



The Solar Pons Gazette

W W W . S O L A R P O N S . C O M



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CRUMBS FOR A TOAST TO SOLAR PONS by Robert Bloch

We don't dispute the toil
Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Invested in creating Sherlock Holmes;
And Miss Marple, fat and frisky,
Thanks to Miss Agatha Christie
Appears in a variety of tomes.

And a MacDonald - Ross -
Is never at a loss
For getting Archer into quite a bind;
While MacDonald's namesake - John D. -
Created Travis McGee
Whose problem is that he is color-blind.

This item first appeared in the 1971 Annual issue (Volume 1, Number 2) of *The Pontine Dossier*.

Wolfe, Poirot and Vance
Perchance enhance romance
Detection and deduction are their field;
And while Philip Marlowe guzzles,
Charlie Chan solves Chinese puzzles
And Perry Mason's cases aren't appealed.

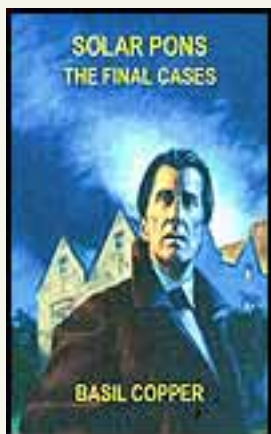
But we salute a sleuth
Who dignifies, in truth,
The mantle of the master that he dons;
All the others, irrespective,
Must defer to our detective-
So, gentlemen-I give you -Solar Pons!

This bids fair to be the merriest of Christmas'!"

- Solar Pons, The Adventure of The Stone of Scone

Copyright notice:

Solar Pons is the sole property of the August Derleth Estate. The illustrations used in the masthead were created by Frank Utapel.



You've probably seen the cover of Basil Copper's *Solar Pons: The Final Cases*. However, unless you own a copy, it's quite possible that you've never viewed the full picture that it was taken from. Turn the page...

GREETINGS FROM PRAED STREET

Welcome to the second installment of the Solar Pons Gazette. You may notice a reduced page count (of 12, if you're really good at math!) from our first issue. Fear not, we aren't running out of content. And don't expect to see filler pages of advertising (like that's a big concern). The Christmas supplement is intended to be just that: a holiday bonus issue. Expect a full-size edition next summer.

It is a reasonable assumption that the readers of Solar Pons are also Sherlock Holmes fans. It seems unlikely to encounter someone who enjoys the Solar Pons tales but does not like Sherlock Holmes. Thus, it is tempting to fill up space in the *Gazette* with articles related to the Master. And items related to Sherlock Holmes would probably appeal to nearly all of our readers (all sixteen of them, so far!).

In an attempt to strike a balance, there will be a few pieces here and there that are not Ponsian in nature, but instead relate to his Illustrious Predecessor. However, it is the intent of the *Solar Pons Gazette* to maintain a nearly exclusive focus upon the Sherlock Holmes of Praed Street.

One example of our Holmes coverage can be found on page 10. Looking for a holiday gift for your favorite Sherlockian? *A Baker'(S)treet Dozen* lists some books that would most certainly be well received. And notice also that it is not completely unrelated to Solar Pons.

I believe that it was Christopher Morley who referred to *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle* as "a Christmas story without slush." However, I much prefer *The Adventure of the Unique Dickensians*, which is included as this issue's featured Case Commentary.

There is a relative paucity of speculative Ponsiana, spoiled as we are with the plethora of similar pieces about Sherlock Holmes. One of the earliest examples, by Bruce Dettman, can be found in this issue.

Also, as editor, I really encourage you to contribute to *The Gazette*. The quality of this newsletter will improve with more input from diverse individuals. Be it is an essay, a poem, a drawing, whatever: please email it to me. I will gladly include it in an upcoming issue, properly credited.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays from the *Solar Pons Gazette*!

Pons On The Small Screen? By Bob Byrne

To the best of my knowledge, there has never been a television or movie version of a Solar Pons adventure. I'm pretty sure that he hasn't appeared on stage or radio, either. I'd be even more surprised to find that there was a Solar Pons video/computer game. Of course, Sherlock Holmes has been appearing on screen and stage for over one hundred years and there doesn't appear to be any end on the horizon.

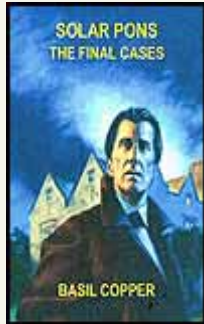
I wrote several screenplays for an original television series adaptation of John Gardner's excellent novel, *The Return of Moriarty*. Unfortunately, that project never got off the ground, though the possibility of the wonderful Donald Sutherland as Moriarty was mentioned at one point. That would have been stupendous.

However, I did develop some small skill with the screenplay format ('small' may be a generous assessment). After examining several Pons stories to determine if they would be suitable for adaptation to a one-hour television episode, I found *The Adventure of the Sussex Archers* to hold great promise. From an opening scene through the dramatic denouement, this is a story that would translate very well to the screen.

Of course, there would have to be three in-synch partners for such a venture. The Derleth heirs, who own the rights to Solar Pons, would have to be a part of and approve any proposed project. A quality pilot script would have to be developed to pitch. And what I believe to be the biggest obstacle, someone would have to commit to make the show and either find someone to televise it, or air it themselves. In America these days, I don't believe there is a market for such a series, nice as that would be. The Arts & Entertainment Network, which once provided high quality Sherlock Holmes and Nero Wolfe programming to American viewers, now fills the airwaves with Dog the Bounty Hunter and real-life tattoo shows. Perhaps these three elements will come together some time in the future and such a project would stand chance of reaching fruition. Until then, I will likely block out a scene-by-scene outline of such an episode. I have already visualized many of the scenes.

Solar Pons: The Big Picture

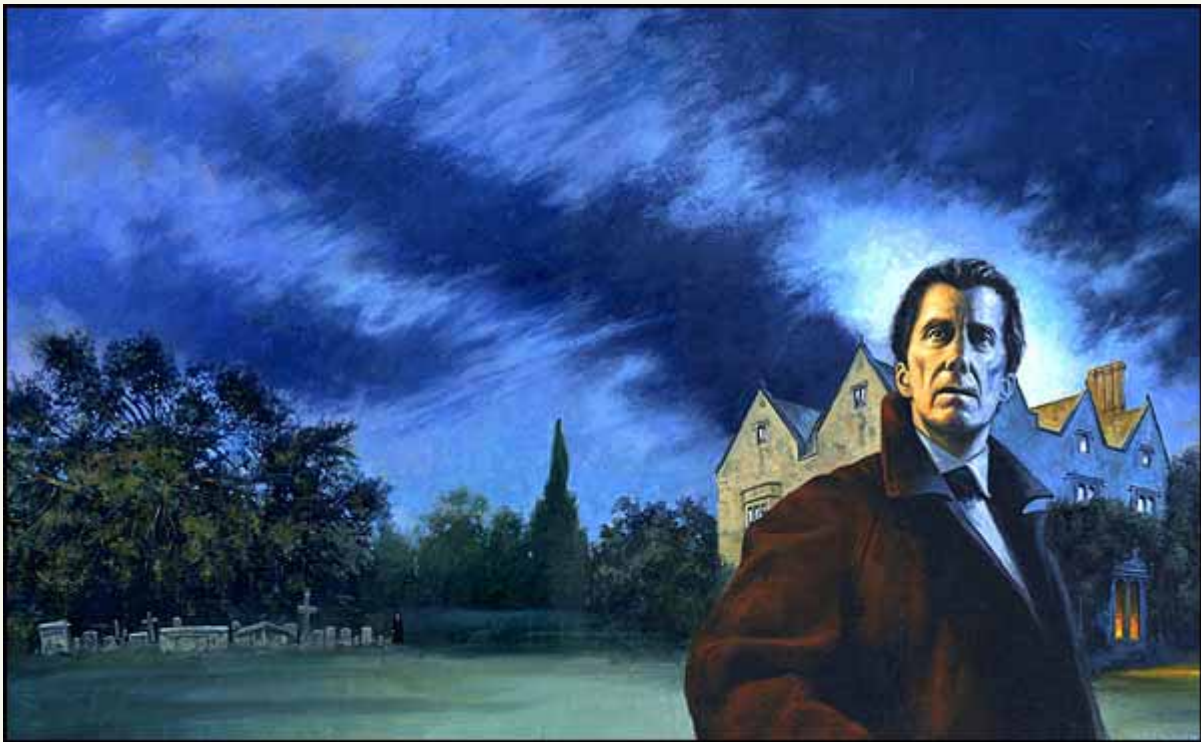
By Bob Byrne



Les Edwards is a very talented British artist who has created many dust jackets over the years, as well as other artwork. Some of his creations are simply beautiful and Edwards provided the artwork for the pictorial boards of two Solar Pons books by Sarob Press, the second of which is *Solar Pons, The Final Cases*. That cover can be found rather easily on the internet and is shown to the left. But the cover of the book represents only a small portion of an absolutely gorgeous oil painting. Les' website includes the full picture. You can insert your favorite superlative here to describe this detailed print. The *Gazette* nominates it as the finest Solar Pons illustration ever created. It is also excellent viewed in black and white.

Edwards notes that Basil Copper insists that Solar Pons resembles Peter Cushing, which comes through in the drawing.

Fantastic work. Kudos to Les Edwards!



Les Edwards, for *The Final Cases of Solar Pons* by Basil Copper



More From the Notebooks of doctor lyndon parker - iii



January 2, 1921

There is a slight breeze as I sit at my writing desk, bringing to mind an event that transpired recently in our lodgings. It is certainly not worthy of publication in any periodical for public consumption, but I shall record it here in my notebook as a reminder of my rather unsuccessful attempt to outsmart Solar Pons.

A P r a e d S t r e e t C h r i s t m a s

I opened the door to our rooms at 7B Praed Street and entered, careful not to jostle the package I carried in both hands. I was immediately engulfed in the warmth of the crackling fire that blazed in our hearth. More florid wordsmiths than I would describe the snow that had fallen on London as 'being like a gossamer blanket' or some such romantic twaddle. The fact of matter was that a breathtaking cold had grasped the city, its icy fingers squeezing the breath from denizens unlucky enough to venture outside. Adding to the discomfort was the driving snow that periodically bowled out of the graying half-light like a runaway hansom. My cheeks were red, my nose raw from sniffing and sneezing and my hands nearly numb, though they were encased in my thickest pair of wool gloves.

Solar Pons lay sprawled in his favorite chair, a journal of some type, doubtless obscure, in his hands. He tossed it aside as he greeted me. "Ah, Parker, you have finished your rounds and holiday shopping and returned too late for Mrs. Johnson's evening repast. However, I am sure she can be prevailed upon to provide you with some cold meats and hot tea."

Here he paused and before I could reply, changed tack entirely. "But I see that you stopped at your club, where I am sure that you slaked your hunger."

You can imagine my astonishment, dear reader, to hear this. Not one word had I uttered since entering the room, and I saw no way that he could know that I had indeed dined at the club. I was surprised that he hadn't given the name of the former army colleague who had joined me for the meal.

"Pons, this is outrageous! How could you possibly have deduced that in the few seconds I have been in this room?"

He waved a hand in casual dismissal. "Please, it is obvious." The look on my face must have shown that I was not convinced, so he continued. "Your boots have that dark sheen which is unique to the elderly boot black at your establishment. There are at least three other distinctive marks that tell me as much, but the boots alone, which were much scuffed only last night, were enough to deduce it. It is the merest child's play. Pray, remove your coat, light your pipe and make yourself comfortable."

I shook my head and chortled. My friend never ceased to amaze me with his elementary but surprising deductions. Once divested of my outer wear and having put away my weather-beaten but still reliable Gladstone, I sat in my chair near the fire and filled my clay pipe with a fresh supply that Bradley's had delivered from Oxford Street just the day before. Once it was properly alight, I looked at the world's greatest consulting detective. Noticing my scrutiny, he reached behind his chair and placed a package on the table before me.

"This is a gift for you Parker. What is it?"

"That's hardly fair," I retorted. "How could I know what is in that wrapped package?"

He merely smiled, and his eyes glowed with wry amusement. "You know my methods, apply them."

I leaned forward and closely examined the wrapping paper, which was of a good quality. It was blue, with silver trim, no bow or the like adorning the top. I gently picked up the package. Nothing shifted inside, and I mentally noted that it was not very heavy; No more than two pounds, if that. I peered at it thoughtfully, waiting for my subconscious to offer me some insight. Finally, I returned it to the table. Leaning back in my chair, I said as casually as I could "It is a quill and ink set. I would venture further that it has a high quality nib. Oh, and it was probably purchased at Robertson's"

For perhaps the first time, I had left Solar Pons speechless. He looked at me, unable to speak a word. I had shared lodgings with Pons for several years now and I was savoring this moment.

He finally gained his composure, though his face still showed traces of surprise. "Parker, I hardly know what to say. You left this morning before I purchased



More From the Notebooks of
doctor lyndon parker - iii
(c o n t .)



this item, and you have only just returned. I would have noticed you had you been present when I bought it. Your answer must have been a guess."

How many times had our situation been reversed? With more than a trace of smugness, I am sure, I said, "Pons, I never guess. It is harmful to the faculties, old chap."

Chagrined, he replied "Touché, Parker, a most palatable hit. Your sense of humor progresses from piquant to pawky. I would be pleased to hear how you came up with your answer. I am your student."

I cannot tell you how much I was enjoying this. It was a rare moment, indeed, when I had the upper hand on Solar Pons. Just as he had done so often in the past, I set out explaining my trick."

"Last night, as we relaxed after supper, I awoke from a short nap to notice you looking at my writing desk. I was curious and observed you from beneath lowered brows. You shook your head slightly and I knew you were thinking that I have worn my current quill to the point of obsolescence. It has certainly been one of my favorites."

"Has it not?" he said, nodding his agreement, still not certain how I had reached my answer. "You remain steadfast in writing up your cases with old-style quill and ink. Continue."

I continued. "You then leaned back in a contemplative mood, perhaps wondering if replacing it would be too personal. Even though you have belittled my writings as 'sensationalistic,' you know that I take them very seriously, and a writer's tools are very important to him."

Here I paused for effect and took a few puffs on my



pipe, just as Pons had often delayed his explanations, leaving me in eager anticipation of his next words. I took Pons' expression to be a mix of admiration and pleasure. I continued.

"This was not actually a risk, however, since you know which implements I prefer. So, you decided to give me something thoughtful and practical."

"Very good Parker, but how can you tell it is of high quality?"

"That is the easiest question, Pons. Do you think I would expect you to give such a gift, but of inferior craftsmanship? And at Christmas? Hardly."

He merely nodded at this, for it really wasn't much of a deduction on my part. "And you how did you determine that it was purchased at Robertson's?"

"Here, I had some additional information. As you know, it is a capital mistake to theorize before one has all of the facts at hand." He let out a chuckle, hearing his own maxim tossed back at him, and motioned for me to continue.

"I myself was in Robertson's earlier this week, looking for a blotter. I couldn't help but notice the wrapping paper being used for holiday purchases. It was the same paper that I see before me."

With that, I took a sip of my tea and looked at my companion, satisfied.

"Bravo, Parker, bravo," he said, clapping his hands together. I will admit that my smile widened, for such praise from Pons was rare. "You have correctly identified the contents of the package. But that is not the most amazing thing." I gave him a curious look, not understanding.

"No, what truly stands out is that you did correctly



More From the Notebooks of
doctor lyndon parker - iii
(c o n t .)



identify it, even though every deduction you made was incorrect."

The smile faded from my face instantly. I sat forward "What do you...incorrect....Pons...." Were I describing someone else at this moment, I believe that "sputtering incoherently" would be appropriate.

He continued, the tables clearly turned and pressing his advantage. His voice softened. "No, no, that is not entirely a true statement. You were correct in stating that I would not give you an inferior gift. I thank you for the compliment. However, your other observations are all wrong."

Now it was my turn to be at a loss. I still had not managed to put together a cogent sentence in response to Pons' statement.

Pons tamped his pipe, drew a small breath, released a stream of blue smoke and sat back, continuing in a smooth voice. "You did in fact catch me looking at your writing table last night. However, while I was certainly aware of the quill, I did not take any further notice of it. I was, instead, looking at the table itself. It seemed to me that, by sitting there, you would catch a chill breeze when the fire was not lit, as is sometimes the case. I then sat back in my chair and determined that you would likely be more comfortable if you moved the table to that spot."

Here, he pointed to an open space about six feet to the left. "At that point, I gave it no more thought, as it is your business where you want your writing table. I would add that I purchased the quill and bottle at Stamford's. You are aware that the world's leading mapmakers have a fine selection of writing utensils. The wrapping paper is common, and I suspect that many of the city's cartographers and the like use it."

Any elation I had felt just a few moments ago was

completely gone. I was now capable of speaking, but I had nothing to say. My friend was not done with me, however.

A twinkle in his eye belying the mock severity of his face, he leaned forward towards me. "So now, Parker, you must tell me how you knew what was in the package. Was it not a guess?"

A sheepish grin crossed my face as I was forced to acknowledge that my façade had crumbled. "No Pons, it was not a guess. Yesterday, I heard you talking in the hallway with Mrs. Johnson about the purchase. I was in my own room."

"Capital, Parker!" Pons said with a grin. "You had an outcome, so you looked at the facts in a way that led you to your result. I dare say you could join Jamison at Scotland Yard."

"That is unfair of you, Pons." I muttered.

Seeing a hurt look on my face, he relented. "Come now, it's not as bad as all that. You attempted to use my process of reasoning. That's more than the Yard does. And of course, the gift is yours. Should you need help moving the table, I am at your disposal. As for me, I shall retire."

With that, he arose and went to his room. As he closed the door, I heard him say "Merry Christmas to you, and to you a good night."

Laughing to myself at my attempt to outsmart the great detective, I placed my still-wrapped gift for him on the mantle above the fire and adjourned to my own room upstairs.

A version of this story originally appeared in Sherlock Magazine as Watson's Christmas Trick.

The Real Story Behind The Adventure Of The Stone of Scone

By Bob Byrne

On Christmas Day, 1950, the Stone of Scone, the ancient coronation stone of the Scottish kings, was stolen from Westminster Abbey and eventually smuggled back into Scotland by young Scottish Nationalists. August Derleth borrowed liberally from this event for *The Adventure of the Stone of Scone*. Derleth compresses events for narrative purposes and does a nice job of working in elements of Scottish-British history in his retelling. However, it is easy to trace the origins of this story, as shown below.

WARNING: SPOILERS FOLLOW



Pons	1950
Four Scottish students (three men and a woman) steal the Stone on Christmas morning	Four Scottish students (three men and a woman) steal the Stone on Christmas morning
Ian MacCormick is the lead conspirator	Ian Hamilton is the lead conspirator
They break the Stone into two pieces while stealing it	They break the Stone into two pieces while stealing it
A major search is undertaken by the British government but it fails	A major search is undertaken by the British government but it fails
They sneak the Stone into Scotland	They sneak the Stone into Scotland
They have the Stone repaired	They have the Stone repaired
They leave the Stone on the altar at Arbroath Abbey	They leave the Stone on the altar at Arbroath Abbey
The police are notified and the Stone is recovered and returned to England	The police are notified and the Stone is recovered and returned to England
Not wishing the culprits to garner publicity for the Scottish Nationalist movement, British authorities do not prosecute them	Not wishing the culprits to garner publicity for the Scottish Nationalist movement, British authorities do not prosecute them



On November 30 (St. Andrew's Day), 1996, the Stone of Scone was returned to Scotland and installed at Edinburgh Castle. About 10,000 people watched the procession for this grand event. Interestingly enough, the Stone remains the possession of the British crown and Edinburgh Castle is the home base for the British military in Scotland.

Legend says that the Stone was Jacob's pillow when he had his dream about a ladder reaching to Heaven (that's from the Bible, not an August Derleth-Mack Reynolds collaboration).

Featured Case

(www.SolarPons.com)

The Adventure of the Unique Dickensians,
1969
The Chronicles of Solar Pons

Date—December 23–24, 1920

Quotes

- Pons: *This Christmas season..holds the promise of being a merry one.*
- Snawley: *Christmas is a time for well-meaning fools to go about bestowing useless gifts on other fools.*
- *Having completed this scrutiny, he took up the lamp and, holding it aloft in one hand, crept around and around the body in ever-widening circles. At intervals, he placed the lamp on the floor, in order to scrutinize anything that might catch his eye. It was an hour before this process was completed, but at last Pons rose and gave the lamp to one of the constables. (Parker's narration)*

The Case

The penurious Ebenezer Snawley comes to visit Praed Street on the day before Christmas Eve. One of the world's finest collectors of Charles Dickens works, he is being plagued by a man who marches in front of Snawley's home each evening, robustly singing street songs from Dickens' own

time. Pons, intrigued, agrees to ride in Snawley's horse-drawn hansom cab back to the man's home and look into the affair.

Comments

- This short adventure was published by itself in 1968 and later included in *The Chronicles of Solar Pons*.
- Ebenezer Snawley's servant is Pip Scratch, who "was stooped and wore on his thin face and expression of dubiety and resignation.." Surely his first name is culled from the main character of Dickens' *Great Expectations*.

Of course, 'Ebenezer' was the first name of the famed Scrooge from *A Christmas Carol* and 'Snawley' is a character that can be found in *Nicholas Nickleby*. It should then be no surprise that he instructs Scratch to serve glasses of (The Cask of) Amontillado. One wonders whether or not someone was buried alive in the basement in Upper Norwood.

- Ebenezer Snawley is certainly one of the most enjoyable characters to be found in the



Canon. Visually, from his clothes, his mode of transportation and his residence, he is a man of the Victorian era, or even earlier, rather than an Edwardian. He is crotchety, querulous, a spendthrift, short with others, a hard taskmaster and jealous of his possessions. From his introduction to Pons, demanding to know the cost of a consultation before even crossing the doorstep to his solicitation of free medical advice from Parker, Snawley steals every scene that he is in.

- We come across the name of Dennis Golders near the end of the story. Golders had previously been encountered in *The Praed Street Dossier's Notebooks* in the case known as *The Book-sellers' Clerk*, which is believed to have taken place in 1920. Pons had indicated then that Golders' nearly perfect talents at forgery could be put to good use by brother Bancroft. Apparently his belief was correct, as Golders was working for the government by the time it was discovered that he had faked the manuscript of *Master Humphrey's Clock*.



Pons' demand that Snawley invite his tormenter (along with Pons and Parker) to a smorgasbord feast for Christmas dinner. When Snawley objects, Pons quotes the outrageous sum of 500 pounds as his fee. Snawley grudgingly agrees to feed the three men. Surely Pons could not have selected a more enjoyable burden to lay upon his client, given the holiday circumstances

- Pons comments of Snawley and Micah Auber, "This pair is surely unique.." While a pair is an individual unit and can accurately be termed unique, Auber and Snawley are two people, which would inherently imply that they can't be unique in the same way.

Actually, that last statement is not necessarily true. Oxford defines unique as "being the only one of its kind; unlike anything else." But a further definition states "remarkable or unusual." The latter definition certainly applies to these two collectors of Dickensiana.

- Solar Pons displays his humor in many different shadings throughout the Canon. Here, we are treated to

A Baker's (treet) Dozen By Bob Byrne

While the esteemed Sherlockian John Bennet Shaw recommended 100 titles for the Holmes library, the average reader can do quite nicely with far fewer. In fact, here (in alphabetical order) are 13 that would fit the bill, with a few extras tossed in for good measure. The year and publisher are not necessarily the originals, but the versions in my own collection. An "*" indicates the book is on the Shaw 100.

A Study in Celluloid – Michael Cox 1999, Rupert Books

Before ill-health seriously hampered Jeremy Brett and executives went into a cost-cutting mode that undermined the quality level of the production, the Granada television series was as well-done as a Holmes fan could hope for. It is difficult to imagine it being surpassed.

Michael Cox first pitched the concept to Granada execs in 1981. He also produced the first thirty episodes and two feature-length movies and can rightfully be considered the man behind the series. His insider view is simply absorbing. He gives an episode-by-episode look, along with additional insights and experiences related to the series as a whole. His frustration at some developments comes through, but that is understandable from the person without whom the show never would have been made. If you liked the Granada series, you will read this book more than once.

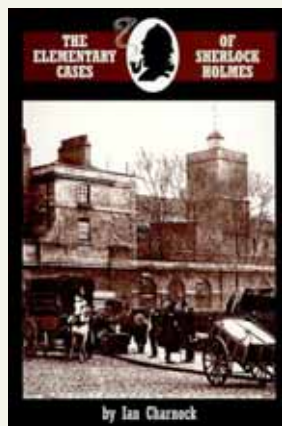


Other recommendations:

Bending the Willow - David Stuart Davies

Jeremy Brett & David Burke: An Adventure in Canonical Fidelity - R. Dixon Smith

The Elementary Cases of Sherlock Holmes – Ian Charnock 1999, Breese Books



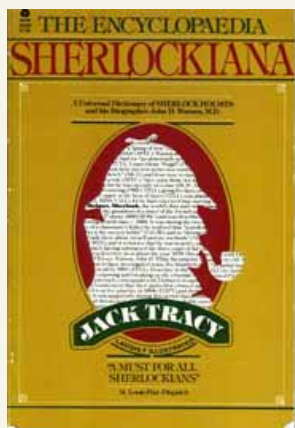
Perhaps the most difficult challenge in writing an excellent authentic pastiche is to do so without the use of Dr. Watson. A Holmes adventure without Watson is missing something. Watson's stolid presence and writing voice are as much a part of our love affair with Holmes as the deerstalker and Inverness cape. Ian Charnock presents several Holmes cases mentioned by Watson, but all occurring before he met the great detective in the basement of St. Bart's. Watson's role as narrator and companion is instead played by young Stamford, the good doctor's former dresser. The plotting is good, though not great. However, what stands out is Charnock's writing style. I will assert that no other imitator has emulated Doyle's style and voice as well as Charnock. The words come off the page as if Doyle himself were the author. That is high praise indeed!

Other recommendations

The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes – Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr

The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes – edited by Richard Lancelyn Green

Holmes for the Holidays – edited by Martin Greenberg/Jon Lellenberg/Carol-Lynn Waugh



The Encyclopedia Sherlockiana – Jack Tracy
1979, Avon Books

Orlando Park before (*Sherlock Holmes Encyclopedia*) and Matthew Bunson after (*Encyclopedia Sherlockiana*) put together encyclopedias about the great detective, but it is Tracy's that remains the standard. Any Sherlockian or pastiche writer needs this reference on the shelf: the amount of Canonical information is almost beyond comprehension. The additional recommendation below tells the story behind Tracy's monumental achievement, which makes the book itself even more impressive. It will likely be the most-used volume in any Sherlock Holmes collection.

Other recommendations:

On The Shoulders of Giants – Christopher & Barbara Roden

**Prisoner of the Devil* – Michael Hardwick
1979, Pinnacle

Sherlock Holmes pastiches number in the thousands, but it is quite possible that none are as good as this one. Even Hardwick's own *The Revenge of the Hound* (sequel to *The Hound of the Baskervilles*), pales in comparison to *Prisoner of the Devil*. The plotting is superb, the characterizations excellent and the writing style smooth. Holmes' inquiry into the famed Dreyfus Affair is wonderfully done. It is a shame that this book has not been adapted into a film, which would generate much-deserved publicity for the novel.



With his wife, Mollie, Hardwick wrote several Holmes plays and the adaptation for the film *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes*. The two were also script writers for the British television Holmes series starring Peter Cushing. Solo, he wrote Holmes' own autobiography, *Sherlock Holmes, My Life and Crimes*, as well as *The Private Life of Doctor Watson*, which made this list. If you enjoy pastiches, put off *Prisoner of the Devil* for a bit. All others that come after will seem a trifle less enjoyable. It really is that good.

Other recommendations

The Canary Trainer – Nicholas Meyer

**The Giant Rat of Sumatra* –Richard Boyer

The Private Life of Doctor Watson – Michael Hardwick
1985, Dutton Books

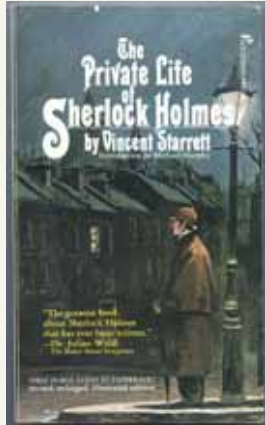
Michael Hardwick broke new ground when he penned an autobiography for the good Dr. Watson. Relying somewhat on the speculations of William Baring-Gould, he covered Watson's life from birth up to two weeks before he met Sherlock Holmes. This book is a totally fresh perspective on a voluminously written-about subject. It's hard to believe no one had thought of it before Hardwick. Regardless, it is a treat for any Holmes fan.

Other recommendations:

Sherlock Holmes: My Life and Crimes – Michael Hardwick

**Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* – William Baring-Gould





**The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* – Vincent Starrett
1993, Otto Penzler Books

Opinions on scholarly Sherlockiana vary widely: one person's insightful analysis is another's insomnia remedy. However, this is one book that almost unanimously stands out as a shining example of the field. First published in 1933, Vincent Starrett's writings are interesting and informative. There is much to enjoy in this collection of essays, including *Impersonators of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Evolution of a Profile*. Perhaps best of all, Starrett had a wonderful writing style and refused to affect the professorial tone not uncommon in this field. With apologies to

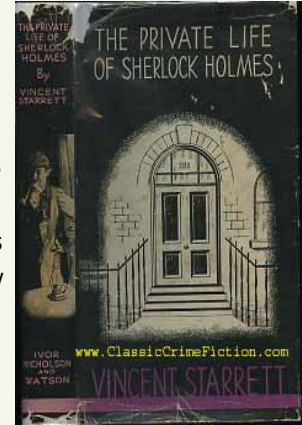
John Bennett Shaw, there are very few books truly required for a Sherlockian bookshelf. However, Vincent Starrett's marvelous work is at the top of the list.

Other recommendations

**221B: Studies in Sherlock Holmes* – Vincent Starrett

Baker Street Studies – H.W. Bell

**My Dear Holmes: Studies in Sherlock* - Gavin Brend



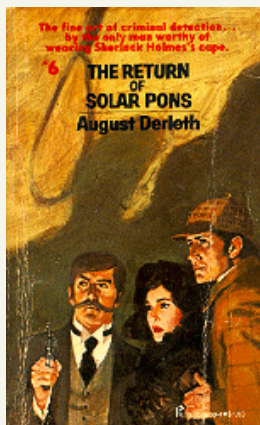
**The Return of Moriarty* – John Gardner
1974 – Putnam

The first of two volumes (the third is forthcoming), Gardner's book tells of events from Professor Moriarty's side of the street. The Professor is a Gaslight Godfather, leader of a far flung criminal organization which he calls The Family. As with *The Private Life of Dr. Watson*, the book offers a new perspective on the Holmesian world. Gardner is an excellent novelist and his depiction of a Victorian-era mafia makes great reading. Find out what happened after Moriarty did not perish at the Reichenbach Falls.

Other recommendations:

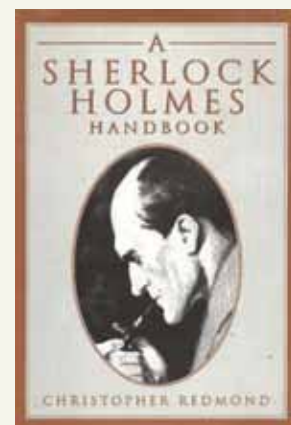
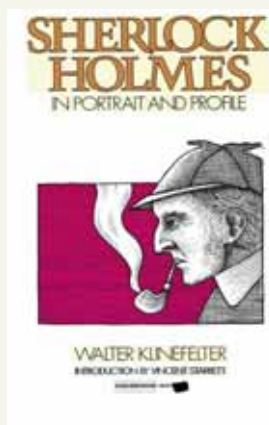
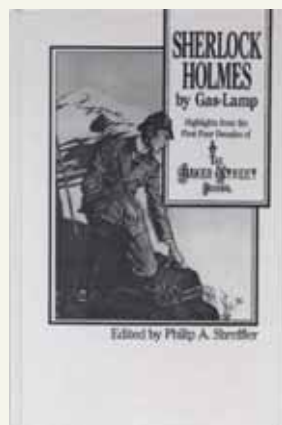
**The Infernal Device & Others* – Michael Kurland

The Return of Solar Pons – August Derleth
1975 – Pinnacle



Told by Conan Doyle that there would be no more Holmes stories, Derleth created Solar Pons, the successor to the great detective. The Pons stories are so close in style to Doyle's originals that they can seem like Holmes stories in all but name. Derleth was at his best in *The Return*, but any of the six collections and one novel are worth reading for a Holmes fan. In fact, many of the stories are superior to some of Doyle's originals. Basil Copper continued the Solar Pons tales after Derleth's death and they are also good reads, but the originals have not yet been surpassed.





Other recommendations:

The Rivals of Sherlock Holmes – edited by Allen Russell

The List of Seven – Mark Frost

Sherlock Holmes by Gas Lamp – Philip Shreffler
1989, Fordham

As close to a one-stop shop on Sherlockiana as can be found. Shreffler extracted over three dozen pieces from the first four decades of the *Baker Street Journal*. The pieces vary widely in tone, seriousness and subject matter, and it's quite possible the reader will not care for more than a few. However, there is much good reading in this collection, including writings by Edgar Smith, Poul Anderson and Basil Rathbone. For the value, this book offers more Sherlockiana than any other yet published.

**Sherlock Holmes in Portrait & Profile* – Walter Klinefelter
1975 – Shocken Books

Tracing the illustrators of the Canon from *A Study in Scarlet* through the last short story, *Shoscombe Old Place*, this is a fact-filled book with over a hundred pictures. It remains the definitive text on the subject, over forty years after its original publication. Perhaps some day a color version of this tome will be reissued.

Other recommendations:

**Sherlock Holmes in America* – Bill Blackbeard

Sherlock Holmes: A Centenary Celebration - Alan Eyles

A Sherlock Holmes Handbook – Christopher Redmond
1993, Simon & Pierre

If forced to pick out only one Holmes-related book to supplement the Canon, this would likely be it. It covers the gamut of Holmes-related topics, including the original stories, characters, illustrators, Doyle, the Victorian era, crime and punishment, pastiches, films and television, as well as Sherlockian Societies. This book probably has more information than any other tome of comparable size, or even twice as large. If "indispensable" applies to anything outside of the Canon, this is the one.

Other recommendations:

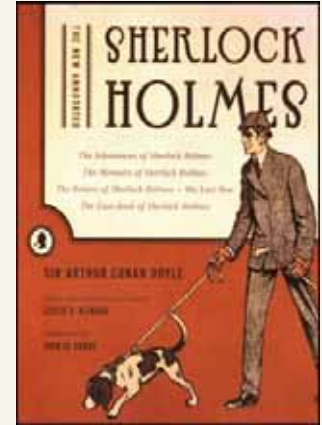
**A Sherlock Holmes Commentary* – D. Martin Dakin

**Sherlock Holmes: The Published Apocrypha* - Jack Tracy

The New Annotated Sherlock Holmes – edited by Leslie Klinger
2005, Norton Books

A Holmes fan does not need to own an annotated edition of the Canon. Some would even argue that a Sherlockian can get by without buying one. However, there is no denying that at least one read through of the stories with annotations greatly expands the knowledge base and increases the enjoyment level of Sir Arthur's tales. A reader can even pick and choose when and which annotations to read.

While Baring Gould was the undisputed choice for years, and Klinger's own *Reference Library* editions are far less bulky and attractively done, it is Klinger's marvelous *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* series that is recommended here. It is easier to read than the Annotated Oxford edition, which relies on end-notes, causing a great deal of page turning. And graphically these three books are simply beautiful, which gave them an edge over the Reference Library, as well as being more affordable.



Other recommendations

The Complete Annotated Sherlock Holmes – William Baring Gould

The Sherlock Holmes Reference Library – Leslie Klinger

Starring Sherlock Holmes – David Stuart Davies
2001, Titan Books

Davies has written several pastiches, an earlier film book on Holmes and is the editor of *Sherlock* magazine. This coffee-table sized book is a wonderful reference for the fan of Holmes on film and television. Proceeding in chronological order, it features interesting reading and a plethora of gorgeous stills, posters and publicity shots. This is easily the most visually appealing Holmes on screen book ever made. From extensive coverage of the Jeremy Brett Granada series to relatively unknown efforts such as *The Baker Street Boys*, you can find interesting information on almost any production you are looking for. There are few more graphically attractive Holmes books of any type out there to boot.

Other recommendations

Sherlock Holmes on Screen - Alan Barnes

The Sherlock Holmes File - Michael Pointer



From the Pontine Dossier

This article first appeared in the December, 1957 (Volume 1, Number 2) issue of *The Pontine Dossier*.

In the Master's Footsteps by Bruce Dettman

Who is Solar Pons?

The answer to this question is of a far more detailed and conjectural nature than one might expect. Remember, the question is "who" not "what"! As anyone who has ever read the Pontine Canon will testify, Solar Pons is a consulting detective patterned after the immortal Sherlock Holmes and who with his friend and associate Dr. Lyndon Parker tackled some of the greatest criminal cases in England.

My initial meeting with Pons came in the summer of 1965, long after I had been drawn into Sherlockiana. I was attracted, first of all, by the name itself . . . Solar Pons. An examination of a local phone book revealed fifteen entries under the name Pons, but even had I pursued my investigation I doubt whether I could have located a single "Solar".

Earlier this year I gave the problem some further thought and I believe I have come up with the probable identity of Pons. I say identity because of my reluctance to accept that Solar Pons was not an assumed name.

Next to his name, the most incredible aspect of him is his uncanny resemblance to Holmes.

This was obviously not a product of mere chance. He had made a detailed study of the Master sometime during his younger years, and it is my belief that this study was made at close range. Not even a loyal reader of the Strand Magazine could have emulated the great detective in such remarkable detail. Pons had to have, at some time, personal contact with Holmes.

Dating is very important in a paper of this nature but unfortunately very little has been done in this area of Pontine study. However, Michael Harrison in his notes on Lyndon Parker in *The Chronicles of Solar Pons* did some important chronological work and so it is to his dating that I have turned. When Parker and Pons first met in that pub near Paddington they were older than Holmes and Watson at the time of their first meeting in 1881. According to Harrison, Parker completed his medical studies in 1901, at which time he must have been at least in his mid twenties. They met in 1919 (again Harrison's dating) and shortly afterwards moved into their Praed Street quarters. Assuming that Parker was approximately 25 in 1901 this makes him 43 at the time of their meeting.

Now, the following point is my own opinion, but I have always firmly felt that Pons was a good deal younger than Parker, at least ten years. I believe Parker's atti-

tude throughout the Canon illustrates this but this paper is not on that aspect of Pons so I will proceed on.

The question then is, what individual, under 20 was in personal contact with Holmes during the Baker Street years?

There was one admirably fit young man for this role. In Watson's own words: "The young, but very wise and tactful page who had helped a little to fill up the gap of loneliness and isolation which surrounded the saturnine figure of the great detective." In other words young Billy.

It will be recalled that the above lines were delivered during the case recorded as "The Mazarin Stone" in 1903. The young page, at the time of the case, must have been at least 15 or 16 years, making him about 32 in 1919.

Who else would have been in better position to observe Holmes both in leisure and at work? The youth must have learned invaluable, first hand knowledge and probably even aided Holmes in the last years of his active practice. So, after the Master had gone to his bee keeping in Sussex, William Pons, having long before decided on a career modeled after Holmes (and I trust with the Master's blessings) set off to make his own name as a consulting detective.

Editor's Note: The best-known stage Billy was Charles Chaplin, who performed the role for the famed William Gillette in *Sherlock Holmes*. So, if Billy went on to become Solar Pons, then Charlie Chaplin holds the distinction of being the first, only and best-known stage and screen Solar Pons!

THE BEST SUBSTITUTE FOR SHERLOCK HOLMES KNOWN

- Vincent Starrett

The Solar Pons Gazette is the on-line Newsletter of www.SolarPons.com, the world's only internet site dedicated to Solar Pons. The *Gazette* is published annually with occasional special editions and is free of charge.

For questions, comments, or to contribute to the next issue of *The Solar Pons Gazette*, contact editor Bob Byrne at Admin@SolarPons.com.

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