Miles MacLaren is a fellow student of Daulat Ras.

In this last example Conan Doyle uses approximately the Hebrew form (Daleth) of the letter D, and pairs it with "Ras", an Abyssinian Royal title. Daulat Ras and "Dor-king" return us to this idea of doors which is of frequent occurrence in *The Return*. It opens with the murder of Adair and the reappearance of Holmes, and it ends thus:

"Holmes turned away smiling from the keen scrutiny of those wonderful eyes.

'We also have our diplomatic secrets,' said he, and picking up his hat, he turned to the door."

2 JOHN AND JAMES.

Certainly it was all designed to draw attention to something but the question of exactly what remained obstinately impossible to answer.

Try a new tack. Could it be that the topics raised by the various pairings had some bearing on the matter? I went over them again and extracted some general themes:

Oak trees. Doors. King Charles in hiding. Engagements. The Empire and Imperial wars. A missing athlete found by a hound. French busts of Napoleon and Holmes. Camden House. Latin and Greek and hieroglyphs. Good and evil.

On the face of it the list did not look at all promising. Some of the pieces matched each other, but they refused to fit together into an elegant whole.

Looking over the pairings once more I was struck by the ninth section: John Hardy and John Harden with the Harding Bros. A bell began to ring. John H. Watson! Since my own baptismal name was John P. Horgan, I could not help noticing that the combination of John H. was suspiciously popular. Or was that only in my mind?

Now, with an alphabetical list of the names, it was not hard to check this out. There were six people in *The Return* called John who also had surnames, and five of them also had names beginning with an H. But what could I use as a standard for comparison? The next most common name was James, so the next step was to see whether that name had a tendency to associate with any particular letter. There were five of them and they showed no such affinity:

Dr. John H. Watson.

Prof. James Moriarty.

John Hopley Neligan.	Lord Mount-James.
John Hector McFarlane.	James Smith.
John Hardy.	James Wilder.
John Harden.	James Lancaster.

This seemed to be much firmer ground to work from. What was it the old man had said that first night? He had commented on the introduction to the *Complete Holmes*, but I couldn't remember quite what he had talked about, so I found the book and read over those pages to remind myself. What I wanted was not hard to find. Christopher Morley lists some of the "minutiae", the little puzzles which have never been satisfactorily explained. Among them were the case of Moriarty's work on the Binomial Theorem, and the oddness of Watson's wound.

I remembered with irritation that I had stupidly interrupted him at that point, instead of waiting for him to finish. But he had said that I should be able to see through the Watson problem. And now here were the two, side by side, on this list of the commonest Christian names: Watson and Moriarty, hero and villain, John and James.

The Binomial Theorem?

That was what had worried Mr. Morley. How could Professor Moriarty have had a "European vogue" and won a Chair of Mathematics for his work on the Binomial Theorem? It is totally absurd at that point in time, and Conan Doyle certainly knew it.

We must discard mathematics.

He must have meant us to interpret the word "binomial" in the sense of having two names - or related to the pairing of names, from the Latin "bi-nomen". I felt I had stumbled across an answer at last after working so diligently for several days. The names did fall into pairs, and all that work pointed in some way at Moriarty and Watson.

So there were two problems to be solved along the way. No evidence of the great crime had surfaced yet, but at least my kit of diagnostic detecting tools was beginning to grow. I would tackle them in turn. All this filing and counting finally focussed on a Biblical duo, John and James.

John Watson and James Moriarty.

Chapter Six.

On the way down to the Theatre I stopped off at the Central Library to discuss my problems with Mr. Cameron Hollyer, the Curator of the remarkable collection there of Sherlock Holmes material. I showed him the list of pairings from *The Return*, and said: "It is hard to imagine that you would find the same sort of thing in a book by Agatha Christie, for example, isn't it?"

He took the sheets and went over them slowly, nodding to himself. "There's a point here which you may have missed," he said finally. "Might it not be important that the bust of Holmes which they watch Colonel Moran break from Camden House, the 'Empty

House' of the story's title, makes a very special match with the one of Napoleon, broken outside the empty house in Camden House Road. After all Moran was the right hand man of Moriarty, and Holmes called the Professor the 'Napoleon of crime'."

"Absolutely, and thank you! It's another example of this duality which surrounds the man - part of his Binomial nature."

"Two names, yes I see. And you've been through the entire text of *The Return* to find all these pairings?"

"Every single name filed and accounted for," I replied proudly.

"There's a book which might save you a great deal of work along the way, if you feel this sort of thing is important. Jack Tracy has listed all the names of people and places in the Canon alphabetically in his *Sherlockiana*. Do feel free to take it home with you, and perhaps you also might have a use for the Annotated Edition of Holmes so you can get a rough idea what work has been done on the Watson and Moriarty problems."

I accepted them most gratefully, and heavily laden dashed off for a quick dinner before the show. Naturally they were open on the table as I ate. First of all I had a look at the book that was new to me, the *Sherlockiana*. There was some discussion about the nature of Watson's wound, and, turning to Moriarty, about the odd fact that the Professor had a brother also named James. Now that certainly fitted in with my hypothesis I thought. Jack Tracy felt the problem was soluble only if James Moriarty was treated as a compound name.

Well, let's see what Baring-Gould has to say about it in the *Annotated Holmes*. He provides another variation based on the story of the staunch Royalist of earlier times who named all his fourteen sons Charles!

Mysteries within solutions, I said to myself, as I started to comb through all the material in both works about Watson and Moriarty. First there was the matter of the names:

A) John H. Watson: Watson declares that this is his name, but in *Twisted Lip* his wife addresses him as James. There have been many suggestions as to what his middle initial stands for: he may have been a Henry (according to Mr.S.C.Roberts), a Hamish, to account for the wifely James (no less an authority than Dorothy L.Sayers), a Henry again (Christopher Morley) or variously a Holmes, Hubert, Hudson or Huffham.

B) James Moriarty: The Professor and his brother were both named James.

Then there are two "professional" mysteries:

A) Why does Watson claim he limps from a wound in his heel, when the bullet struck him in the shoulder in the first story?

B) How did Moriarty acquire a European vogue and a Chair at a small University on the basis of work on the Binomial Theorem? Surely that vein had been worked out by Newton, Bernouli and Abel many years before. Why in Conan Doyle's day Hamilton was already investigating the mathematics of quaternions!

My new interpretation of the word binomial removed it from

the field of mathematics, and cast light on the other mysteries, which were all of the same type: the duality of the names of Moriarty and Watson, the former with but one name between two men, the latter with an extra name his initials do not provide for, and thirdly the two wounds from apparently the one bullet. Perhaps the logical place to start the search would be with some closer consideration of the Professor who worked on this impossible theorem.

Having read the whole canon fairly recently I knew that it was a misconception that he was the arch villain of the Holmes stories, a constantly lurking figure, whose plots were foiled time and time again by our hero. It was the movies which fostered this notion, along with the false picture of a bumbling and inadequate Watson, always brow-beaten by Holmes. Moriarty appears in the flesh only in the last story of *The Memoirs*, in which the rivals have their showdown at Reichenbach Falls, and fall to their watery graves. He is spoken of in the first story of *The Return* in which Holmes explains how he managed to survive the confrontation, and he is twice mentioned in other stories of that set. His only other appearance is as a sinister background figure in *The Valley of Fear*.

When I got to the theatre I checked up on him in more detail. In *The Memoirs* we learn that at the age of twenty one he wrote a treatise on the binomial theorem which won him a chair in mathematics at "one of our smaller universities". This he lost when "dark rumours gathered round him". He resigned his chair and became an "army coach" to cover his activities as the "Napoleon of crime". One would have thought that the Army might equally question his background - ah well. In *The Return* Holmes says to Watson that at the time of his "death": "...if I remember right, you had not heard the name of Professor James Moriarty". But compare that with the last story of *The Memoirs* where Watson says that he is only telling the story of Holmes' death because: "My hand has been forced, however, by the recent letters in which Colonel James Moriarty defends the memory of his brother..."

And then just to complicate things there seemed to be yet a third member of the family. In *The Valley of Fear* (p.776) we get a lot of information about Moriarty, including this: "His youngest brother is a station master in the west of England." So it would seem that there were three Moriarty brothers.

"You can't see the woods for the trees," the old man had said. And here was another trio, but it was not until I was on stage the following night that the penny suddenly dropped, and it was all I could do not to stop the performance and burst out laughing. Of course Conan Doyle had a reputation for being a joker, but this was really outrageous.

I was looking up the train in the *ABC Guide* when it came to me. Trains are made up of coaches!

Moriarty became an army coach, his brother was a Colonel, and his other brother was a station master. But a military station could be run by a Colonel, where the training would involve the use of Army coaches. It was rather reminiscent of Lewis Carroll. But what was the purpose of it?

This must have happened within the space of a second or two,

then suddenly I realized where I was, and had to struggle for a moment to find my place in the play:

"Stonehouse...Stowell...Stoke"

"I know my train, Mr Holmes."

"I was looking for mine..." And we were back on track.

After the show I couldn't resist a quick peep at the relevant passage in *The Valley of Fear*, and was delighted to find Holmes expressing his regret in this fashion: "...if criminals would always schedule their movements like railway trains, it would certainly be more convenient for us all. As to what it is we - Well, that's what we are watching for!" What an extraordinarily cryptic statement from Conan Doyle, and what a most revealing one, once one has the basic key.

My reverie was disturbed by a sudden battering on the dressing room door. "Come in!" I called out, hoping that perhaps it might be the old man again. It was not but my visitors were equally welcome.

"Patrick!" with a bear hug.

"Jim! You crept in without telling me," I chided, "and I must apologize for being rather bemused tonight."

"Not a bit of it! We had a most educational evening, didn't we love?" he said to the girl beside him. "Patrick, this is Mary Foley. Mary, meet Mr Sherlock Holmes in person!"

"I just loved it," she said shaking my hand.

"Yes, you weren't bad at all," said Jim. "What do you mean by that, bemused? I barely closed my eyes for minutes on end with the sheer fascination of it all."

"I suppose that's high praise coming from you?"

"It is," said Mary. "And I loved it too."

"Thank you very much, Mary. But really I'm afraid that I may have seemed a bit...well, out of it...at times. I had one of those moments of aperçu right in the middle of the performance."

"Did you now. And I thought you were just acting!" Jim laughed. "And what was it you suddenly realized, may I ask?"

"Well, you know I have been doing some work on the background of the play. I told you last Sunday about the three letter clues, do you remember?"

"Oh yes, the R's and the S's. I even noticed them in the play."

"It was right at that spot then, as I was looking for the train in the *ABC Guide* it came to me that the Moriarty brothers were another trinity."

"The Professor, the Colonel and the station master," said Jim.

"How on earth did you know about that? I thought it was fairly esoteric."

"I wouldn't doubt it, but I'm a special case, you see, so I imbibed it with my mother's milk. I think she always rather fancied the idea of me as a Professor, and God bless her, I made it!" He laughed uproariously, as I looked at him blankly. "She called me James, don't you see, Jim Murdoch!" Finally realizing that it meant nothing to me, he began to explain. "You're obviously not getting the point. Murdoch and Moriarty are the same name when you get back to the root of it. There's lots of

others. Moriarty, Murtagh, Murdo, Murdoch are all the same, navigators all. I fear the Irish never learned to spell."

"Only to talk," Mary put in.

"But that's fascinating," I said. "There could be a whole lot more Moriarties scattered about in the canon. I must check up on those aliases."

"I'll look forward to hearing the results," he replied. "In fact why don't you come and have lunch with me tomorrow?"

"Fine."

"We have to be getting on now, but I'll expect you about half twelve, and you can unburden your soul."

We said our goodnights and I made my way home eager to track down any pseudo Moriarty. It was fortunate that I had borrowed just the right book for the purpose, the *Sherlockiana*. It shouldn't take long with an alphabetical index.

Murtagh? Nothing. Murdoch? Yes, two of them. Murdo? Again nothing.

Only two Moriarty cousins? I was a little disappointed. But wait a minute...How about Mac's? Yes! There were two more, the McMurdos.

I started with the Murdoch in the story of *The Lion's Mane*, which is one of a pair that Holmes tells in the first person, because it occurs after his retirement to Sussex. Near his villa is the "coaching establishment" (Aha!) of Harold Stackhurst (shades of Stonyhurst). Fitzroy McPherson, the science master, is killed while swimming. Suspicion falls on Ian Murdoch because he has a terrible temper, and once even threw McPherson's dog through a window when he was annoyed at it. He is such a very good teacher though that he has been kept on. And what does Ian teach so well? He is the "mathematical coach"!

Jim Murdoch was going to love this. Eagerly I began to check the other candidates.

Chapter Seven.

Punctually on the dot I knocked on Jim's door, a sheaf of notes in my hand, the fruit mostly of the morning's work on *The Valley of Fear*. It hadn't taken long last night to discover that there was far too much material about the Moriarty "cousins" to deal with in a few minutes. Very soon Jim welcomed me.

"Professor Moriarty?" I enquired with a courteous bow.

"The very same, Mr Sherlock Holmes," he responded. "Do please come into my parlour."

"Where you sit at the centre of your web," I quoted, "feeling all the thousands of radiations?"

I followed him into the sitting room and took the chair he indicated with a wave as he went off to the kitchen.

"Tell me all your news," he called out as he poured a couple of beers. "From the amount of paper you have there you must have been hard at work."

"I have indeed. And you won't believe what I've found. Your tip about the names produced an absolute gold mine." I took one

of the tankards. "Your health!"

"Slainthe," he toasted. "Need I tell you to help yourself?" The table was loaded with cold cuts. "The smoked ham is something I recommend. Tuck in!"

Jim enthused about the play as we had our lunch. While he went to get another round of beers I stood at the window looking across at the Police Station trimmed with snow sparkling in the sunshine. Another lovely Sunday! Had it been that long, I thought? The days had certainly sped by since I'd started on all this. It was over a week now since the old man had come back-stage.

"So tell me all about it," urged Jim as he returned with two open cans, and I duly launched into the saga.

"This does get a little complicated so you'll have to patient. First let me tell you about the four Moriarty cousins, two McMurdos and two Murdochs. Here's a table I drew up. Have a look at that and check them off as we go." I handed him a piece of paper with this information"

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Profession</u>	<u>Story</u>	<u>Fate</u>
1.	McMurdo	Boxer: servant of a twin.	<i>Sign of Four</i>	Lives.
	Khutmutgar Chowdar	Servant of other twin.		Lives.
	Khutmutgar	Servant of Royslott, stepfather of twins.	<i>Speckled Band</i>	Dies.
2.	Birdy Edwards, aka "Jack McMurdo", "twin" of Teddy Baldwin.	Detective.	<i>Valley of Fear</i>	Kills Teddy Baldwin. Drowned by Moriarty's men.
3.	James Murdoch.	Miner (?).	<i>Valley of Fear</i>	Mutilated by Scowrsers (Moriarty's allies).
4.	Ian Murdoch.	MATH Coach.	<i>Lion's Mane</i>	Falsely accused of causing death in water.

"First of all here's a man with a background much like yours in one sense, a boxer, but an ex-pro..."

"I coulda bin a contender," Jim claimed.

"Please! McMurdo was a professional boxer, who was rather proud of having fought a three round exhibition with Holmes some years before. Now he is the servant of Bartholomew Sholto in *The Sign of Four* (p.106). And right away the plot begins to thicken."

I gave him a summary of the pairings I had found, and what I had to believe was the true explanation of Moriarty's supposed work on the Binomial Theorem. "And now listen to this: Bartholomew Sholto has a twin brother called Thaddeus." I paused to take a pull at my tankard.

"Bartholomew and Thaddeus were both Apostles. That would fit in with your James and John, they were both Apostles too, and brothers, weren't they?" suggested Jim.

"True, true, but the main thing here is the twins, don't you see. Twins! Like the Gemini, Castor and Pollux. You remember what Pollux was famous for?"

"A boxer, wasn't he?" supplied Jim, "like myself, and this McMurdo."

"So," I continued, "if one of the twin Sholto brothers had a servant called McMurdo who was a boxer, wouldn't we have to ask ourselves..."

"Who was the servant of the other twin," Jim cut in. "He ought be a Castor."

"He is an Indian, named Lal Chowdar, the khitmutgar of Thaddeus (p.100). Now that's a pretty unusual word but Conan Doyle does use it elsewhere, in *The Speckled Band*. Dr. Roylott served time in India for killing his khitmutgar, and the Doctor was the stepfather of twins."

Jim thought about that for a few moments and then came up with yet another pairing. "One of the Indian servants died, and the other lived?" he suggested, pointing at my table.

The implications of that sprang into my mind. "You're right! It's a matter of life and death, just as it was in the original mythic story. Castor was the twin with the mortal father, so he died after his fight with Pollux. Then his brother was so lonely without him that he begged Zeus to revive Castor."

"That's it," said Jim. "But I think they had to live for six months each, turn and turn about."

"Very good. And here we have the case of two khitmutgars; one is killed and the other lives. The survivor pairs with the boxer McMurdo, who was the servant of a twin. Now here's the beauty part. What would it mean if Conan Doyle wrote about another McMurdo who was killed, who in turn had killed a man who was so like him that the body could be mistaken for his own?"

"Castor and Pollux, no doubt about it," Jim agreed excitedly.

"And there he is. Number two on the table: Jack McMurdo in *The Valley of Fear* who is finally drowned by Professor Moriarty's men."

"Valley of Fear? Isn't that the one about the Molly Maguires in the Pennsylvania coalfields?"

"Right. Though Conan Doyle wasn't very sympathetic towards them. He calls this group the "Scowrs", a bunch of thoroughgoing villains who run the Vermissa Valley, and stop at nothing. At one point there is another Moriarty, a man with your name and the professor's, James Murdoch, mutilated by the Scowrs to intimidate him."

"A James Moriarty who survives," said Jim. "And who was this Jack McMurdo? Oh, you've got the John-James pairing here again incidentally."

"Exactly. This was simply the alias used by an undercover agent of Pinkerton's who was sent to infiltrate the Boss McGinty Lodge. He's a redoubtable man with his fists, just like the other McMurdo, in fact even the giant McGinty is afraid of him. And here's the amazing thing, and I must confess I don't begin to

understand it, but the fact is that McMurdo wears glasses, and McGinty has a squint."

"Perhaps that links up two of Conan Doyle's specialities: he was a boxer and an eye Doctor," Jim suggested.

"You might be right, but it certainly is very odd! Worth noting for future reference. His real name is Birdy Edwards, and after he manages to succeed at his task he is pursued by the Scowrer Teddy Baldwin, who is so much like him in appearance that when Birdy kills him he tries to pass off the body as his own."

"Castor and Pollux again. Edward and Teddy - both named Edward this time. Cops and Robbers. Life and Death."

"And there's even a capper to it all. Moriarty crops up at the end of this story. There is no doubt that it was his men who finally hounded down poor Birdy Edwards, alias McMurdo, and threw him overboard off the coast of...wait for it...St. Helena!"

"You've got to be jesting. St. Helena! But that's where Napoleon died!" cried Jim.

"And in this very story Moriarty is labelled as a "Napoleon-gone-wrong". So we have him providing a substitute victim for himself..."

"Who dies in the water," Jim interrupted, "like Moriarty at Reichenbach Falls..."

"Here's the absolute clincher, as if we needed one. The case of a proxy suspected of death in water. The last of the quartet is Ian Murdoch..."

"Scottish John," supplied Jim.

"...who works at a coaching establishment in Sussex, and has been wrongly accused of murdering the science master, Fitzroy McPherson, while he was swimming."

"A watery grave!"

"And of all things Ian Murdoch is the math coach."

"Shades of Professor Moriarty!"

"So we get a balance among the four Moriarty cousins: McMurdo, the boxer, lives on; 'McMurdo', the cop, is killed in the water; James Murdoch is mutilated; Ian Murdoch, the math coach, is wrongly accused of causing a watery death but lives on. And they link with Professor James Moriarty who died in the Falls at Reichenbach."

"And look at the twins for Castor and Pollux," said Jim, handing me back the table on which he had scrawled the extra information. "McMurdo, the boxer, is one of a pair of servants who work for twins, the Sholtos. The other servant is a khitmutgar who pairs with the khitmutgar of Dr. Roylott, stepfather of twins. Then there is Jack McMurdo, or Birdy Edwards, who kills the pseudo-twin Teddy Baldwin, before Moriarty gets him off St. Helena. BINGO!"

"You could hardly get a pattern like that by accident."

"When were all these books written?" asked Jim, pointing at the column indicating which stories the Moriarties appeared in.

"*Sign of Four*, McMurdo the boxer, in 1890; Moriarty himself died in *The Memoirs*, 1893; Jack McMurdo and James Murdoch are in *The Valley of Fear*, 1914; and Ian Murdoch. the Math Coach doesn't appear until *The Casebook* was published in 1927."

"That's a span of 34 years."

"And still he kept the pattern going. It must be vital for something," I observed. "Then there's some more pairing in *The Valley* that's hard to explain. 'Jack McMurdo' was not the only alias of Birdy Edwards. He also claimed to be 'Steve Wilson', and there are four Wilsons in this one book."

"That must be significant surely."

"And here again there's this same theme of duality, of good and evil broadly speaking." I handed him another table of the Wilson clan:

<u>Story</u>	<u>Wilsons</u>	<u>Professions</u>
<i>The Memoirs: Gloria Scott.</i> Holmes' first case ever.	Wilson.	Fake Clergyman.
<i>Sign of Four.</i>	Sir Archdale Wilson.	General, and saviour.
<i>The Adventures: Red Headed League.</i>	Jabez Wilson.	Pawnbroker, a victim.
<i>The Return: Golden Pince-Nez.</i> <i>Black Peter.</i>	Wilson. Wilson.	Policeman. "Canary Trainer", a crook.
<i>The Valley of Fear.</i>	Wilson. Wilson. Steve Wilson Bartholomew Wilson.	Policeman. A young Scowrer. Detective. (Birdy Edwards). Secret boss of the Scowrers.

"As you can see there was just one Wilson in Holmes' first case, the fake clergyman on board the *Gloria Scott* in *The Memoirs*. There is Jabez Wilson, a victim in *The Adventures* and we can pair him with General Wilson, the saviour of Delhi in the Indian Wars, obviously a representative of law and order. The pairs continue with a cop and a robber in *The Return*, both mere walk-ons. Then in *The Valley of Fear* we get the cop and robber pair again, and another pair composed of the alias of the detective and his apparent arch criminal superior, Bartholomew Wilson."

"Reminiscent of Bartholomew Sholto who hired McMurdo the boxer, where we started out?"

"And look at the name of his 'body-master', James H. Scott!"

"Another of your James H. clan? No, they were John H.'s weren't they?"

"Indeed they were, but I'm beginning to think that John and James are a bit interchangeable. The main point here is the Scott, because the first of the Wilsons was the fake clergyman on the *Gloria Scott*. And for those of us who know the play *The Speckled Band* there is always the fiancé of Violet Stoner whose name is Scott Wilson."

Chapter Eight.

As night began to fall I was boarding a plane heading for New York. When I told Jim of my plans he was aghast at the prospect of spoiling such a beautiful Sunday by abandoning his programme of a long hike followed by dinner, some brandy and a lot of great talk. But I had to explain that actors often don't have any choice, and I had accepted a booking to do a voice-over for a TV spot early next morning, so that I could get back to Toronto in time for the show.

"And how could that be worth your while?" he asked. "Are they paying your fare, and recompensing you for the dreadful wear and tear on your person caused by going through Customs twice in twenty four hours?" he demanded.

I had to admit that they weren't, but this would be the second spot I had done for Rothchild's candy, and it was quite amazing how much a thing like this could bring in over a period of time in the way of residuals.

"Money!" he roared. "You're prostituting your talents!" He paused impressively, and then admitted that he only wished he could find a way of doing that himself. "You know," he said, "there are times when I've thought of going into the Moriarty line of business myself. It must surely be lucrative to be the Napoleon of crime."

"Oh come on, Jim! There's pots of money to be made in your own field. Lots of historians write best sellers."

"Some. That English lady and Barbara whatsit.."

"Why don't you give it a try though?"

"I have lad. But my particular vein has long ago been worked out. Who cares a fig about the English Civil War, the antecedents and consequences? Your man Conan Doyle made a penny or two in his day out of it. And voting for the wrong side, the bloody Puritans!" He burst out laughing. "There's something monumentally funny about the fact that the Irish were the staunchest of Royalists at the time!"

"And the King wasn't even a Catholic!"

It was odd indeed, I thought now, watching the darkening sky as we flew south. How very strange that Conan Doyle changed sides so completely from Catholic to Puritan, from Cavalier to Roundhead.

Another duality.

"Magazine, sir?" asked a voice.

"No thanks." I pulled a book from my pocket.

Duality. That had been the focus of our talk that afternoon stemming from the Binomial Theorem. But what was the focus of all the signal beams Conan Doyle had sent out to his readers? A lot of them centred on the first story in *The Return*, *The Adventure of the Empty House*. I knew it pretty well by now, but I had brought my dog-eared copy along with me to study on the trip. This time I would be infinitely meticulous in ferreting out all the clues. Was there anything here which begged to be overlooked?

As I began to read I realized that this was the copy I had used in recording the book for the blind, which accounted for its

battered condition. I had also gone over it again quite carefully when Sam Rosenberg had first talked to me. His *Naked is the Best Disguise* had just been published, and it had created a stir with the suggestion that Sherlock Holmes after his "death" represented the Resurrected Christ. Part of his argument had been that the first story of *The Return* took place at Easter. While I liked his basic premise, I found in the margin of my copy a severe note to the effect that the date in the story did not correspond with his theory. The murder took place between the hours of ten and eleven on the night of March 30th. 1894. I had scribbled: But in 1894 Easter fell on March 25th.!! I remembered that it had taken some effort to establish this point, but any reader of the story at the time Conan Doyle wrote it would have been able to check up on the date of Easter just a few years before with no trouble at all. So if Conan Doyle meant it to be Easter why didn't he use the correct date? And if not, why not? If it wasn't Easter, then what was it?

So Sam's contention that Moran's eyes "shining like two stars", along with Lestrade producing two candles and the policemen uncovering their dark lanterns, conjured up images of the Ceremony of the New Fire and the Lighting of the Paschal Candle didn't quite make sense. Those rites take place on Holy Saturday, which fell on March 24th., while the murder takes place on March 30th.

"Something to drink, sir?" Some red wine perhaps. Keeping pace with Jim made the tongue a little furry.

Holmesian axiom: discard the impossible. And you are left with the inevitable, I added. So if it was not Easter, what exactly was the date of Holmes' reappearance? Watson records: "As I read the evidence at inquest, which led up to the verdict of murder against some person or persons unknown....all day I turned these facts over in my mind....In the evening I strolled across the park, and found myself about six o'clock at the Oxford Street end of Park Lane. A group of loiterers upon the pavements, all staring up at a particular window..."

He bumps into an old man, knocking his books to the ground, and presently the same old fellow turns up at Watson's house offering to sell him some books. It is Holmes in disguise, returned from the grave. Watson listens to his tale: "Such was the remarkable narrative to which I listened on that April evening."

It is certain then that Holmes returned in April, but what was the date?

The first possible date, remembering from the *Speckled Band* play that inquests were held speedily enough in those days to include a viewing of the body, would be Sunday, April 1st. The murder of two days before was still fresh enough news to bring loiterers to the scene to gape. It is likely to be a weekend rather than a weekday to make that possible, and to put Watson at liberty to "stroll across the Park". The probable date of the return then is the First Sunday after Easter, known in the Church as Low Sunday.

All very well, I thought. It shoots down the Rosenberg hypothesis, but offers no alternative theory. It would be worth

checking up on Low Sunday when I got home...unless...wait! That might be the date of the Greek and Russian Orthodox Easter. Didn't they fall a week after ours? Check up on that too.

I poured out my wine, took a sip, and turned back to the text. What about boring information, was there any? Yes! Why do we need to know the names of the books?

Watson writes: "As I did so I struck against an elderly deformed man, who had been behind me, and I knocked down several books which he was carrying. I remember that as I picked them up, I observed the title of one of them, *The Origin of Tree Worship*...With a snarl of contempt he turned upon his heel and I saw his curved back and white side-whiskers disappear among the throng."

Then presently the "old book-collector" arrives at Watson's house in Kensington, and says to him: "Well, sir, if it isn't too great a liberty, I am a neighbour of yours, for you'll find my little bookshop at the corner of Church Street, and very happy to see you, I am sure. Maybe you collect yourself, sir. Here's *British Birds*, and *Catullus*, and the *Holy War* - a bargain every one of them. With five volumes you could just fill that gap on the second shelf."

Watson turns to look at the spot indicated, and when he looks round again he finds that the "bookseller" is Sherlock Holmes back from the grave: "I am glad to stretch myself, Watson," said he. "It is no joke when a tall man has to take a foot off his stature for several hours on end."

The flight attendant came to clear away my empty glass and bottle.

Four books have been mentioned in all. Why does Holmes specifically say that five volumes would fill the gap on the second shelf? I would certainly have to check up on those books.

But now we were landing so I gathered myself for the dash through Customs; no problem without any luggage as a rule. And soon I was settled in a cab lurching fitfully toward the city.

He was certainly a most aggressive driver, forcing his way from lane to lane with the greatest eagerness, and with very little concern for safety. Not a native New Yorker, I thought, glancing at his license: Karolos K.Iokoi. A Greek presumably? He looked like one with his hawk-like face, deep set eyes and black moustache. Maybe he could help me with my Easter problem? He was delighted to talk, though it did not improve his driving. By the time I reached home I was an expert on the observance of Orthodox Easter, a very big Feast in his year. The only thing I could not find out was exactly when it fell in relation to the Christian date. He knew that it was a much older feastday, and he assured me that it had to be more correct since it always fell after the Jewish Passover. I had to admit that it made biblical sense.

It was something to go on. I tipped him lavishly for his efforts and dashed upstairs to my apartment eager for the hunt. A quick phone call to order some Chinese food, then I grabbed my Missal and turned to the Mass for Low Sunday.

Aha!

This was the day when Christ appeared after his death to the assembled Apostles. Apostles! We had found two pairs of them at

lunchtime. The Gospel (John 20: 19-31) tells the story, and this is the important part of it:

"Now Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him: We have seen the Lord. But he said to them: Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger in His side, I will not believe. And after eight days, again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in their midst, and said: Peace be to you. Then He saith to Thomas: Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side, and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered and said to Him: My Lord and My God!"

It seemed that Sam had been right after all, but just a week off in his Liturgy.

Over some well-spiced Szechuan beef I matched this Gospel with Watson's total bewilderment at Holmes' resurrection. At the first sight of him Watson faints "for the first and last time" in his life, and as he recovers he records the scene:

"My dear Watson," said the well-remembered voice, "I owe you a thousand apologies. I had no idea that you would be so affected." I gripped him by the arms.

"Holmes!" I cried. "Is it really you? Can it indeed be that you are alive? Is it possible that you succeeded in climbing out of that awful abyss?"

"Wait a moment," said he. "Are you sure that you are really fit to discuss things? I have given you a serious shock by my unnecessarily dramatic reappearance."

"I am all right, but indeed, Holmes, I can hardly believe my eyes. Good heavens! to think that you - you of all men - should be standing here in my study." Again I gripped him by the sleeve, and felt the thin sinewy arm beneath it. "Well, you're not a spirit anyhow," said I. "My dear chap, I'm overjoyed to see you. Sit down and tell me how you came alive out of that dreadful chasm."

The whole scene is very much like the one described in the Gospel of the day. Doubting Watson faints away, thinking he sees a spirit. Then he is able to reassure himself by touching him, that Holmes is resurrected in the flesh from the "abyss", the "chasm", which equates with Christ's descent into Hell after His death.

Some instinct suggested checking up on the original text of the Gospel, so over coffee I read the whole chapter of St. John, and found that there was another corroborative detail: Christ had appeared first to Mary Magdalene. This is matched in the story: Holmes explains that his dramatic return had thrown Mrs. Hudson into "violent hysterics". He had calmed her down, and briefed her on managing the moving of the bust of himself which was designed to fool Moran into thinking that he was stalking his real adversary. He does not say exactly when this occurred, so we are

at liberty to suppose that he returned a week earlier, on the "correct" date, Easter Sunday.

The Gospel and the text fitted together very neatly. A good day's work! The next step would be to check up on those books which Holmes wanted Watson to have for his second shelf, and to find out the date of Greek Easter, in case it was relevant. It sounded most intriguing but it would all have to wait until morning.

My recording session was over by 10.30 - it doesn't take very long to say : "RRRRing for RRRRothchild's" in a delighted sort of way, so I had plenty of time left before catching my flight back to Toronto. The New York Public Library was practically next door, and I went in through the 42nd. St., entrance, turned right and headed for the Jewish section. "Would you mind telling me when Passover occurred in the year 1894?" I asked with some diffidence, and I was told to sign the book on the desk. Oh dear, this was going to take a while obviously, and that was not too surprising.

I thought it would be quite hard to establish, but no. "What year did you say?" asked the Librarian, pulling a book from the shelf behind him. It was perfectly routine he assured me: "Passover in the year 1894 ran from...(Let it be March! I crossed my fingers, uselessly)..April 20th. until Saturday April 28th." So Greek Easter fell on April 29th. Damn! Rather crestfallen, I thanked him for the information and climbed the stairs among the huge marble pillars to the third floor to consult the main files.

This time I was not disappointed, and my researches during the next three hours were richly rewarded.

* * *

Tired as I was after the show that night, I was so bursting with news that I simply couldn't resist the temptation to tell Jim Murdoch all about it. Luckily he was at home, and eager for a visitor.

"My dear Mr. Holmes, do come in!" he greeted me. "You're looking very cheery. How did it all go? You wouldn't mind a beer, I daresay?"

"Good idea," I agreed, and while he went to fetch a couple I launched into the discovery of the Low Sunday Gospel, which I showed him when he came back.

"This old Missal of yours has seen some service, or Services I should say," he commented, taking it from me. "Look at that. It has all the Latin: "Quasi modo geniti infantes," he intoned to the manner born. "That takes me back a few years."

"Me too," I said. "But let me tell you the best part of it." I explained about Holmes' return in disguise and the fact that Conan Doyle had bothered to name the books in detail. "So I went to the Library to track them down. *The Holy War* was no trouble."

"Yes, that's a book by John Bunyan, isn't it?" he offered.

"Right. Or to give it its full title: *The Holy War, made by Shaddai upon Diabolus, for the regaining of the Metropolis of the World, or, the losing and taking again of the Town of Mansoul.*"

"Hmmm. Duality again: good and evil, eh?"

"And most importantly Religion," I pointed out. "Then the

Catullus was fairly easy, though naturally I had to leaf through the index of all his works in their various renderings to find the right one. Conan Doyle gave a lot of help here by saying Watson picked up a book he thought was called *The Origin of Tree Worship*.

I was pretty lucky to see a copy of this one at all; it was falling apart. Holmes was quite right to call it a bargain, because only 550 copies of it were printed. It was published in 1892 and it is by Grant Allen. And get this impressive title: *The Attis of Caius Valerius Catullus with Dissertation on the Myth of Attis, on the Origin of Tree Worship, and on the Galliambic Metre*."

"What a mouthful! Those Victorians liked to give the whole plot in a nutshell before they started writing the book, didn't they?"

"And of course this book has religious implications as well. But there is another special feature about it, because it contains virtually three books in the one volume, *Attis*, *Tree Worship*, and *Galliambic Metre*. So when Holmes says that five books will fill the gap.."

"*Holy War*, these three and the next one," supplied Jim.

"That's right," I said. "And then I got very lucky indeed. *British Birds* sounds far too ordinary to be worth bothering about, some little ornithological treatise, or perhaps a children's book, but just for the Hell of it, I looked it up in the index. And I was staggered to find that there was a listing."

"The book came out in Conan Doyle's day?"

"Yes. And it's not at all what you might expect. When I got to the desk with my chits all filled out, the chap said that this one was kept in another building way over on the West side. They could get it for me by tomorrow, if I liked, but I told him there was a time problem. So after I had had a look at the other two books, I made the pilgrimage to this almost forgotten repository practically in the River Hudson. I made my request and then sat down to wait at a table covered with heaps of obscure tomes which an elderly scholar was working on. I was a bit embarrassed at the thought of my little *British Birds* sharing the same space." I paused for a mouthful of beer.

"Go on! Go on!" urged Jim. "Don't keep me in suspense."

"Well, when finally it came it was quite a small volume, like *Holy War* and *Catullus*, easy for a deformed old man to handle. It was about birds, to the extent that it contained information about eagles and canaries for instance, but the surprise was that it was published in 1840 by The Religious Tract Society!"

"Good God! So they're all about Religion then?"

"And you yourself gave me the answer to the central riddle here."

"I did? But what's the riddle?"

"You said the very words," I teased. "Who is Holmes disguised as? That's the question."

"Let me think." Jim swallowed some beer for inspiration.

"He's a bookseller, yes?"

"Don't let that sidetrack you. He has just come from France; he says that his shop is in Church Street; he carries three religious books, which would fill that gap in Watson's second

shelf - his mind in other words; and finally we know that Holmes in fact really lived in Marylebone. Oh, and here's another little detail, which fits with *British Birds*: Holmes has a 'dead white tinge in his aquiline face'."

"Aquiline...?"

"No, forget the eagles."

Jim Murdoch pondered. "He is disguised as a Frenchman, I take it?" I nodded.

"...and the bust he used as a decoy was made in France too, wasn't it?"

"Absolutely right."

"He must have been spending a lot of time indoors to get that pallor?"

"True, and that should ring a bell for you." Then I threw him another little clue: "He has a 'curved back' and has taken a 'foot off his height'."

"Three religious books...shop on Church Street...lives in Marylebone..." he murmured to himself. "And he makes his appearance on Low Sunday! I have it. Money for old rope! He's disguised as Quasimodo, the Hunchback of Notre Dame, so called because he turned up at the Cathedral..."

"On Low Sunday!" we chorussed. "And the day is known as Quasimodo Sunday from the opening words of its Introit," we variously explained to each other in high glee.

"I congratulate you, Mr. Holmes!" Jim exulted. "We must most solemnly celebrate." He soon returned with a bottle of John Jameson and two glasses. "What do you make," he asked, as he poured, "of those books Watson was given to improve his mind?"

"I don't know yet," I replied, as we toasted each other, "but I do get the feeling that they might answer some of the reader's questions about Watson himself." I took a good swig and tried to put my thought into words. "The idea being that if a reader played detective and solved this conundrum of the Holmes disguise as Quasimodo, he should be able to go on and penetrate Watson's."

"How do you mean?" asked Jim. "Watson isn't in disguise, is he? He's the author of the darn thing. We know who he is: Dr. John H. Watson!"

"Two problems about that. We don't know what the letter H stands for. And secondly that was not his original name. When Conan Doyle wrote the first notes for *A Study in Scarlet*, his first Holmes book, he called him Ormond Sacker of Jordan."

"Ormond Sacker? That strikes a chord..."

"And another problem, the oldest mystery in the Canon. Why does Watson, who was shot in the shoulder at the Battle of Maiwand in Afghanistan..."

"There really was a Battle of Maiwand, you know," put in Jim.

"Good. But why later on does he call himself a half-pay officer with a limp from a damaged Tendo Achillis? No mention of the shoulder again?"

"Fascinating." Jim topped up our glasses and gave some thought to the matter. "Ormond Sacker has to be important," he said at last.

"Oh yes. Central to the whole thing, because Joyce uses that form of Watson's name twice in *Finnegans Wake*, and in very cryptic

circumstances."

"Does he now," said Jim slowly. "So you think he might have solved this little riddle then?"

I told him the details and he had to agree that there was a strong possibility.

"And did he put Holmes in as well?"

"Yes, he did, but usually under the alias he used during the period of his supposed death, when he was a Norwegian called Sigerson."

"So Joyce called Watson, Ormond Sacker, and Holmes, Sigerson?"

"That's right, but he decorated the names. He played with the letters to make Soakersoon, Sackerson and so forth, but he is so often called a Constable that..."

"Sackerson!" Jim interrupted me, "and Ormond Sacker."

"I never thought of that."

"So Joyce must have spotted the relationship between them, Watson and Holmes. Conan Doyle first thought of him as Ormond Sacker - and that would be his own pen name mind - and then changed him into Watson, John H. Watson. But he kept his original idea alive with Holmes as Sigerson."

He emptied his glass, and eyed me solemnly. "I have it," he whispered. "Who was the Ormonde Sacker?"

"Whoever sacked Ormond, I suppose."

"Right, but I'm not jesting," he said. "John Bunyan wrote the *Holy War*, a book that Sigerson gave to Sacker. Now what war did Bunyan fight in?"

"Oh come on, Jim. I don't know. Surely he was writing metaphorically about the war of good and evil, an inner war."

"Very good, that. But he really was a soldier and he did fight in what you might call an inner war."

"Bunyan? I didn't know that. Or...wait a bit, I suppose I may have done. *Pilgrim's Progress*. He was a Puritan, right?"

"Exactly! And he fought in the Civil War. So now tell me who the Ormonde Sacker was." He gave me an encouraging look, determined to squeeze the answer from me.

"Sacker? Somebody who sacked something...in the Civil War?"

"Right."

"Oh I know! It must be the Sack of Drogheda - the town of Drogheda north of Dublin - it was wiped out by Oliver Cromwell."

"On the button. He slaughtered the clergy, and the garrison to the last man. And that last man who escaped with his life was the Protestant Commander. Of course I wouldn't expect you to know who he was, but that man was James Butler, the 12th. Earl of Ormonde. Hence the Ormonde Sacker was Oliver Cromwell."

"James Butler, eh? Then isn't there something else here? Since Conan Doyle's first note was 'I am Ormond Sacker of Jordan'. Who does one think of immediately in relation to Jordan?"

"John the Baptist."

"And the Ormond Sacker, who defeated James. became John H. Watson, when Conan Doyle decided to dump Cromwell."

"I think he must have realized how unpopular that choice would have made him with many of his readers, but he left the clue where it was," said Jim.

"Or perhaps he never really meant to call him Ormond Sacker?" I suggested. "Perhaps it was just there simply as a signpost. But then we're still left with this mystery of the intial H."

We fell silent for a couple of minutes considering the problem, and then light began to dawn. The alphabet is secret, the old man had said. "Trees! That may be it. They keep cropping up, and Watson was definitely encouraged to study the origin of tree worship, wasn't he. Perhaps it connects with the Irish alphabet."

Jim Murdoch groaned. "You're right, and I of all men should have spotted it. The Irish letter H is called Uath, which means a hawthorn or a maytree. But to an English eye the word Uath looks exactly like Watt, so Watson is Uath-son. Of course he is!"

"I'll just quickly nip next door and get my *White Goddess* so we can see if there's anything more to it than that. Won't be a moment."

By the time I got back Jim wore the seraphic smile of a Buddha.

"What?" I asked simply.

"It's your turn to do the congratulating, Mr. Sherlock Holmes. I have just solved the John H."

"How? Who is he?" I asked.

"Not another word for the moment. You'll have to wait until tomorrow so that I can assemble all the evidence for you. Could you find time early in the afternoon to visit my rustic shack on campus?" I said that I could, and he went on: "Good. I'll have all the bits put together by then. Oh yes," he chuckled, "I'm sure I know who the John H. was. It's Civil War right enough, so he did follow up on that clue, and I'm prepared to bet there's a mention of the man in one of the historical novels. But..."

His ebullient chatter died away as he realized that I had found something in Graves. Waving the book gave him a solid clue. "What have you there?" he demanded.

"Gold!!" I cried. "Okay, congratulations on your John H., but that's only half the story. There's a whole mine of information here about the letter Uath. For instance each of the letters is linked to a profession. Graves quotes a gloss on Uath from the Book of Leacan: 'I am a shrewd navigator'."

"But the name Moriarty means a navigator, so he must be related to Watson."

"Staggering isn't it? Then again the bird of Uath is the night-crow. Its tree is the hawthorn or may, as you know. So its month is May, which in Greece and Rome was sacred to the death Goddess, Maia or Hecate. This means that Holmes must be Uath-son also because the son of Maia was Hermes."

"Hermes. Holmes is Hermes, you say? How do you work that out?" asked Jim.

"Well, he was famed for his great cunning, and he invented the lyre, a stringed instrument, so Conan Doyle made Holmes a violinist. Then here's a special point for you: Holmes was also a prodigious boxer and Hermes invented boxing."

"Did he so? I'm beginning to believe you. Holmes is Hermes."

"The son of Maia. That must be the reason why he risked his

life to retrieve the boot marked 'Meyers' out of Grimpen Mire in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. Because Maia was his mother's name. Or is that too far-fetched?"

"Depends how big the bog was!"

I groaned.

"Look! What it all comes down to is that Uath links this whole trio. Moriarty is Uath as a navigator, Watson is Uath's son, and Holmes is Hermes, son of Maia."

"That's true. So both Holmes and Watson must be 'Uath-sons'. I wonder if there's any stronger link between them?" We both mulled that over for a while, till once again the answer flashed into view. "He was a Doctor! And Hermes carried the caduceus, the wand with the intertwined snakes..."

"That's it! The universal symbol of Medicine," Jim agreed. "The Symbol of...what's-his-name...the God of healing? Not Hippocrates, the other fellow?"

"Aesculapius."

"Him. My memory must be going."

"Let me see whether Graves has anything about him here." I turned to the index and was surprised to find tons of references.

"Yes, he certainly does. Lets have a look at p.52 for a start."

I ran rapidly over it and soon found something interesting.

"Listen to this: 'Son of Apollo...to whom the crow is also sacred'."

"We just had the crow as the bird of Uath. Conan Doyle wasn't kidding with the clue of the book about birds."

"There's more: 'patrons of healing and resurrection ... Aesculapius is represented in Greek art with a dog beside him and a staff in his hand around which twine oracular snakes'."

"Or speckled bands, you might call them," Jim put in.

"Very true. But this makes a definite link to an incident in the first book of the Canon, when Watson went to meet Holmes with a view to sharing lodgings with him. After some chat they both confess their faults to see whether they will be compatible. Watson-Aesculapius says that he has a dog, and Holmes-Hermes admits to playing the violin."

"Perfect! So they form a team. In fact they must be aspects of the same character."

"That would explain a lot," I said slowly, thinking about it all. "He called Holmes and Watson, Sigerson and Sacker, so in some sense Watson must be the father."

"Yes. But how can we fit Moriarty into the scheme of things? Uath is the navigator...so he must be Watson's father!"

"No. The point Conan Doyle makes is that he's Holmes's father. The gloss Graves quotes on the letter M is that it belongs to the 'skilled artist', and of course Holmes is descended from the very artistic Vernet family."

"It's most beautifully complicated, but it does all interlock," said Jim. "You know, the thought I can't get rid of after all those Apostles we've found is that Conan Doyle meant this trio to represent Father, Son and Holy Ghost?"

We both toyed with the implications of that, and finally had to accept it.

"Since he died and was resurrected we can take Holmes as

Christ?" I offered.

"Pretty certain," Jim confirmed.

"Then he is the son, and Watson must be his father, though they are both exactly equal as the sons of Uath or Maia," I went on. It was an elegant re-statement of an old theme, the essential identity of the three persons in one. "So he must have designed them to be the trinity, because if you think for a moment about those three books, you'll find that they also fit the pattern: *The Holy War of Shaddai* represents God the Father; the *Attis* is the dying and reborn God, the Son; and *British Birds* suggests the dove, the symbol of the Holy Ghost. Watson was supposed to wake up his 'second shelf' and realize just who he was!"

And on that happy note I staggered home to bed next door, having promised again to visit Jim on campus tomorrow.

Chapter Nine

It came to me after a dream filled night that there was yet another way of fitting the trio together. Certainly, when taken in conjunction with the books for Watson's second shelf, Holmes, Moriarty and Moriarty make a close match with the Trinity. And they all "belong" to the letter Uath, or H: Holmes and Watson have it in their names, and Moriarty is tied to it as a navigator.

But consider the relationship of the Christian names: Moriarty and Watson are a James and a John. In the *New Testament* they were the sons of Zebedee whom Christ nicknamed the Boanerges, the sons of thunder. The only other Apostle to be so honoured was Simon, called Peter. These three were the inner core of the Twelve. They were present at the Transfiguration, at the raising of Jairus's daughter and in the Garden of Gethsemane. They were specially singled out. In what way then could Holmes be a "Peter"? The answer was not hard to find. In the *Speckled Band* play he comes to Dr. Rylott's house disguised as the new butler, Peters.

As the kettle was boiling I checked up in the *Sherlockiana* for the name Peter. There was a groom of that name in one of the stories of *The Return*, whose only claim to fame was that he was knocked out by Roaring Jack Woodley. The fact that he was a groom links him with horses, and Castor was a horseman, while his twin Pollux was a boxer. Holmes as Pollux knocks out Woodley in turn.

So Holmes played the part of Peters on one occasion, and took his part on another. Then again he allowed "Holy Peters", the con-man, to escape, and uncovered the killer of Black Peter Carey, in other *Return* stories.

It looked as though Conan Doyle did have the trio of Peter, James and John in mind, and that ought to mean that a close connection should exist between Holmes and both Moriarty and Watson.

In the Gillette play, as Sherlock Holmes, I had some lines about Moriarty, which were quoted almost word for word from the

Final Problem, the last story of *The Memoirs*:

"He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless like a spider in the centre of its web, but that web had a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them."

This had made me take notice of a very similar passage in an earlier story about the *Resident Patient*, in which Watson has this to say about Holmes:

"As to my companion neither the country nor the sea presented the slightest attraction to him. He loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumour or suspicion of unsolved crime."

Conan Doyle definitely suggests that Holmes and Moriarty had something in common, but did he ever do the same for the pairing of Holmes and Watson? I started turning the well-thumbed pages of *The Return* and soon found that there was indeed an underlying unity, which Watson clearly recognizes:

"We had breakfasted and were smoking our morning pipe."

"These details only struck our attention afterwards, for our thoughts were entirely absorbed by the terrible object..."

Now it could certainly be argued that this is just a style of writing, but the more I read the more it became apparent that when any physical activity was to be done, often something very trivial, Holmes wanted Watson to do it for him. I began to tabulate the evidence to show Jim in the afternoon.

PHYSICAL -MENTAL CONJUNCTION.

- a) "I believe you have some matches in your pocket, Watson"
But Holmes is a very heavy smoker; surely he must have some of his own!
- b) "Watson, a bucket of water over the straw."
- c) "Watson, would you have the kindness to take the paper and read aloud the paragraph in question."
Surely Holmes would have a better comprehension of the material if he read it silently to himself.
- d) Watson is required to bend down and let Holmes get on his shoulders to see over a high wall, because the super athlete Holmes gets "so little active exercise".
- e) "Not one of your cases, Watson - mental, not physical. All right. Come, if you want to...."
- f) The mind governs the body's finances as one might expect:
"Your cheque book is locked in my drawer," says Holmes to his friend. Watson is not at all surprised at this most unusual arrangement.

SIMILARITY OF CHARACTERISTICS.

- a) On a number of occasions Watson remarks on Holmes' uncanny ability to get around the ladies. At the end of *The Return* we find: "Now, Watson, the fair sex is your department," said Holmes with a smile.
- b) Holmes is a heavy smoker with little regard for the clock, but we find him saying: "What with your eternal tobacco,

Watson, and your irregularity at meals...".

INDIVISIBILITY.

A very odd feature of *The Return* is that only three times does anyone other than Holmes say anything to Watson, and then it is the detectives, twice it is Inspector Lestrade and once Stanley Hopkins. Both of them have Holmesian characteristics: Hopkins bears his initials, and Lestrade can be equated with the Strad on which Holmes plays so expertly.

The rest of the time nobody even bothers to greet him. The most striking example is in the last story when the Prime Minister is appalled at the idea of revealing a State Secret to Sherlock Holmes. Finally, and with the greatest reluctance he does so, purely on the basis of a "need to know". But Watson is present at this meeting, a fact to which the Statesman is utterly blind. Surely he would have said: "Well, it would appear to be necessary that I must confide in you, but I'm afraid I must ask your friend here to step into the next room while I do so."

Each little item taken on its own would not convince a sceptic, but taken as a whole they supported the notion of an underlying unity between the three characters. They formed a trinity, in which Moriarty served as the dark, or, I suddenly thought with a start, the light or Lucifer element: the power of the spirit for good or evil, the Colonel or the Professor. And wasn't that exactly the same duality as in the case of Watson, the Doctor and the soldier? His brief experience on the battlefield marked him for life, both physically and mentally.

All right, I said to myself, it's time to get to the bottom of this wound business, and have something really concrete to show Jim Murdoch later on. First I turned to the opening passage of *A Study in Scarlet* where Watson tells the story of the severe wound he suffered at the Battle of Maiwand. He took a bullet through his shoulder, and was only saved from death by the gallantry of his orderly, Murray, who got him back to the safety of British lines on a horse. Then in the very next book, *The Sign of Four* (p.121), he speaks of himself as a "half-pay officer with a damaged tendo Achillis." Was he wounded in the shoulder or the heel?

Throw out the impossible and what are you left with? He could hardly have forgotten where he was wounded. Shoulder or heel? Why not both? Why not indeed. Holmes says that Watson has a "natural turn for violence", and, speaking of Dr. Rylott, that Surgery is a violent profession.

Perhaps Watson wasn't exercising his profession at Maiwand; he might have been acting as a combatant. Throughout the canon we find that he is armed with a pistol, and is eager to use it. Place him in the prone firing position and he could very easily have a bullet strike him in the shoulder, an injury which "shattered the bone and grazed the subclavian artery", AND have that same bullet pass down through the axilla to strike him in the heel. I blessed my medical training. Conan Doyle was most specific anatomically. We presently find that it was the left shoulder which took the bullet, which is consistent with the fact

that his right shoulder would be largely protected by his own rifle. The bullet, or some part of it, then lodged in his heel, a seemingly unimportant injury compared to the massive bleeding from the shoulder, and the shattered bone. In his weakened condition, and suffering also from enteritis, it must have been thought inadvisable to operate, so the fragment was left where it was. His life was saved, but he was left with a limp.

So a picture builds up of Watson as a soldier rather than a Doctor at the Battle of Maiwand. We may suppose that he was acting in defence of the wounded men in his care.

Overall it threw considerable fresh light on the problem, I thought to myself, as I walked through a dusting of new snow to the nearby Campus of the University. It took quite a while to track down my friend's "rustic shack". It seemed that visiting Professors were kept in Limbo. After being re-directed several times I finally discovered that he was lodged in a rather comfortable trailer, parked next to a huge hole in the ground, where some building was going on rather tentatively. "Mr. Holmes!" he greeted me joyfully. "I have it all here for you as promised.

My young henchpeople have been busy since dawn combing the library, and they've run it all to earth for us. Now do take off that lamentable sheepskin, and make yourself comfortable."

"Thanks!" I hung up my coat and settled into an old armchair, before announcing that I had solved the mystery of Watson's wound in the meantime.

"Have you now?" Jim sounded rather disappointed. "How did you do that?"

"Well, it came to me that he couldn't possibly have forgotten he had been hit in the shoulder when he wrote that he had a limp.

So, throwing out the impossible, he must have been hit in both shoulder and heel, perhaps even by the same bullet. No problem. But it does show that he was soldiering rather than doctoring at the time."

"Very good, very good indeed! That all fits splendidly." Jim perked up considerably. "It's the mysterious John H. that I was trying to track down. Now look at this first of all. Nothing up my sleeve! A genuine copy of Arthur Conan Doyle's historical romance entitled *Micah Clarke*, which concerns itself with the doings and the gallantry during the Civil War between the Roundheads and Cavaliers, the supporters of Parliament and King Charles I. You are familiar with it?"

I said that I had read it.

He handed it to me and first pointed out the publication date. "1889. That's just three years after Conan Doyle wrote the note about 'Ormond Sacker'. And now turn to the marked passage there." He flipped over some pages. "As you can see there is here a specific mention of a Battle fought at Chalgrove Field. Now did you ever hear of that?"

"No, I can't say I did. Pretty obscure one is it?"

"It is. Only a historian might remember it, more of skirmish really. But Conan Doyle proves that he knew about it, so we must conclude that he must also have known about the most important incident during that battle."

"Certainly. But please get to the point!"

"First we look at Conan Doyle's first notes for his first Holmes book. Here's a reprint of the page. Observe: `Ormond Sacker of Jordan'. The `of Jordan' is crossed out, and `of Afghanistan' is substituted. He no sooner put down Jordan than he crossed it out. Now you pointed out that Jordan made you think of John the Baptist, and Watson's name was John. So why Afghanistan?"

"Why indeed?"

"Because Conan Doyle knew about the real Battle of Maiwand, and because Uath equates with Maia."

"Yes, that works. There's something else to remember: Watson was saved by his orderly, Murray, and later he married Mary Morstan. Maiwand, Maia, Murray, Mary, you see?"

"A lovely fit," Jim agreed. "But first let's go back to the question: what was the link between Ormond Sacker of Jordan and John H. Watson?" He smiled triumphantly. "Answer me that."

"I'm sorry, but I must confess I've no idea, except the John and Jordan."

"Ormond Sacker was Oliver Cromwell, remember?" I nodded, "Then John H. must be his cousin, John Hampden..."

"Oh I've heard of him," I interrupted, "he was the chap who refused to pay the ship money, wasn't he? An M.P.?"

"Right. He was a leading figure in Parliament, and his rich family helped poor cousin Oliver a lot in his early days. You might call him the power behind the throne, except that Cromwell didn't think much of that type of chair until later on in his chequered career."

"So John H. is John Hampden?"

"Just look at the facts. He was a cousin of Oliver Cromwell, the Ormond Sacker; his name was John; like Watson he volunteered for service when his country was in trouble; he was a lawyer, but he raised a Regiment of his own, and served as its Colonel, but he wasn't playing the Colonel on the most fateful day of his life, just as Watson wasn't being a Doctor, as you found. Hampden was at Chalgrove quite by accident. Look here at *The Dictionary of National Biography* entry about him. `On June 18th. 1643 Prince Rupert fell on outposts at Postcombe and Chinor, and the battle of Chalgrove Field followed'." He looked up at me to emphasize a point: "And that, mind you, is a battle which Conan Doyle mentioned in *Micah Clarke* in 1889. Now Essex's despatch to Parliament said...but here. Read it for yourself, or you'll never believe it"

I took the volume from him and found the place. The despatch said that Colonel Hampden had "put himself in Captain Cross's troop where he charged with much courage, and was unfortunately shot through the shoulder". He rode quietly from the field in order not to draw attention to his condition, and made it back through hostile terrain to the safety of Thame. There he died from his wound.

"This fits beautifully," I told Jim. "He left the battlefield on a horse just like Watson." Jim nodded as I began to read on.

Hampden's character was very much like Watson's. D'Ewes said of him that he was "one of those fiery spirits who, accounting

their own condition desperate, did not care, though they hazarded the whole kingdom, to save themselves." He was eminent for "prudence, piety and peacefulness, and his courage was equal to his best parts." King Charles, whom he so violently opposed, on hearing of his injury sent his own surgeon, Dr, Gyles, to do what he could for him.

It was clear what Conan Doyle had done. He had discarded the idea of Oliver Cromwell and substituted his cousin, John Hampden, honest, courageous, a follower rather than a leader, and an amateur soldier in the Civil War who was wounded in the shoulder.

I said as much to Jim, and was rewarded with an enigmatic smile.

"You obviously haven't come to the beauty part yet," he replied.

"Read on. There's a very good reason for the oddity of Watson's wound."

I did as he bade me. Was this it? There was some doubt about his last words. Did he, in fact, say: O Lord save my country? This historian doubted it...Ah, here it was: "Round Hampden's last days a number of legends have gathered and animated controversies have taken place. The precise nature of the wound which caused his death has been much discussed. (Notes and Queries, 1st. Series, vii 647. xii 271) All contemporary accounts agree in ascribing death to the consequence of a bullet wound in the shoulder, but in the next century a report spread that it was due to the explosion of an overloaded pistol which shattered his hand." In order to settle the point Lord Nugent opened the grave in 1828, and amputated both arms with a penknife. Later he admitted that it had probably been the wrong grave!

"What about that then?" Jim cried, seeing my look of amazement. "Less that sixty years before Conan Doyle put pen to paper this had been a famous historical point of controversy. Conan Doyle shows that he knew about the battle of Chalgrove Field. Surely as a historian he must have known all about John Hampden's equivocal wound."

"There can be no doubt about it at all," I replied. "Let us lift our hats to Dr. John Hampden Watson."

"You believe all that so?"

"Absolutely!"

"So did I," said Jim with a smile. "But here's the sucker punch. Where was Dr. Watson wounded?"

"Shoulder and heel." I said. "Oh, but you mean whereat, don't you?"

"In Afghanistan," Jim nodded. "Did you know that there was just one survivor of the retreat from Kabul?"

"You're talking about the Khyber Pass massacre aren't you?"

"That's it. Later it turned out there were also a few captives. But sixteen thousand people died, and most of them were civilians. One man came back to Jalalabad on a clapped out horse, with a sword wound on his head. He was a Doctor..."

There was a pause. "What was his name? Don't tell me it was Watson."

No. His name was William Brydon and he was an Assistant Surgeon. He was a Scotsman. And he qualified at the University of Edinburgh."

"Like Arthur Conan Doyle. Oh my God! What happened to him?"

"They patched him up and he went back to the wars. Must have liked the danger. But he died in bed back in Scotland."

"He knitted the two stories together then?" I said slowly.
"And nobody noticed?"

"They don't do they?"

Chapter Ten.

We had done it, we really had. It was a wonderful feeling as I walked home that afternoon. I was not just playing the part of Holmes, I was actually being him, patiently finding all the evidence - no, a better image - sniffing it out like a bloodhound, then discarding the impossible and coming to logical conclusions, solutions to problems which had troubled readers for years. Of course nobody had been taking Conan Doyle's work quite this seriously, but it was all so simple once you knew the trick!

I went back over the steps that had led to the solution of the Moriarty and Watson riddles, from my first meeting with the strange old man who had pointed the way. Things had started with the triple letter clues and the complicated patterns of changes Conan Doyle made in constructing his play from the earlier story versions of Milverton and the Speckled Band. Then the background of the Roylott-Rylott story had come out, based on a combination of Macbeth and the Fisher King. So often the little inconsistencies had pointed back to *The Return* that it had then seemed worthwhile to spend the many hours necessary to catalogue all the names in it. This had revealed over-abundant pairing, and rather too many John H.'s. Things then began to happen quickly: John and James were important; Watson and Moriarty; the binomial theorem referred to two names; Jim told me of the Moriarty cousins; the importance of trees; Uath and Maia; the hidden unity of the trinity of Holmes, Watson and Moriarty; Holmes, disguised as the Hunchback of Notre Dame, giving Watson those symbolic books for his "second shelf"; Watson, Doctor and amateur soldier, Aesculapius and Achilles. It all matched up so perfectly. And now we had the final piece of the puzzle, Colonel John Hampden and his equivocal wound. and Dr. Brydon in Afghanistan, the sole survivor. This would be worth writing a book about, I thought. I could visualize the acknowledgements: "Thanks are due to the many people who have helped me with this exercise in deduction, the librarians, the cabbie from Greece, my own Professor Moriarty, Jim Murdoch, who knew so much about History and Irish names, but most of all to the nameless gentleman who started me on the road, and to a number of books which were laid on me...."

Sherlock Holmes had offered Watson three books for his "second shelf"...

There was a slow creeping sensation at the back of my scalp. My own name was John Horgan. I had been called Patrick only since my days as a medical student when we found that five of the six of us dissecting the same body were named John. We had worked it out with a Jack, a Johnny and so forth, and for some reason I

had opted for my second name, Patrick. But I was born a John H., and I had studied Medicine. I had been an amateur soldier too, and now like Watson, and his creator, I was planning to turn writer. Watson married Mary Morstan. Conan Doyle's mother and mine were Irishwomen named Mary, and we were born on virtually the same date, he on May 22nd.1859, and I on May 26th.1929, almost seventy years to the day later. The month of May is that of Mary.

We both went to school at Stonyhurst College. He practiced Medicine on Devonshire Place, and I had lived in an apartment there when I was a student at St. Mary's Hospital. It was just a stone's throw from Baker Street.

It was a thunderbolt. I wasn't Holmes at all. I was the John H. who needed the volumes to fill his second shelf. The Grail book the old man had given me even had an inscription that it was meant for my "shelf", but I shouldn't shelve it.

This is going too far, I said to myself, trying to get back to the everyday world. Here it is a grey cold day in Toronto, the snow lying in great piles at the edges of the road, and the buildings outlined starkly against the scudding clouds. People are hurrying along bundled up in their coats and scarves, hats and gloves. This is real. Feel it. Look at it. The person you are thinking about does not exist. That way madness lies. The fictional world and the real one cannot interconnect.

Nevertheless...

"That was Sherlock Holmes himself!" I shouted, ignoring the turning heads and the smiles of couple who were passing me on the street. It just had to be Holmes. "Professor Moriarty" had helped in the solution. And I must be Dr. Watson! Why I even had the "stigmata" to match his wounds, a skiing accident had left me with a much weakened shoulder, and I had torn the ligaments of my ankle falling off a skate board.

"Oh come on now," I said to myself, but not out loud this time, "don't start getting silly. It's broad daylight on a wintery day in Toronto. It's half past three in the afternoon. This is not the time or the place to start imagining things!" But those coincidences were impossible to ignore. My whole life had uniquely fitted me as the one person to perform this task. I WAS Dr. John H. Watson.

I thought back to the old man who had initiated me on the quest by telling me that I could solve the Watson and Moriarty problems. What else had he said? He had asked me to find the evidence. What had we been talking about? We had been tramping through the snow, and he had asked me how I had become interested in Conan Doyle as well as Joyce. Through Sam Rosenberg, I had told him. And I had rambled on about Conan Doyle killing his hero off, only to revive him later in order to make some money. He had become quite angry. I could almost feel his steely fingers gripping my shoulders ...probing Watson for the well-known wound?

"Oh dear, the same old half answer. Why don't you think?" His tone had been scathing.

I had to find him and tell him that I had woken up at last. Let me think. We had driven north from the theatre, then turned right before reaching the TV Station, of that I was certain. There was only a narrow strip of built up area there before you

reached a great ditch where a Freeway was being made. We had not crossed over that. So the number of streets where the house could be was strictly limited. The image was still with me: the Victorian-Gothick turrets, the steps flanked by dog and deer, and the portico with its eagle on top. An eagle - how very suitable for Holmes.

As I began to check out the area painstakingly I remembered also our second meeting. How heavily he had smoked, both pipe and cigarettes; the battered silver cigarette-case - why that could be the very one whose gleam caught Watson's eye through the gloom at Reichenbach. Then his observation about my smoking habits. Why on earth had that not all made sense at the time! He had spoon-fed me along the path from the triple alphabetic clues to the enormous importance of the Irish alphabet; he had shown me Stoke Moran, that hellish place, on the map.

I walked until dark, and I was convinced that I had searched every street in the neighbourhood, but there was not a vestige of that one particular house. There were buildings not unlike it in this part of the city, but none with those peculiar stone figures. I was feeling the chill as I turned for home. Passing the Police Station which faced the hotel I had a fantasy of going in and asking for help.

"And what's the man's name?" the bored Officer would ask.

"Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

"I see, sir," most patiently. "And I suppose you wanted him to solve some crime for you? Perhaps we could be of some help?"

To solve a crime for you!!

That was it. I was supposed to solve a crime, and I had not even begun my task. I could hear his voice in my mind, a little disconsolate: "The Doctor's crime. He was a self-confessed criminal of blackest dye. You are the only person who can defend him." Then he had paused, and added: "But of course you'll have to accuse him first, won't you?"

Conan Doyle was to be wrongly accused of some crime, and then I was to turn lawyer and defend him. Watson was to become John Hampden, alias Doctor Brydon.

Holmes, for that was how I had already begun to think of him, had suggested three cases as worthy of study. And the inevitable process of evidence discovery along the lines he indicated had led to the solution of the Watson and Moriarty problems. The Conan Doyle crime had to be the third part of the trinity and therefore must concern Holmes himself.

When I got back to the apartment, as soon as I had thawed out, I sat down to figure things out diagrammatically. The sketch came out like this:

John H, Watson, Doctor and soldier, survived his shoulder wound in Afghanistan.	Colonel John Hampden, lawyer and soldier died of his shoulder wound. Dr. William Brydon, of Edinburgh University, survives in Afghanistan.
---	--

Professor James Moriarty died at Reichenbach.	Colonel James Moriarty lives on. So does Dr. William Brydon.
Sherlock Holmes.....?	Sherlock Holmes died at Reichenbach.

It became apparent that there was a pattern to these events but it was not easy to see what they predicted. The fact that Watson survived the injury which killed his avatar, Colonel Hampden, was mirrored by the fact that the Professor died, and his brother, the Colonel, lived on. So did Dr. Wason and Dr. Brydon. What did that say about the fate of Holmes at Reichenbach?

The left side of the table had to do with the "real" world of the Sherlock Holmes canon up to Reichenbach. The right hand side had to do with other events, what could I call them, historical events, events that don't belong in the canon.

The only way to make the pattern fit was to conclude from its life and death nature that Conan Doyle had always meant to kill off Holmes and bring him back to life. In view of Watson and Brydon's survival from their wounds in Afghanistan, the only possibility for the empty box was: "Sherlock Holmes survives his death at Reichenbach."

That had to be the answer.

Conan Doyle's crime was that he murdered everybody's favourite detective. He admitted it, and the world was led to believe that he was dead for good. But just supposing that he was not committing a crime, but instead one of the greatest hoaxes in the history of literature, by pretending to dislike Holmes and terminating him? And then suppose further that he put all the evidence into the stories to show that Holmes was not in fact really dead. He was in effect saying to his readers: "You have studied the methods of detection in these stories. Surely you must notice that there is something very odd about them. There are silly 'mistakes', and the names keep recurring. Don't you think something peculiar is going on? Now solve this case for yourselves!"

It had a good feel to it, but I needed to know the facts of the matter. What exactly had been the history of this episode of Holmes' death? In the *Annotated Edition's* introductory articles I found the accepted version, the circumstantial evidence which Conan Doyle had used to convict himself falsely. He had written to his mother during the final stages of writing *The Adventures* that he was thinking of "slaying Holmes in the last and winding him up for good."

Now that is a very telling little *double entendre*. Once one understands the nature of Conan Doyle's duality one can grasp that he meant by Holmes' death to "wind up", as with a clock, his hero, for the purpose of GOOD, or for eternity - to grant him immortality. His mother naturally didn't see the joke. Mary Conan Doyle wrote back: "You won't. You can't. You mustn't." But he would, he could and he did. While winding up the next set of stories, *The Memoirs*, he sent another letter to his suffering mother: "I am in the middle of the last Holmes story, after which

the gentleman vanishes, never to return. I am weary of his name."

Here again there is no reason to suppose that Conan Doyle was telling a lie. He could very easily have been writing the very last adventure that was ever published, the case of *The Retired Colourman*, which he then kept shelved for later use.

Be that as it may, Holmes' death in the last story of *The Memoirs* triggered a public outcry, and the reaction from his publishers can be imagined. But no matter what they offered he was not to be swayed.

There are a couple of tiny hints in the *Annotated Edition* that offer food for thought to the enquiring mind. He wrote to a friend: "I couldn't revive him if I would, at least not for years..."

This could equally mean that he had already put into the text some evidence that would demand an interlude of years before any more Holmes stories could be published. In actual fact it was eight years before *The Hound of the Baskervilles* appeared, a reminiscence about an early case, and a full ten years before he was finally resuscitated in *The Return*.

The letter goes on to say that he has had "such an overdose of him that I feel towards him as I do towards paté-de-foie-gras of which I once ate too much".

There was nothing so intimidating about the circumstantial evidence that it would prevent me from honestly undertaking the task of becoming Colonel John Hampden, Counsel for the Defence.

First of all I had to frame an indictment on behalf of an outraged public:

"The defendant, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, is charged with a crime to which he has repeatedly pleaded guilty, to wit that he did knowingly and with malice aforethought, during the year 1893, cause the death of his immortal creation, Sherlock Holmes."

That was what the world believed. But if all the evidence I had been led to search for was not entirely of my own fashioning, Conan Doyle had been trying rather strenuously to draw attention to an underlying detective story, one that his readers were supposed to solve for themselves. And in that case there must be evidence enough in the text to demonstrate that Holmes would indeed return triumphant from the grave.

I felt sure enough on this point to think that I was capable of fighting a holding action.

* * *

"M'Lud, in the unavoidable absence of Sir Arthur from this Court, I would like to enter a plea on behalf of my client of Not Guilty."

There is an outcry from the spectators as I sit down and adjust my wig.

The Judge gavels for silence. "Did I hear you correctly Colonel Hampden? Not Guilty?"

I rise once more. "Not Guilty, M'Lud," I confirm, with a pretense of confidence. "And may I ask the indulgence of this

Court, since I was only retained on this most important case just a few minutes ago, and request a four week period of grace for the preparation of my brief."

"In view of the gravity of the offense and the short time you have been allowed for consideration of the matter this Court will adjourn for one month..."

* * *

So that was that. The next stage was a meticulous examination of the evidence. Clearly it could belong to one of two categories. Again and again anomalies in Conan Doyle's later writing had led back to that abyss between *The Memoirs* and *The Return*. Naturally enough after the "resurrection" Conan Doyle was eager to draw attention to what his readers had missed. But to use this as prima facie evidence would be quite inadmissible, and would never get by the Judge. There had to be evidence of another sort, predictive evidence, in the stories before the "death" to show that Holmes was certain to reappear.

The search for clues must cover the books written before the fatality at Reichenbach, when the killing of his hero was demonstrably on Conan Doyle's mind, the sets of stories called *The Adventures*, and *The Memoirs*.

PART TWO

THE HUNT

"...too much evidence. What was vital was overlaid and hidden by what was irrelevant. Of all the facts which were presented to us we had to pick those which we deemed to be essential, and then piece them together in their order, so as to reconstruct this very remarkable chain of events."

Chapter Eleven.

The sense of excitement continued on through that night's performance. It was rather amusing to think that the audience was witnessing a most unusual event: they were seeing Dr. Watson play the part of Sherlock Holmes. But I woke early the following morning to the realization that there was something important missing. My little dream of defending Conan Doyle in some sort of trial was all very well, but what did I propose to do about it in concrete terms?

Somehow or other this had to be brought to the attention of the public, that was item number one. That would be the trial then, whether people could be persuaded to accept this new truth.

The answer was obvious. It had to be made into a book which would start with this idea of the trial, and then go through all the evidence step by step, allowing the readers to play the part of the jury.

Early breakfast and afterwards some further consideration over a second cup of tea. I already had a stack of notes on the work done so far. All this material would have to be written up.

Those solutions to several of the problems raised in Conan Doyle's writing would demonstrate his methods of work, the *modus operandi* of my criminal, and they would further show what "tools" were available to help the reader-detective in his literary sleuthing. Then would come the body of the book, the presentation of whatever evidence could be found to show that Conan Doyle never intended a permanent death for Sherlock Holmes.

I started to sketch out a logical framework for the material I had covered so far. There were several obvious main headings, each with a number of important subdivisions for thorough consideration:

1. A study of the changes Conan Doyle made when he turned *The Speckled Band* and *The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton* into a play:
 - a) Life and death changes.
 - b) The importance of places and maps.
 - c) The use of the Bardic alphabet; Uath, Maia and Hermes.
 - d) Legendary material: the Fisher King and Parsifal.
 - e) Importance of names, e.g. Augustus and Sebastian.
2. Binomiality:
 - a) Moriarty and his kinfolk.
 - b) Castor and Pollux.
 - c) Moriarty and Holmes.
 - d) James and John; and Sherlock Holmes.
3. Holmes as Christ:
 - a) The Trinity of Holmes, Watson and Moriarty.
 - b) Holmes returns on Low Sunday after a three year absence.
 - c) Importance of symbolism of the books for the second shelf.
 - d) Use of dates based on the Catholic calendar.
4. John H. Watson:
 - a) Use of historical figures.
 - b) John Hampden, the Roundhead.

- c) D. William Brydon.
5. Most important of all, and easiest to overlook, was the discovery that clues were most likely to be hidden in the most boring pieces of text.

It would certainly take many weeks of patient work to fill out this framework step by step so that the logic of it all would be inescapable. Already I had noticed a fundamental error since the last item on my table would have to be presented first. For instance it was the boring information from the Railway Guide which had led up to an understanding of *The Speckled Band*. That was the place to begin when following up the train of evidence.

The book would have to fall into two parts. This would be the first part, showing how to find the clues. Since the nature of my life as an actor meant that I could only type this up for a couple of hours a day, the search for the evidence of the non-crime, which would be the second part of the book, could be conducted during odd moments side by side with the donkey work.

Following this plan I spent a while setting down the details of the changes between the stories and the play of *Speckled Band*, then took a rest and started to comb through *The Memoirs* for clues. Since this was the book in which the death of Sherlock Holmes took place it seemed the likeliest source for evidence about it. I had already found in typing things up that it would save considerable time and effort if I were to adopt the Baker Street Irregular's convention of referring to the stories only by their first four letters. Accordingly, as I read the first tale, about SILVER Blaze, I kept my eyes open for boring information, and it leapt from the page.

SILV is about the disappearance of the racehorse, Silver Blaze, the favourite to win the Wessex Cup. Presently the race-card is given to us for the Wessex Plate (immediately one wonders why there is this change from Cup to Plate?), but there is no information about the trainers, and the breeding of the horses. In this strange world it will be wise to pay close attention to what is offered:

1. Mr. Heath Newton's The Negro. Red cap. Cinnamon jacket.
2. Colonel Wardlaw's The Pugilist. Pink cap. Blue and black stripes.
3. Lord Blackwater's (misp.)² Desborough. Yellow cap and sleeves.
4. Colonel Ross's Silver Blaze. Black cap. Red jacket.
5. Duke of Balmoral's Iris. Yellow and black stripes.
6. Lord Singleford's Rasper. Purple cap. Black sleeves.

Well! These jockeys are not very fully clad, that is obvious to begin with. Number 5 has no cap, while 3 and 6 have sleeves but no jackets. Clearly Conan Doyle did not think his readers

²Misp. indicates that the Complete Edition has a misprint; in this case Backwater for Blackwater.

would want to spend any time studying this piece of rubbish! What then does it draw attention to?

The joke seems to be that there are exactly enough items of black equipment to outfit one jockey completely: two half jackets from 2 and 5, with the sleeves from 6 and the cap from 4. He would then ride for Lord Blackwater(3) on The Negro(1). This truly funereal assemblage would make a perfect contrast with Silver Blaze, the hero-villain of the story.

When John Straker, his trainer, attempted to nobble Silver Blaze the horse kicked out and killed him. His jockey appears in the colours of a Judge, wearing the red robes and the black cap which are worn while sentencing a culprit to death for a capital offence. There was another example in this story of the same colour combination: Fitzroy Simpson, the prime suspect, wore a cravat of "red and black silk" (338).

Two ideas seemed worth pursuing. The black is suggestive of mourning for the soon-to-die hero, the red and black of the sentencing judge. It didn't take long to comb through the stories for further examples. There was blackness in every single one, and it was combined with red in six out of the eleven:

YELLOW Face: This story is about the concealment of a "coal-black negress" who wears a "red frock" (361).

STOCKbroker's Clerk: Here a "black-bearded man" shaves off his whiskers in order to pretend to be his own brother (365).

GLORIA Scott: Here we have a Doctor in black (379). Hudson, sole survivor of the explosion which sank the Gloria Scott, wears a "red and black check shirt" (376)

MUSgrave Ritual: Musgrave was kept awake by his "café noir" (389). Brunton dies wearing a black suit (391).

REIGate Squires (misp): Holmes suffers the "blackest depression" (398), and the story hinges on "blackmail" (409).

CROoked Man: Henry Wood fears that things will "look black" against him (421).

RESident patient: Blessington keeps his money in a "big black box" (429). Dr. Trevelyan wears a "black frock-coat" with a "touch of colour about the necktie" (425). In medical parlance that touch of colour would probably indicate redness.

GREEK Interpreter: Holmes and his brother Mycroft comment on a man dressed in "complete mourning" (437). The name of the Interpreter is Melas, the Greek for black (438). Melas has "coal-black hair" and a "black beard" (438,445). It is rather striking that Mr. Melas is described first as having black hair, though later in the story he is only recognisable by his black beard, one which seems to have sprouted overnight. This makes a match with the oddity of the beard which Pinner shaves off in the third story in order to become his own "brother". This balance occurs in the third and ninth stories, which are of course symmetrically disposed in the series of eleven. This point should be worth following up. Neither of them has the colour red.

NAVAL Treaty: Joseph Harrison wears a "black cloak" to hide his "ruddy" features (467).

FINAL Problem: Moriarty works out problems "upon a black-board

ten miles away" (473). Mycroft will be recognisable as Watson's coachman by his "heavy black cloak tipped at the collar with red" (474). Holmes is disguised in the black cassock and hat of an Italian clergyman" (475). Watson sees the "black figure" of Moriarty hastening to Reichenbach for his final confrontation with Holmes amid the "glistening coal-black rock" (478). The only note of sparkle in this scene is lent by the "gleam of something bright...from the silver cigarette case which he used to carry" (479). This may be a deliberate echo of the Silver Blaze in the first story who stood out from the funereally black field.

This little study led to a new consideration. The obvious pairing between the third and ninth stories made me realize that the combination of red and black fell also into a symmetrical pattern in 1-2-4-8-10-11. Was that just an accident? It did not seem likely.

The overall blackness was fitting for a book about the death of Holmes, but while scanning the text it became apparent that there was more than a fair share of people and places with names beginning with the letter B. This might be important in connection with the Bardic Alphabet - or was it simply my imagination? I would have to go through the text once more to count up the B's, and there was just time before the matinée. Oh Lord! It was the special one for the local Baker Street Irregulars; the "Bootmakers of Toronto" would be there in full force. I had to be on my best behaviour!

During the first act inquest scene I scanned *The Memoirs*, and afterwards at the reception in the Theatre Lounge upstairs I showed the results to Cameron Hollyer, who had asked eagerly about my researches. "Still counting names then?" was his comment, as I told him about this new line of thought. "What do you think it all means?"

"Well, I'm not sure yet. But do cast an eye on this. Surely the number of B people and places is quite beyond coincidence," I pleaded, handing him this short page of notes on the eleven stories:

1. Silas Brown conceals Silver Blaze.
2. Concealment of a black child.
3. Beddington is Pinner's real name.
4. Beddoes is the alias of Evans.
5. Brunton, the butler, is killed by Rachel Howells.
6. William (Bill?) Kirwan is the blackmailer.
7. Colonel Barclay dies of apoplexy.
8. Blessington is killed by Biddle in the "Brook Street Mystery".
9. Mr. Melas is a Greek, and his name means black in that language. Paul Kratides is killed in Beckenham.
10. The Treaty is hidden in Briarbrae. The suspected Mrs. Tanguy lives in Brixton.
11. Holmes is attacked three times on his way to Watson's house: first by a van in Bentinck Street, then by a dropped brick and finally by a man with a bludgeon. Moriarty's men try to burn

his rooms at Baker Street. Holmes flees to Brussels and Basle, and is apparently drowned in the waters which flow into Lake Brienzen.

He read it through twice and then said: "Yes, it certainly is an impressive total."

"And you see," I put in, "the thing is that it fits with this idea of blackness which is there in every single one of the stories too."

"Blackness in mourning for Sherlock Holmes presumably?" he queried. I nodded and he went on to ask what exactly I was trying to demonstrate.

"That is something I can't quite get a grip on yet. But I suspect that the letter B is so common in this book because of its significance in the Bardic Alphabet." He looked a little bewildered, so I explained briefly about the amount of that kind of material that I had found in the text, and what it meant in terms of the Alphabet.

"So what does the letter B represent, if that is the right word?" he asked.

"The Birch tree of the letter Beth, which marks the beginning of the New Year. I would think that Conan Doyle might be contrasting the death of Holmes, the blackness on the one hand, with the idea of his revival with the New Year of the letter B. He dies like the Oak-King of the first six months of the year, and like him he will certainly return next year. It is all based on the old bardic cycles."

"Yes, I have read something about that," said Mr. Hollyer. "Wasn't *The Golden Bough* based on Frazer's examination of the Oak King at Nemi?"

"You have a wonderful memory!"

"Could Conan Doyle have read that, do you suppose? We know that he wrote *The Adventures* in 1891, so he just might have used it. Had you thought at all about the last story in that set, the one about the copper beeches, in relation to your birches? Do the two trees go together in any way?"

It was a tempting idea, birches and beeches, but I had to admit that they didn't fit. "I'm afraid not. I've been over this material very recently in *The White Goddess* and beeches were taken as kin to the Oak, the letter D of the door."

"That is even more interesting," replied the librarian. "You seem to have stumbled on something here deserving of further thought. Didn't Silver Blaze live in a stable called King's Pyland? Do you remember much of your Greek? The root might be suggestive."

"Hmm. Sandy Pylos? Wasn't that the kingdom of someone in the *Odyssey*?"

"Yes, right as far as it goes. But far more generally, let me remind you that the Greek 'pylos' means a gate. The root is found in some common words like pylorus, the gateway from the stomach into the intestines." I nodded and he continued: "Then we might postulate that this particular gate is the one through which the King must pass in order to leave the earth and then later

return with the renewal of the cycle of life? The Solar Horse, Silver Blaze, goes Westwards and ultimately will return from the East?"

"It's certainly worth looking into. That has a very promising ring to it," I replied thoughtfully.

Chapter Twelve.

There was a good deal of food for thought on the following morning as Sunday dawned bright and clear, some useful and some a bit negative. There had been a dinner for the Bootmakers after the matinée at a restaurant called, fittingly, Sherlock's on Sheppard Street. I had had to leave early for the evening show, but since they were making me an honorary member I had managed to give a little speech to mark the event. What I had done was to run over the solution to the middle initial of John H. Watson and propose a toast to him under his newly discovered name of Hampden. Circumstances were not of the best with both microphone and speaker hidden from most of the diners, and the reaction from all except a few totally committed members had been one of disinterest. Even those who had seen the point I was trying to make had regarded it as more of a clever game than a serious attempt to crack Conan Doyle's code. This would certainly have to

be kept in mind while writing the book: the revelation of real solutions to these puzzles which had always been looked on as idle games, more of an excuse for a get-together, was not necessarily going to be all that popular. I would have to lock things home in a most scholarly way.

On the other hand there was that little discussion with Cameron Hollyer on the positive side. The Adventure of the COPPER Beeches might give me some clues. Over breakfast I had a look at the section of the *Annotated* (I really would have to be careful to get those borrowed books back to the Library - I was leaving Toronto at the end of the week), and found that it was important.

Conan Doyle had written all but the last one, this one, of this set of stories, when he wrote to his mother on November 11th. 1891 to say that he was going to kill off Holmes forthwith. She wrote back forbidding him to do any such thing and COPP was the result.

Since he had originally planned Holmes' demise in this story it could well offer some pointers.

I read through slowly and with increasing delight. It made some very strong links with the first story in the next set, and a reading of SILV confirmed the fact. But there was even more to it. Where had I put my list of names in *The Return*? Well, well...

The roads were pretty clear of snow so I decided to go out for a run to get things straight in my mind. As I ambled along in my warm-ups, for it was barely above freezing still, I reviewed what I had found. First of all the parallels between COPP, the last *Adventure*, and SILV, first of the *Memoirs*, fairly screamed for recognition. This would make a nice side by side comparison table, which would look something like this:

ADVENTURES.

Last story, COPP:

Holmes and Watson travel to Winchester,
to solve the case of Violet Hunter, ex-governess to the family of Colonel Spence Munro, who has gone West to America.
She seeks employment from the West End agency called Westaway's.
the

Colonel Spence Munro went to America.

MEMOIRS.

First story, SILV:

Holmes and Watson travel to Winchester, having solved the case involving Ned Hunter, who looked after Colonel Ross's Silver Blaze, in the West of England at Dartmoor.

They are travelling westwards for the second time to watch race for the Wessex Plate.

YELL(2nd story): Grant Munro's wife came back from America.

By now I was warmed up and striding easily along, enjoying the winter day. At such times the mind seems to work better too, and the pattern started to fall into place. If Conan Doyle had planned to make Holmes "go west" in COPP only to change his mind and relent, then obviously he was starting his new book with the

same idea. Another thing was clear, that Conan Doyle was painting on a far larger canvas than I had suspected, because the links also spread forward into *The Return*. It was natural enough that the first story of that set, *EMPTY House*, should tell the story of how Holmes had survived at Reichenbach, but it was impossible to explain why Conan Doyle found it necessary to use again the same names that were to be found in *SILV*, unless he was trying to draw attention to something. It could hardly be the effect of laziness on the part of the author since eleven years elapsed between the writing of *SILV* and that of *EMPT*. Nor was this an isolated example. There were several of these pairings and they all concerned boring little walk-on characters and virtual footnotes, precisely the sort of people who would be easily overlooked. But what was the point of them all? It well might be that they were designed to draw attention to the earlier linkages between *COPP* and *SILV*, and to chide the would-be detective for his lack of alertness.

Home again, after a shower, I settled down to type up the tables. Here is the second one:

MEMOIRS.

RETURN.

First story, *SILV*:

First story, *EMPT*:

- | | |
|--|---|
| a) The maid is named Edith Baxter. (337) | a) Adair's ex-fiancée is named Edith Woodley of Carstairs. (483) |
| b) Straker tries to nobble Silver Blaze with a cataract knife. (342,349) | b) Adair came back from Australia because his mother needed a cataract operation. (483) |
| c) Straker smoked Cavendish tobacco. (341) | c) Adair belonged to the Cavendish Club. (484) |
| d) Balmoral owned Iris which placed third in the Wessex Plate, winning him 200 pounds. (347-8) | d) Balmoral lost 210 pounds at cards to Adair. (484) |

I was wondering whether this slight alteration in the amounts of money won and lost deserved some comment when a knock at the door took the decision out of my hands. On my way to answer it I thought maybe it did, since there were gypsies on the moor in both cases. Jim Murdoch was outside with two opened cans of beer at the ready.

"Heard you at work, and it's time to stop. Tell me all about the Irregular "do" last night," he said. "Here's something for what ails you."

"Come in, Jim," I greeted him. "There's not a lot to report about the Bootmakers, but I did get a hint at some lovely new territory. Sit yourself down and give these little coincidences your historian's critical attention."

He sat down and read them over. "Ass-tonishing!" he muttered, swallowed some beer and went over them again more slowly. Finally he looked up at me and said: "How did you stumble across this lot?"

"I was talking to one of the Bootmakers last night and happened to get into the tree alphabet. I was trying to explain that the large number of things beginning with the letter B in *The Memoirs* might stem from the significance of Beth, the birch tree of the New Year. Then he countered with the idea that birch and beech might be related, and that took us to *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches*. the story which was originally going to have the death of Holmes in it. In fact of course beeches don't go with birches; they are relatives of the oak. Which reminds me. Do you happen to know when Frazer published *The Golden Bough*, Jim?"

"Ah, I see the line of thought. If Conan Doyle had read that, he might have wanted to make his dying Holmes into the Oak-King, which would tell us that his rebirth was inevitable in the course of time?"

"Exactly so."

"Well, I don't know myself off hand, but let me make a call. I have a student with a vast library; Miss Coombs will look it up for us in a minute." While he was finding the number I looked over the links to *The Return* again, and suddenly realized that they all concerned the murdered man, Ronald Adair. The letter of the oak was called Dair. Didn't that mean that this man was "a-dair", anti-Dair, a substitute, or tanist, for the returned Oak-King Holmes?

"Good morning, Shirley," he was saying, "up and about I trust? Great! Do me a little favour and see whether you can find out when *The Golden Bough* first hit the shelves? Okay, I'll hang on."

"Jim, think about this for a moment. Doesn't the name Adair look a lot like a-Dair, a sort of anti Oak-King?"

"Robin Adair! Of course. The robin was the bird of the Oak-King wasn't he?"

"Yes, but Conan Doyle calls him Ronald, not Robin. That's funny! Because when I was doing my names I remember that I first put him down as Robin, and realised that Sam Rosenberg had made the same mistake in his book. It's an easy one to make if you know the old ballad."

"So Conan Doyle must be trying to emphasize this new name, Ronald. I rather think it has the same root as Reginald. It means that he is a King."

"Holmes 'dies' at Reichenbach....."

"Ruling stream...."

"And when he returns he has an anti Oak King dying in his place. And Conan Doyle links that man back to *The Memoirs* every which way."

"Yes, Shirley," Jim said into the phone. "When? 1890. Thanks a lot. So you did know who wrote it. You can have a plus on your next alpha." He cradled the phone and turned his attention to his tankard. "It's in Enc. Brit. under Frazer," he told me, "and the year was 1890. Any help?"

"It might very well work. It's not exactly a vital point, but that is the year before Conan Doyle decided to kill off Holmes

in the *Copper Beeches*."

"The story of Spence Munro going west?" Jim asked with a sly smile. "Conan Doyle had a lovely sense of humour didn't he?"

"You mean with bringing Mrs. Munro back from America in the next book?"

"Well, that too I suppose. But what is the letter of the beech and the oak?"

"Dair," I replied.

"But what does it stand for?" Jim pursued.

"Doors. It links to doors..."

"No! Think Copper Beeches my friend; and Spence Munro. What kind of name is that? What else does the letter D stand for?"

I collapsed as realization dawned. "A common or garden penny, a copper! S-pence! It's almost too silly to believe, but either way what a coincidence."

"We progress, we progress. Go now to your fridge and see what you have to feed us." He hauled me to my feet and dragged me not unwillingly to the kitchen. "Two of these," he said opening two more beers, "and you can slice up some of whatever you've got."

This is the plan. We'll spend the afternoon cracking this Oak-King puzzle. This beats Crosswords any day. Then I'll buy you dinner as my farewell treat. I'm sneaking off to Banff tomorrow for a fortnight's skiing, so I'll not be back before you take off for New York."

"I'm sorry to hear that," I told him as I set about making us some lunch.

"Don't be! We'll be getting together for good times anon, I'm sure of that. And now to work. Tell me all about the Oak-King, and we'll try to think what Conan Doyle had in mind."

"Well, at its simplest there were two Kings, the Oak, who died at Midsummer, and the Holly, who died at Christmas."

"So they ruled in turn?"

"Yes. The Kings of the Rising and the Waning Year."

"So they were seasonal, right? Primitive man built his legends around that theme. The sun got hotter for six months, then it became weak and wan during the other six. It must have equated in his mind with the daily journey of the sun across the sky and its disappearance at night."

"I'll go along with that. The North-South movement of the sun affected the seasons, which were vital for crops and so on. The whole thing then got enmeshed in the religious observances, and the Oak and Holly Kings became the dying and reborn Gods."

"So far, so good. Now Conan Doyle decides to give his hero the temporary death of the Oak-King, in other words the Sun-God. So what have you got in the text to go along with that idea?"

"Aha! The horse is a solar symbol. Silver Blaze, in the first story, was stabled at King's Pyland, and someone just pointed out to me that Pyland could be based on the Greek root for a gate. The stables are in the west country, so we may have the Sun-God departing to the West at sunset?"

"And that fits with Munro who went to America and returned in the next book. The Colonel in the one, old Spence, is matched by the American military man, Grant, in the other..."

"Spence Munro went to America. Then Mrs. Hebron comes back from America and marries Grant Munro. That has to be a strong clue. The secret is in travel. Let me think." I went over the links again in my mind, and remembered a most important point. "Silver Blaze goes West but he does finally return in the last story, symbolically at least: there is the gleam of Holmes' silver cigarette case to show Watson where to find his last message."

"Then we have a nice afternoon's work ahead of us," said the Professor. "Just one tiny point though, where does the last story take place?"

"It begins in England, and then moves to the Continent, France, Switzerland and so forth," I told him.

"It should work then. Bring out *The Memoirs* and we'll comb through them looking for countries. Have you two copies? Good."

We each settled down with a copy and started searching for hints of the progress of Helius with his sun-chariot going around the world. The first story was pretty much cut and dried with Silver Blaze in the West, and Watson lyrically and most uncharacteristically describing the sunset.

"Yellow Face next," said Jim. "Couldn't that be a solar image?"

"Not really. It is the mask covering Lucy's face, the black girl."

"Lucy? Surely that comes from the latin lux, meaning light.

The sunlight is now hidden, that sort of thing?"

"Or the sun has gone down and now sheds its light on the moon?"

"Hmm..."

We skimmed through that story and both came up with Atlanta in America. The fact that a fire there was duly recorded fit very well with the idea of Silver Blaze disappearing into the West.

"What should we do about the Scotch firs and the Scotchwoman?" asked Jim.

"If we put them in we'd have to include a French window. I think we just have to throw out the adjectival entries."

"So logically in the next story we must throw out the 'Venezuelan loan' and the 'New Zealand consolidated shares'?"

"Seems fair to me," I replied, and we worked steadily on. Two hours later we had our complete list, but found ourselves rather confused. While the main thrust was indeed there, the picture was complicated by constant reference to places in Europe.

"He could hardly write the stories without establishing where they took place. Perhaps we should see what happens if we throw out the European place names, until the Sun gets back there?" I suggested.

"Good idea, but there's also this problem with *Gloria Scott*.

There's an excellent match with New Zealand and Japan at the beginning, and finally young Trevor goes off to India to do some tea-planting in Terai, but in between there is this long confession of Trevor Senior which mentions Australia, the Black Sea, the Atlantic, the Cape Verdes, Sierra Leone and then back to Australia again. What should we do about that?" Jim asked.

"Couldn't that be a circuit of the globe within a circuit?"

Isn't it rather striking that though Trevor's voyage is in fact Eastward to Australia, the places he mentions tend to fall in a Westward pattern?"

"Good point. We can leave the main trip around after New Zealand and Japan, make a quick separate one around from Australia back to Sydney, and then pass on to India..."

"Hey! Wait a minute," I cried with excitement. "How about if this was intended to draw attention to Australia?"

"Go on," Jim encouraged me.

"At the very beginning of *The Return* Ronald Adair, the anti-Oak-King, comes back from Australia to become a proxy victim for Holmes. And the reason for this voyage was that his mother needed a cataract operation. He is killed by Moran..."

"And Holmes survives his cataract death at Reichenbach Falls. You're right."

"I really do think so. But let me go on pruning down our list." I started to circle the strangers, adjectives and European places, but then struck another slight problem. "What should we do about repetitions? Watson likes to talk about Afghanistan a lot."

"Circle them too, and see what's left," Jim advised.

"Okay. Well now I'll just type up the complete expurgated table, if such a thing is possible, and then we can see where we are."

By the time I had finished it looked like this:

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------------|
| 1. | SILV Winchester and Dartmoor. | West of |
| | England. | |
| 2. | YELL Atlanta in America. | West. |
| 3. | STOC ... | |
| 4. | GLOR New Zealand, Japan and India. | West. |
| | (with a second trip around in Trevor's | |
| | letter to his son from Australia back | |
| | to Australia.) | |
| 5. | MUSG Afghanistan | West. |
| 6. | REIG | |
| 7. | CROO Crimea | West. |
| 8. | RESI ... | |
| 9. | GREE Athens and Budapest. | West (Europe). |
| 10. | NAVA Dantzic, Italy, Mediterranean, Europe. | West (Europe). |
| 11. | FINA Narbonne and Nîmes, Continent, | West (Europe). |
| | Scandinavia, Paris, Dieppe, Luxemburg, | |
| | Basle, Brussels, Strasburg, Geneva and | |
| | many places in Switzerland. | |

"Now that is really interesting," said Jim, when I handed him the completed document. "Does anything strike you about those last stories geographically?"

"A bit shuffled?"

"Only the final one oddly enough. If you go north from Athens which way do you have to turn to get to Budapest?"

"Right surely," I replied after a moment's thought.

"Have you got a map? No, how could you have!"

"But I do have one as a matter of fact," I said pulling out my pocket diary.

"Let's have a look," he said taking it from me. It didn't take long to convince me. Budapest is North-West of Athens, and moving on to the next story, Dantzig lies North of Budapest with Italy to the West, then westwards again to Switzerland and France.

But as we pored over the tiny map I realized something else I would never have suspected. This world travelling "Sun" never does quite reach the zero Latitude of London. Narbonne, Nîmes and Paris all lie East of the Meridian, so the solar horse will arrive with perfect symbolic correctness from the South-East.

Chapter Thirteen.

The Universe is organized along very strange lines. It has often been pointed out that if you really need something you can get it. Of course you must beware of asking for something because you may not get what you thought you wanted. However in this case it was the other way round, because I got what I needed without any effort on my part. One of the first calls when I returned to New York was from William Howle who ran the Recording Studios of the American Foundation for the Blind.

"Now that you're back from playing Sherlock Holmes, I've got something for you to record for us, if you're available," he said.

"How would you like to do another of Conan Doyle's books for us?"

"I'd be delighted," I told him. "Which one is it?"

"*The Memoirs*. You could start on Wednesday if you like...your usual early morning sessions?"

"Yes, that would be fine." I had found that doing the first two hours of the day starting at 8.40 a.m. made the smallest hole in the standard day of a New York actor, since an early Commercial audition could usually be re-scheduled for a little later.

And so I found myself going through the book very carefully in preparation for the recording sessions, primarily to make sure

there were no surprises in the matter of pronunciation. You'd be astonished, by the way, at how many fairly common words are usually mispronounced, and the standards of the Library of Congress who issue the completed books on tape are rather high.

It was not long before a new oddity sprang from the text. Why did Conan Doyle put in all these silly little repetitions? Was it just laziness? In the third story I found (362):

"...followed by the high, somewhat strident tones of my old companion's voice. 'Ah, my dear Watson,' said he striding into the room..."

Then again in the tenth I was struck by the fact that Charles Gorot works on Charles St. (450-1), and then again by (453):

"The only tangible fact was that the commissionaire's wife - Mrs. Tangey was the name..."

Okay, the lazy solution is to attribute this to laziness, but that wouldn't begin to account for another two examples where different stories had matching material. In REIG, the sixth one, Holmes says (406):

"I am afraid, my dear Colonel, that you must regret the hour that you took in such a stormy petrel as I am."

Whereas in the tenth, NAVA, he says (448):

"You are the stormy petrel of crime, Watson."

Holmes and Watson have something in common, but so also do Holmes and Moriarty. RESI has this passage (423):

"He (Holmes) loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumour or suspicion of unsolved crime."

But FINA has this (471):

"He (Moriarty) sits motionless, like a spider at the centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them."

I found myself on a new trail.

* * *

"How's the new book coming along?" asked my son Chris, as we rode up the Sundance lift at Mount Snow. It was rather a cold day so we had chosen to ride this open one to avoid competing with the crowds flocking to the Gondolas to escape the elements; and besides the run down this lift line was one of our favourites.

I hung my poles on the bar and tried to get my turtle neck up over my chin for protection from the icy blasts which always blew across the open spaces halfway up. "Which one?" I asked, watching to see how the skiers were faring on the early morning frozen surface. I hoped it would soften up some if the sun ever came out as promised, but it looked very slippery at present - real Vermont skiing.

"You brought a whole stack of notes up with you for something," he pointed out. "Is it another book on *Finnegans Wake*?"

"No. I finished the third Wake book a few weeks ago, the one about the names. This one is about Sherlock Holmes."

"Going popular now?" he laughed.

"Trying to, I suppose," I admitted, "but it's just as much of a struggle. Every time I turn round it seems there's a fresh ton of material demanding to be included."

"What's it about?"

"Well, did you know that Conan Doyle killed off Sherlock Holmes halfway through the stories he wrote about him?"

"No, tell me."

"He claimed that Holmes was taking his mind from better things, but then later on brought him back to life."

"Needed the money?"

"That's the standard explanation. But I have a strong suspicion that the whole thing was a gigantic literary hoax. He was very fond of a prank, was Arthur Conan Doyle."

"And someone spotted it?"

"Your father!" I boasted brashly, and then felt compelled to add: "With a little help from my friends."

"So what did you spot?" Chris asked.

"Well, for instance, it's hard to believe that all the oddities he put into *The Memoirs* could be there by accident, and that's the book which ends up with the supposed death of Holmes."

"Don't think I've ever read that one, so try me with what you've found and see whether it makes any sense to me," he offered. We watched the astonishing run of a one-legged man who had a tiny ski on his other pole. If anything he was doing rather better than anyone else.

"Okay then. I was recording the book two weeks ago, so what with having read it twice within a short period of time, and the fact that I had to go through it slowly, certain things leapt out of the text. For instance in the third story the action takes place in Birmingham, and very early in the next one we get a one-liner out of the blue: Holmes' friend Trevor had a sister who died of diphtheria while on a visit to Birmingham. But she's never mentioned again, and has absolutely no relevance to the story."

"He hated Birmingham, and wanted to keep people from going there!" Chris laughed. "No, wait a minute. Seriously. Surely that happens to writers all the time. Conan Doyle had Birmingham on his mind from the story he'd just finished writing?"

"That might fit except that he took a month or so to write each one. And then too, when I had thought about it some more, I realized that he had linked the first and second stories together in exactly the same way. The first one is about the disappearance of a horse called Silver Blaze, who has been disguised by covering over the white spot on his face. The second is about a mother who hides her negro child with a yellow mask. Oh, and there was a horse racing against Silver Blaze called 'The Negro' in the first story."

"Hidden negro and hidden Silver Blaze. So what's hidden about Birmingham?"

"Good question. Oddly enough the city has somehow got a very bad reputation as the home of the counterfeit: cheap brass, false coins, whatever. And that means that it makes a sort of fit with the link between the second and third stories."

"Wish I had mittens instead of gloves," sighed Chris.

"Stick your hands inside your jacket, and take your fingers out of the holes," I suggested.

He showed me that his fingers were already floppy, and tucked his hands under his arms. "Second and third stories then?"

"In the second one Mrs. Munro gave all her money to her husband for safe keeping, and then asked him for a hundred pounds of it, much to his shock. In the next story the villain makes sure that Hall Pycroft goes to Birmingham by bribing him with a hundred pound note."

"Yes. That was a lot of money back then wasn't it?"

"A year's wages for a lot of people."

Chris was making himself into a cocoon as the wind began to seek out the chinks. How could he manage to ski in jeans I often wondered. "Go on, I can still hear you," he mumbled.

"Just about time for one more before we reach the top. The next three stories all fit together. We have criminal servants in them for a start. Hudson and Brunton are both butlers..."

"Ah, the butler did it!" Chris offered gleefully.

"Yes. And then there's Kirwan, the coachman, who takes to blackmail in the next one. They all die for their sins. And then too they all have message solving in them. Trevor gets a letter which is in code. You have to read every third word. The next story is about solving the Musgrave Ritual. And then the sixth one has a letter written by the two Cunninghams. They do alternate words in slightly different handwriting which gives the game away to Holmes' eagle eye."

Now the lift was almost there so we pushed up the bar and got ourselves ready. We slid off and made the sharp left turn to the top of the run, and stood there for a minute enjoying the view.

"Gorgeous!" I sighed.

"You're halfway through now, aren't you? Was that it for five and six?" asked Chris as he sorted his poles out.

"Just one thing. And this is a real puzzle. Brunton and Holmes both used balls of string to solve the Musgrave Ritual, and in the next story there's a phony robbery and a ball of string is among the missing items!"

"That ties things up nicely!" called out Chris as he neatly skirted a couple of novices below the steep little drop-off at the top, and made off down Deer Run at high speed. I charged after him a bit more circumspectly and finally found him waiting for me, as I expected, at the turn-off into Uncles. I stopped for a moment to get my breath back. It was an exhilarating morning and the valley below sparkled in the sun, which had at last broken through.

"It looks a bit icy in the middle but the edges should be good going," I said, taking off down the narrow trail. It was great skiing, and I stopped after a steep section to look back up at Chris as he snaked his way expertly just a foot or two from the trees on one side.

"Pretty nice, huh?" he shouted as he hurtled past.

All too soon the trail fed back into the novice run, but even that was fun since this early in the morning there was not too

much traffic. Then we were back on the broad open slope which led back to the lift at the bottom.

"What now?" asked Chris.

"Same again," I suggested, "but let's come down the lift line this time. We can get all the skiing we want over here while everyone stands in line for the Gondolas." We only had a four minute wait and during it I started up again on the story links.

"How can you remember them all so easily?" Chris asked.

"Well, I know the stories quite well by now, but somehow they're not hard to keep in mind. Perhaps it's because they form some sort of pattern of their own." And by now I was certain that there was an underlying message for the budding detective to solve.

"So tell me the next pair. Six and seven isn't it?"

"Number six: Kirwan, the coachman, takes to blackmail, and gets a letter telling him to go to Eastgate at a quarter to twelve to meet Annie Morrison. This letter and the time of day is of great importance to the story."

"Got it."

"The next story begins with Watson looking at the clock and remarking on the fact that it is a quarter to twelve."

"Conan Doyle had a clock on his desk that wasn't working!"

"Ha ha, most ingenious. But in this story there's another Miss Morrison, a friend of Mrs. Barclay. And finally there's another coachman in this story who finds Colonel Barclay's body."

"Didn't you say that Kirwan got killed?"

"Yes. His employers shot him."

"Then how about this? A coachman dies, killed by his masters, while another one lives to find his master's body. Is that fair as a link?" asked Chris as we reached the front of the line and crouched for the chair to pick us up.

As we settled into it and pulled the bar down I mulled over his idea. "I think you've hit on something important there," I said slowly. "You've heard of Professor Moriarty, of course?"

"He's the great Holmes villain, isn't he?"

"In the movies he was, but the fact is that he appears in very few of the stories. He crops up for the first time in this book and apparently dies along with Holmes at the end of it. But the interesting thing about him is that he was a mathematician and when he lost his University position he became an 'Army coach'."

"A coach-man!"

"Your mind works like mine. So it could be very important to take a close look at the coachmen in *The Memoirs*. Yes, I like your idea a lot."

"Always glad to be of help. And moving right along what sticks eight and nine together?"

"This is an odd one. Watson has a picture of Henry Ward Beecher, of American Civil War fame, on his wall. In the previous story we have a soldier who survived the Indian Mutiny, another Civil War if you like, named Henry Wood."

"Henry Ward and Henry Wood. Quite close."

"Right. Then Henry Wood, late of India, is found in his lodgings, on Hudson Street, crouched over a blazing fire on a hot

day. In the next story, and remember that Mrs. Hudson was the name of the housekeeper at his lodgings on Baker Street, Watson can barely wait to tell us that his service in India had trained him to stand heat better than cold so that a temperature of ninety didn't bother him."

"It wouldn't bother us right now," said Chris, pulling up his hood as the winds got at us again.

"Just to keep up the warming trend the next pair of stories are linked by fire. Blessington lives in hiding and is so afraid of fire that he keeps a rope under his bed to use as an emergency fire escape. Finally his ex-accomplices in a robbery hang him with it."

"Serves him right?"

"Indeed. Then in the next story a perfectly innocent man, Paul Kratides, is being held prisoner. The villains kill him by asphyxiation from a charcoal fire in a closed room."

"That's a very solid one. Some of them do get a bit complicated."

"That's true. But it is helping me a lot to try them out on you. Problem is I may be noticing more than I should. Some of the coincidences may really be due to laziness, but certainly not all of them."

The lift swayed to a stop. I covered my face with my mittens and tried to hibernate.

"We could do with that chap's rope right now," said Chris. I let my teeth chatter for comfort, and just as I could bear it no more the lift finally lurched into motion.

"At least there won't be any traffic on the way down!"

* * *

We got back to *The Memoirs* over a cheeseburger lunch in the bar at the Base Lodge. We generally like to get in for that at about 11.30 so the noise level was a mere whisper compared to what it would become as lots of skiers came in, and I was able to think clearly.

"The last two pairs are quite simple ones again."

"Yes? Then why are they so complicated in the middle?"

"That's a valid point. If the first and last few stories are easy to spot why should there be so many more linkages in the middle ones....I just don't know. I'll let that sink in for a while and maybe something will come of it. Anyway nine and ten couldn't be simpler since they both have to do with Government. Nine has Sherlock's brother Mycroft appearing for the first time, and he audits books for several Government departments. The tenth story is all about the recovery of a Naval Treaty stolen from the Foreign Office."

"Easy enough," said Chris swigging down his glass of milk. I can never stand the stuff myself, and here he was at twenty four behaving as if he had shares in a dairy!

"And finally we have the Naval Treaty which seeks to give more power to Italy. In this same story we have a girl with dark Italian eyes called Annie Harrison..."

"Shades of Annie Morrison," Chris interjected.

"Could be. Then in the last story we have Holmes in disguise as an Italian priest. There's another link between these two stories though. In each of them Holmes manages to get his knuckles banged up in fights."

"And so what about the next one?" asked Chris as he tightened his boots up, ready for the slopes.

"What next one? That's the last story in *The Memoirs*," I told him, putting my parka back on.

"But surely if he links the stories, they should go back to the beginning again. Or does he link them to the next book?" He carefully stowed away a chocolate chip cookie for his afternoon's sustenance.

* * *

After a few runs down Olympic over on the North Face I felt that I had done enough for the day. Naturally Chris wanted to stay out to conquer the tougher runs, so I went back to the Lodge to wait for him.

The bar by now was miserably crowded and noisy, but I managed to find a table in the far corner, and bribed a young lady to keep my plastic glass filled with beer. I mulled over Chris's idea. I had already found strong links between the books. There was all that Western material, and the name Hunter which linked the last of *The Adventures* with the first of *The Memoirs*. And naturally Holmes in the first story of *The Return* explains what really happened in the last Memoir. In fact I had found a great deal of stuff in *The Return* which made this backward link, but was there a circle too as Chris had suggested. Did the last of *The Memoirs* link back to the first?

The connection between the last two Memoirs was the fact that Holmes gets his knuckles cut up in both stories. What was there in SILV which matched that in any way? How about the attempt to lame Silver Blaze with a cataract knife. Yes, why not? Then Holmes and Moriarty finally disappear down a cataract, and the opening of *The Return* has Ronald Adair coming back from Australia because his mother needed a cataract operation. And add to that the reappearance of Silver Blaze in the last story in the shape of the gleam from the silver cigarette case which drew Watson's attention to Holmes' last letter.

Once we had the wood fire going back at the house in East Dover I told Chris he had been right about the circularity of *The Memoirs*, and he was duly impressed, but he did have one rather thorny question: "If you're trying to prove that Holmes would have to be revived, how do these paired story links help?"

"That's what worries me," I agreed. "They don't prove anything by themselves, but they do at least show that Conan Doyle was writing his book in quite an unusual way. Why did he put all these oddities into the text unless they were for some purpose? And that purpose seems to be to demonstrate that there is an underlying pattern. Anyone reading the book who had any pretensions to imitate Holmes would have to notice these multiple clues. And once you have spotted them it becomes rather difficult

to explain that these very same linkages are all echoed in the stories of *The Return*. This must settle any argument that these things were entirely accidental, since one would then have to theorize that in re-reading *The Memoirs* Conan Doyle noticed what he had subconsciously done, and then went to a great deal of trouble to repeat those patterns consciously, ten years later, in *The Return*. Why? That is all extremely improbable. It is far more likely that he was simply thumbing his nose at readers who should have been detective enough to have spotted his original purpose."

"And you say that all those links are found again in the next book?" Chris asked in surprise.

"Every single one. There's some repetition and overlapping because there are thirteen stories in *The Return* and we have eleven links in *The Memoirs*. I've got them all listed here side by side. Name me a pair and I'll tell you where it crops up again in *The Return*."

"Just a couple of them would convince me," said Chris. "Give me a moment to remember some of them. Now which ones are the most unlikely," he mused. "What about Birmingham then?"

"Turning rapidly to the correct page we find that it links to *The Adventure of the Priory School*." I quickly read over the entry to myself to refresh my memory. "Oh this is a good one," I said. "Conan Doyle uses two meanings of the word. First of all, as I told you, Birmingham has the reputation of being the home of fakery and the counterfeit. In *The Return* story the villain makes false cattle hoofprints with a horse. But it is another meaning of the word which is more important here. A supporter of the Exclusion Bill was called a 'Birmingham'."

"The Exclusion Bill? You lost me there."

"Sorry. It was the Bill which was designed to prevent Charles II's Catholic brother James from succeeding to the throne on his death. Charles and James are the vital things to keep in mind here."

"Weren't they the Stuart Kings?" I nodded. "Cavaliers and Roundheads. I remember all that a bit vaguely."

"You've seen it in the movies, many's the time. And in this story we have the Duke of Holderness. His father-in-law is named Sir Charles Appledore, and his illegitimate son James abducts the true heir, and is sent to Australia for his crime. Going back to the Royal Family we find that King Charles sent his brother James over to the Netherlands to save his life."

"And next you're going to tell me that Australia is a very 'nether-land'?" Chris laughed.

"You're a mind reader!" I agreed. "So what do you think? Isn't that circumstantial evidence at least?"

"Hard to say. If that was the only example I'd be doubtful, but you say that you've found all the links?"

"Absolutely! They'll all be in the book set out in side by side columns like this. Look at this one. You remember the one about Henry Wood liking the heat because he had served in India?"

"Yes. Then in the next story Watson says exactly the same thing about himself."

"Here's *The Adventure of the Three Students*. The prime suspect in the theft of the exam papers is an Indian called Daulat Ras, and the real culprit winds up going to another very hot country, Rhodesia. They're all here!"

So you're saying what? That Conan Doyle planned *The Return* when he wrote *The Memoirs*? But surely that was his next book."

"No. Actually he wrote *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in between. But the thing is that *The Return* wasn't published until ten years after *The Memoirs*. That does make it odd that they should be connected so thoroughly, don't you think?"

"Unless he had written it back then and just didn't publish it?" Chris suggested.

"That had occurred to me," I agreed. "But there can't be any doubt that this whole thing was deliberate. Just look at this. In *The Return* he developed a passion for Sydenham, which crops up in strange circumstances in two stories. In *The Memoirs* he had a similiar craving for St. Vitus's Dance. It is there in two stories and Holmes fakes a fit of it in another one."

"I don't get it. What does Sydenham have to do with St. Vitus's Dance?" Chris objected.

"The medical name for that disease is Sydenham's Chorea. Doctor Conan Doyle certainly knew that!"

"Now that," said Chris, "is really convincing."

Chapter Fourteen.

It was several weeks later, and the daffodils were beginning to bloom as I went running in Central Park, when I got a letter at last from Jim Murdoch:

Dear Mr. Holmes,

Sorry not to have written before but things have been rather hectic for the last month or more. The skiing in Banff was just great. You should really go and try the deep powder yourself sometime!

I promised to have a careful look at the paperback of *The Memoirs* you left with me. The results of my researches seem infinitesimal but perhaps may be of some use to you. You will remember that you remarked on symmetry in the book that lively Sunday when we found the global trip, Silver Blaze in the first story and the silver cigarette case in the last? By a mathematical process of extrapolation (and how very suitable for Professor James Moriarty, my alter ego!) I deduced that the sixth story should contain similar treasure. We had felt that Silver Blaze represented the Sun, the Oak King, making his way round the world to reappear at the end of the book. Now consider the items taken in the phony robbery in the sixth story:

A volume of Pope's Homer. Interesting combination of

Christ and Odysseus.

Two plated candlesticks.

Silver one might assume?

A small oak barometer.

Oak King!

"Baros" means weight. This is a useful instrument for a

voyager, but may also be

designed to emphasize the idea of giving weight to the letter of Oak, Dair.

An ivory letter-weight.

Well, well!

A ball of string.

??

If we were right in our thinking this certainly supports our conclusions, since the oak and the silver are taken in a robberythey are MISSING...gone below, where they need the light and the gadget for measuring the pressure. What do you think?

A second thought. Symmetry could well be an attribute of the famed Binomial mathematician. The villain Moriarty crops up for the first time in the last story and he makes a pair with the horse of "Isonomy stock" (Silver Blaze) in the first one. Greek iso- means equal, I need hardly remind you, so Isonomy and Binomial are based on much the same idea, the one Greek and the other Latin. Then it struck me that Holmes does some math in the first story when he works out the speed of the train in his head.

That took me back for another look at my silver mine in the sixth story. And there I found another M villain called Maupertuis. Now it turns out (good old Enc Brit!) that there really was a Frenchman of that name who was an eminent mathematician. He "enunciated the principle of least action", which of course is

very much like Moriarty. Remember what Holmes says about him: "He sits motionless, like a spider...He does little himself.." ³ Maupertuis' great opponents were the chevalier d'Arcy and Samuel Koenig (Cavalier and King), and he died in Basel, Switzerland! How's that for a pseudo-Moriarty? Conan Doyle must have been delighted with the fine print on this one.

That made a symmetry of mathematics between 1-6-11, so just for fun I had a look at 3 and 9. You'll never believe it!...

3. Hall Pycroft has "extraordinary financial ability".
9. Mycroft Holmes (notice the name pairing too, and the lovely duality of Hall and Holmes - a Stately Home might be a Hall) makes his living "auditing the books of several Government departments", because he has an "extraordinary faculty for figures".

And just to lock things home Conan Doyle's Maupertuis was foiled in his colossal schemes involved with "politics and finance".

So you see there is a very pretty symmetrical mathematical match which runs through the five stories: 1-3-6-9-11.

Hope you find my ramblings of some help. Don't work too hard. Saw you the other night on the telly being wonderfully arrogant in a Nazi uniform on Star Trek...an undercover man of course! See you sometime when I pop down to New York. Mary sends her love...

sinisterly,
your left hand man,
Moriarty'

Ye Gods! How could I have missed all this? was my first reaction.

Even as I was reading his letter the very special nature of that link between the first and last stories struck me forcibly. Holmes works out his math problem in a speeding coach, while in the last one he describes Moriarty as a "retiring mathematical coach" (473)...coach math and math coach! Chris had made a joke about the "coach-men". And Jim had found treasure too with the Frenchman Maupertuis who died in Switzerland, just like Moriarty, the Napoleon of crime.

I hauled out my battered copy of the Complete Edition and checked up on the central story in which Holmes nearly killed himself in foiling the schemes of Baron Maupertuis, "an investigation which had extended over two months, during which period he had never worked less than fifteen hours a day and had once, as he assured me, kept to his task for five days at a stretch." (398) That innocent seeming word "stretch" led me back to the first story since it can also be a horse racing term, and in that tale Desborough was beaten in the stretch by Silver Blaze. The odd thing about this connection was that it drew attention to some other racing matters. The odds offered are utterly

³ □ p.271.

impossible in bookmakers' language, which always reduces the numbers to "such-and-such to one" whenever it is possible to do so. Yet here we have Conan Doyle quoting odds of "fifteen to five against Desborough"⁴ (398), though a few lines earlier he shows that he knows the correct usage is "three to one". This remarkable flight of fancy must serve some purpose. Anybody who knows anything at all about horse racing will be sure to spot this howler, and certainly ought to remember it when the same number combination crops up again in the central story, along with the key word "stretch", which come to think of it, could equally refer to the time served in jail by a criminal.

Conan Doyle went to the trouble of multiplying the correct odds of "three to one" by five to make "fifteen to five". This fitted very well with Jim's mathematical links which were to be found in 1-3-6-9-11...five stories in all! Could it be as simple as that, I wondered as I turned my attention to 3 and 9 to look for confirming evidence. I had already spotted some links between the two stories: St. Vitus's Dance was there in both, as I had pointed out to Chris, and there was that oddness about the black beards which came to light when I was working on the presence of red and black in *The Memoirs*. Mr. Melas in 9 was only recognizable from his black beard after his fire ordeal (445), but he did not have one earlier in the same story (438); on the other hand Arthur Pinner in 3 shaved off his black beard in order to pretend to be his own brother Harry. The game here was given away when the alert eyes of Hall Pycroft spotted the gleam of gold from a badly stuffed tooth which the "brothers" had in common (368).

A careful reading of the two stories revealed a new element. In STOC Pinner declares in horse racing jargon: "I'll lay you a fiver..." (366), while in GREE Kemp pays Mr. Melas for his services with five (gold) sovereigns (441). The clue of the number five, and that of gold and silver was beginning to make a perfect match with the mathematical symmetry.

Could any conclusion be drawn from all this?

Certainly not yet. It did not offer the solution to the Final Problem, but it suggested a very promising new line of approach. It might be fruitful to draw the whole thing out on a table, and once again the results were quite beyond the scope of mere coincidence.

Silver-Gold.	Fives.	Fakes-Disguises.
1. Silver Blaze. 3. Gold tooth. 6. Plated candle- sticks. 9. Gold sovereigns 11. Silver cigarette case.	Fifteen to five. "lay a fiver". Five items stolen. Five sovereigns. Five attacks on Holmes.	Faked horse. Beard shaved off. Faked robbery. Beard added. Holmes disguised as an

⁴ The Complete Edition misprints this as the even more impossible "five to fifteen".

		Italian priest.
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In the process of filling up the table the information already discovered led to other new elements. The "silver blaze" on the horse's forehead in the first story was blacked out by way of disguise, and this paired with the negro child in the second story who was concealed with a yellow mask. If 1 and 2 pair, then this might be true of 10 and 11. Was the priestly disguise of Holmes in FINA echoed contrariwise by anything in the tenth Memoir?

Indeed it was! Mrs. Hudson, as was the custom at that time, serves up three "covers" for breakfast, presumably those silvery dishes which kept the food warm until it was put on the plates. And under one of those covers was hidden the recovered Treaty, which is described as a roll of "blue-gray paper". Now that is a pretty odd sort of colour for paper, something perhaps halfway between the negro and the silver blaze in 1 and 2.

It was now manifest that Jim's mathematical symmetry between 1-3-6-9-11 had other ramifications. The grouping of 3-6-9 for instance had three sufferers from St. Vitus's Dance: the Doctor who sold Watson his practice, Holmes himself who faked a fit in REIG and the villain Kemp. But this trio strongly echoed the central trinity of the Canon, Dr. Watson, Sherlock Holmes and the arch criminal Moriarty, which I had discovered back in Toronto. This suggested the use of one of the special tools for the solution of Conan Doyle's little puzzles, the Catholic Missal. I soon found that St. Vitus was at least temporarily saved from religious persecution by his tutor Modestus, who could be equated with the coach Moriarty. Vitus and Modestus were later martyred by the Emperor Diocletian.

Perhaps it would be worth while investigating other symmetrical groupings centred on the sixth story to see whether they exhibited the same symptoms as 1-3-6-9-11. This research took a couple of weeks of work at odd moments, and meanwhile I had nearly caught up with myself in typing up the material already found. The book was coming on at a splendid pace, and I felt that with this new stuff it had to convince even the most sceptical that Conan Doyle had put it all in deliberately. Here are the results of my work on the other three possible symmetries involving the sixth story:

2-6-10: As in the case of the St. Vitus symmetry the outside elements were quite easy to find. Both 2 and 10 refer to a story, *The Adventure of the Second Stain*, the last one in *The Return*, which Conan Doyle ostensibly would not come to write for another ten years (351,447). Didn't that have to mean that he was already planning ahead, that he knew perfectly well there would be more stories to come after the apparent death at the end of *The Memoirs*?

Examination of the central story revealed once again that the outside pairing was far beyond coincidence. Here the clue which gives the game away is a piece of paper torn from a letter written in alternate words by the two Cunninghams, father and son. Holmes

spots the dissimilarities between their handwriting, and notices that the first writer had not left quite enough room for the second to insert his words. It is this vital clue of the "second stain" on the paper which reveals all to Holmes' vigilant eye.

4-6-8. The outside pair again is obvious since both 4 and 8 have sinking ships, the Gloria Scott and the Norah Creina. Then too the eighth story refers back to GLOR (4), Holmes' first case, and to *A Study in Scarlet*, the first one described by Watson, as the "Scylla and Charybdis" of that historian.

The sinking ships and the reference to the Odyssey are easily matched in the central story by the theft of a volume of "Pope's *Homer*" (399).

5-6-7. The most obvious pairing between 5 and 7 is yet another item to be added to the 1-3-6-9-11 "Silver and Gold" symmetry. In 5 there are coins of the reign of Charles I, and in 7 a "fake florin" which turns out to be a silver Indian Rupee.

The 5-6-7 symmetry turned out to hinge on the Civil War. Jim Murdoch was going to be mortified that he missed this one! The fifth story is about the search for the Crown of the Stuart Kings which was hidden by Sir Ralph Musgrave, a "prominent cavalier" (397). In 7 Colonel Barclay has a maid named Jane Stewart and he lives in a house called "Lachine" (413-4). The city of Lachine is near Montreal, and its name stems from the fact that its founder was looking for the Western route to China, "La Chine" in French. The explorer's name was René Robert Cavelier de la Salle.

I had to admit to myself that Jim had supplied the missing central piece of the puzzle, one which would otherwise have been extraordinarily hard to find. In his letter he had quoted from the Enc Brit article on Maupertuis which mentioned the names of his great rivals, the chevalier d'Arcy and Samuel Koenig. The Cavaliers were the supporters of the Stuart Kings, and their Parliamentary foes were called the Roundheads.

Since 5 and 7 contained silver coins, which linked to the larger symmetry of 1-3-6-9-11, a search in 1 and 11 for Civil War allusions might bear fruit. Since a cavalier or chevalier originally meant simply a horseman, this alone would make a link with the story of Silver Blaze, but it turned out that there was far more than that in the text. Holmes describes Colonel Ross's behaviour towards him as a "trifle cavalier". Ross scratches his second horse, Bayard, but his Silver Blaze wins from Desborough. Bayard was the famous French Knight known as "le cavalier sans peur et sans reproche". John Desborough was Oliver Cromwell's brother-in-law, a prominent Roundhead, who very nearly captured Charles II near Salisbury.

So far. so good, but where was the Cavalier in the last story?

In order to maintain the symmetry there simply had to be one, but for the longest time he eluded me. Where would a Stuart hide was the baffling question. The pat answer was most encouraging: he would hide, like King Charles at Boscobel, in an oaktree; there

is even an Oak-Apple Day to commemorate the event. This would make a very fine match with the idea of the Oak-King, but it failed to cast any light on the last story of *The Memoirs*. Finally the penny dropped. I had found three French Cavaliers, perhaps that was the clue. The King would hide in France, as in fact King Charles II did, he fled there in 1646. At the beginning of FINA there is the boring information that Watson received notes from Holmes in Narbonne and Nîmes. It would be worth checking up on them in Enc Brit. It offered a wealth of surprising material on which I took copious notes, and then finally the piece of the puzzle I was hunting for came to hand. The city of Nîmes is overlooked by the ruins of the Turris Magna on Mont Cavalier.

There was much food for thought here.

I remembered that the old man had urged me to solve the problem of Watson's middle initial. It had emerged, with Jim Murdoch's help, that his name was based on that of Oliver Cromwell's cousin, John Hampden, a leading Roundhead. In the first story Bayard, the Cavalier, is scratched. Then John Straker tried to "scratch" his stablemate, Silver Blaze, with a cataract knife, to prevent him from beating Desborough, the Roundhead.

What could one predict about the fate of Holmes in this Civil War? He seemed to equate with Silver Blaze, who was ridden by a jockey in the "well-known black and red of the colonel". Then in FINA Mycroft Holmes, his brother, drives a horse wearing a black cloak "tipped at the throat with red", the very same colours. And Jim had pointed out that the Isonomy horse in the first story matched the binomial Moriarty in the last one....

I looked at my watch and found that it was past seven o'clock. Jim might easily be back at the Waldorf Hotel by now, so why not give him a ring and lay all this stuff on him? He was.

"Hullo you old rogue!" I greeted him. "And many thanks for the letter."

"Mr. Holmes! Always a delight to hear from you, in fact..."

"You'll never believe what occurred to me today..." we both said pretty much in unison, and burst out laughing.

"Alright!" said Jim, "It's your dime." And I told him what had developed from his symmetries, interrupted by various chuckles and shouts of glee from the other end. He was indeed mortified at having missed the Civil War bits, but that was matched by my chagrin when he pointed out all the fives I had missed.

"It's only to be expected," Jim consoled me. "Here we are both wandering around in the same labyrinth. We may start from the same point but within a very short space of time our paths diverge. So you went from the 1-3-6-9-11 symmetry and found more patterns which led you to the Cavaliers. At the same time I was looking at things from the point of view of the silver and the numbers, and that meant money. You spotted the fiver and the five gold sovereigns, and fitted them into a pattern of fives, but there's a whole bunch more of them which fit into the same overall grouping. First story: Fitzroy Simpson has accepted bets of five thousand pounds on the favourite, and the entry fee for each horse in the race is 50 sovereigns. Third story: you have that one, the fiver. Sixth: the phony ad Holmes proposes offers a fifty pounds

reward, but Cunningham suggests five hundred. Ninth: you have the five sovereigns. Then we come to the last and this one takes a bit of finding." He paused, and I said that couldn't remember money being mentioned. "Not directly, no. But there's a link from the first one, where Holmes asked the groom Dawson whether Silas Brown would be up and about by five in the morning."

"Yes, there's another five," I agreed.

"True. But he tries to give him a half-crown for his help."

"Oh, I get it. Five sixpences?"

"I hadn't even thought of that, but it does fit. No. What I had in mind was this idea of sovereigns and crowns.⁵ There's an underlying emphasis on Kingship, you see. And in the last story when Holmes talks about the impending confrontation with Moriarty he says: 'Your memoirs will draw to an end, Watson, upon the day that I crown my career by the capture or extinction of the most dangerous and capable criminal in Europe.' The book begins at King's Pyland and winds up at Reichenbach: Reich, a German kingdom. Holmes does get his crown."

Meanwhile an idea had struck me and I had fished out a volume of Enc Brit from the shelves beside me and skimmed over a short article. "This just might be relevant," I said with barely suppressed excitement, "but do you realise that you now have fives in five stories?"

"True enough," Jim replied, "so?"

"Well, just look at the page with the race-card on it for the Wessex Plate. Do you notice anything? I'll go and get myself a celebratory beer while you're finding it." By the time I got back on the phone Jim was making astonished noises at the far end.

"It is a bit remarkable, isn't it?" I asked. "Let's see just how many times the number five crops up. I reeled them off as I found them on p. 347:

"50 sovereign entry fee for each of six horses.

Four or five year old horses.

Place money adds up to five hundred pounds.

Course is one mile and five furlongs.

Number 5 horse (Duke of Balmoral's Iris).

Five to four against Silver Blaze.

Five to four against Silver Blaze.(again - I added)

Fifteen to five against Desborough.

Five to four on the field.

Only five have passed."

Jim had been keeping count of the fives as we went and told me that there were fifteen of them. There were also, it turned out, two examples of "fifteen" on the page, which were relevant too. "What do you make of it," asked Jim.

Now I was able to launch my rocket. "I just checked up in Enc Brit," I replied, "and there's a game called Fives which can be played on one of three different types of court, one of which

⁵ □ English coins. A crown was five shillings, a half-crown was half that much, and a sovereign was twenty shillings, a pound.

is the Winchester. This race takes place at Winchester, doesn't it? And the game is played to fifteen points. Fives, fifteen and Winchester!"

"And that would account for those impossible odds of 'Fifteen to five'! Conan Doyle knew that was entirely silly, but he gave the answer to the problem on the same page, Winchester! You've got to be right. Now wait a minute... Winchester...to a historian. Aha! Winchester was famous as the home of the Round Table and the Court of King Arthur."

"The once and future King! That opens a new can of worms! My mind was going in quite a different direction. Of course you're right. Conan Doyle is featuring his own name here: Arthur."

"Naturally he would identify with Sherlock Holmes, wouldn't he?" said Jim. "But is there anything else about the game of Fives?"

"Basically it's a type of handball. We even had a court at Stonyhurst where Conan Doyle and I went to school.⁶ It's played with a little hard ball and you hit it with a gloved fist. Nobody's sure of the correct origin of the name Fives, but commonly it is thought to come from the slang for a fist, a 'bunch of fives'. And that puts the ball into your court as a boxer, doesn't it?" I laughed.

"Boxing!" Jim cried. "Conan Doyle's sport as well, you know. Look here, there's even a horse in the race at Winchester called The Pugilist. So he has combined the Court game - the Royal element - with the ideas of boxing and horse racing. That combination rings a bell somewhere," he added musingly.

"It certainly should. It fits perfectly with something else I have found," I told him. "Horses and boxing were under the patronage of the Heavenly Twins, Castor and Pollux, and what's more they were both under the Divine Aegis of Hermes."

"Hermes and Holmes again?"

"Absolutely! But let me go back to the fives. The fives clue runs throughout *The Memoirs* in five stories, but the last one, the 'crown' is not so easy to find, right?"

"That's so."

"I think it may all be designed to draw attention to this gap in the last story. I was looking for Cavaliers there, you may remember, to make up another set of five, and ultimately found the answer in Enc Brit while researching Narbonne and Nîmes. Those are the cities from which Holmes sent notes to Watson. There is a Mont Cavalier in Nîmes, but there was a lot more information."

"And what gems did you find?" asked Jim.

"There's quite a lot. But let me start out with a refresher on Castor and Pollux because they're pretty important. They were

⁶ □ A letter to the College drew a reply from Fr. Macadam. We had sung in the choir together when I was there. Unfortunately the earliest reference he could find to Fives was in 1919, but that is not to say there was not a court there in 1875 for Conan Doyle to have played on.

the twin brothers of Helen of Troy, but their mother Leda managed to get herself impregnated by Zeus and a mere mortal at the same time. Consequently the twins were from different fathers: Castor was mortal and Pollux was a God. One day they fought and Castor was killed by his brother, who was then so lonely without him that he pleaded with Zeus for his revival. The brothers were then granted immortality turn and turn about. They were known as the patrons of boxing, horsemanship, and oddly enough shipwrecked sailors."

"Yes," said Jim, "that's all somewhere in the attic of my mind, but what's the connection with France and...Oh! Helen and Paris!" he guffawed.

"That might not be such a bad idea at that," I laughed too. "But it turns out that Nîmes is a very ancient French city dating back to Roman times, and the present day Church of St. Castor.."

"Aha!"

"...is built on the ruins of the old Augustan Temple."

"Was there a St. Castor? I don't remember him"

"It is a bit doubtful. The feeling is that he was based on older models like so many others. But next we have to remember that Augustus himself became a God."

"Standard practice for the Roman Emperors, wasn't it?" Jim suggested.

"True enough, but I checked up on him in Suetonius, and he records that someone swore his spirit soared up to heaven from his funeral pyre."

"So you are saying that both Castor and Augustus died and were reborn, which could prove that Holmes would do the same?"

"Yes, exactly. But that is only half of the story. The title Augustus, which was given to the Emperor, would be translated into Greek as Sebastos."

"You lost me there."

"One moment only. The other French city Holmes visited was Narbonne. Lo and behold, its great claim to fame is that this was the place where St. Sebastian was shot to death with arrows at the orders of Diocletian."

"Well, I certainly remember that. There was a ghastly picture of him on the wall where I went to school. Gave me nightmares. They made a pin-cushion out of him."

"True. But the astonishing thing that very few people know is that he survived his martyrdom. He was left for dead, but a lady named Irene came along and nursed him back to health."

"Really!"

"And that in Holmesian terms take us to a story in *The Adventures*, called *A Scandal in Bohemia*, in which Irene Adler, the only woman in Holmes' life, tended the wounded clergyman, who was Holmes himself in disguise."

"That certainly makes a good match," Jim admitted.

"Back to St. Sebastian. The Emperor ordered a re-martyrdom and he was beaten to death with rods. But is it just a coincidence that the Emperor involved was Diocletian, the same man who made away with St. Vitus and his coach Modestus?" I had to explain a little about St. Vitus and Sydenham, before Jim said he

was inclined to think not.

"That's what I thought. So next I checked up on the map where exactly in France Narbonne and Nîmes were, and found that they are in the South with Montpellier on the dead straight line between them. And Montpellier is the place from which Holmes makes his triumphant return."

"The only snag there is that your hypothetical reader-detective could not have deduced that from *The Memoirs*. Montpellier won't be mentioned until the first story of *The Return*," Jim objected. "But I'll go for the idea that he should have checked up on Narbonne and Nîmes. They do give the game away that Holmes will survive his death, like the others, Augustus Castor and Sebastian. Oh, and I do see what you mean with the thought that Augustus and Sebastos mean the same thing. But it still doesn't mean that Montpellier will necessarily be the place."

"Not so far. But it just might if you bear in mind that Conan Doyle also tells us for the first time in *The Memoirs* that Sherlock Holmes had French ancestry. His forebears were the artistic family of the Vernets, and they came from Avignon." I looked at my diagram for confirmation:



"And the interesting thing," I continued, "is that Avignon and Montpellier are pretty much equidistant from Nîmes. Now if my hypothetical detective had checked up on the Vernets he would have been rather overwhelmed to find that Joseph Vernet of Avignon painted seascapes and shipwrecks, and that he was married to the daughter of the Pope's Naval Commandant."

"You don't say. And Avignon was the Papal city wasn't it?"

"Until 1791. So we're on solid ground. And we also have in *The Memoirs* the theft of Pope's *Homer*, and the theft of the Naval Treaty. And then there were more artistic Vernets. Joseph's son Carle liked to paint horses and he also did a very famous portrait of Napoleon..."

"The Moriarty of war?" Jim laughed.

"And finally there was Horace who did that famous painting of his studio complete with a horse, some dogs, some boxers, fencers and so forth. That takes us back to the horse-boxer combination of Castor and Pollux."

"Who were also patrons of the shipwrecked sailors painted by the other Vernet, their father."

"It does look as if Conan Doyle was very careful to think this whole thing out, because the sinking ships and *Homer* were also the basis of one of the new symmetries."

"What were the other ones again?" Jim asked.

"St. Vitus, martyred by Diocletian after his tutor Modestus had saved him the first time, was the first one. Then Cavaliers

and Frenchmen, which led to Nîmes. Can I have your vote for the French Resurrection?"

"That you most certainly can," said Jim fervently.

Chapter Fifteen.

It took a couple of weeks to get everything typed up, and once again for the umpteenth time I put three questions to myself. This time I had some answers:

1. Will Holmes return to life?

Yes. He is a combination of the religious, the kingly and the heroic, exemplified by Christ, Dionysus, Attis, Adonis and Osiris as Gods, Arthur and the Stuarts as Kings and Odysseus as the hero.

2. Where will he come from?

Probably from France in the vicinity of Narbonne, Nîmes and Avignon, because:

a) Narbonne was the city where St. Sebastian outlived his martyrdom.

b) Nîmes was the city where St. Castor's Church was built on the ruins of the Augustan Temple. Both Castor and Augustus survived their apparent deaths.

c) Avignon, in the same area, was the place where the artistic Vernet family, Holmes' kin on his mother's side, originated. It was also the city of the Popes. The theft of a volume of Pope's *Homer* suggests a combination of Christ and Odysseus. Holmes and Homer have an obvious affinity. For good measure in the play of *The Speckled Band* Billy complains on Holmes' behalf that "the Pope's been bothering us again."

3. When can he be expected?

This question needed further exploration. There were four solutions which needed to be considered:

i) Six months, the period of the absence of the Sun-Oak-King.

We had found a global voyage in the stories of *The Memoirs* which suggested that Silver Blaze represented a Solar God who dies and is reborn with the changing of the seasons. He rules for six months and is then replaced by King of the Dying Year. While this was useful as an indicator that Holmes would return it did not seem likely that Conan Doyle could have intended to use such a short period of absence, since it would mean that his hero would hardly be gone before he came back again.

ii) Ten weeks, the period of absence of Osiris.

Another period which is given importance in *The Memoirs* is

that of ten weeks during which the Naval Treaty was missing in the tenth story. In ancient Egypt the Dog-Star, Sirius, by far the brightest in the heavens, was absent for seventy days, during which there was general mourning for the dead Osiris. Robert Graves gives the period as beginning on May 14th. and so running into late July, which fits pretty well with the fact that the Naval Treaty was stolen on May 23rd.

Having discovered the importance of the Fisher King legend in connection with *The Speckled Band* it was noticeable that the hero, whose life was blighted by the loss of the Treaty was named Percy Phelps, which is astonishingly close to Parsifal. Add to that the fact that he lives in Woking (Woe-king), and the Treaty is returned to him on a dish, and it is clear that the basis for this story lies in the Legend of the Holy Grail. The Grail was brought to England by Joseph of Arimathea, and the man who took the Treaty is named Joseph Harrison.

While ten weeks is not attractive in itself, the number ten is certainly stressed in this story, the tenth Memoir.

iii) Three years, matching the days of Christ's absence.

Between the Crucifixion on Good Friday and the Resurrection on Easter Sunday Christ spent three days in Hell. This would accord very well with the cryptic message I had derived from the paired links between the stories of *The Memoirs*:

1-2. Concealment of Silver	The Messiah was hailed as a child
at Blaze and the child	Bethlehem, and as a man riding a
	donkey on Palm Sunday. But now his
	identity is hidden.

2-3. A sum of money.	He was betrayed for thirty pieces of
	silver.

3-4. Birmingham - the name	Exclusion of the Catholic King
given to a supporter of	James II, who will finally gain the
the Exclusion Bill.	throne.

4-5-6. Three servants, all	Christ, crucified between two
criminals, are killed.	thieves.
Brunton in 5 has an	Christ is buried in the tomb of
intelligence much like	Joseph of Arimathea, who brought
the that of Holmes, and is	Holy Grail to England. In Mark,
Mary also a musician; they	and the other ladies worry about
how can both solve the Mus-	they are to roll away the
tombstone,	

grave Ritual. He is	Nevertheless the tomb is open on	found
buried under a	Easter Sunday.	
stone it is very hard		
to move.		

6-7. 11.45 p.m.	A new day is about to begin...
Morrison.	for the son of Mary.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 7-8-9. Fire/heat. | Now he is in Hell for three days. |
| 9-10. Government. | He will return to sit at the right hand of God the Father...of whose Kingdom there shall be no end. |
| 10-11. Bare knuckle fighting and injury. | This links back to the nobbling of Silver Blaze. It is also a hint at the boxer Pollux. Castor was the horseman of the pair. |

The next step was an examination of the stories for periods of "three days":

1. Holmes avoided going to King's Pyland from Tuesday to Thursday without ever offering an adequate explanation, even though his help had been urgently requested in two telegrams. This period corresponds to the gap between Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The Nicene Creed has this surprising description: "After three days he rose again."
2. "On the third day however" (357)... "three days later" (362).
3. Watson has been confined to the house for three days with a severe chill (363). Hall Pycroft was due to start work at Mawson's in three days (364-5). Pycroft was given a silly task on Saturday; he returns to his employer on Monday, on Wednesday and again on Friday. These are all three day Biblical periods.
4. GLOR: nothing discovered.
5. "On the third morning" (390).
6. The story begins with Holmes in France suffering from the "blackest depressions", but "three days later we were back in Baker Street" (398). He goes to visit Colonel Hayter to recuperate and solves the case the following day. He promises to return "much invigorated to Baker Street tomorrow" (411). Once again on the third day.
7. Holmes tells Watson that the facts of the case "are only two days old" and asks for his company the following day at Aldershot, when he solves the mystery (412).
8. RESI: nothing discovered.
9. "This is Wednesday evening...it was Monday night - only two days ago, you understand" (438). Mr. Melas evidently does not like the Biblical reckoning!
10. "during the last three days" (454).
11. "In three days...three days" (471); "moving upon the third day" (476); "On the third of May" (this is the Eve of Holmes'

death: 477).

The combination of the cryptic message and the great stress in *The Memoirs* on the three day period lent importance to the idea of a three year period before the Return. But the serious question remained: Was that predictable? After all three days and three years are not the same thing. It seemed more probable that this was just another dominant element in an already complicated fabric.

iv) A period of ten years, that of the Odyssey.

What then was special about the two stories which had not contained periods of three days? The answer was very simple. These were the ones which told of watery deaths, the sinking of the two ships, the Gloria Scott and the Norah Creina. Attention was drawn to the Odyssey in the second of them, RESI, by a reference to GLOR and STUD as "Scylla and Charybdis". The sole survivor of the sinking of the Gloria Scott was Hudson, who returned after an absence of thirty years to plague the Trevors. In all Odysseus was away from his native Ithaca for thirty years as well, ten at the Trojan War, ten on his famous voyage, of which he was the sole survivor, and a further ten years in exile for his attack on Penelope's suitors. The ten year period also crops up in RESI: first of all Dr. Trevelyan hoped to be able to save enough in ten years to enable him to put up his plate (425). He is saved from this necessity by the assistance of his "resident patient", who is in fact a bank robber hiding from his swindled accomplices, who were sent to prison for fifteen years apiece. They were released after serving only ten years each, and three times ten is thirty.

The only other period of exactly ten years that I was able to find is in MUSG. Here an elm tree was struck by lightning ten years ago and cut down (393). Since the elm is a prime bardic tree I felt it might be a good idea to check up on it in *The White Goddess*. Robert Graves equates it with the silver fir and says the the Trojan Horse was built from it (WG: 190-1). The horse was built by Odysseus and resulted in the victory at Troy, but it did take him ten years to get home after it.

Taken in conjunction with the ten week period of the absence of Osiris which was so stressed in the tenth Memoir this seemed to be the most likely candidate. It has the added advantage that it stresses the human-heroic aspect of Holmes character.

* * *

"So when did Conan Doyle finally bring Holmes back to life?" asked the editor I had been sent to. We were seated in her office at the publishers who had accepted the submission of the book, and naturally she was interested in the basic premise.

"It turned out to be a combination of the main possibilities," I told her. "Conan Doyle managed to mingle the ten and three year periods rather cleverly. In the stories the

dates are given clearly: Holmes "died" on May 4th. 1891 in *The Memoirs*, and he came back to life on April 1st. 1894 in *The Return*. There you have the three year absence, and Holmes is revived at about Easter time, in fact on Quasimodo Sunday, which is a separate little joke.."

"Hunchback of Notre Dame?" she supplied.

"Yes, that's it. The complications are wild and wonderful. But you'll read it all in my book. Then Conan Doyle uses the ten year period of the *Odyssey* in what you might call real time. In other words there was a whole ten year interval between *The Memoirs* in 1893 and the appearance of *The Return* in October 1903."

"And you really think it was possible to predict this on the basis of what Conan Doyle wrote before the event?"

I nodded slowly.

"So Conan Doyle must have been guilty of a literary hoax on a colossal scale?"

"Exactly that. He deliberately deceived millions of people, and the deception has succeeded for a hundred years."

"Amazing that nobody spotted it until now!"

"Well it must be admitted that the evidence in *The Memoirs* is pretty well hidden. It was only afterwards that Conan Doyle became quite flagrant in making fun of his readers for failing to spot it, and for not paying attention to Holmes himself. Here's a lovely clue he put into *Abbey Grange*; this is what Holmes says to Watson:

`Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of as a scientific exercise has ruined what might have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations. You slur over work of the utmost finesse and delicacy, in order to dwell upon sensational details which may excite, but cannot possibly instruct, the reader'."

"Why hasn't anybody else noticed this, do you suppose?" she asked shrewdly.

"I think there have been glimmerings. I'm fairly sure that James Joyce spotted it for instance. Then certainly Sam Rosenberg presented a good case for Holmes as a Christ figure returning at Easter time. The snag is that many of the people who have made this their special field of study produce wonderful work based on some facets of the evidence, but they tend to look at things very much in the way that Watson does, instead of as the 'classical series of demonstrations' that Holmes recommended. What could be clearer advice than that? And what book more classical than the *Odyssey*?"

"Yes, I can see that," she replied. "If you're right, then you're very, very right. I really do hope you are."

"I don't think there can be any doubt of it when you take into account Conan Doyle's later work. The next book after *The Memoirs* was the famous *Hound of the Baskervilles*, and that one is full of inconsistencies drawing attention to this central problem of whether Holmes really did die at Reichenbach."

"Now hang on a second. How could Conan Doyle have written about Holmes before *The Return*?"

"*Hound* was described as a reminiscence about earlier cases."

"I see, and when was it written?"

"It was published in August 1901, eight years after the supposed death, and the book ends in a most interesting way for the armchair detective. The hero's nerves are so shot from his brush with the hound that he goes off with Dr. James Mortimer, the man who certainly seemed to be the villain of the piece, for a two year voyage around the world."

"Ah yes. And eight years plus two makes up the period for the Odyssey?"

"To say nothing of the fact that they do go off on a sea voyage. Then too you need to know that Odysseus was trapped on Circe's island for eight years during his trip."

"Was he indeed, I didn't know that."

"Then there's another very backward looking book called *The Valley of Fear* where Conan Doyle really rubs our noses in the correct time periods. In this one Moriarty has become a hero in the guise of Jack McMurdo, the detective..."

"Moriarty is disguised as a detective in one of the stories?"

"Oh, sorry, no. That was not what I meant. You see the Irish name Moriarty has quite a number of variant forms: Murdo, Murtagh and Murdoch for instance, so anyone in the stories with those names must automatically be thought of a sort of cousin to the Professor," I told her.

"Okay. Do go on," she urged.

"It takes ten years to bring the wicked Scowrers to justice, then they are sent to prison for ten years. And just listen to these quotations: 'In ten long years of outrage there had been no single conviction', that's on p.833, then on p.864 Jack McMurdo says: '...there's many a thousand will call me a deliverer that went down into hell to save them. I've had three months of it.' Still on the same page we get: 'Ted Baldwin for one, had escaped the scaffold...so had several others of the gang. For ten years they were out of the world.' Conan Doyle manages to combine the Christian and the Odyssean periods you see?"

"Yes," she said thoughtfully, "it's very obvious here."

"Oh! And by way of a bonus, this is one of the very few stories in which Moriarty does appear. You probably know that Holmes called him the Napoleon of crime?"

"No, but I'll take your word for it," she replied with a smile.

"Well, Moriarty's men kill McMurdo at the end of the book by throwing him overboard off the island of St. Helena."

"But surely that's where Napoleon died?"

"Yes. Conan Doyle loved to have his little joke."

Chapter Sixteen.

Rejection is as much a way of life for an actor as it is for a salesman, though perhaps we take it a little more personally, since it is ourselves rather than the product which is unwanted. But there is nothing quite to match the deep pain inflicted by the rejection of a book, the fruit of long and arduous effort, one's child in a sense, that some idiot,...some collection of...!

Words failed me as I read the fatal letter. They loved the book, they were awestruck by the scholarship, and so on and so forth, BUT in the current state of the economy...not entirely convincing...a little above the heads of our readership...directed to an expert audience. What it came down to, I finally was made to realize, after a long discussion of the matter with my wife Susan, whom I had met when we were both in the Broadway *Sherlock Holmes*, was that I had failed to prove my case.

"Then they can't have read it very thoroughly," I asserted testily.

"It's not a very easy book to read thoroughly," she reminded me gently, "even though it is true."

In any case it had to be buried with many another rejection because we were on our way the next day down to Baja for Christmas. Her parents had a wonderful house there, not far from Rosarito, an ideal spot for licking my wounds.

Just before the trip by one of those odd circumstances we had heard how useful taped books were for long drives, and it seemed to fit with the fact that I had recorded so many myself for the blind over the years. The upshot was that Susan went to check out the tape place, which turned out to be only a quarter of mile from the parental Condo in Newport Beach. When she brought me back their catalogue I had a tiny lurking suspicion that they had to be pirating stuff I had done in New York, since it contained so many titles I had recorded, and the names of the artists were entirely unfamiliar to me. The following morning I rented the tapes of *The Memoirs* and as we drove down to Mexico I put them on. There was no need to have worried - those were not my dulcet tones, and why for God's sake pronounce "Halloa" as "Hallo-ah"?

It was a new experience for me to listen to a book, and it took a while for me to stop being critical of someone else's reading, and start paying attention to the text. But gradually the story began to take over, and during the second adventure I noticed something new.

"There it is again," I said, and stopped the tape.

"What?" asked Susan, who was paying more attention to the driving than to the book, and rightly so.

"In this story both Grant Munro and his wife, on separate occasions, have this choking feeling," I replied.

"Didn't notice it," said Susan.

"And how about the yellow face and the yellow fever?"

She thought about that for a while. "That's true. Yellow Face is the name of this story, and her first husband died of yellow fever in Atlanta."

"And I rather think that in the first story one of the jockeys wore yellow. We'll have to listen to it all again. Have you got some paper? I must start making notes of anything silly like this."

"Yes, in the outside pocket of my shoulder bag. There's a pen in there too."

"Well done!" I wriggled around to find what I needed on the back seat of the Volvo, and then switched on the tape again. We listened in silence as we sped across the boring bit before Camp Pendleton. The third story produced a gold tooth filling to match the yellow, and the attempt by Pinner to hang himself to go with the choking sensation.

After passing through the cursory border in Tijuana, the sun began to come out, and by the time we stopped in Rosarito to pick up supplies, the day was gorgeous. We just had to stop at Calafia for lunch. It is quite a spectacular spot, almost suspended over the waves, with a wonderful view of the bay with its tiny rocky island in the middle, and in the far distance the clouded purple coast stretching down towards Ensenada. From here we could look down on the rocks where a young seal was basking, and enjoy the sun ourselves, just a few days after New York's harsh winter weather.

"What do you make of it so far?" asked Susan, as we settled back after ordering two sets of margaritas and beer. The only drawback of this place was a severe shortage of waiters, so it was wiser to order things in batches.

"Well," I said, scanning my by now rather scruffy bit of paper, "we've got both Munroes in 2 with a choking feeling, and the hanging in the third story. Then there's Gloria Scott...lots of people die, but there's nobody choking."

"What about all the soldiers and sailors who were drowned? Weren't they choking?" she countered.

"Off camera, as it were?" I thought about that. "It's a possibility. Come to think of it there was the surgeon who had his throat cut by Prendergast. But let's shelve that until we see whether the later stories have choking in them too."

"What would it mean if they did?"

"It might be a sort of prefigurement of the final struggle between Holmes and Moriarty as they try to kill each other at Reichenbach. Then again it might have to do with the classical criminal death by hanging."

"Sentenced to a stretch?" Susan suggested with a laugh.

"That's gruesome."

"It's no worse than some of yours!"

"Hmm. I daresay you're right," I admitted. "Could be there's some way of counting the chokers and making some prediction."

"Doesn't sound very promising," she objected.

"Any port in a storm. Ah! Here he comes...like lightning today. Muchas gracias!"

The waiter set down our drinks, and we ordered steak sandwiches for lunch. They do something special to them in the way of spicing them up, and their rare combination of pink inside with burnt crisp outside was something to look forward to.

"Then what do we have on the yellow?" asked Susan taking a sip of her drink, while I sank a bottle of Superior more or less at a gulp.

"There we are absolutely solid. First story, the jockey's clothes; second, the title and the yellow fever; third, the gold filling; Gloria Scott, the case of jaundice among the prisoners. You'd have no chance of noticing that last one if you were reading the book casually, just that one tiny reference."

"You wouldn't notice it unless you were looking for yellow references either," Susan pointed out.

"True enough. Again I don't know what to make of them. Perhaps it's gold we are finding rather than yellow. Yes! Didn't Trevor say that he'd made his money at the diggings in Australia?"

"At the gold fields...he was specific." What a memory she had.

"That could be it then. In the Stockbroker story there's a mention of Broken Hill. That was a great Australian mining centre - silver or gold, I rather think. I'll have to look it up."

It was rather difficult working without the text, and also without any reference books to check up on things, but it meant that we had to listen all the more carefully to the recording. Over the course of the following week we went through *The Memoirs* twice and found that our choking links ran as far as the sixth story where Holmes fell to the ground clutching his throat, and later was nearly strangled by the Cunninghams. There was a hanging in the eighth, and in the ninth a man killed by asphyxia. The last story talked of a rope for the members of Moriarty's gang.

The clues of the gold and yellow rather petered out, except for the examples Jim and I had found which fell in a symmetrical pattern. We tried without success to construct a table of the many deaths in the book which would show some logical structure. By the time we got on the plane in San Diego to return to New York I felt that there were no fresh leads worth following up, but Susan kept urging me on.

"I'm absolutely sure there must be more to it. Look at how much you missed already," she reminded me.

"Yes. I'll concede that, but what we've found doesn't lead anywhere," I objected. "What do you want me to do? Rewrite the whole damn thing?"

But she wouldn't let go, and when we got home that evening she insisted on pulling out the book and pointing out that there were a hundred pages of evidence based on *Hound* and *Valley* which were not only very hard to concentrate on, but also after the fact.

"I know they're after the fact," I replied rather huffily, "but Conan Doyle put so much stuff in them to show the readers what they had missed in *The Memoirs*!"

"Yes, well look what you missed in *The Memoirs*! There's got to be more it. And I'll bet, if you go to a little bit of extra trouble, you'll find enough evidence to prove that Holmes will return without all this later material. You can take it all out of your book, and make it much more readable."

"I thought you loved it," I complained, but laughing in spite of myself.

"I do. I did. But if you can make it better?" she pleaded.

"It was like pushing a pea up a mountain with my nose, writing that book," I confessed, "and now you want me to start all over again?"

"It's got to be your decision. I know how hard it must be."

There was a long silence.

"Tell you what," I said at last. "You know I have to go down to New Orleans for a week to do *The Joy that Kills* for American Playhouse. While I'm there I'll make a really thorough search of *The Memoirs*. And if I find anything new I'll rewrite the darn thing."

* * *

On the plane I started to kick myself. I had to admit that she was quite right. The book was not just hard to read, it was downright impossible, and the evidence from later work was inadmissible in any court of law. I had to show, and in a convincing way, that a reader of *The Memoirs* should have been able to deduce that Holmes would reappear. Either the evidence was there, and I would start again, or it was not and the whole idea should be laid to rest.

* * *

The weather was most cooperative. It was the wettest and coldest January in the history of Louisiana. The banana trees in the courtyard of my hotel were all dead. It did not bode well for the producers of the little TV movie, since it was supposed to take place at the start of the Southern Summer, and it was not easy to give that impression with steamy breath, despite the freshly planted flowers in the garden and the tarpaulin stretched overhead to keep the rain off. Ice cubes held in the mouth for half a minute just before the shot helped solve one problem, but not very comfortably! In the absence of any temptation to explore the city during my many hours off it was ideal weather for detecting, and once I got started it took my mind completely off the elements.

On the plane coming down I had desultorily made a list of the categories I should cover, so that when I found an example of any of them I could make a note of it under a separate heading. Obviously the original work had some validity, so it would be as well to cover that ground again and look for any more examples of pairing between stories, but this time with a difference. I really had to get down on my hands and knees to sniff out all the possible clues. Anything at all peculiar would go down on one sheet, anything involving the Holmes-Watson-Moriarty connection on another, Cavaliers and France on a third. But that was all old terrain. Time periods had also been partly covered. Go over them again more thoroughly. Were there any possible new areas? Deaths should be noted down, and probably watery deaths should be a

separate listing - in fact what about a category devoted to any kind of water imagery? Anything which could be taken as hinting at the final scene at Reichenbach Falls, where one would survive and the other die. Another heading: survival and escape from death or danger. Illnesses. Fakery. A sudden inspiration! Could there be a coded message in that final note from Holmes to Watson written just before his "death"? It would certainly be worth making a list of all messages throughout the text.

The whole process would be very much like that of sorting out the pieces of a jigsaw. First you try to find all the edge bits (and they're never all there for some reason), then you put the rest into categories starting with the easier more coloured pieces. Finally you deal with the task of putting the all blue sky together. Once my pieces were properly sorted out, it should be possible to make the real picture out of them.

With the rain streaking the windows and my category sheets spread on the bed near me, my trusty tape machine played Mahler's Ninth at my elbow, as I started to work super slowly through the story of Silver Blaze, ready to react at the least hint of anything out of the ordinary. And now the very opening words struck me as extremely significant. How clever it would be of Conan Doyle to hide something at the beginning where it would be most likely to be overlooked:

"I am afraid, Watson, that I shall have to go," said Holmes... "Go! Where to?"

"To Dartmoor; to King's Pyland." (p.335)

I now realized that this could be read as a forecast: Holmes knows that he must leave, that he must "go West". If that were so, then some words further down the page sounded very much like instructions to the reader on how to deal with the ultimate disappearance in this book, that of Holmes himself, presumed dead:

"It is one of those cases where the art of the reasoner should be used rather for the sifting of details than for the acquiring of fresh evidence..." (These words lent a strong note of hope to my new search) "...The tragedy has been so uncommon, so complete, and of such importance to so many people that we are suffering from a plethora of surmise, conjecture and hypothesis."

(This would seem to apply to the overall case far better than to the immediate one of the disappearance of the racehorse. After all it is not as if it were the favourite in the Derby. Who ever heard of the Wessex Cup...or Plate?) "The difficulty is to detach the framework of fact - of absolute undeniable fact - from the embellishments of theorists and reporters. Then having established ourselves upon this sound basis, it is our duty to see what inferences may be drawn and what are the special points upon which the whole mystery turns."

And that was just what I was now attempting to do!

Upon deep consideration these words now read as perfectly logical instructions to the detective. Watson reports and theorizes, but there is an underlying framework of fact that must be established. It now became apparent that I had left out a most important category of material to be made note of, and I headed a fresh sheet of paper with the title: Methods of Detection. In

almost every story there are examples of Holmes explaining exactly how he does it. Very soon another one came to light as he stretches out full length on the ground to make a careful examination of the trampled mud. He finds a spent match there, much to the Inspector's chagrin, but Holmes explains that he only found it because he was looking for it. This sounded like very good advice. Clearly if you are not seeking the evidence of Holmes' ultimate survival, then you won't be able to see it; if you don't know the type of thing you will need to find, you can never spot it among all that "trampled mud".

Gradually the sheets filled up and other headings suggested themselves from time to time. In the end many of them turned out to be false leads, but it was vital to check out everything this time. The one of absorbing interest as things progressed was the "Methods of Detection", which continued to support exactly the kind of examination I was engaged in. The important thing always was to sort the wheat from the chaff, the facts from the embellishment, to find the real evidence and put it in the right order. The second story even went into some detail on pp. 359-360 about the wrong way of doing things, with Holmes making an ass of himself for once. He feels sure that blackmail is involved in this case, and without any firm basis of evidence he presents his case to Watson. Then he asks (the suspicion must be there that he is testing Watson's acumen):

"What do you think of my theory?"

"It is all surmise."

"But at least it covers the facts. When new facts come to our knowledge which cannot be covered by it, it will be time enough to reconsider it. We can do nothing more until we have a message from our friend at Norbury."

But on this occasion it turns out that Watson was correct and Holmes indeed did not have enough facts to go on. He has to admit his error and ask his friend, whenever he is again guilty of this kind of overconfidence, to whisper the magic word "Norbury" into his ear. First the facts, and only then the theory. But that did not stop me from leaping to a half conclusion right then, since this key word "Norbury" suggested the idea of non-burial. Don't bury me until I'm really dead!

Holmes in this instance should have followed the advice he gave in other cases in this book:

"See the value of imagination. It is the one quality which Gregory lacks. We imagined what might have happened, acted upon that supposition, and find ourselves justified." (344)

"You know my methods in such cases, Watson. I put myself in the man's place, and having first gauged his intelligence, I try to imagine how I should myself have proceeded under the same circumstances. In this case the matter was simplified by Brunton's intelligence being quite first-rate, so that it was unnecessary to make any allowance for the personal equation, as the astronomers have dubbed it." (395)

"Oh, it is as well to test everything." (402)

"I am afraid that my explanations may disillusion you, but it has always been my habit to hide none of my methods, whether from

my friend Watson or from anyone who might take an intelligent interest in them....It is of the highest importance in the art of detection to be able to recognize out of a number of facts, which are incidental and which vital. Otherwise your energy and attention must be dissipated instead of being concentrated...Now I make a point of never having any prejudices, and of following docilely wherever the facts my lead me..." (406-7)

"Having gathered these facts, Watson...trying to separate those which were crucial from others which were merely incidental" (415)

"We had all listened with deepest interest to this sketch of the night's doings, which Holmes had deduced from signs so subtle and minute that, even when he pointed them out to us, we could scarcely follow him in his reasonings." (433)

"...too much evidence. What was vital was overlaid and hidden by what was irrelevant. Of all the facts which were presented to us we had to pick just those which we deemed to be essential, and then piece them together in their order, so as to reconstruct this very remarkable chain of events." (467-8).

* * *

When I had finished combing through the stories for evidence I had an impressive pile of notes, and also this set of practical instructions on how to deal with them. The vital must be selected from the merely incidental, and the remaining pieces of the puzzle could then be fitted together into a consistent picture.

Until now, as Susan had reminded me so painfully, I had allowed myself to argue from the standpoint of a reader who knew from the later books that Holmes had survived. It was essential to put myself strictly in the position of someone who was reading what he thought was a book in which Sherlock Holmes really did die, and see if that reader could have broken a code. I would have to go through my book and take out every shred of those assumptions which were based on post facto considerations ("Norbury" whispered a voice in my ear), and rely only on what could be substantiated from the text of *The Memoirs*.

Did Conan Doyle do anything in that book which was designed to make an alert reader sit up and take notice?

Yes. Plenty! I had found pairings between adjacent stories and overall symmetrical patterns, which led to evidence of survival after death.

Was there any new material?

Yes. I had several pages of notes on extremely odd happenings throughout *The Memoirs*.

What did they suggest?

I lit my pipe and read them over slowly. I found myself lingering over the Musgrave Ritual. This was the case in which Holmes put himself into the mind of Brunton, a man of first rate intelligence, in order to think how he would have behaved under similar circumstances. There were some odd features about Brunton which made me realize that his character was very close indeed to that of Holmes:

"He was a young schoolmaster out of place when he was first taken up by my father, but he was a man of great energy and character, and he soon became quite invaluable in the household. He was a well-grown handsome man, with a splendid forehead, and though he had been with us for twenty years he cannot be more than forty now. With his personal advantages and his extraordinary gifts - for he can speak several languages and play nearly every musical instrument - it is wonderful that he should have been satisfied so long in such a position, but I suppose he was comfortable and lacked energy to make a change." (388-9)

Like Holmes he displays both great energy and the lack of it, and like him he is a redoubtable musician. He is also an amazing linguist, which connects him with another remarkable man, Mr. Melas, the Greek Interpreter, who speaks "all languages - or nearly all." (438) I had already decided that Brunton's burial beneath a very heavy stone was intended to suggest a match with Christ's interment, since the point is made in the Bible that the stone would be very difficult for several women to roll away. This is emphasized by the fact that this story is sandwiched between two others, and all three involve deaths of criminal servants. A fresh element sprang to light: Melas is called an "Interpreter", and that word would cover the activities of Brunton and Holmes in this story; they both interpret the Musgrave Ritual with the aid of balls of string. This was the fifth story, and it linked to the sixth where a ball of string was stolen and Holmes again acts as interpreter in solving the message written in alternate words by the Cunninghams. Perhaps the solution of coded messages was the thread which would tie thing up neatly for me?

Coded messages?

I had failed to find a code in the final note that Holmes left for Watson, and now a more determined attempt resulted in another failure. But perhaps there might be an overall pattern of messages which conveyed some sort of message to the reader? The coded ones seemed to form a clump in the central stories of the book. Having found my sheets with the messages listed on them, I laid them out for further consideration. First of all it would be necessary to assign them to their various categories, and I found that just five were needed to cover all possibilities:

- B. Buried information; cryptic and coded messages.
- L. Letters and notes which simply give information.
- N. Newspaper items, including ads and letters to them.
- F. Fake messages.
- S. Summons for help.

Just as soon as I had made a tidy list of the messages they began to fall into a pattern, and one which was totally surprising. There seemed to be a folding of the first ten stories to form as it were a U shape, since all the cryptic material fell in the centre. But there was a curious lack of any message at all in the seventh story. Now one of the items noted under the heading of "Very Odd" drew attention to the number seven: Holmes states that he has been given seven clues, but never elucidates the matter further (456). He is then asked: "You suspect someone?"

"I suspect myself."

"What?"

"Of coming to conclusions too rapidly..."

Certainly therefore I must avoid coming to conclusions about the number seven without further thought. Placing the stories in a U pattern, with a letter beside each item showing which category of coded information was present, did show a definite hole at that point which had to have some meaning:

1. <u>SILV:</u> Instruction letter and bills. (L) (L) Accounts in Telegraph (N) and Chronicle. (N) 2 telegrams summoning Holmes. (S) (S)	10. <u>NAVA:</u> Holmes' note to himself on shirtcuff. Unanswered ad. Letter from Phelps to Watson.
2. <u>YELL:</u> Message from Munro to Holmes. (S) (N) Letter from Mrs. Munro (S) (L)(F) (S)	9. <u>GREE:</u> Answer to ad. Ad. Question and answer session: Melas and Kratides. Note from Melas to Kratides.
3. <u>STOC:</u> Answer to ad. (L) Letter in reply. (L) (N) Ad of Mawson's. (N) Newspaper account of robbery. (N) Letter from Pinner to his "brother". (F)	8. <u>RESI:</u> Newspaper cutting about deaths of robbers. Letter to Doctor from fake Russian. (S)(F) Note from Doctor to Holmes.
4. <u>GLOR:</u> Coded note from Beddoes to Trevor. (B) Letter from Trevor to his son. (L)	7. <u>CROO:</u> ??
5. <u>MUSG:</u> The Musgrave Ritual. (B) Unanswered letters. (L) (B)	6. <u>REIG:</u> Note to Kirwan in two handwritings.

- | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|
| | Telegrams of
congratulation. |
| (L) | |
| | Phony ad. |
| (F) | |
| | Telegram to Watson. |
| (S) | |

The overall appearance demonstrated a good balance with fakery as a growing element, and buried messages in the central stories. The next step was to add the message material from the eleventh story to see whether there was any correspondence:

11. FINA:

- | | |
|---|--------|
| 2 notes from Holmes to Watson sent from Narbonne and Nîmes. | (L) |
| Slip of paper handed to the cabbie with the destination written on it. | (L) |
| Final letter from Holmes to Watson. | (L) |
| Letters from Colonel Moriarty to the papers. | (N) |
| Newspaper accounts of Holmes' death. | (N) |
| Note from Peter Steiler about the supposed English lady dying of consumption. | (S)(F) |

In order to preserve absolute symmetry between this last story and the other ten there ought to be an example of the B category, that of buried meanings. It did not take long to see that I had already solved that part of the puzzle by spotting that the messages from France did conceal a survival message in that Narbonne and Nîmes were the cities of Castor, Augustus and Sebastian, all of whom were resurrected.

Some further reflection revealed that this item formed part of an overall symmetry of messages falling into the now familiar 1-3-6-9-11 set of the "Winchester Fives" and the "Silver and Gold":

1. Two telegrams summon Holmes urgently to King's Pyland.
3. Answered ad in a case involving a phony French Company.
6. Telegram summoning Watson to Lyons, in France, where Holmes was dangerously ill.
9. Answered ad tells Holmes where the Greeks are to be found: at The Myrtles in Beckenham.
11. Two notes from Narbonne and Nîmes, in France.

If I were to accept that King's Pyland, the source of the message in the first story stemmed from the Greek root "pyl-" there was an overall linkage of France and Greece. Of course the two countries had something very important in common: Paris was the capital of one, and the prime cause of the whole "mishegas", as Susan would put it, of the Trojan War for the other. The phony company in 3 is based in Paris, and it is also the destination of Holmes and Watson when they set out on that last fateful journey in 11.

The only answered ads in *The Memoirs* are those in 3 and 9. The one in 9 has attention drawn to it by yet another of my "Very

Odd" items. Mycroft Holmes is described as a man who never varies his set routine. He leaves the house where he lives as a neighbour of the Greek Interpreter, Mr. Melas, and goes to his work auditing the books for the Government. Then, after a few hours at the Diogenes Club, again the Greek element, he returns home. However on this particular occasion he does something quite inexplicable. Holmes and Watson have been to see him, they take their leave and go back to Baker Street. When they get home they are flabbergasted to find that Mycroft has taken a hansom and passed them en route (why didn't he pick them up we ask?), bringing an answer to the ad which he has just received. Mycroft, the eternal stay-at-home, "from year's end to year's end he takes no other exercise", then even accompanies them to Beckenham. These remarkable events must draw attention to the importance of that answered ad.

The remaining piece of jigsaw which was so hard to find was the buried message in the seventh story, but the solution to that turned up in the "Very Odd" items I had in my hand. As in the eleventh story where Narbonne and Nîmes provided a cryptic clue to the reader this was also a hint to the would-be detective.

The seventh story begins in exactly the same way as the eleventh, FINA, with Holmes arriving late at night to find Watson still up and about. In both cases Holmes asks Watson to come on a journey with him. Here is the exchange in CROO:

"The problem presents features of interest," said he. "I may even say exceptional features of interest. I have already looked into the matter, and have come, as I think, within sight of my solution. If you could accompany me in that last step you might be of considerable service to me."

"I should be delighted."

"Could you go as far as Aldershot to-morrow?" (412)

Watson hands over his practice for the day and travels with Holmes, but he does absolutely nothing to aid in the investigation.

One of the items in the "Methods of Detection" was the instruction to piece the evidence together in the correct order, and this seemed to be a case in which this advice should be followed. This little anomaly could easily be explained if one read into it that Holmes would require Watson's company on a trip, far longer than this one "as far as Aldershot to-morrow", to his "last step", the one taken at Reichenbach Falls. This might be the buried message which would complete the pattern by linking seven and eleven, CROO and FINA.

The question had to be asked: Why did Holmes need Watson to go with him on this trip. What was so important that necessitated his getting Jackson to take over his practice? Watson did nothing at all. But what then did he do in FINA at Reichenbach? He left Holmes alone to face Moriarty. When he returned he saw the gleam of the silver cigarette case and found the note from Holmes. He examined the footprints and reported that it was impossible for anyone to have survived.

What effect did this have?

It assured the public and Holmes' enemies that the great

detective was now absolutely and beyond hope, DEAD.

This then could be the "considerable service to me" which Watson was asked to perform, and it fitted neatly with yet another very peculiar happening, this exchange in RESI (430). The word "grotesquely" strikes a false note right away:

"Is there not one alternative," I suggested, "grotesquely improbable, no doubt, but still just conceivable? Might the whole story of the cataleptic Russian and his son be a concoction of Dr. Trevelyan's, who has, for his own purposes, been in Blessingtons' rooms?"

I saw in the gas-light that Holmes wore an amused smile at this brilliant departure of mine.

"My dear fellow," said he, "it was one of the first solutions which occurred to me, but I was soon able to corroborate the doctor's tale. This young man left prints upon the stair-carpet ...When I tell you that his shoes were square-toed instead of being pointed like Blessington's, and were quite an inch and a third longer than the doctor's, you will acknowledge that there can be no doubt as to his individuality. But we must sleep on it now, for I shall be surprised if we do not hear something further from Brook Street in the morning."

Indeed they do hear something, that Blessington is dead. It looks as though Holmes expected this to happen, but took no steps to prevent the murder of someone he suspected of being a criminal in hiding.

But Holmes must have realized that Watson's idea is indeed a "brilliant departure", and perfectly logical; there was nothing to prevent Trevelyan from disguising his footprints by donning another pair of shoes and laying a false trail. Surely it must be this which makes Holmes smile at his friend's suggestion. Thus misinstructed by events at Brook Street, when Watson comes to read the tale of the prints at Reichenbach, (and "bach" is a German BROOK) he will make unwarranted assumptions. It would be quite possible for someone to have returned backwards along the two sets of prints beside the falls, leaving the trail undisturbed, except to a far keener eye than the Doctor's.

With all the art of the expert magician Holmes has fed Watson a card which he trusts will stand him in good stead later on. He puts in his mind a doubt about his own reading of the footprint evidence. Had he stuck to his guns he might have doubted the clue of the prints at Reichenbach, but it was of infinite importance, to protect Holmes from any suspicion that he might still be alive, that he should not do so. Watson must very simply follow the example of Holmes in the first story, where he traced the paired prints of Silver Blaze and his abductor, Silas Brown, to the Mapleton Stables.

The system of using Holmes' Methods of Detection was working well. The "Very Odd" events were signposts to other evidence, and the pattern of symmetry led again back to this special point of the survival of certain individuals in the face of death. Clearly I was still a Watson getting an education. Though a great deal of what I had originally written was valid and valuable, it was extremely embarrassing to discover how much I had missed. This

time it would be different, I promised myself. I had amassed every possible shred of evidence, and it only remained to go through it with extreme vigilance, and fit the vital facts together.

No problem!

Chapter Seventeen.

What more could I do? I felt totally spent as I waited for the Subway after the meeting. I had presented the case for the gigantic literary hoax that Conan Doyle perpetrated many a time to friends, and they had always seemed to be convinced of its truth.

But these "consultants" of the new publishers had been more than sceptical. The average reader, Mrs. Daneman had informed me, only knew the Sherlock Holmes stories from the Basil Rathbone movies, and so couldn't possibly be interested in reading all the bardic nonsense in my book. Surely, I replied, they might be just a little astonished that Arthur Conan Doyle had hoaxed the reading public of the entire planet for a hundred years. He claimed that he had murdered their favourite hero, and then waited with glee to see whether they would realize that it was all a practical joke. Prove it, she answered tartly.

It was over a year since the book was rewritten and submitted to another publisher. Yet again there was a lengthy waiting period and I had begun to lose hope when finally a letter arrived one morning. I opened it with great trepidation to find that my presence was desired at a meeting the following Friday, at which I could "clarify certain points in the manuscript". A pat on the back - or a kick in the ass? But surely they wouldn't go to this trouble unless the book had some value?

We had spent the afternoon over several cups of coffee in a small boardroom, the walls covered with "Olde English" sporting prints. Professor Carlos Gomez had said very little, merely lent his sombre and disapproving presence to the event, but his taciturnity had been more than counterbalanced by the garrulity of Mrs. Daneman. She had reminded me a little of Margaret Rutherford, though certainly not in the role of Miss Marples!

I had tried to recapitulate the detective work which had led me to believe that Holmes was never killed off. There was the blackness throughout *The Memoirs*, and the silver in the first story echoed in the last one to suggest the global voyage of the sun. That was confirmed by the actual places mentioned in the text, which fell into a West-bound pattern with two trips around the world. Then there was the ever recurring letter B, Beth, the first letter of the bardic alphabet, which suggested the New Year to come. That was what precipitated the explosion about the public's lack of interest in bardic matters. Alright then - a new tack. How about the astonishing links between the stories of *The Memoirs*? I ran over them in detail, pointing out the underlying message. Mrs. Daneman, who had seemed edgy throughout my exposition, said at some length that the pairs were simply an

example of a busy writer's repetition of words and ideas. It was all Conan Doyle's subconscious at work, coupled with my over eager imagination. And it didn't strike her as beyond coincidence that there were so many of them. I had pointed out that each of those links was echoed in *The Return*, only to have the Professor remark that what had been written after Holmes' return could hardly be taken as evidence that he would do so. True enough! But what explanation could they offer, I had retorted. Did they think it at all possible that Conan Doyle had noticed these "subconscious" pairings in *The Memoirs*, and ten years later, when he wrote *The Return*, went to a superhuman effort to repeat them. If he was so careful to study his old work, why had he changed all the names when he turned his short story into the play, *The Speckled Band*? Why?

Pure accident was Mrs. Daneman's response. You could probably come to the same conclusions if you looked at the Bible with the same sort of puzzle freak attitude. I had to bite my tongue at that one.

Alright then! How about the triple links? There was the Homeric connection between 4-6-8; the unwritten story of the Second Stain linked 2-6-10; and there was St. Vitus's Dance in 3-6-9.

What did that prove?

Well, for a start, since they stuck out to such an extent, that Conan Doyle wanted his readers to pay attention to an overall symmetry underlying the eleven stories. Having spotted these glaring examples it was easy to progress to the larger pattern of 1-3-6-9-11 which makes it possible to ask and answer some questions about what happens in the final story.

Mrs. Daneman snorted.

"Go on," murmured Professor Gomez.

"I have shown twenty examples of this type of linkage in the book. But for now let me go into some cases which point towards Holmes' survival. There are two sets of 3-6-9 linkages which drew attention to the thought that there could well be matching material in 1 and 11 to produce an overall symmetry. Take first the category of people who survived after near death experiences.

In 3 Pinner is rescued when he tries to hang himself; in 6 Watson rushes to France to the aid of Holmes, who is very dangerously ill; and in 9 Mr. Melas is revived after being exposed to the charcoal fumes which killed Kratides. Add to that category the occasions when two criminals are brought to justice: in 3 the Beddington brothers are captured; in 6 the Cunninghams, father and son; and in 9 Kemp and Latimer are stabbed by Sophy Kratides. Both of these sets of triple links are echoed in the first story by the disappearance of Silver Blaze. On the one hand he survives his presumed death, and on the other, rather jokingly, he does match the two criminals in that his four legs add up to the total of theirs, and he is after all the innocent killer of John Straker." I could sense that Mrs. Daneman was hating the four leg parallel, so I pressed on vigorously: "Next we must take notice of a number of things the first and last story have in common. First of all they have examples of disguised identity: Silver Blaze is

made unrecognizable, even to his owner, in 1, while in 11 both Holmes and Mycroft are unrecognizable to Watson. Next they both have fake illnesses: in 1 Fitzroy Simpson lived in the invalid houses near the stable, and the name Simpson means someone who fakes milk by watering down - that little item is in the OED, by the way; in 11 there is a fake English lady said to be dying of consumption. But the central event in the first story is the disappearance of Silver Blaze, just as in the last one it is that of Holmes. In 1 the horse is attacked by his trainer with a cataract knife - he is of Isonomy stock and the incident takes place on Dartmoor, a place most famed for its prison, originally built to accommodate French prisoners during the Napoleonic Wars.

Contrast all that with the presumed deaths in the cataract at Reichenbach of Holmes and the Binomial "coach" Moriarty, also known as the "Napoleon of crime", and there is a perfect chiasma.

In the first story the innocent killer horse survived and went on to win, while his trainer died. Hence it would be logical for the reader of the last one to deduce that the innocent killer Holmes will survive, and the coach will be the victim of the cataract."

"That is all very complicated," sighed Mrs. Daneman.

"Fairly plausible. Perhaps a little thin on its own," added Gomez quietly, "unless of course there is something further to indicate Mr. Holmes' forthcoming resurrection?" He raised a rather disbelieving eyebrow.

I tried to muster my diminishing resources of patience, and explained about early ideas of Kingship, when the monarch had to die after reigning for a certain period. It had not taken long for the wiser holders of that dubious office to realize that they were in a dangerous calling, and they introduced the custom of using a substitute victim, so that they might continue to reign.

"True," observed the professor, "but where do you see that in *The Memoirs*?"

"In every case where Holmes is attacked a substitute is provided for him. In the central story the Cunninghams try to kill him, and they are in fact the murderers of William Kirwan. In the tenth he is attacked by Joseph Harrison with a knife, and knife victims are to be found in the fourth, where a surgeon has his throat cut, and the ninth, where Sophy Kratides stabs Latimer and Kemp to death. Turning to the last story there are a number of attempts made on Holmes' life: first there is the two horse van which tries to run him down, which is matched by the killing of John Straker by Silver Blaze; next there are falls of bricks and rocks, matched by the falling slab which seals Brunton in his tomb; thirdly the attack by a man with a bludgeon, matched by the watchman at Mawson's who was killed by a blow from a poker; fourthly there is the fire at Baker Street, matched by the suffocation of Kratides from the fumes of a charcoal fire; and finally we have to analyse the probabilities in the Holmes-Moriarty confrontation. What will be the outcome? Since Conan Doyle has provided so many substitute victims and corpses we can be sure that Holmes will survive once again."

"Interesting," agreed the Professor.

"Another tiny point which leads to the same conclusion is

that of the 'coach-men'. In the first story the trainer is killed by the horse; in the central story the coachman Kirwan is killed by the Cunninghams; hence in the last one the 'army coach' Moriarty must die."

Mrs. Daneman made a moue of distaste at this new flight of fancy, so I tried yet another tack.

"Next," I said, trying to quell her with a confident look, "there is the evidence of the writing process itself. I have shown that Conan Doyle built up a very complex infra-structure which just cannot be ignored. Once the reader becomes aware of the anomalies in the text he must also realize that here was a writer with a very unusual method of work. Clearly from the moment that Conan Doyle decided to bury these clues in his text it must have become a matter of some difficulty to write the stories at all. This is fully borne out by the record. In April 1891 he started to write *The Adventures*, the book before *The Memoirs*, at the rate of one story a week. By the end of the year he had slowed down by 300%, which would fit perfectly with the idea that it was during this time that he first thought of the great hoax. By the end of the year he had finished twelve stories, and he wrote to his mother that he was going to kill off Holmes in the next one because he took his mind from better things. He relented however and saved his hero for another set of stories, *The Memoirs*, which he wrote the following year."

"We all know about that," Mrs. Daneman interjected, "he needed the money."

"No." I replied firmly, and took a deep breath. "The fact is that he needed time to set things up so that his readers would have a chance of testing their wits. There are very obvious links from the last story of *The Adventures* to the first one of *The Memoirs*, COPP and SILV, which show evidence of a larger plan. And now each of the stories took more than a month to write, until in April 1893 he wrote again to his mother to confess that he was once and for all killing off Sherlock Holmes. And that is what he did despite the public outcry, but he also left a vital clue as to his real intentions by writing to a friend that he could not revive him even if he wanted to, 'at least not for years'. His readers, even his mother, were to think Holmes was dead, but he had conceived a plan to bring him back after a certain number of years. How long would that period be? It was ten years until he wrote *The Return*, and the first story of it has Holmes coming back after a three year absence. so Conan Doyle effected a neat combination of the Odyssey and Christ's descent into Hell before the Resurrection."

"What you say is all very well," said Mrs. Daneman, "but have you found out what else Conan Doyle might have been writing during that period which could have kept him from finishing the stories in a week each as he had done previously?"

I had to confess that I had not done so, but riposted with the argument that if these were the popular money spinning yarns he could toss off so easily, and if he did indeed need the money, Mrs. Daneman's own suggestion, then he would certainly do them as quickly as he could. "What slowed him down was placing all these

interconnections in them. I have found twenty categories of links based on the symmetrical pattern of the number eleven. Consider for a start the placement of the evidence for the time period which must elapse before Holmes' return. My book shows that he put three day periods into all but the fourth and the eighth stories, which are the ones with very obvious references to the Odyssey. The Odyssean period went into another symmetrical set. And here it must be remembered that Odysseus was absent for ten years at the Trojan War, ten on his famous journey back to Ithaca, and then a further ten in exile for his wanton murder of Penelope's suitors." I then went through the symmetrical pattern in detail:

1. SILV:

Col. Ross: "I have been on the turf for twenty years" (347).

4. GLOR:

Hudson returns: "Why, it's thirty year and more since I saw you last." (377).

5. MUSG:

Brunton, the butler, "has been with us for twenty years" (389). The elm tree was "struck by lightning ten years ago, and we cut down the stump" (393).

7. CR00:

Henry Wood returns. "I thought you had been dead this thirty years, Henry" (418).

8. RESI:

Trevelyan, as a newly qualified Doctor, hoped to be able to save enough in ten year's time to put up his own plate (425).

His acquisition of a sponsor in the form of the "Resident Patient" saves him the trouble. But the patient is a bank robber hiding out from his three accomplices, who had been sentenced to terms of fifteen years apiece, and he is aghast when he finds that they have obtained an early release from prison. It is possible to deduce exactly what period they served from the fact that Watson describes Dr. Trevelyan as not more than "three or four and thirty" (424). In England the usual age for a qualifying Doctor is 23-4, hence the three thieves came out after doing stretches of ten years each.

11. FINA:

Since there is no mention of a period of ten years in this story to fill out the symmetry, it would be logical to assume that Holmes will be absent only for that length of time.

"Then again," objected the Professor, "why not twenty or thirty years?"

"Ten years is the basic unit," I suggested, "and it was the one during which Odysseus was missing, presumed dead."

"Quite so, very good," he agreed.

"But you said that you had twenty categories," Mrs. Daneman objected, "and you've only given us two of them." I could not

help but wonder whether she ever listened, and indeed whether she had actually read the manuscript. I sighed inwardly and counted them off for her, finishing up by giving stress to the newer ones.

"The point is that the tiny obvious repetitions, like the recurrence of St. Vitus's Dance, the fives and so forth, lead to a more thorough search for overall patterns of symmetry, and the discovery of the material which points to Holmes' survival. The most used pattern is the 1-3-6-9-11 as in this one of water imagery:

1. John Straker attacks Silver Blaze during a heavy rainstorm with a cataract knife.
3. Pinner says: "He knew I was in the swim down here" (366). Watson says: "I must confess that I am out of my depths" (371).
6. Holmes says: "These are much deeper waters that I had thought," and then sinks his head on his hands (401).
9. Mycroft Holmes says: "I thought you might be a little out of your depth", but his brother replies that he has solved the mystery already (437).
11. Two deaths seem to have taken place in the water at Reichenbach Falls.

A second watery pattern interlocks with this one and involves the names:

1. The action takes place at King's Pyland Stables on Dartmoor, which takes its name from the River Dart. The prime suspect in the case is Fitzroy Simpson. Fitzroy means a King's son, and "Mrs. Simpson" is slang for a water pump from the use of this name to describe a person who waters down milk.
4. Many deaths occur at sea, and the Gloria Scott is sunk. One of the escapers, Beddoes, lives at Fordingham, the other, Trevor, lives near Langmere on the Norfolk Broads. The Doctor who attends Trevor is named Fordham.
- 8 There is mention of Scylla and Charybdis. Three murderers die at sea in the sinking of the Norah Creina. Dr. Trevelyan lives on Brook Street.
11. The final confrontation takes place at Reichenbach, which neatly combines the royal element, found twice in 1, with the water. In German a Reich is a Kingdom and a Bach is a brook.

For once Mrs. Daneman was reduced to silence so I forged ahead with more of the 1-3-6-9-11 patterns. "Next we come to one in which the French element is prominent:

1. Bayard is reputed to be able to beat Silver Blaze, but does not run in the Wessex Cup. Bayard is the name of the famous French Chevalier, 'sans peur et sans reproche'.
3. This story is about the fictitious Franco-Midland Hardware Company with a main depot in Paris.
6. Holmes lies dangerously ill in Lyons, once the home of the Emperor Augustus.
9. Holmes reveals that he is related on his mother's side to the French family of artists, the Vernets, who came from

- Avignon.
11. Holmes and Watson flee towards Paris, but leave the train en route hoping to gain a respite while Moriarty watches their luggage at the depot in Paris.

"Next there is this mathematical symmetry:

1. Holmes does mental arithmetic in a coach of a train.
3. Hall Pycroft has immense financial ability.
6. Holmes foils the schemes of Baron Maupertuis. There was a real mathematician of that name who was born in France and died in Switzerland.
9. Mycroft Holmes has great mathematical ability.
11. Moriarty was famous for his work on the Binomial Theorem. He was called the Napoleon of crime, and he died in Switzerland.

"Add to that the matrix of the messages:

1. Two telegrams summon Holmes to King's Pyland.
3. The first of two answered ads.
6. A telegram summons Watson to Holmes' aid in Lyons, once the home of Augustus. His room is knee-deep in congratulatory telegrams.
9. Another answered ad is important enough to make Mycroft vary his stay-at-home routine by travelling to Baker Street and then on to Beckenham.
11. Holmes sends notes to Watson from Narbonne and Nîmes. Narbonne was the city where St. Sebastian survived his martyrdom. Nîmes is the site of the Temple to Augustus, now the Cathedral of St. Castor. Castor and Augustus achieved immortality after their supposed deaths."

"This is all very confusing," said Mrs. Daneman. "First you want us to believe that Holmes is one person, then another. So far you have told us he was Christ, Odysseus, and the Stuart Kings; and now we are hearing about Sebastian, Augustus, Castor and Pollux and I don't know what all!"

"A rich mixture indeed," commented the Professor. "I am a little surprised not to find Jason and Theseus there too, along with Adonis and Dionysus!"

"They very well might be!" I responded with some heat. "It is my contention that Conan Doyle combined all the great death and rebirth figures to show that Holmes would survive his apparent demise. You can see the same sort of thing on a quite mundane level in the case of the various types of illness. Doctor Conan Doyle has been careful to place them in a symmetrical pattern too. There was the case of the St. Vitus's Dance which we have already observed, but there are three more.."

"Only three?" the Professor cut in, somewhat derisively. While I ran through them he began doodling on his note pad, so I tried to convince the implacable Mrs. Daneman.

"First there are the heart cases which occur in 4-6-8: Trevor had a weak heart, Kirwan is shot through the heart, and Blessington too has a weak heart. All three of them die. Next

there are the brain cases which appear in 2-5-6-7-10."

"What happened to your famous 1-3-6-9-11?" Mrs. Daneman put in.

"This is another symmetrical pattern in a group of eleven," I responded. "The centre is 6, so that 5 and 7, and 2 and 10 are distributed around it evenly."

She gave that some thought and finally admitted that they were.

"Brain cases: Grant Munro behaves oddly because he has had an experience which 'tries a man's nerves'; Rachel Howell has brain fever; Holmes suffers from the 'blackest depression'; Mrs Barclay and, in the tenth story, Percy Phelps, also suffer from the mysterious brain fever.

"Then there is this final pattern of medical evidence, which concerns lameness, and takes us back to the old conundrum about the nature of Watson's wound:

1. Three sheep are lamed. An attempt is made to lame Silver Blaze which results in John Straker's death. Holmes is threatened with a 'dog at his heels'.
4. Holmes is lamed by a dog and laid up for ten days.
5. Mention is made of two old cases, that of Ricoletti of the club foot, and the singular affair of the aluminium crutch.
7. Wood is a crippled wretch who walks with his knees bent.
8. Watson's hand steals towards his old wound as he thinks of the futility of war. Here is the passage where he first mentions it: (120-1) 'We again trace the presence of some confederate in the household. Jonathan, with his wooden leg, is utterly unable to reach the lofty room of Bartholomew Sholto. He takes with him, however, a rather curious associate, who gets over this difficulty but dips his naked foot into creosote, whence come Toby, and a six-mile limp for a half-pay officer with a damaged tendo Achillis.'

Need I add that Toby is a dog?"

"Are we to have Achilles as well?" asked Mrs. Daneman.

"So far so good," said the Professor, "but I do not recollect any lameness in the eleventh and final story?"

"That's exactly the point," I replied. "It is because it isn't there, when it ought to be in order to fill out the matrix symmetrically, that we can deduce what will happen. In the first story the intended victim, the Isonomy horse, turned the tables on its attacker and killed him. Therefore in the last story Holmes will survive the attack of the Binomial Professor."

"I don't quite see where lameness enters the picture?" put in Mrs. Daneman.

"Moreover, could not one equally argue that it will be Moriarty who will survive the attack of Holmes?" the Professor suggested mildly.

"Take the two points together," I responded. "Holmes has already survived his laming experience when he was attacked by Trevor's dog in the fourth story."

"Hmm," murmured the Professor dubiously. "I am sure you are aware that Dr. Conan Doyle was a specialist for a while?"

"Yes. He was an eye Doctor."

"Then is not blindness something to be guarded against? You seem to have overlooked another pattern of medical clues, and this one falls into a pattern of ten rather than eleven, a point to which you will need to address yourself. Here are some examples for 1-3-8-10 which I have admittedly culled from memory, a somewhat unreliable instrument at my age...however check them if you wish." He handed me the paper on which he had apparently been doodling. I was able to make out the spidery handwriting:

1. "I have been blind," cried the colonel.
3. "What a blind beetle I have been," says Hall Pycroft.
8. "His talk about a burglary was the merest blind," says Holmes.
10. "How blind I have been," says Phelps.

Touché, I thought to myself. How on earth had I managed to miss all these? Here I am trying to be a Sherlock Holmes, and it turns out yet again that I am just a poor limping Watson.

"This has been a most interesting afternoon, though perhaps not quite the series of classical demonstrations which Mr. Holmes would have advocated," said the Professor.

"I should think not," Mrs. Daneman broke in. "This has been a total waste of my time. I cannot think why anyone would bother trying to read anything into these very simple little detective stories. This so-called evidence is just a product of your imagination." She paused a moment, then continued more kindly: "It's like lying in bed for a long time during an illness - you begin to make non-existent patterns out of the wallpaper or the ceiling."

"Perhaps we could all meet again next Thursday, nevertheless," suggested Professor Gomez. "I do not have to return home until the end of that week. Could you please spare us the time, dear Mrs. Daneman? We really do need you."

She shook her head discontentedly but responded to his flattering smile. "Well, yes, I suppose so. But I do hope we are not to go through much more of this."

"It might be useful. And also Mr. Frank Crane, who was unable to attend our deliberations today, has expressed his desire to put a few questions to Mr. Horgan." He turned to me. "Let me see, where did we break off? The lame and the blind, was it not, so it would be appropriate to call a halt there?" I smiled to indicate I appreciated his little joke, but he did not respond. "Perhaps we could take up the argument at that point, and in the meantime you may be able to think of something a little more solid in regard to this point of the two symmetries, the eleven and the ten. Then too, though I must agree with your basic premise that someone will survive, could you produce evidence to show who that Someone will be? Say next Thursday afternoon?"

I asked if I could bring a friend with me who would really convince them that Holmes would survive at Reichenbach. If I could fly up to Toronto and find the old man who had started me on the search, that would certainly do the trick.

"Will it be Sherlock Holmes in person?" asked Mrs. Daneman acidly.

"Are you perhaps in touch with that figment of Dr. Conan Doyle's busy imagination?" asked the Professor with a smile.

And that was that. The Professor thinks I'm crazy, and Mrs. Daneman knows it. But dammit it they're wrong!

People were looking at me a bit strangely on the crowded D train. Had I been talking to myself? Certainly I hadn't been paying attention because we were now pulling into 125th.St. I got off and dashed upstairs to cross to the Downtown Local for a train to 81st.St. in some irritation. Couldn't I get anything right?

Chapter Eighteen.

The weekend was a nightmare. I just had to find the man I now thought of as Holmes. He was the only one who could help me convince the world of his own existence. He would have the answers. All the hard work I had done was useless without him. It seemed that it could be shrugged off as the wild imaginings of someone who had read the books too often, with perhaps too fixed a theory in mind. It was very much like the story of the Yellow Face, in which Holmes himself was guilty of that error, and asked Watson to whisper "Norbury" in his ear if ever again he should be over-confident of his powers.

I took an early plane up to Toronto on Saturday and started to comb the area where I had dropped him off in the snow that night long ago. It should not be difficult to find, that Victorian house with the tell-tale stag and hound on the balustrades, and the eagle over the porch. I had failed to find it that afternoon long ago when we had found the secret to Watson's wound, but then I had only looked for an hour or two. Now I was quite determined, but it was still useless. I cast my search in ever widening circles. Perhaps after all I had not perceived the direction quite accurately in the snowstorm. But no matter how wide the circles became there was absolutely no trace of the building I sought.

Despairingly the following morning I went to the Police Station across from the Waldorf, that I had looked at so often but never visited. Did they know of any house in the vicinity which looked something like this? I drew them a sketch. They asked around very helpfully, but nobody had seen anything like it. Not in this neighbourhood, they said. And certainly they would have noticed a house as unusual as this. Had there been much demolition going on within the last three years? They didn't think so. And in any case someone would have remembered a place like this, they said.

I tried another Police Station, and then another without avail. By now it was Sunday afternoon, and panic was beginning to take hold, as I sat in a bar with sore feet having a well earned beer and considering the matter. I was rather lame - and quite blind too! I couldn't find Holmes. But he had said that I would know where to find him.... What did I have to go on? Just the

three figures on the house. Three figures on his HOME...a stag, a hound and a bird. Wait a minute! They were the three symbols of bardic concealment which Graves talks about in *The White Goddess*.

And I had found plenty of evidence that Conan Doyle knew all about them in the course of researching the stories. There were the impossibilities in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*: the hound which sounded like a bittern, the mare's tail which could never be found in that area - nor could the bittern - and Dr. Mortimer's dog which could not have got to the centre of the Grimpen Mire without help...

Let me think! Another beer by all means.

The original symbols were the hound, the lapwing and the roebuck. I had found a hound which sounded like a bittern, a bird of the lapwing family. Since Graves says the roebuck was kin to the Unicorn, Conan Doyle could use a horse to stand in its place.

There was the episode of the pony "craning out of the bog", as it was sucked down to its death. And the crane, come to think of it, is another relative of the lapwing.

The conjunction was there again at the end of *The Valley of Fear* where Birdy Edwards complains that Teddy Baldwin had been after him like a "wolf after a caribou": bird, wolf and caribou, a Canadian deer of sorts. Baskerville in *The Hound* had come from Canada. I was in the right country at any rate!

Find a combination of the three symbols and that was where Holmes would be. I got hold of the Yellow Pages and checked up on bars and hotels. It did not take very long to comb through the list, and narrow it down to the few which had at least a pairing of the symbols. It was not too surprising to find none with all three, but Hounds were fairly common in one guise or another, and there was a sprinkling of them linked to birds or deer.

It was getting late and I was feeling the effects of my pub crawl before I hit the right one. The Stag and Hound was a cheery little place, much on the lines of an old English Inn, and there over the door was exactly what I was looking for, a sign saying that the proprietor was R.Byrd. Eagerly I settled myself on a stool and ordered a beer. Look at that! There was even a stuffed pheasant in a glass box on the shelf over the bar. I could hardly believe my luck, but nowhere in sight was there anybody who could even remotely be Holmes, no matter how masterly the disguise. So there was nothing for it but the direct approach. Time was running out. I asked for another beer and bought the barman a drink. He was not too busy to chat.

"I'm hoping to find someone who I think comes in here," I told him. He gave me a funny look, so I hastened to reassure him that it was nothing sinister. "He doesn't owe me money or anything, but it's rather vital that I get in touch with him, and I can't seem to find his address...."

"I'll bet I know who you're looking for," he cut in with a knowing wink and a strong Scottish accent.

"I hardly think so...but...er...well. Have you seen anything of Sherlock Holmes lately?" I finally blurted out.

"Sherlock Holmes!" He laughed. "Charlie Combes, you mean. Oh, I knew it. He's a right mystery man and no mistake, is old

Charlie. Never here when he's wanted. That's his little way."

"So you do know him? Tall, thin chap, quite elderly?"

"Aye, that's our Charlie."

"And do you know where I can find him?" I asked with held breath.

"Och, he left last Thursday. Said he didn't expect to be back until towards the end of next week. He's off on one of his 'cases', as he calls them." Now he laughed uproariously. "He really does think he's Sherlock Holmes, you know! What a character."

"But do you know where he went?" I pleaded.

The barman shook his head. "He never says. Personally I think he has to go into Hospital for treatments of some kind now and then, and he doesn't want to admit it. He's getting on in years if half his stories are to be believed."

Gloomily I finished my beer and accepted another.

"Hang on a second though," said my friend. From a shelf behind him he pulled out a penknife which served to pin a few pieces of paper to it. "If he was expecting you he'd maybe have left you a message."

"I hardly think he could have done that..."

"Aye, here it is! 'Expected next Saturday night'...that'd be yesterday, wouldn't it? You're a wee bit late, then." He looked up at me with a grin, and then read on: "'Tall dark-haired man with an English accent. Mr. John Patrick Horgan.' Could that not be you, I wonder?"

"It is," I said, feeling my scalp crawl with astonishment as I took the proffered note. How had he known that I would be trying to find him a few days after he left on his mysterious case? I unfolded the paper and read:

My dear Horgan,

It is with deep regret that I must tell you of my inability to appear on your behalf since I have undertaken a more pressing task. May I wish you the best of good fortune in your highly commendable enterprise, and hope to see you again soon.

Very sincerely yours,

Sherlock Holmes

My search had come to an end.

* * *

The following morning, back in New York, I wanted to reassure myself that the whole thing hadn't been a dream. Where was that letter from Holmes? I went through every pocket, and turned my travelling case inside out, but still failed to find it, but what did come to light was the piece of paper that Professor Gomez had handed me with the quotations about blindness on it. At least that would take my mind off things for a while, so I settled down over breakfast to ferret them out in *The Memoirs*.

Twenty minutes later I sat amazed. They were all word for

word correct, and they were found on pp. 349, 372, 434 and 468 in 1-3-8-10, the symmetrical pattern based on the number ten, just as predicted. What a truly phenomenal memory that man had!

But now I reminded myself that I too had found a pattern based on ten, that of the messages, where those in the first ten stories were counterbalanced by the presence in the last one of all five types of communication. This had proved to be another signpost to the vital clue of the notes from Narbonne and Nîmes, which were symbols of survival after death. Could it be that Gomez's ten pattern of blindness would also be echoed in the final story? I started to read *The Final Problem* for the thousandth time, and very soon found what I was looking for. Moriarty had poor vision too: on p.473 he "went peering and blinking out of the room".

Since the message pattern had pointed the way to something important, this might well do the same. Blindness on the part of the would-be detective would link with his inability to decipher the message. It would be a good idea to check whether this balance of the pattern of ten with the final story provided any further clues. Accordingly I drew up a table with the stories arranged in the U shape:

1	10		
2	9		
3	8	=	11
4	7		
5	6		

Obviously the blind items fitted neatly into this scheme, but were there any more examples of this type of correspondence? Within a few minutes it became clear that the game was afoot. After I had prettied the whole thing up I had a table like this:

THE TEN PATTERN

1. SILV:	10. NAVA:
a) "I have been blind".	"How blind I have been".
b) Attack on horse with knife fails. Straker dies with a gashed thigh.	Attack on Holmes with knife fails. Harrison gets an eye closed in the fight.
c) Three sheep are lamed.	Holmes gets cut over knuckles.
d) Heavy rain during crime.	Rain during crime.
e) Prints are useful.	Absence of prints is useful.
f) Curried mutton is served to Ned Hunter.	Curried fowl is served by Mrs. Hudson.
g) Curry contains opium to put Hunter to sleep as he guards Silver Blaze.	Harrison doctors Phelps' sleeping draught to put him to sleep as he unwittingly guards

It works.
h) Ned Hunter falls asleep at
Commissionaire,
his post.

2. YELL:
a) Fire in Atlanta destroys
important papers.
b) Hebron and child are
presumed dead of yellow
fire.
fever. The child survives.
c) Atalanta of Greek Myth?

3. STOC:
a) "what a blind beetle I have
been."
b) The watchman at Mawson's
dies in a robbery.
c) Beddington tries to hang
himself.
d) Watson has a severe chill.
wound.

4. GLOR:
a) Hudson survives the mutiny
capture
and explosion.
mutineers.
b) Hudson returns thirty years
years
later.
c) This causes the death of
Trevor from apoplexy.
d) Coded message.

5. MUSG:
a) Brunton, the butler, turns
robber and dies.
b) Coded message: Brunton and
Holmes solve the Musgrave
Ritual.
c) Brunton and Holmes do math.
d) Brunton has an intelligence
on a par with Holmes'.
e) Brunton and Holmes use balls
of string.

the stolen Treaty. It fails.
Tangey, the F.O.

falls asleep at his post.

9. GREE:
Charcoal fire kills Paul
Kratides.
Kratides and Melas are exposed
to the fumes of a charcoal

Melas survives.
This is a story about Greeks.

8. RESI:
"His talk about burglary was
the merest blind."
The Bank guard is killed in a
robbery.
Blessington is found hanged.

Watson thinks of his old

7. CROO:
Henry Wood survives his
and torture by Indian
Henry Wood returns thirty
later.
This causes the death of Col.
Barclay from apoplexy.
Coded message.

6. REIG:
Kirwan, the coachman, turns
blackmailer and dies.
Coded message: Holmes solves
the clue of the letter written
in alternate words by the
Cunninghams.
The villain Maupertuis was a
mathematician.
Holmes is exhausted foiling
the political and financial
schemes of Maupertuis.
A ball of string is taken in
the phony robbery.

I do keep coming back to those damned balls of string, I
thought with some irritation, but overall there were quite an

astonishing number of match-ups between the two sets of five stories. What an amazingly complex structure Conan Doyle built up in order to provide the clues! I very much wished I could rub Mrs. Daneman's pug nose in this new evidence. This simply could not be coincidental. No way. It was a deliberate and delicate fabric designed by an architect of rare skill. How on earth had he managed to keep those perfectly credible detective stories going on top of this framework, without it becoming obvious?

But there was more work to do. Luckily I did not have to go to the "factory" that day. I was on a Soap at the time, which usually meant two, sometimes three days a week. Tomorrow was the only day this week however, so I could give at least two whole days to following up this new trail in the hope of finding something which would convince my judges, as I now thought of them.

The next step would be to go through the same process I had used for the messages. In that case the ten stories had made this five and five match-up in a U shape, and then they also equated with the last story in a most useful way. The thing now was to check up on these new pairings. And just look at the closeness of the ties between the first and the tenth story, I thought to myself.

The only thin patch in fact was that between Yellow Face and the Greek Interpreter, but doubtless some explanation for that would appear in the course of time. Atalanta and Atlanta was a bit of a stretch even for my ready imagination, and I certainly did not want to have to defend it to Professor Gomez. But even discounting that one I was left with quite an impressive total of over twenty links.

All day I laboured trying to find the matching elements in FINA which would link with the twin sets of five stories. But this time I had to confess failure. It would appear this was a dead end after all. The links were much harder to find, and by the time I quit work at eleven that night I had found only half of them. This is how my table looked at that moment:

TEN TO ONE.

1-10. SILV-NAVA:

- a) Blindness.
- b₁) Attacks on a horse and Holmes with knives.
- b₂) Straker dies with a gashed thigh.
- c) Three sheep are lamed and Holmes gets cut over the knuckles.
- d) Heavy rain during crimes.
- e) Prints are useful by their presence and absence.

11. FINA:

Moriarty "went peering and blinking out of the room."
Attack on Holmes with horses.
Other attacks on Holmes.
? (This denotes no connection discovered)

Holmes has two burst knuckles.

Reichenbach Falls.
Watson sees footprints going to edge of Falls and none returning.

- f) Curried dishes are served. ?
- g) Sleeping potions, one effective the other not. ?
- h) Hunter and Tangey fall asleep on duty. ?

2-9. YELL-GREE:

- a) Fires at Atlanta and Beckenham. Fire at Baker Street.
- b) Death and survival of Hebron and Greeks. Death and survival of Moriarty Holmes.
- c) Atalanta of Greek Myth? ?

3-8. STOC-RESI:

- a) Blindness. Moriarty, as before.
- b) Watchmen killed during robberies. ?
- c) Two men hanged. Holmes predicts "the rope" for all of Moriarty's gang.
- d) Watson had a chill, and he thought of his old wound. (Does this hint at Achilles?) ?

4-7. GLOR-CROO:

- a) Hudson and Wood survive mutinies and danger. ?
- b) Hudson and Wood return after thirty year absences. ?
- c) Their returns cause deaths from apoplexy. ?
- d) Cryptic messages. Notes from Holmes in Narbonne and Nîmes.

5-6. MUSG-REIG:

- a) Servants turn criminal and are killed. ?
- b) Brunton and Holmes solve cryptic messages. Notes from Holmes in Narbonne and Nîmes.
- c) They use math to do so, and Maupertuis was an actual mathematician. Moriarty is a mathematician.
- d) Brunton and Maupertuis are worthy opponents. So is Moriarty.
- e) Brunton and Holmes use balls of string to solve the Musgrave Ritual. A ball of string is "stolen". ??!

There were thirteen solid match-ups, but what thread could possibly bind them all together? The balls of string? Quite so! I lit my pipe to reflect in the Holmesian tradition. How could I bridge the gap for the twelve examples which did not seem to match? By studying the ones that did. Which were the most startling pairings? Well naturally the balls of string, but what

on earth could that mean? Then there was the truly astonishing fact that both Hudson and Wood returned thirty years after surviving mutinies, and thereby caused deaths from apoplexy. And by way of a bonus, Wood lived on Hudson Street. This was an example of Conan Doyle waving his legs in the air for attention.

The phone was ringing and somewhat wearily I went to answer it.

"Patrick, you're devilishly hard to pin down you know. Why would an actor have an unlisted number for God's sake?" The voice was familiar, an Irish one.

"Jim Murdoch! Where the hell are you then?"

"I'm here in New York for a couple of weeks on a conference. But someone screwed up in the hotel booking area, and would you believe there doesn't seem to be room at the inn anywhere nearer than New Jersey! So I had to run you to earth slightly sooner than I had anticipated. I have your address of course, but I didn't want to arrive unannounced. A fair few Horgans in the phone book, but not you. So I had to take a leaf out of your book, and detect your whereabouts." He laughed triumphantly.

"How did you do that at this time of night?" I asked.

"Not too difficult, in fact elementary, if you know anything about actors. Where would they congregate after the show, I asked myself? Doubtless at some fashionable hostelry in the theatre district. It was the work of a moment to find an obliging stage-door man and get the necessary information. Two places were suggested as the prime candidates: Joe Allen's produced no answer, but Charlies' did the trick. I only had to whisper your name and enlightenment was granted me. Here I am at their phone, as you can probably hear, and if you're up I'll be over in two shakes. That is if you have a manger for a poor benighted traveller?"

"As it happens I have, if you don't mind a pull-out sofa. It's pretty firm. Susan is away on a remote in Jamaica."

"I won't even ask..."

"No it really was her idea. She's doing *As the World Turns* down there for a couple of weeks. So we won't be too crowded here. She'll be sorry to have missed meeting you though. Anyway you'll be more than welcome."

"Fine. I'll be on your doorstep before I leave here," Jim promised. And it was only a quarter of an hour before we were greeting one another like long lost brothers. We spent some time catching up on things, but finally the question was asked.

"And how's the great work going, Mr. Holmes?"

I explained how things stood, and showed Jim my latest effort, the attempt to match up the first ten stories with the last one. He slowly read them over to himself, and then asked: "And you say this came from what? How did you leave it with this Gomez chap?"

"I was expounding on all the symmetrical patterns in *The Memoirs* based on the number eleven. Remember there are eleven stories?"

"Yes. And I remember well when we found the patterns."

"There were a lot of medical ones, which I only discovered recently. There's a potential 1-3-6-9-11 of lameness. And

suddenly he brought up one of examples of blindness which is based on ten, you've seen it there in my match-ups, and wanted to know why there are two symmetries?"

"Good point," Jim mused.

"There was no doubt about the usefulness of the eleven, and it pointed to survival in many ways - most importantly the Narbonne and Nîmes clue. But there can be no doubt about the existence of this U shaped pattern which points to the exact same thing again. BUT! There are all these gaps in it."

"Lameness and blindness, and a U shaped pattern of ten," Jim smiled. "Doesn't that ring any particular bells for you? The answer must be on your shelves." He went off into my study and called out: "What is the second greatest book ever written?" as he came back with my copy of *Ulysses* in his hands. The paper back has a huge U on the front cover dominating the other letters. "But of course, I don't suppose for a moment that this was Conan Doyle's line of thought," he admitted.

"But it should have been mine?" I added for him. "Yes, this is really getting embarrassing," I confessed. "Of course! That answers a lot of questions. Blind seers, the death of Achilles from an arrow in his heel..."

"Precisely. And didn't you always think that the global journey of the sun fitted with the ten years of the Odyssey?"

"True enough," I replied ruefully.

"Alright then! And remember that whole slew of fives in the text? They must be designed to give a hint that you need to make this U-shaped fold in the first ten stories, make two fives of them, in other words, in order to find the treasure in the final one."

"More beer," I suggested.

"Right! Then we'll list the gaps in your table and see what we can come up with."

While I was in the kitchen refilling our tankards he called out to ask how much time did we have to find the answers.

"Till Thursday afternoon. I'll be working tomorrow on *The Guiding Light*, but it's an easy day with the fast Director, say from twelve thirty until six or seven. Then Wednesday and Thursday are clear. How's your schedule?" I handed him a full one, and took a good swig from mine.

"Skedule!" he imitated me. "My word, Mr. Holmes, you're taking on the coloration of the country! Well, wait now till I see. My Wednesday will be frantic, but otherwise I'm at your disposal. Come on, the game's afoot, as the master would say. Let's take a good look at the gaps and I'll bet we can come up with something if we sleep on it."

I started to read them out slowly: "Attack on a horse with a knife? Straker dies with his thigh gashed?"

"Ulysses was gashed on the thigh while hunting a boar," said Jim.

"But he didn't die from it," I objected.

"True," said Jim, "but lots of classical figures did. What about Dionysus, Attis, Adonis and so on?"

"Could be. And that one pairs with Harrison getting an eye

closed..."

"Polyphemus in the Odyssey, you mean," Jim cut in eagerly.

"We can tick those off."

"Three sheep are lamed? Curried dishes are served? Sleeping potions, one effective and the other not?"

"Circe!" cried Jim. "Circe tried to drug Ulysses but it didn't take because some God, Hermes wasn't it, supplied him with, what was it called?"

"Moly! Good for you."

"Tick that one off as well. Next?"

"Hunter and Tangey fall asleep on duty? Atalanta and a Greek story?"

"We'll want to take a closer look at that one," said Jim.

"You know, I wasn't even too sure about putting it in, but now it begins to look promising. The next one is watchmen getting killed during robberies."

"Common enough, I should think."

"Watson gets a chill and thinks about his old ankle wound? Of course it could be the shoulder wound, but it does sound as if Conan Doyle meant the ankle: a chill and Achilles?"

"Terrible joke!"

"But Conan Doyle does say 'chill'," I objected, "and its no worse than many of yours. You were definitely going to say 'dja make 'er' a while ago."

"Heaven forfend!"

"Well, the next one is that Hudson and Wood survive mutinies and dangers."

"That goes for Ulysses," Jim replied.

"They return after thirty year absences? There's no doubt about that one. Ulysses spent ten years at Troy, ten on the voyage home and then another ten in exile after the rebellion at Ithaca. Conan Doyle puts periods of ten, twenty and thirty years into the text."

"That's a winner."

"These returns of Hudson and Wood cause deaths from apoplexy?"

"Apoplexy! What on earth does that mean exactly? You were a medical man." Jim demanded.

I had to confess that I couldn't be accurate about it, and went off to see what *Butterworth's Medical Dictionary* had to say on the subject. "Here it is. It's what we now call a stroke. Acute vascular disturbance caused by the rupture of an intracerebral artery, or its occlusion. A sudden severe haemorrhage."

"I believe I have the answer. When Ulysses got back to Ithaca who was the first to recognize him?"

"His old nurse, I think. She knew him from the gash on his thigh which he got boar hunting as a young man."

"Before that," said Jim. "Wasn't it his old hound, who gave no sign but simply dropped dead on the spot?"

"Argus! You're right. Though of course he must have been pretty ancient by then. Hey! That fits with the strange behaviour of the dog in the first story when Silver Blaze was

taken from the stable!"

"And what was that?" Jim asked.

"It's a very famous passage. Let me see if I can quote it from memory: 'Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention,' asks the Inspector. 'To the curious incident of the dog in the night time,' Holmes replies. 'The dog did nothing in the night time.' 'That was the curious incident,' Holmes tells him. He deduced from it that the intruder was someone the dog knew very well."

"I see. So you're saying that Ulysses' dog did nothing either to draw any attention?"

"It fits perfectly, taken along with the two deaths from apoplexy caused by people returning after thirty years. I'll tick that one off. And then we come to: Servants turn criminal and are killed."

"Didn't that happen with some of Ulysses' people?" Jim asked.

"We'll have to check up on that."

"Balls of string?"

"I beg your pardon!"

"Granted. In one story Homes and Brunton both used balls of string to solve the trig problem presented by the Musgrave Ritual. Then in the next one there's a phony robbery in which a ball of string is taken. Now that fairly screams for attention, and I've been going off my rocker every time I think about it."

"One final drink," Jim suggested, getting a bottle of Irish out of his bag, "and then bed for me. It's been a long day, and I saw the sun rise over the Phoenix Park." As we adjourned to the kitchen for a nightcap, Jim pointed out that he had solved the robbery ages ago, and written to me about it.

"That's true, you did, but not the balls of string." I hunted down the relevant passage in the text. "Here it is, and mark you it is mentioned several times. Holmes specifically remembers later on about the string and the letter weight."

"So read it to me. The hard evidence before the decoration," Jim ordered.

"Okay. 'The whole place was turned upside down, drawers burst open, and presses ransacked, with the result that an odd volume of Pope's *Homer*, two plated candlesticks, an ivory letter weight, a small oak barometer, and a ball of twine are all that have vanished.' And then Holmes says that the county police ought to have made something of it, but alas he is interrupted by Watson."

That foolish man! Yes, I remember now. Oak for the Oak-King, and the barometer because he has gone below, temporarily we assume; then the silver or gold plated candlesticks, and five items stolen. Yes, that was the clue that stuck the two things together, the fives and the silver."

"Right, but what about the balls of string?"

Jim broke into a broad smile. "I'll tell you in the morning," he said. "You'll be amazed." He laughed at that, but not a word more would he say about it.

* * *

"So why wouldn't you tell me last night?" I demanded, pouring us both cups of tea.

"Ever sneaky, I wanted to take a peek at your copy of the *Greek Myths* first. Didn't know that Homer ever mentioned him, but Graves quotes Scholiast on Homer in his notes about Theseus, which sews things up. You must remember that Ariadne lent him a ball of string, which Daedalus had given her, to solve his particular problem."

"To get in and out of the Daedalus labyrinth in order to slay the Minotaur. Right! And isn't it odd that Joyce made Daedalus a hero in his *Ulysses*. Umberto Eco was right: one book does write another!"

"Something else cropped up in my reading though. Conan Doyle has Holmes use the ball of string to unravel the Musgrave Ritual and find the crown of the Stuart Kings. In the *Myths* Theseus dived into the sea to fetch up Minos's ring and show that he was really a 'son of Poseidon'. He brought up the ring AND a golden crown given him by Amphitrite."

"But that fits perfectly!" I told him excitedly. "In the Musgrave story Rachel Howells threw a bag containing the crown into the lake and they had to dredge it up again."

"It gets better and better. You see the manifold benefits of a classical education."

"Classical!" I cried as if stung.

"What?"

"Old Gomez as much as quoted that passage from one of the stories in *The Return*, which I have always thought of as a strong clue on how to read the sub-text. Let me find it for you." It took a few minutes to find the relevant piece on p.636 in *ABBE*. "Here it is: 'Your fatal habit of looking at everything from the point of view of a story instead of as a scientific exercise has ruined what might have been an instructive and even classical series of demonstrations. You slur over work of the utmost finesse and delicacy, in order to dwell upon sensational details which may excite, but cannot possibly instruct the reader'."

"I would say that was VERY encouraging."

Chapter Nineteen.

That evening when I got home from the studio we had a celebratory dinner at Panarella's just round the corner, downstairs in the brick-walled cellar. Over a good bottle of Californian Cabernet Sauvignon, with the pianist playing in the background we read out our findings to each other. Since we now knew where to look and what to look for, just one day's work and nearly all the lacunae in my table were filled. I was thoroughly mortified to find that I had quite missed the Trojan Horse.

"Silver Blaze is attacked with a knife," Jim pointed out. "This is matched by the Greek horse which was found unattended outside the walls of Troy. There was a conference to decide what to do about it, and the seer Laocoon was dead set against bringing it in. When the verdict went against him he hurled his spear at the horse, and was killed for his impiety."

"Straker attacked Silver Blaze with a knife and died. You're right Jim."

"King Priam, or as Conan Doyle calls him in his story, Silas Brown, takes the horse in. Silver Blaze is unharmed and goes on to win, just as the Trojan Horse led to the ultimate Greek victory after so many years."

"I love it. Priam and Brown - a not too subtle hint."

Jim checked over the table on which we had been ticking off the items we had discovered, and said: "I think that leaves just one gap to be filled. I have worked over the Odyssey and the Jason voyage with the Argonauts, which is very much like it, since they faced many similar dangers, and I can't find anything to fit with the story of the Greek Interpreter."

"Me neither," I confirmed. "Let's try to strip it down to essentials, and then when we get home we can start from there. Basically it's about a girl who gets revenge by killing the two men who murdered her brother. He died of asphyxiation from a charcoal fire, and she stabs the two killers to death in Budapest."

"The classic dual city," Jim observed. "That could be a clue in itself - Buda and Pest?"

"Yes, it certainly could. I rather think that Conan Doyle spells it as Buda-Pesth, with a hyphen."

"A sister getting revenge for the death of her brother - could that be Antigone?"

"No, I think she just wanted to bury him. She never got revenge for his death. In any case it was the other brother who killed him."

"Was it indeed? Hmm." Jim thought for a while. "We'll find the right answer, never fear."

And so an hour later we were back in the apartment poring over the books again. If my childish thought about a match-up between this story and the one about Atlanta was any help, the answer might have something to do with Atalanta, so I checked up on her in the *Greek Myths*. Meanwhile Jim undertook to go through

the entire alphabetical index in *Bullfinch's Mythology* to find any vengeful sisters. It did not take long for both of us to find the answer though we arrived at it from different directions.

"The Calydonian Boar Hunt," said I.

"Althaea and Meleager!" said Jim.

"Would you believe that I once played a character on a Soap who was married to someone named Althea," I said in anguish.

"Althea. It's a strange name; tell me about it."

"It was on *The Doctors* during its heyday. Dr. Althea Morrison. My God, how things fit together. There are two characters in this book of Conan Doyle's called Morrison. I can't imagine why I never bothered to read up on the origin of the name Althea."

"It will be your favourite reading matter from now on, like the *Army List* for Ernest."

The Althaea Myth was a beautiful upside-down version of the *Greek Interpreter*. This is what the *Greek Myths* had to say about it in Chapter 80. When Althaea gave birth to her son, Meleager, the Fates revealed that he would only live as long as a certain brand, at that moment burning in her fireplace, should remain unconsumed. Naturally she snatched it out, doused it, and carefully hid it away. Meleager grew to manhood. Alas, his father forgot to sacrifice to Artemis one day, and in retribution she sent a huge boar to ravage their land of Calydon. Many famous people joined in the hunt for the Boar, including Althaea's two brothers, Plexippus and Toxeus. Atalanta drew first blood with an arrow, but it had little effect. Ancaeus bragged that he would show them all how to do it, but he was charged, gored, castrated and killed. Finally it was Meleager who finished the beast off. He flayed the animal and presented this trophy to his beloved, Atalanta, but his two uncles were enraged at not getting this token themselves, and seized it from her. Meleager put them to death with his sword. Now poor Althaea was in a bit of a bind: her son had killed her two brothers. What should she do about it?

After a lot of soul searching she came to the conclusion that she might have other heirs, but her family honour had to be satisfied.

So she took the old log from its hiding place, and put it on the fire. Meleager died as predicted.

"Do you see the beauty of it," said Jim triumphantly. "Conan Doyle made his fire death a remote event as well. Kratides was not burnt to death, but asphyxiated from the effect of fire at a distance!"

"It's a perfect match, with a reversal of roles. In the original the sister was revenged for the death of her two brothers. Conan Doyle has her getting revenge for the death of her one brother by stabbing the two men, just as Meleager did to his two uncles."

"Yes. And just look at the list of those who took part in the Hunt. It's a veritable *Who's Who* of the Greek world: Nestor, King of Pylos, who later fought at Troy; Theseus of Minotaur fame, the man with the ball of string; Castor and Pollux, we have found them over and over; Jason was there along with several of his Argonauts, Laertes, father of Ulysses, Atalanta, Ancaeus and

Telamon. Wait a minute, I've just spotted something. I believe they all link up." And Jim began busily scribbling away on a piece of paper.

"So I wasn't all that crazy to think that Atalanta was hinted at in the story about Atlanta after all. The two stories were connected by the fires, but there's another thing. The whole point of *Yellow Mask* was the concealment of the negro child born of the inter-racial marriage of Mrs. Hebron to a black lawyer in Atlanta. Now Atalanta was the fastest human being of her time, and she said that she would only marry somebody who could beat her in a race. So a fellow called Hippomenes did it by dropping three golden apples as they ran. Of course she just had to stop to pick them up, he won and they got married."

"A race-ial marriage," Jim laughed. "Do you really suppose he was thinking of that?"

"Could be. Look how it pulls things together. And here's something else in the Myths. Melas was the name of the Greek Interpreter, but classically he was a companion of Heracles during his war to recover Iole. It's in Chapter 144."

Jim handed me his paper showing how all the names fitted together.

CASTOR & POLLUX	CALYDONIAN BOAR HUNT	ALTHAEA & MELEAGER	ATALANTA
brothers of	NESTOR LAERTES father of	THESEUS (son-in-law) (string) (MEDEA)	JASON
	TROY ULYSSES	ODYSSEY	ARGONAUT
	ACHILLES killed by		
HELEN	PARIS killed by	ANKLE WOUNDS	
	PHILOCTETES	(with arrow of)-----	HERACLES

"Yes, and Heracles and Atalanta were both Argonauts. Every single one of these classical characters links back to the Calydonian Boar Hunt. And I think I can see what intrigued Conan Doyle about that. At the time of King Arthur Caledonia was the name of the mysterious forests to the north, what we would now call Scotland."

"And that was where Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was born."

* * *

I devoted Wednesday to putting all our discoveries together

into one overall statement for presentation on the following day.

What I had found by reading the *Odyssey*, and looking for elements that were in *The Memoirs*, made a very good match with what Jim had brought to light by seeking the answers to the missing pairings with the final story from my U pattern. All the question marks on my old table could now be discarded; where the ten stories did not find an echo in the eleventh they surely found one in Greek Myth.

The classical solution grew into an impressive document, and since there was new material to be added to the basic matching pattern, I chose to lay out the evidence story by story like this, with the appropriate references to *Greek Myths* in brackets:

THE CLASSICAL SOLUTION.

1. SILV:

- i) Silver Blaze is stabled at King's Pyland.
 - a) Sandy Pylos was the kingdom of Nestor, the great ally of Ulysses in promoting the Trojan War. Nestor was present at the Calydonian Boar Hunt.
- ii) Silver Blaze is found wandering on the moor by Silas Brown and taken into hiding in the Mapleton Stables to prevent him from defeating Desborough in the Wessex Cup. Nevertheless Silver Blaze wins the race with Iris third and Pugilist unplaced.
 - a) The Trojan Horse was left in the open by the apparently departing Greeks, and brought within the walls of Troy by Priam (167e). Troy is of course a "rival camp". This action results in a Greek victory.
 - b) Iris was the messenger Goddess who brought news of the elopement of Helen and Paris to Crete (160a). Helen was the sister of Castor and Pollux.
 - c) A sturdy Ithacan beggar names Irus (after Iris) challenged the disguised Ulysses to a boxing match on his return. He was beaten with one blow (171f).
 - d) Castor was the patron of horses, his brother Pollux of boxing. Both sports are under the aegis of Hermes.
- iii) John Straker is killed by a blow on the head from Silver Blaze, but also gashes himself on the thigh with a cataract knife.
 - a) Death from a gashed thigh inflicted by a boar was a common occurrence for mythical figures. Attis, Adonis and Dionysus all died that way. Ulysses received the injury as a young man hunting with his uncles, but recovered from it. He was recognized by his old nurse when he returned to Ithaca after his Odyssey by means of his scar (171g).
 - b) Ancaeus, the Argonaut, was slain by the Calydonian Boar which castrated him (80g).
- iv) John Straker attacks Silver Blaze with a knife, and is slain.
 - a) Laocoon hurled his spear at the Trojan Horse, and was killed for his temerity (167e,i).
- v) A drugged meal is served to Ned Hunter, guardian of Silver Blaze. He falls asleep and the horse is taken from the stable.
 - a) Medea put the guardian dragon into a drugged slumber to

- enable Jason to steal the Golden Fleece (152h).
- vi) Three sheep are lamed.
 - a) Ulysses smuggled his men out of the cave of Polyphemos by tying them beneath three rams each.
- vii) "I have been blind".
 - a) Ulysses blinded the giant Polyphemos during his wine induced slumber (170d).
 - b) Ulysses consulted the blind seer Tiresias in Hades about the future of his voyage (170n).
 - c) Jason freed the blind seer Phineus from the Harpies who plagued him, and consulted him about the future of his voyage.

2. YELL:

- i) Mrs. Grant Munro had been married previously to a black lawyer in Atlanta. This was an inter-racial marriage.
 - a) Atalanta was the world's fastest human. Hippomenes succeeded in winning her hand in marriage by beating her in a race. He dropped three golden apples for her to pick up (80j-l).
- ii) Holmes was "one of the finest boxers of his weight that I have ever seen" (351).
 - a) Ulysses defeated Irus with a single blow (171f).
 - b) The famous twins, Castor and Pollux, were Argonauts. During the voyage King Amycus refused food and water to Jason's crew unless their champion would meet him in the ring. Pollux accepted the challenge and killed him (150h).

3. STOC:

- i) Watson is kept at home for three days by a severe chill.
 - a) Achilles withdrew to his tent in a fit of pique when Briseis was taken from him (163b). (Chilly Achilles?)
- ii) "What a blind beetle I have been."
 - a) See 1. vii.
- iii) A watchman is killed during a burglary at Mawson's.
 - a) Ulysses and Diomedes twice killed guards, first when they stole the horses of Rhesus (163g) and then during the theft of the sacred Palladium of Athene (166l).

4. GLOR:

- i) Holmes is confined for ten days after a bull terrier freezes on to his ankle, but he is none the worse for his experience. On the other hand Watson limps from the old injury to his tendo Achillis.
 - a) Philoctetes inherited the bow and poisoned arrows of Heracles without which the Trojan War could not be won. Unfortunately he accidentally wounded himself in the foot with one of them, and had to be left behind. He recovered after the surgeon Machaon attended to his wound (166a-d).
 - b) Achilles was killed by an arrow in his heel shot by Paris. This was his only vulnerable spot (164k).
 - c) Philoctetes' first act on reaching Troy was to challenge Paris to an archery contest. His first arrow went wide,

- his second struck Paris in the bow hand, his third in the right eye, and his fourth caused the mortal ankle injury which killed Paris (166e).
- d) Philoctetes survived his duel and his wound (169m).
 - e) Mopsus, an Argonaut, was killed by a snake bite in his heel (154j).
- ii) Prendergast cuts the surgeon's throat.
 - a) Machaon (see 4.i a above) was killed by the Trojan Eurypylus, and his bones were taken back to Pylos by Nestor (166i).
 - iii) Mutinies.
 - a) Eurylochos, the mate, and all his men rebelled against Ulysses when they broke their oath and slaughtered cattle belonging to Helios (170u-v). Only Ulysses survived the God's vengeance.
 - b) The citizens of Ithaca rebelled against Ulysses for his slaughter of the suitors of Penelope. He was exiled for ten years (171j).
 - iv) Many deaths at sea.
 - a) Deaths at sea are common in the voyages of Jason and Ulysses.
 - v) Hudson is the sole survivor of the explosion which sank the Gloria Scott.
 - a) Ulysses was the sole survivor of the Odyssey. The last remnants of his crew were killed for their slaying of cattle belonging to Helios, when Zeus sent a storm in retribution and their vessel foundered (170v).
 - vi) The first mate was the last holdout against the mutiny on the Gloria Scott.
 - a) It was Eurylochos, the mate, who led the mutiny against Ulysses.
 - vii) Hudson returns after a thirty year absence.
 - a) Ulysses spent ten years at the Trojan War, ten on his Odyssey and ten in exile.
 - viii) Trevor dies of apoplexy caused by his return.
 - a) When Ulysses got back to Ithaca disguised as a beggar his old hound, Argus, knew him but gave no sign to betray him, and dropped dead on the spot (171d).
 - ix) Trevor was a great boxer in his youth.
 - a) See 2.ii.

5. MUSG:

- i) Holmes, the marksman, inscribes VR on his wall in bullet pocks (386).
 - a) Ulysses, the marksman, shot an arrow through twelve axe rings to defeat the suitors of Penelope (171h).
- ii) Brunton, the butler, turns robber and dies.
 - a) One of Ulysses' servants and twelve of his maids were killed for aiding and abetting the suitors (171i).
- iii) Brunton and Holmes use balls of string in computing distances to find where the Musgrave treasure is buried.
 - a) Ariadne lent Theseus the thread, which Daedalus had given her, to get in and out of the Labyrinth and

slay the Minotaur (98k).

- iv) The Stuart crown is dredged up from the lake where Rachel had put it.
 - a) Theseus dived into the sea to recover the lost ring of Minos, and brought back also a Golden Crown given him by Amphitrite (98j).

6. REIG:

- i) A volume of Pope's *Homer* is taken in the fake robbery along with a ball of string. Pope called the hero of the work Ulysses.
 - a) Ulysses was the most famous hero in Homer, *Iliad* or *Odyssey*.
 - b) For string see 5.iii.
- ii) Kirwan, the coachman, turns blackmailer and dies.
 - a) See 5.ii a for Ulysses killing rogue servants.
- iii) One of the Cunninghams writes with characteristic Greek e's.
- iv) Holmes fakes a fit.
 - a) Ulysses feigned madness in order to avoid going to the Trojan War (160f).

7. CROO:

- i) Henry Wood survives his capture during the Indian Mutiny, and returns thirty years later. His reappearance so startles Colonel Barclay that he dies of apoplexy.
 - a) See 4.iii, vii and viii.

8. RESI:

- i) Watson sees himself as a historian threatened by the twin dangers of Scylla and Charybdis. These are the first case he recorded (*A Study in Scarlet*), and the first case Holmes solved (*Gloria Scott*).
 - a) Ulysses sailed between these twin monsters. He lost six sailors to Scylla (170t) and was the only survivor of the shipwreck at Charybdis (170v).
- ii) "His talk about a burglary was the merest blind."
 - a) See 1.vii.
- iii) Watson remembers his old wound. *A Study in Scarlet* records it as a bullet in the shoulder (15), while *The Sign of Four* says he has a damaged tendo Achillis (121). The two are not incompatible, and the doubt about the site of the injury accords with the case of John Hampden.
 - a) For ankle injuries in general see 4.i.
 - b) Philoctetes (like Holmes) survived an ankle injury and lived to kill the man (Paris) who had killed Achilles. Both victims died of ankle wounds.
 - c) Ajax was said to be vulnerable only in the armpit. Finally he was drowned by Poseidon at the Gyraean Rocks (168f).
- iv) The Worthingdon Bank gang kill a guard during their robbery.
 - a) See 3.iii.
- v) The fake Russian nobleman is helped into the Doctor's surgery by a young man with the appearance of a Hercules (427).

a) Heracles was an Argonaut, though he left the ship before it entered Russian waters (the Black Sea) on its way to Colchis (150b-c).

9. GREE:

- i) Holmes' brother Mycroft makes his first appearance. He is a recluse who audits the books for several Government Departments, and spends nearly three hours a day at the Diogenes Club. He is a neighbour of the Greek Mr. Melas.
 - a) Though Diogenes was a historic figure he is surrounded by legendary tales, the most famous being the one which has him living in a barrel. He founded the Cynics in the 4th century B.C. Two features of his life make links back to the Sherlock Holmes stories:
 - 1. This story pairs with STOC in the eleven symmetry. STOC takes place in Birmingham, a city with a bad reputation as the home of false coinage. Diogenes made it his mission in life to drive out false coin.
 - 2. Moriarty was a math coach. Diogenes was captured by pirates and sold in Crete to Xenocrates, who made him his children's tutor. Thus he too was a "coach".
- ii) Mr. Melas is the Greek Interpreter.
 - a) Heracles had a companion called Melas who was killed in his war to recover Iole (144a).
- iii) The brother of a Greek girl is killed indirectly by fire. Latimer and Kemp leave Paul Kratides tied up in a room with a charcoal fire, and he dies of asphyxiation. Sophy Kratides later stabs the two men to death to avenge her brother.
 - a) This is a reversal of the Myth of Althaea and her son Meleager, whose life depended on a certain piece of firewood remaining unconsumed. After the Calydonian Boar Hunt Meleager stabbed his two uncles to death. Althaea avenged the deaths of her brothers by placing the brand in the fire, and Meleager died (80a-i).
- iv) Holmes turns burglar:
 - "I have a window open," said he.
 - "It is a mercy that you are on the side of the force, and not against it, Mr. Holmes," remarked the inspector as he noted the clever way in which my friend had forced back the catch. (445)
 - a) Jason stole the Golden Fleece.
 - b) Ulysses inherited his taking ways from his grandfather Autolycus, the son of Hermes. He stole the horses of Rhesus and the Palladium of Athene, the Goddess of Wisdom (163g and 166l).
- v) The Greek girl in this story is named Sophy.
 - a) Sophy means wise in Greek. See Pallas Athene in 9.iv b above.

10. NAVA:

- i) Watson links this story with two other cases, that of the

- Second Stain*, which, like this one, is about Government affairs, but has not yet been written, and that of the *Tired Captain*, which Conan Doyle never wrote.
- a) Taken in combination with naval matters we may be sure that this must be a Sea Captain. Both Jason and Ulysses fill the bill.
 - ii) Tangey, the Foreign Office commissioner, falls asleep on duty. Meanwhile the Treaty is stolen.
 - a) The guards were asleep when Ulysses stole the horses of Rhesus and the Palladium (163g and 166l).
 - b) The dragon slept while Jason stole the Golden Fleece.
 - iii) "How blind I have been."
 - a) See 1.vii.
 - iv) Harrison doctors Phelps's sleeping draught to make sure he will not awaken when he tries to recover the Treaty, which has been hidden in his room. It does not work. (468)
 - a) Circe attempted to drug Ulysses so that she could turn him into a swine like the rest of his men. But he has a moly plant so her plan does not succeed (170k).
 - b) Medea attempted to poison her son-in-law Theseus but failed (157a)
 - v) Holmes closes one of Harrison's eyes during their fight, and is cut on the knuckles of his left hand.
 - a) This matches the injuries inflicted on Paris by Philoctetes. His second arrow struck the bow hand (the left); his third hit him in the eye; and the fourth mortally wounded him in the ankle (166a-d). Both Holmes and Watson had ankle wounds mentioned in GLOR and MUSG.
 - b) Ulysses deprived Polyphemus of the sight of his only eye, by driving a stake into it while he slept (170c).
 - vi) Holmes says that he suspects himself, though the real suspect is Harrison. In STOC Holmes uses the alias of Harris.
 - a) Both names relate to Paris.
 - vii) Holmes breaks off business suddenly to admire a moss-rose.
 - a) Hermes provided a moly plant to ward off Circe's spells (170k).
 - b) Medea provided crocus juice to enable Jason to subdue the wild bulls with which he must plough (152j).
 - viii) "I hardly think I shall go back to Briarbrae". This statement from Holmes is a deliberate falsehood.
 - a) Ulysses was famed for his penchant for telling lies.

11. FINA:

- i) Holmes recruits Watson to go with him on his life and death journey to the Continent. Watson has a damaged tendo Achillis.
 - a) Ulysses recruited Achilles for the Trojan War (160k).
- ii) Holmes instructs Watson to take the Continental Express, and books his own luggage through to Paris.
 - a) The purpose of the Trojan War was the recovery of Helen from Paris.
- iii) The trip does not go according to plan. Holmes and Watson leave the train at Canterbury. They had meant to reach

- Switzerland via Luxemburg and Basle, but now they go via Dieppe, Brussels and Strasbourg.
- a) Neither the voyage to Troy nor the trip home went as planned.
 - iv) Holmes is attacked by thrown bricks and rocks.
 - a) Polyphemus hurled rocks at Ulysses' ship.
 - b) The Laestrygonians did the same.
 - c) Talos hurled rocks at the Argo.
 - v) After talking to Holmes Moriarty goes "blinking and peering out of the room".
 - a) Ulysses consulted Tiresias, the blind seer, in Hades (170 l-o).
 - vi) Holmes and Moriarty meet at Reichenbach on the lip of the Falls. "The shaft into which the river hurls itself is an immense chasm, lined by glistening coal-black rock, and narrowing into a creaming, boiling pit of incalculable depth." (478)
 - a) Ulysses went down into Hades to consult Tiresias about the future of his voyage. Circe later points out to him: What hardihood to have visited the land of Hades! One death is enough for most men; but now you will have had two" (170q).
 - b) Two great dangers were faced by Ulysses when he was the last of his crew left alive. First was the sinking of his makeshift raft in the great whirlpool of Charybdis. He managed to hang on to a tree when the water fell away below him until at last it rose again and he was able to survive (170v). Later, when he left Calypso's island on a raft, Poseidon swept him overboard with a huge wave. The Goddess Ino provided him with a magic veil to keep him afloat (170y).

"It's a very strong case now," Jim agreed, when he had read over the combined Greek material that night. "If Holmes is Ulysses he cannot die in the water, so we must deduce that he will return in ten years time. Look at that comment of Circe's about the double death, how well it matches the story of Christ's descent into Hell. And then you have Watson actually drawing attention to Scylla and Charybdis."

"It really is beyond coincidence now, isn't it?" I asked him, wondering whether Mrs. Daneman would ever think so.

"It's good enough to convince me, and historians are not the most gullible people," Jim replied firmly. "This could not be Conan Doyle's subconscious at work. Firstly there's far too much of it, and secondly it falls into exact patterns."

"Yes, that's the way I see it. And we do seem to have answered Professor Gomez's objections too."

"There is one tiny point that needs clarification though. What happens to Moriarty?"

"He dies of course!"

Chapter Twenty.

On Thursday morning I found that Jim had been the early bird. He was deep in the books again with a seraphic smile on his craggy features.

"What have you found then?" I asked, putting on the kettle.

"Something that just might turn out to be useful," he replied evasively. "Would you mind doing a little favour for me after breakfast. I hate to bother you, but I think this will work better if you do it. Besides which I'm rather tired and might miss something." He scribbled on a piece of paper and gave it to me. "Would you go through the last two stories very carefully and see if you can find these words?"

"Sure. Anything else?" I asked, really quite eager for any task which would take my mind off the coming ordeal.

"Well, you might ponder on this point for a while. Why is the race which Silver Blaze won sometimes called the Wessex Cup and sometimes the Wessex Plate?"

"I dimly remember that. Can't think why though," I said, but when I demanded the reason for his interest he stonily refused to be drawn.

"Tell you what," said Jim, as I got breakfast together, "I'll join you at the meeting if you think it would be of any help? Moral support - that sort of thing?"

"That would be more than kind," I told him, and gave him the address. "It's at three o'clock."

"I have an appointment for lunch, but I'll be there to lend an air of scholarly respectability to the proceedings," he promised, pouring himself a cup of tea.

By the time he was leaving I was able to tell him that the Annotated Holmes did in fact raise the very point that he had done. The text does seem to be at variance with itself. Mostly the race is called the Wessex Cup, but the racecard has it as the Wessex Plate. The editor, Baring Gould, explains that a plate is a general term which covers a cup or other prize for racing.

"Interesting though, don't you think," Jim said, "that Conan Doyle should have drawn attention to that word. One has to wonder why?" He was smiling as he closed the door. Thoroughly puzzled I set to work on his project.

All too soon I was facing the Inquisition again. It was the sombre presence of the black garbed Gomez, with his slight Spanish accent which gave me that feeling of course. This time he was flanked by Mrs. Daneman's ample person in a totally unsuitable red dress, and Mr. Frank Crane, with a flamboyant tie and thick glasses, a man with an impressive record of publications in the Sherlock Holmes field. I felt a terrible sense of the futility of attempting to convince this group of the importance of a long dead writer's "crime", but nevertheless I set to with a will.

I started where we had left off last week, with the topics of blindness and lameness. I derived some humorous encouragement

from the fact that Mr. Crane's glasses indicated considerable trouble with his sight, while Mrs. Daneman had her left knee heavily bandaged. Last Friday I had gone through the symmetrical pattern of lameness when Professor Gomez pointed out to me that there was quite a different symmetry relating to blindness. This time I was armed with the answers. They were all part of the "classical demonstration" which I now proceeded to give them, with a Xerox copy of the mythical evidence for each of them to have at hand.

Jim Murdoch was true to his word, but did not arrive until I had finished going through the Greek material in detail. I introduced them all round, and Jim was enthusiastic in his support of my work. Not so Mrs. Daneman. She complained that the new material related to a combination of Greek heroes, Jason, Theseus, Heracles and Ulysses. Why should I single out Ulysses from the group and assert that Holmes would be back in ten years time?

I tried to demonstrate that Holmes shared many features with Ulysses, both in his personal characteristics and in the nature of the adventures he had in *The Memoirs*. In the first story Holmes becomes an accomplice in the abduction of Silver Blaze, the equivalent of the Trojan Horse, which was designed by Ulysses and which carried him inside the walls of Troy. Holmes leaves the animal in a rival stable without informing the owner, Colonel Ross, of its whereabouts because he wants to get a "little amusement at his expense". Now that is not the sort of thing one would expect from a rational human being. But it was exactly this sort of rash behaviour which resulted in poor taunted Polyphemus nearly wrecking Ulysses' ship. He gave his name to Polyphemus as Outis, and in STOC Holmes gives himself the alias Harris for Pinner's benefit. Like Ulysses Holmes is a trickster faking a fit to distract attention in REIG. In RESI he abandons Blessington to his fate, hanged by three members of his gang; Ulysses left six sailors to die in the mouths of Scylla. Ulysses was a liar and a thief: Holmes breaks into the Myrtles in GREE, and in NAVA he tells a barefaced lie, saying that he would never go back to Briarbrae. He has qualities which equate with those of Hermes, who was Ulysses' great-grandfather and guardian God. He is a gifted musician, a fine mathematician and a seer, able to foretell that Lord Holdhurst will become the Prime Minister."

"Yes," said Mr. Crane. "I can see how all this fits very nicely with what in fact Conan Doyle did. Holmes was absent for eight years after *The Memoirs* until the publication of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, when Conan Doyle began to admit that it might not have been Holmes who fell off the ledge after all."

"Eight years was, I believe, the period which Ulysses spent on Calypso's island," I interjected.

"Exactly the point I was about to make. And then we have the two year voyage of Baskerville and Dr. James Mortimer around the world to make up the ten of the Odyssey, followed by Holmes' triumphant return. But your point is that a reader of *The Memoirs* should have been able to predict all this. What is there in the text to show that Holmes, alias Ulysses, will survive? You see the difficulty?"

"It seems to me that all the evidence points to survival. All the patterns point to those cryptic notes from Narbonne and Nîmes in the final story. In particular there is the symmetrical arrangement of Odyssey material in 4-6-8. First there is the disaster at sea with Hudson as the only survivor, his return thirty years later, which results in Trevor's death from apoplexy. This exactly matches the story of Ulysses and the death of his hound Argus on his return. In the sixth story a copy of Homer is stolen, and in the eighth there is the mention of Scylla and Charybdis related back to the fourth one. Since these numbers fall into a pattern based on the symmetry of eleven, the fact that there is strong evidence in the first story of the presence of Ulyssean material makes it very probable that it will be matched by some in the final story. Look first at Silver Blaze. The horse belongs at King's Pyland Stables; it is attacked with a cataract knife from Weiss & Co. - weiss is the German for white, just as "argos" is the Greek; Argus was the hound of Ulysses who did not react to his master's presence, like the dog in the story; the attacker of Silver Blaze is killed and gashes his own thigh with the cataract knife; the horse is of Isonomy stock."

"Doesn't that show by your own theory that the binomial Professor should survive, like the horse in the first story?" complained Mrs. Daneman.

"Well of course, one is an innocent murderer and the other a most guilty one, but I must confess that this point did worry me for a while," I conceded. "You have to realize that the horse is merely related to Isonomy, and then too there is a very strong interconnection between Holmes and Moriarty, between Vernet and Napoleon for instance, as I have shown."

"That's true," put in Mr. Crane, the peace-maker. "Do go on."

"So in the final story we have recurring elements. We have the German Reich, a kingdom, to match the King's Pyland of the stables. We have the note found under Holmes' silver cigarette case, which suggests the idea of the Sun returning after its global journey. And most importantly we have the white cataract which means death for someone. Who will it be? We have found that Silver Blaze, the solar horse, survived his attack and went on to win, and further more we know that Holmes, as Ulysses, cannot die a watery death."

"Essentially then you would equate Holmes with the horse, and Moriarty with John Straker, the attacker?" Mr. Crane pursued.

"Exactly. John Straker was a trainer, a 'coach' if you will, just like Moriarty, and he was killed by the horse."

"I can see that, but I am still puzzled by the fact that he was also gashed on the thigh," said Mr. Crane. "Even conceding that Moriarty may perhaps have gashed his thigh when falling into the cataract, and that is quite possible, would that not turn him also into a survivor? There is a passage here....," he murmured turning over the pages of his copy of the Greek evidence. "Ah, here it is! You must pardon my lack of familiarity with classical mythology, but if he is attacked by the boar, surely that would make a God of him, like all these people you have named here:

Attis, Adonis and Dionysus all died that way and they were immortalized."

Hell and damnation, I thought, someone would have to find a weak point in my argument. I offered all I had been able to find.

"It is matched very closely in *The Hound* where the murderer of Baskerville was drowned in Grimpen Mire..."

"I see your line of thought," Mr. Crane said gently. "And of course the gates of Baskerville Hall had the boar's heads of his Arms upon them. But it does not quite answer my question."

"Indeed it does not," said Professor Gomez briskly. "And evidence from *The Hound* is after the fact. The question of Professor Moriarty's death, if your hypothesis is valid, must be satisfactorily explained, Mr. Horgan!" He looked at me unwinkingly from those deeply hooded eyes, with the manner of one who knows that information is being withheld. There was a long silence. Whether or not he had ways of making me talk I had told all I knew, I thought with the humour of despair. My heart sank as I turned to Jim Murdoch, but he put a sympathetic hand on my arm, and then, much to my surprise, he stood up with the light of battle in his eyes and a confident grin.

"Mr. Horgan introduced me to you as Professor James Murdoch," he began, "but there is a little point about my name that has probably escaped you. Murdoch and Moriarty are just two of many variations of an Irish name, I won't trouble you with the original spelling, which means a navigator."

"So you are, in effect, Professor James Moriarty?" Gomez suggested with a sardonic chuckle.

"Exactly." Jim bowed his acknowledgement. "So I'm sure that Mr. Holmes would like to give me the special privilege of clarifying this little point?" Jim turned to me as the Professor nodded slowly, and added: "If you wouldn't mind?"

"Not at all," I said, totally out of my depth. "Do feel free." What on earth had he found this morning that he had been so maddeningly mysterious about?

"The point at issue here is quite a simple one. The symmetrical patterns show that there ought to be a strong similarity between the central confrontations in the first story and the last one. If Silver Blaze does equate with Holmes-Ulysses then Straker, the trainer, must equate with Moriarty, the coach. Why then does Straker die with a gashed thigh? If there is something about Moriarty which links him to this sort of injury, the final piece of the puzzle is neatly slotted into place. Is that correct?"

There was short pause for consideration, then Mr. Crane agreed with the premise, and the Professor gave a thoughtful nod.

"On the face of it there is nothing in the last story to suggest that Moriarty was ever injured by a wild boar. But there is a lot of hidden information nonetheless which must lead to the conclusion that Conan Doyle invented this character with a famous classical model in mind. Consider four things. First of all his name in Irish means a navigator. Secondly Conan Doyle makes him a mathematician, a suitable skill for a man who guides a vessel. Next we are told that he is a specialist who gained his fame by

work done on the Binomial Theorem. Now this is patently absurd. The theorem had been thoroughly explored by the year 1860. Hence we must look further for the underlying reason, and the answer has to be that he is one of a pair of brothers with the same Christian names. He and Colonel Moriarty are both called James, and that seeming anomaly disappears if one hypothesizes that they were named after two of the Apostles, James the Great, the fisherman, and James the Lesser. And finally we get a good idea of the nature of the man from the scene at Baker Street when he most arrogantly warns Holmes to leave him alone."

"You must stand clear, Mr. Holmes, or be trodden under foot," Mr. Crane quoted from the text.

"Thank you, Mr. Crane," said Jim. "Those words are most revealing, because they could very well have been said by the man who was the model for Moriarty. He was a navigator in the first place; secondly he was one of two men aboard the Argo who bore the same name - the Binomial element; and thirdly this statement is very much like the one he made during the Calydonian Boar Hunt when he brashly told everyone, famous heroes all, to stand back while he showed them how to kill the Boar. He was gashed in the thigh, castrated and killed. His name was Ancaeus."

"And you say there were two Argonauts called Ancaeus?" asked Mr. Crane.

"Indeed there were. This man is Great Ancaeus, and the other is known as Little Ancaeus. You will note how neatly they fit with the James the Great and James the Lesser, the Moriarty brothers."

"They certainly do, but I have to admit that I never heard of either of these Argonauts."

"I daresay most people would think they hadn't," Jim replied. "But there is a very well known story told about Great Ancaeus, and I'm quite sure you will remember it even if his name is unfamiliar. When he was preparing to go with Jason aboard the Argo one of his servants predicted that if he did so he would never live to taste the wine from a vineyard he had lately planted. Despite this warning he took part in the quest for the Golden Fleece, he became the Navigator of the Argo and managed to get home in one piece. After his steward handed him a cup of the wine from that vineyard, he sent for the false prophet and taunted him. The man answered with these well-known words: 'Sire, there's many a slip twixt cup and lip!' At that exact moment servants rushed in to tell of the huge boar which was ravaging the vineyard. Ancaeus snatched up his weapons and went out to slay the beast, with the result we have heard."

"But Moriarty fell into the chasm in the last story, he didn't get gashed," Mrs. Daneman objected.

"Please don't be so literal!" Jim ordered sternly, at his most professorial. "Consider the links with the first story. Ancaeus and John Straker die with gashed thighs. Straker's wound was caused by a cataract knife from Weiss and Co., by a white cataract in other words.."

"And Moriarty-Ancaeus falls to his death from the lip of the cataract," supplied Mr. Crane.

"That is very plausible," commented Professor Gomez.

Mrs. Daneman was not so easy to convince. "Does he say that it is the lip?" she challenged, her jowls wobbling in derision.

"Not in so many words," admitted Jim imperturbably. "But he did go to a great deal of trouble to draw attention to the cup. Perhaps you could tell them about the race which Silver Blaze won in the first story, Patrick?"

I did so and explained that the apparent confusion between the Wessex Cup and the Wessex Plate had even drawn a comment from the usually imperturbable Baring-Gould. "Conan Doyle drew attention to the word 'cup', there's no doubt about it," I finished.

"There's many a slip twixt cup and lip," Jim repeated. "We can be quite sure of the fact that Conan Doyle based the character of Moriarty on that of Ancaeus, so what could be more natural than that he should have incorporated this myth into his text. It would be my contention that the idea of his death at the 'lip' stemmed from it."

"Then where are the cup and the slips in the last story?" Mrs Daneman demanded, walking right into Jim's killer punch, as I now realized.

"The cup," said Jim, slowly and commandingly, "is to be found at the end of the tenth story when Sherlock Holmes, - correct me if I am wrong, I do not know the canon as well as you people - most uncharacteristically takes a cup of coffee before lighting his pipe and explaining how he recovered the Naval Treaty."

"Yes, it is out of character," confirmed Mr. Crane.

"I did not even look for the 'slips' myself, so certain was I that they had to be there." Jim turned to me: "Patrick, would you let us have the fruits of your search this morning?"

"I'm totally amazed," I laughed, and told everybody that he was absolutely right. There were slips to be found, and all in the last story. I handed Jim my notes and he read them out one by one.

"Here we have one on p.471 about the Moriarty gang: '...they may slip out of our hands...'. Then on p.474: '...handing the cabman the address on a slip of paper'. Holmes hoped that this ruse would enable Watson to elude the vigilance of Moriarty's men. And finally on p.477: 'They have secured the whole gang with the exception of him. He has given them the slip.' He, of course, is Moriarty himself, so all the slips concern the arch villain." He handed the piece of paper to Mrs. Daneman with a flourish. "There are your cup and your slips. I submit that they prove Moriarty must die, like Ancaeus, at the lip!"

"Thank you, Professor James Moriarty!" said the Chief Inquisitor.

"My pleasure, Senor Carlos Gomez," replied my friend, and was rewarded with the faintest smile.

"Perhaps Mr. Horgan would like to make some final statement?" He turned those piercing eyes on me, and reluctantly I rose to do so.

"It all fits together," I said. "The only way to explain what is to be found in *The Memoirs* is that Holmes was never meant

to die. There are so many ways to reach this answer. It is very much as though Holmes' promised work on detection is buried in the text of this book. There is the plethora of B's, hard to explain except as indicating a new bardic year to come. There is the voyage of the sun around the world, a two year trip like that of Baskerville later, commemorating the fact that Ulysses was captive for eight years on Circe's island, and travelled for only two years. There are the pairings between the stories which convey a cryptic message. There are the far more elaborate symmetrical patterns, which simply cannot be accepted as the result of mere coincidence: in the first place because there are far too many of them disposed in too intricate a construction, and secondly because they finally draw attention to the extraordinary clue of the notes from Narbonne and Nîmes, which point to the triumphs over death of Sebastian, Castor and Augustus. And finally there is this spate of classical material which must lead one to conclude that Conan Doyle thought of Ancaeus before he invented Moriarty. Here are two special points: first the Boar Hunt took place in Calydon, and that was also the name by which Scotland was known in the time of King Arthur, Conan Doyle's namesake, and secondly both Ulysses and Ancaeus were gashed by boars - one survived, the other did not. Holmes will return in ten years time, and Moriarty will die most justly. While taking in the whole picture at a glance is impossible it seems evident that Conan Doyle intended us to read into Sherlock Holmes a combination of the Gods, the heroes and the returning Stuart Kings, represented by the historic 'Pretenders', and their Cavalier supporters." I was about to sit down, but felt that something remained to be said. An image of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle flashed into my mind. "There was a short movie made in 1927 of an interview with Sir Arthur. The subject of Sherlock Holmes naturally came up, and anyone who sees the twinkle in his eye as he spoke then of his 'friend' could not doubt what it meant. His hoax had succeeded, but his genius was still unrecognized."

Mr. Crane rose and peered benevolently at us all. "Kindly and smiling," I thought, "but with the tongue of an adder. He's been at this far too long to accept a new interpretation."

"After many years of studying the Canon," he began, "I would have to admit that the puzzles are plentiful and the really satisfactory answers in very limited supply." He paused to pick up a copy of my manuscript from the table in front of him, regarding it quizzically. "Very limited indeed," he repeated. "I too have often wondered about the problem of John H. Watson's middle initial, about the oddness of Moriarty and his brother sharing the same Christian name, about each and every one of the matters raised in this book. I must even confess, with a pang, that I recently spent a number of days writing a learned exposé of the cheating that must have gone on in the matter of the Silver Blaze horse race. Oh dear!" He shook his head and sighed. "The whole fascination of Sherlock Holmes for the many enthusiastic Irregulars like myself, has been the elucidation of this substructure. I am now beginning to see that these questions, which were such absorbing fun for so many people over the years,

were only part of a much larger puzzle, or Conandrum to coin a word. But I cannot allow my game to be spoiled by the novel ideas presented in this book. I shall return to the hunt refreshed by the knowledge that there is indeed an overall solution which will answer all the questions posed by the Canon. Thank you!"

"To my way of thinking," said Mrs Daneman huffily, "it all points to the fact that Mr. Horgan has an exceptionally retentive mind and a sound classical education, two things he shares with Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. He wishes to stress this kinship by claiming that he is the only person who can read Conan Doyle's mind correctly, but in so doing he only reveals his own. Speaking as a Psychologist I have no doubt that all this material would make a fine and scholarly article in one of the Psychiatric Journals as an example of thorough self analysis. Mr. Horgan's literary sleuthing has led him only into the lumber rooms of his own mind. He sees patterns because he wishes to see them, and then creates them. Conan Doyle did not put them there except by coincidence. You would get the same results by an over-examination of the works of any writer, as doubtless Mr. Horgan has done with those of James Joyce, his particular hero. May I suggest that he return to the pages of *Finnegans Wake* and leave these quite delightfully simple detective stories to fend for themselves. Conan Doyle killed off Sherlock Holmes because he was heartily sick of him, and brought him back to life when he needed the money, it is as easy as that!"

There was a long pause.

One pro, quite unexpectedly, and one very predictably con. What would Professor Gomez have to say?

At last he spoke. "It must then be up to me to make some final assessment, much as I hate being cast in such a role." He smiled at Mrs. Daneman and commended her scepticism: "It is very easy to go overboard in reading meanings into the work of an artist," he said sourly, "as I was reminded lately when reading a completely baffling work about the interpretation of Leonardo da Vinci's paintings based on the presence in them of certain shapes. It struck me as certain that he never intended to put them there in the first place. This sort of thing is of extremely dubious worth." He paused for reflection, and took from his pocket a battered silver cigarette case. That's torn it, I thought. And I had been sure that my argument was sound. Now he's thinking up something suitably nasty to say.

"On the other hand, we have Mr. Crane who feels that such an interpretation is justifiable in this case." He sighed, then lit a cigarette and inhaled deeply. "I had almost expected such an authority on the Canon to have trotted out further support for Mr. Horgan's Stuart Kings, and those names, Charles and James, which we have heard from time to time. There was the case of Mrs. Stewart, said to have been murdered by Colonel Moran. There was even," and his frown grew more formidable, "a King James the Conqueror who came from the city of Montpellier, like the returning Holmes." Jim Murdoch, the historian, stifled a laugh at this and was sternly quelled with a look.

"All of that of course would be quite out of the ken of even

the best informed reader of *The Memoirs*, and that alone is what must be considered." He lay back in his chair wreathed in smoke and absorbed in thought.

The silence became charged. Jim gave me a little grimace and a shrug. We had done our best after all. Mr. Crane nodded at me sympathetically. Mrs. Daneman regarded the ceiling with stony disapproval.

What more could have been done? Could I now leap to my feet at this last moment and come up with some clinching piece of evidence which would save the day? But Jim Murdoch had already done that for me with his revelation about Ancaeus. And what could I offer that Professor did not already know, I thought dispiritedly. He knew the Canon better than I did - he had been able to quote verbatim from it the four passages about blindness, and he knew his history well enough to amaze a historian - what was all that about King James the Conqueror? Obviously what I had taken as sympathy and a little help at the end of the last meeting had been designed only to taunt me after all. Now he was about to tear me limb from intellectual limb.

I could no longer bear waiting for him to come out of his trance. Perhaps I should just swallow my pride and leave without further ado. I was taking one last look around the room, almost at the point of getting to my feet. Well, Mr. Frank Crane had done his best for me at any rate. A funny looking bird, I thought - well, two birds really, since a frank is a sort of crane. Hang on a second! Don't they both appear in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*? Yes, they do, and they are both cousins of the lapwing!

Mrs. Daneman? A Dane is a hound. She even looked like one with her pug nose and jowls.

This is getting really silly! Where then is the...? Above Professor Gomez' head there was a sporting print. I had noticed the prints in a general way but never bothered to study them in detail. This one had a stag hiding in a thicket as the huntsmen went by unaware of his presence.

My eyes went from one to the other in disbelief. These were the three bardic symbols of concealment. My mind sped back to the sight of the old man on the step of his house, half hidden in the falling snow, that place which no amount of searching could locate. He had said to me, as he stood there flanked by hound and a deer, with an eagle above his head, that I would know where to find him when I had found the answer. Yes!

I looked into his eyes and realized that he had been watching me as I had glanced from the picture above his head to the two figures who flanked him. The ghost of a smile crossed his stony features as they relaxed for just an instant. There was no doubt about it. He gave me a tiny nod, and one eye flickered closed.

I was home.

Mr. Sherlock Holmes in his very person.