

# Notes on Baker Street

BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

LIKE all other learned and scientific societies, the Baker Street Irregulars exchange notes of research about this time of year. They are too wise to hold stated meetings, which would belie their name and take the fun out of their indoctrinated amateurishness; and the accumulated records of their memoirs and adventures have been lying in a publisher's drawer now for several years pending certain final perfections of accuracy. If you must know, one of the niceties that has delayed them is to obtain an accurate reckoning of how much Sherlock Holmes spent on hansom cab fares in his journeys as described by the Doctor. A gentleman in London was commissioned to itinerate all these journeys as exactly as possible (by taxi), keep account of the cost, and make a pro-rated diminution according to price scales in the 80's and 90's. Then, however, the difficulty began. Was this envoy to have his actual expenses paid by the Club (which has no treasury)? or should he be reimbursed only what the travels cost Holmes?

The overhead charges of literary work (are you listening, Income Tax?) have never been properly appreciated by outsiders.

However, the album in question will eventually appear. Its title will be *221 B*, it will have 221 pages and an additional B page, and will (I hope) be set in Baskerville type.

As evidence of the affectionate fidelity of the clan, mark a letter from Mr. P. M. Stone of Waltham, Mass., who reports that he has loaned to the Waltham Public Library his own collection of Sherlockiana, on show there until January 28. There are about 75 items, he says, including the excessively rare original *Study in Scarlet* (Beeton's Annual, '87), and monographs, drawings, autograph letters, bookplates, posters, theatre programs, whatnots of all kinds relating to the Master. "It will be interesting to see," says Mr. Stone, "how many enthusiasts, in an industrial city of our type, turn out to reacquaint themselves with an idol of their youthful days."

It has always surprised me that so few of the Baker Street investigators go back to one of the prime sources, viz., the *Strand Magazine* of '91 to '93. A careful study of the *Strand* text is prerequisite for any solid Sherlockian scholarship. Consider the problem faced by Mr. Greenhough Smith, editor of the *Strand*, when his most successful feature, the first 12 of the *Adventures*, came to an end in June '92. Anyone familiar with the anxieties of magazines must be amused and

instructed by Mr. Smith's valiant efforts to fill the gap while Dr. Watson was taking a six-months' recuperation. July '92 a short editorial note remarked "It will be observed that this month there is no detective story relating the adventures of the celebrated Mr. Sherlock Holmes. We are glad to be able to announce that there is to be only a temporary interval. . . . Powerful detective stories by other eminent writers will be published."

Shrewdly enough the *Strand* followed this up, the next month, with an illustrated interview (one of a famous series, done by Harry How) showing—yes, we must name him, I suppose—Conan Doyle in his home at South Norwood, and giving the first intimation that Dr. Joseph Bell in Edinburgh, one of Doyle's old teachers, was the suggestion-germ of Holmes's character. But the powerful detective stories by other hands were not so easy to find. Dick Donovan's series of *Romances from a Detective's Case Book* were a terrible let-down, though Mr. Donovan was given a strong build-up as the author of *Tracked to Doom*, *Caught at Last*, *Who Poisoned Hetty Duncan?* etc. Dick Donovan was in a tough spot, and felt it, as you can see by the way he tried to imitate the characteristic opening strokes of the Watson method. Observe Mr. Donovan in the September '92 issue:—

It was a bitter night in December, now years ago, that a young and handsome man called upon me in great distress, to seek my advice and assistance. It was the third day after Christmas, and having dined, and dined well, I had ensconced myself in my favourite easy chair, before a cheerful fire, and was engaged in the perusal of Charles Dickens's "Cricket on the Hearth," when my visitor was unceremoniously ushered into the room. He held his

dripping hat in his hand, and the heavy top-coat he wore was white with snow, etc., etc.

The intention was excellent, but Oh what a difference.

The series called *Shafts from an Eastern Quiver* tried hard to give some continuity of thrill; and Grant Allen wrote *The Great Ruby Robbery* (illustrated by Sidney Paget, who did Holmes and Watson for the *Strand*; in spite of villainous engraving it was a notable job) and even Greenhough Smith himself lent a hand with a pedestrian mystery of his own. Some Baker Street student should monograph Greenhough Smith, editor of the magazine for so many years. I have always respected him for having had the gumption to rehash some of Bataille's great French criminal trials, though his treatment was heavily uninspired. Anyhow as Watson's first regular editor he deserves our homage. May it not have been Watson's own suggestion (see *The Five Orange Pips*) that impelled Smith to get a sea story by Clark Russell to help fill in? It's in the August number of that year, *A Nightmare of the Doldrums*, with the editorial blurb: "A Terrible Story of the Sea, only to be read by people of strong nerves."

Mr. Greenhough Smith must have been a happy man, one day in that autumn of '92, when the MS. of *Silver Blaze* was actually in his hands and he could put a teaser in the November issue:—

Next month will appear the first of the new series of "The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes." Admirers of that eminent detective are also informed that "The Sign of Four," the story of the wonderful adventure by which he gained his reputation, can now be obtained at this office. Price 3s 6d.

That was a little disingenuous, but one remembers that Watson had sold the *Study in Scarlet* outright (for £25) to another house, and there was no way Newnes, the *Strand* publisher, might reprint it. He probably would have if he could: in the *Strand* for December '91,



Greenhough Smith editing Sherlock Holmes stories (*Strand Magazine*, 1892)



"Club Types" by H. Maxwell Beerbohm (*Strand Magazine*, 1892)

for instance, he printed "A Vision of Saint Nicholas, by C. C. Moore" with no intimation that it had ever appeared anywhere before.

But Mr. Greenhough Smith's wits were keenly at work during those difficult months while his readers were hallooing for more Sherlock. Have a look at the September, November and December 1892 issues. There were three extraordinary cartoon features, called *Club Types*; a series of deliciously mischievous little figures representing the characteristic foibles of famous London social groups, each club in its own humor. They were done by a young man who must have been still an undergraduate at Oxford? They were signed first H. M. Beerbohm, and then H. Maxwell Beerbohm. These, which so few collectors have ever spotted, were the *Strand* reader's compensation for doing without Sherlock.

### Up From the Needle

By EDGAR W. SMITH

The reputation attributed to Sherlock Holmes for addiction to cocaine and morphine has served, unfortunately, to obscure the name he more justly deserves for a sound and civilized attitude toward the venial narcotic alcohol. In the early days of his career, when cases were few, it is beyond denying that he turned to the crystalline alkaloids for solace: he tells us in his own words that he found the influence so transcendently stimulating and clarifying to the mind as to make him careless of the ravages inevitable upon his body and soul. Yet we know that he was never a slave of the vice, in the clinical sense of the term, for despite indulgence resulting on one occasion in doses of a seven per cent cocaine solution "three times a day for many months," he was always able to cast off the spell, and to find inspiration instead in the exhilaration of the chase.

The fact that Holmes's resort to the lethal drugs was sporadic and voluntary is proof in itself that his reputation for addiction is undeserved. We have further evidence that Watson's doggedly virtuous urgings, abetted progressively by the in-

creasing importance of Holmes's professional preoccupations, resulted at last in his abandoning the practice entirely. How long the reformation took we do not know, but we can feel quite certain that by the time the zenith of his powers had been attained, and queen and potentate and pontiff were inclining themselves before him in suppliance for his aid, the Master had learned without remorse and without regret to reach for the gasogene instead of the needle.

This noble implement of aqueous dilution, gone in a modern age with the lamp-light and the four-wheeler, stands symbolic of a simpler and more wholesome field of indulgence in which Sherlock Holmes acquitted himself intelligently and well. His tastes were catholic and comprehensive: he loved the grape as well as the barley, and he loved them both in their naturally fermented states as well as in their distillate and more potent forms. In their use as gastronomic adjuncts, he was logical and precise—he had the great good sense, as we are told in *A Scandal in Bohemia*, to wash down a plate of cold roast beef with a draught of foaming, plebeian beer; but when it came to accompanying the oysters and the brace of grouse consumed in *The Sign of the Four*, we are gratified to know that he insisted upon something a little choice in the way of white wine. That he did not ignore the concentrated and more fiery spirit, for the convivial as distinct from the gustatory effect, we are given abundant evidence: as early, again, as *The Sign of the Four* we find him offering Athelney Jones a whisky and soda, and we know, from *A Scandal in Bohemia*, that the spirit case sat handy in the corner, side by side with the gasogene itself.

Other references to Holmes's interest in the traditional drink of his countrymen appear in *The Red-Headed League* and *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*. No deliberate restraint seems to have been put upon access to the store of the spirit maintained in the room, but always the indulgence is occasional and gracious, and never is it stigmatized by evidence of excessive or habitual use. In the *Ad-*

venture of the *Engineer's Thumb* and *The Musgrave Ritual* a subtle change steals temporarily upon the Baker Street scene, for the dominant ingredient figuring in these tales becomes—perhaps with the advent of greater affluence—the somewhat more costly brandy. It was certainly with whisky, however, that Holmes filled his flask when he sallied forth in his quest of *The Naval Treaty*, and it was probably whisky again that he took from his hip to revive the fainting Watson in *The Adventure of the Empty House*.

But it is Holmes's taste in wines, after all, that excites our greatest interest and commands our greatest respect. Whisky is whisky, and beer is beer, and even the most ignorant may stumble upon the choicest and best and consume it appropriately in time and place. In the realm of the natural grape, however, a sense of discrimination is essential to even a modest reputation for *savoir boire*, and these qualities the Master possessed to a unique degree.

At base, his preferences were franco-ophile. There was, of course, the single glass of port imbibed in *The Gloria Scott*, and the Imperial Tokay (from Franz Josef's special cellar in the Schoenbrunn) provided reluctantly in *His Last Bow* by the villain von Bork; but it was definitely to the Bordeaux and the Burgundies that Holmes's natural tastes were inclined. Surprisingly, for an Englishman of his generation, he seems to have shunned the hocks completely. Nowhere are the vintages of the Rhineland given mention, and we are led to wonder if, foreseeing the part he was to play in the Great War, he did not take it upon himself to set up a sort of individual boycott before the fact.

We can be sure, in any event, that the group of ancient and cobwebby bottles sent in by the confectioner in *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor* had seen their origin in some distant chateau in the Gironde, and that Holmes searched the labels beneath the accumulated dust to verify the fact of their local *mise en bouteille*. So, too, with the Beaune in *The Sign of the Four* which helped to incline the good Watson sentimentally toward Mary Morstan; we can assume—if Holmes shared the doctor's repast, as he presumably did—that he made sure of his hospice and his bottling before he partook.

The key to Holmes's whole philosophy in the art of drinking is to be found in an obscure passage in *The Adventure of the Veiled Lodger*. There, before setting out for South Brixton where a horribly mutilated beauty pondered self-destruction, he comments sagely to his companion on the futility of speculation when facts are lacking; then abruptly changes the subject. "There is a cold partridge on the sideboard, Watson, and a bottle of Montrachet. Let us renew our energies before we make a fresh call upon them."

Montrachet! It is a compliment to a



noble vintage that Sherlock Holmes should have chosen it for restoration when his mind was troubled; that he should have come, even so late in life, to prefer it to hypodermic and gasogene alike. But it is a finer tribute still to the man himself, and to his wisdom and discernment, that he should have fixed upon what Courtépée has called, with delightful understatement, "le plus excellent vin blanc d'Europe." The presence of Mont-rachet on the Baker Street sideboard was, we must assume, a matter of studied and deliberate choice, and it stamps Sherlock Holmes indelibly with the hall-mark of *savant* and *connoisseur*.

And so we must regard him, whatever the foibles of his younger days and however late in life his elevation came. The man who drenched his veins with poison was not the real Holmes. Back in the rooms in Baker Street, we can be sure, the sense of the refined and the delicate asserted itself anew in Holmes's blood, and grew apace with the years.

## Is the British Novel Dead?

(Continued from page 4)

but it is perhaps too like its predecessor to add much to one's estimate of Mr. Large's range. The outer novel, however, with its casual but shrewd picture of a thoroughly "modern" household, seems new and promising.

A sombre but powerful talent which has recently made some mark is that of Mr. Gwyn Jones, who has two historical pieces and one novel of modern Manchester to his credit in the last three years. In his case one rather wonders "whether," as they said of Roderick Hudson, "he can keep it up," for the subjects which seem most congenial to his imagination are of a rather special kind, and perhaps do not exist in sufficient quantity to afford him opportunity for a considerable body of work. It remains to be seen whether he can continue to discern and select his topics without artificiality, or alternatively adapt his talent to a different material. The modern novel, a sombre study of a weakling who murdered a prostitute, did not quite come off; but "Richard Savage" and "Garland of Bays" were striking. Both were stories of real historical characters, "Garland of Bays" being the biography of the Elizabethan playwright Robert Greene; both were studies of wild young men of poetic genius. In these novels the historical background was not merely authentically but sumptuously indicated; in both, the wild young men of genius really appeared to have genius. This is much rarer in a novel than it perhaps sounds to the general reader; but anyone who has ever attempted to write a novel containing a clever person, much more a genius, will readily admit the pains that person cost him in characterization, and the dissatisfaction he feels with the result. The reason for this is, I think, that while it is

not necessary that a novelist should have undergone the same experiences as his characters in order to be able to write about them, it is necessary, it is indeed quite essential, that he should have experienced the same emotions as his characters, and to the same degree, though roused by different objects. Now the emotions of a genius are of a range and intensity at which the average novelist must necessarily boggle. I am paying Mr. Jones a high compliment, then, in saying that his Robert Greene, though a trifle too lurid for my conception of that writer, might well have been Shakespeare's contemporary and written the poems, plays, and tracts we find in the catalogues after his name.

Mr. Rex Warner is another young novelist whose books, after reviewing, I retain on my shelf; the hardened reviewer will understand the merit implied. The first novel of Mr. Warner's that I read was "The Wild Goose Chase," a decidedly Rabelaisian but symbolic fantasy which opened quite gorgeously, then fell away into a slough of boring futuristic battles. The hero sets out in search of his ideal, the wild geese; after many adventures he reaches the city where he is told the wild goose resides—or perhaps I should say, presides as a kind of deity. The goose, however, when discovered, is stuffed—which gives one a nice phase of derision for many modern phenomena. Mr. Warner's 1938 novel, "The Professor," is an extremely poignant study of the liberal professor, president of a republic which is betrayed to violence without by treachery within—and, Mr. Warner seems to suggest, by the very liberalism of the professor. It is a sufficiently topical subject; Mr. Warner handles it in a deliberately simple prose which sometimes rises, in the ideological discussions between the various symbolic characters, to real dignity. I see that Mr. Frank Swinnerton, in his survey of last year's novels, calls this book "tendentious"; I would rather call it political. Mr. Warner is essentially a political writer, in the wide sense of the word; he is concerned with systems of government and their effects.

Another new novelist of some interest, who varies between the politico-economic field and the more intensive domestic study, is Miss Lettice Cooper, who in "Private Enterprise" and "We Have Come to a Country" gave pictures of the economic depression in an industrial Yorkshire town, from the point of view of the employer and the unemployed respectively. In "The New House" she wrote a multiplicity domestic novel, out of the ordinary by reason of its peculiarly subtle analysis of motive; her latest work, "National Provincial," again takes the wider field, and presents a cross-section of life in an industrial town, viewed in its political aspect. Miss Cooper's special quality seems likely to be her relation of the huge political prob-

lems of the day to the adjustment struggles in the individual unconscious.

A novelist hitherto political, who has broken new ground very successfully in his latest novel, is Mr. Alec Brown. His "Daughters of Albion" and "Breakfast in Bed" irritated me; they had intimations of perception and form, but seemed a trifle flabby, because based on the uncertain foundation of a revolutionaryism of an armchair and sedentary kind. But when I read "Margareta" I admitted frankly that I had misjudged Mr. Brown's abilities, for in this novel he begins to reveal his true powers. It is a novel of peasant life in Yugoslavia in contrast with modern civilization, of the ageless attachment of Margareta to the soil, and of the temporary escape of her unhappy husband to the world of machinery he loves, in Detroit. The Yugoslavian landscape, with which Mr. Brown has a long familiarity, is depicted with luminous beauty; the character of Margareta, a woman as ruthless as life itself and as vital, has unexpectedly subtle touches. Altogether, I now definitely include Mr. Brown in my list of young English novelists with a possible future.

I am in doubt whether to include our "proletarian" novelists in this list or no, as to me they seem to belong to a passing rather than to an approaching phase. The work of Mr. James Hanley has established its reputation over here, but Mr. Frank Tilsley's grim and poignant studies of unemployment and the less agreeable aspects of capitalism are perhaps less known than they deserve. Mr. Tilsley is an uneven and, to those who believe in his talent, sometimes an exasperatingly careless writer; but "The Plebeian's Progress" and "I'd Hate to Be Dead" and "She Was There, Too" all deserve to be read for their disillusioned but vigorous presentation of contemporary economics. Leslie Halward's proletarian short stories, and his first novel, "The Money's All Right," have a warmer tone than Mr. Tilsley's fiction; this is owing, I believe, to their deeper characterization, for all his people are particularly real and living.

The generation now rising into literary notice is not the thinned and stunned generation of the War, it is abundant and various. Though the prose of the ten novelists I have listed is perhaps similar in its terse lucidity, and their technique too has certain basic similarities, legacies of the pioneer work of the novelists of the 1920's, their subject matter is very various, including as it does science, history, politics, economics, the domestic, and the sinister, and I do not yet find it possible to discern the unifying tendency which makes a "period." External events may perhaps provide one. The novelists of the 1920's were unified by the pressure of events into a clearly discernible "school"; economic pressure from without, Freudian enlightenment from within, gave them a theme and an attitude. A

noticeable feature of the mass of ordinary honest but undistinguished English fiction of the 1920's was its regionalism. The depression struck at England trade by trade; and since in England trades are regional—pottery inhabits the Five Towns, cotton Lancashire, cloth the West Riding of Yorkshire, shipbuilding the Tyne—each region in turn felt the impact of the slump, became conscious of itself as a region and tended to produce its novelist. Meanwhile, the more perceptive writers tried to relate these happenings to a politico-economic theory of a general kind. Now, since 1933, the economic problem has sunk in importance in England compared with the national. A national catastrophe may, the national danger almost certainly must, start a new phase in English literature, for though creative art deals with the eternal verities, it expresses them through contemporary symbols. What shape that phase will take it is not yet possible to prophesy; but that England has at her disposal, to express her spirit and her life, an abundance of young, vigorous, various, literary talent, must be clear to every impartial observer of the English literary scene.

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## Ideology

By ARTHUR GUTTERMAN

ACCORDING to Kentucky ideology, The mint-leaves in a julep must be bruised; Virginia holds this practice past apology, For ideologies are much confused.

A pumpkin pie is best with potent spices,  
Pronounce the ideologists of Maine;  
But this is heresy and other vices,  
Rhode Island ideologists complain.

The ideology of ancient Sparta  
Approved successful thefts; but later times,  
The Constitution, courts and Magna Charta  
Had ideologies that called them crimes.

There used to be conclusions, thoughts  
and notions  
Unbound by crooked etymologies,  
But now we may not even have emotions  
Except as parts of ideologies.

Oh, writers, pedants, students of psychology,  
Professors old, reporters fresh and green,  
Please let us hear no more of "ideology;"  
The word "ideas" expresses all you mean.

## The Man Who Lost America

LORD NORTH. By W. Baring Pemberton. New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1939. \$6.

Reviewed by JOSEPH R. STRAYER

ANYONE interested in the great game of politics will enjoy reading this description of the sport as it was played under eighteenth century rules. Mr. Pemberton has condensed a considerable body of material into a witty and well-written biography. If it is a purely political biography, that is less the limitation of the author than of the subject. North was a politician; he understood the House of Commons perfectly, but he had no comprehension of anything outside the sacred walls. He accepted the existing system, he was annoyed by any attempts to alter it, and he never understood the changes which were taking place in his own country, much less those which were occurring in America.

Mr. Pemberton, while admitting North's weaknesses, feels that he has been underrated. But the author's efforts at rehabilitating his hero are not very successful. His greatest achievement is to prove that North was at least a second-rate politician and not merely a royal errand-boy. He suggests that North must have had some financial ability, since he introduced fourteen successive budgets, but the one example which he gives of the minister's fiscal policy is not calculated to arouse our admiration. As for North's other policies, they were those of a relatively honest and completely unimaginative conservative. He accepted the interference of George III in politics because William III had interfered in politics; he wanted to tax the American colonies because earlier Parliaments had asserted their right to tax the colonies. North's long tenure of office proves nothing about his ability; it merely shows that the Whig oligarchy was hopelessly divided.

Mr. Pemberton, either through sympathy or political conviction, tends to see everything through North's eyes. Since those eyes were never more than half open, some curious judgments result. The Opposition is composed of a shadowy group of figures who bear famous names, but who are always stupid, corrupt, and contemptible. Popular protests are always the work of unscrupulous demagogues, are never based on real grievances, and never represent the real feelings of the people. Majorities in the House are always secured by oral rather than pecuniary arguments. Yet this attitude, annoying as it is at times, does give us real insight into the mental processes of the Noble Lord in the Blue Ribbon. It is easier than ever to see why North lost America. It is rather difficult to understand why he didn't lose England as well.

## BOOKS from CHAPEL HILL

THE following list is compiled from the complete list of books published by The University of North Carolina Press during the past several years. We regard these books as significant—and their reception by reviewers and the reading public shows that we are not alone in this opinion. Check up and see which you have read—and which you would like for us to send you.

- FORTY ACRES AND STEEL MULES, by Herman Clarence Nixon. Illustrated. \$2.50  
SOUTHERN REGIONS OF THE UNITED STATES, by Howard W. Odum. \$4.00  
THE WASTED LAND, by Gerald Johnson. \$1.60  
CULTURE IN THE SOUTH, edited by W. T. Couch. \$4.00  
THE COLLAPSE OF COTTON TENANCY, by Charles S. Johnson, Edwin R. Embree, and W. W. Alexander. \$3.85  
90° IN THE SHADE, by Clarence Cason. \$1.00  
A PREFACE TO PEASANTRY, by Arthur Raper. \$3.50  
THE ATTACK ON LEVIATHAN, by Donald Davidson. \$3.00  
HUMAN GEOGRAPHY OF THE SOUTH, by Rupert B. Vance. \$2.50  
UNIVERSAL EDUCATION IN THE SOUTH, 2 volumes, by Charles W. Dabney. Each \$3.75  
WOMEN'S LIFE AND WORK IN THE SOUTHERN COLONIES, by Julia Cherry Spruill. \$5.00  
TWO SOLDIERS, by Wirt Armistead Cate. \$2.50  
THE LOST COLONY, by Paul Green. \$2.00  
SEED FROM MADAGASCAR, by Duncan Clinch Heyward. \$3.50  
THIS WAS HOME, by Hope Summerell Chamberlain. \$3.50  
CABINS IN THE LAUREL, by Muriel Early Sheppard. \$3.00  
BACKWOODS AMERICA, by Charles Morrow Wilson. \$2.50  
THE AMERICAN POLITICIAN: NINETEEN POLITICAL PORTRAITS, edited by J. T. Salter. \$3.50  
JAMES LONGSTREET: Lee's War Horse, by H. J. Eckenrode and Bryan Conrad. \$1.00  
DOROTHEA DIX: FORGOTTEN SAMARITAN, by Helen E. Marshall. \$8.50  
SAUL, KING OF ISRAEL, by Victor Starbuck. \$2.50  
PAUL LAURENCE DUNBAR, by Benjamin Brawley. \$1.00  
SOJOURNER TRUTH, by Arthur Huff Fauset. \$1.00  
UNDER THE SWASTIKA, by John B. Holt. \$2.50  
THE JEFFERSONIAN TRADITION IN AMERICAN DEMOCRACY, by Charles M. Wiltse. \$3.00  
THE EJIDO: MEXICO'S WAY OUT, by Eyler N. Simpson. \$5.00  
THE AMERICAN STATE UNIVERSITY: ITS RELATION TO DEMOCRACY, by Norman Foerster. \$2.50  
THE SUPREME COURT AND THE COMMERCE CLAUSE, by Felix Frankfurter. \$1.00  
A HISTORY OF ARGENTINA, by Ricardo Levene, translated and edited by W. S. Robertson. \$4.00  
A HISTORY OF COLOMBIA, by Jesus Maria Henao and Gerardo Arrubla, translated and edited by J. Fred Rippey. \$4.00  
MEXICAN FOLK PLAYS, by Josephina Niggli. \$2.50

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CHAPEL HILL