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WITH THIS SHORT PREFACE . . .

Ross E. Davies*

This is our third *Baker Street Almanac*. For an explanation of why we at the *Green Bag* launched this ship and why we are optimistic about its course, please read “Laws of Demand and Supply” in the 2019 edition. It is available on our website (www.greenbag.org).

PORTENTS

The portents are promising.

First, many of the hopes and dreams we listed in the introduction to last year’s *BSA* are already being realized and coming true, including:

- Linda and Terry Hunt’s biographical register of significant figures in the Sherlockian-Doylean-Morleyan world (inspired by the “Births and Deaths” section of *Wisden Cricketers’ Almanack*) has arrived. See their “Past Sherlockians” in this volume.
- More news is coming in from Sherlockians around the world, including Aleš M. Kolodrubec (Czech Republic), Michael Skov Lambek (Denmark), Thierry Saint-Joanis (France), Michele Lopez (Italy), and Roger Johnson and Jean Upton (United Kingdom). As for the United States, well, just take a look at the first page of the table of contents!
- More experts are generating more lists and reports on topics of interest to the kinds of enthusiasts likely to read the *BSA*, including Alexis Barquin (“Arthur Conan Doyle in 2019”), Ron Fish (“A Glance Ahead at 2020”), Carlina de la Cova (“Sherlock Holmes and Science 2019”), and Rob Nunn (“The Beacon Society”).

There are, of course, many more people from many more places we would love to hear from, and many more topics on which it would be nice to have annual (or at least frequent) reports and reflections. Here’s hoping we do hear and learn even more in the future. In the same vein, from time to time there can be a quiet year for a group or a topic (or a year that is so hectic that there is no spare time to do a write-up), and so the occasional absence from the *BSA* of a regular author or group or topic should come as no surprise. Still, even in an exceptionally quiet or hectic year it is nice to have word, like the note we received from Tamar Zeffren of the Baker Street Babes:

* Ross Davies is a *Green Bag* editor.

In 2019, the Baker Street Babes did not take to the airwaves as a collective. However, their efforts manifested in other community pursuits, such as organizing The Great SherlockDCC Scavenger Hunt (<https://sherlockedccparty.tumblr.com/TheHunt>) during San Diego Comic-Con from July 18-21, 2019 and creating and maintaining the Facebook group “221 Be Here,” in affirmation of the credo, “All Holmes is Good Holmes.”

We look forward to hearing of their pursuits — and more of their trademark podcast — in the future. And so, similarly, we know from friendly comments and correspondence that some combination of the quiet and the hectic means that we will not hear now but will hear later from, for example, Germany and Sweden and *I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere*.

Second, some additional improvements in both the organization and the content of the *BSA* happened sooner than we could reasonably have expected, including:

- The editorial structure got two major upgrades in the persons of Ira Brad Matetsky (now Editor of Canonical Annotations) and Monica Schmidt (now Editor of Scionical¹ and Societal Reports (U.S.A.)).
- Monica’s resourcefulness and persuasiveness have triggered a huge rise in news from Sherlockians in the U.S.A. To get a sense of it, compare the total length of last year’s U.S. scionical and societal reports to this year’s. The only downside to her arrival on the *BSA*’s masthead is the cost of the extra ink and paper to print all the news she’s pulling in! If your U.S.-based scion or other society does not appear in this pages and you wish it would, please write to Monica at sweeper887@gmail.com.
- Similarly, Ira has brought back, and improved on, the *Green Bag*’s short-lived (back in 2015 and 2016) program of extravagant Canonical annotation. Elsewhere in this volume you will find his treatment, with contributions from more than two dozen other commentators (you will find their names next to Arthur Conan Doyle’s in the table of contents), of *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box* — with such thoroughness that the whole work is about as long as Monica’s reports. At the end of the story you will find an invitation to propose (and volunteer to write) annotations for Ira’s project for the 2021 *BSA: The Adventure of the Priory School*.

¹ No, “scionical” is not a word (according to the *OED*) — at least not yet. But we aim to change that. See Jon O. Newman, *Birth of a Word*, 13 *Green Bag* 2d 169 (2010).

Third, we continued to attract excellent individual contributions from able and distinguished authors, including:

- Steve Doyle’s history of Wessex Press.
- Ira Brad Matetsky’s aural report.
- Nicholas Utechin’s reflections on Sidney Paget, his artistry, and his engraving intermediaries.

ERRORS

It must be conceded, however, that not everything went well with the 2019 *BSA*. For example, the caption competition flopped. We won’t be trying that again any time soon, or at least not this year.

More distressingly, when we republished Carolyn Wells’s classic pastiche, *The Adventure of the Clothes-Line*, we missed a chance to cite and quote Leslie S. Klinger, whose annotated treatment of the story (characteristically useful and entertaining) appeared in his 2018 anthology, *In the Shadow of Agatha Christie: Classic Crime Fiction by Forgotten Female Writers: 1850–1917*. Apologies to our readers, to Les, and to the memory of Wells.

Finally, slightly confusingly, and truly inconsequentially, the creator of the cartographical dustjacket for the limited *Sense of Humour Edition* of the 2019 *BSA* noted — incorrectly, as it turned out — that the article on which the map was based would appear in the Spring 2019 issue of the *Baker Street Journal*. The article appeared in the Summer 2019 issue.

If you catch an error — large or small — please do let us know (email editors@greenbag.org).

SCUTTLEBUTT

One other topic on which it is worth dwelling for a moment is the single largest entry in this year’s *BSA*, and last year’s: Peter E. Blau’s *Scuttlebutt* from the Spermaceti Press. What we said in our introduction to last year’s entry is worth saying (in shorter form) again, here: Peter’s long-running, supremely informative and entertaining monthly newsletter is available online, but it is still worthy of republication in the *BSA*, not only because it is worth reading and re-reading, but also because the internet is a wonderfully flexible resource for sharing and updating information. Peter himself arranges for the updating of his *Scuttlebutts* on the internet in useful ways — correcting errors, updating links, and so on.² But all that makes finding a reliably genuine first edition (or facsimile of a first edition) difficult. Indeed, the Internet

² And any nefarious pirate of *Scuttlebutts* could update their duplicates too.

Archive itself — that awesome website that aspires to be “[l]ike a paper library” and “provide Universal Access to All Knowledge” online³ — now keeps ink-on-paper copies of many of the millions of books it posts online, precisely because the internet is so wonderfully flexible. “The books are not meant to be loaned out on a regular basis,” *The Guardian* said in a 2011 article, “but are protected as authoritative reference copies if the digital version somehow disappears or a question ever arises about an eBook’s faithfulness to the original printed edition.” In the same spirit, we hope to preserve — in ink, on paper — each issue of *Scuttlebutt* in its original, first-edition form, just as it appeared when it rolled out of the printer in Peter’s office.

And as this year’s set of *Scuttlebutts* shows, there is much to learn from looking at primary sources. Consider, for example, what morsels an historian might someday glean from the envelope — reproduced on the page facing the first page of this preface — in which the October 2019 *Scuttlebutt* traveled from Peter’s hands to *Green Bag* World HQ. Hint #1: What is the latest date on which Peter could have completed writing that issue of *Scuttlebutt*? Hint #2: Peter may or may not have been a member of the Diogenes Club at the time of mailing, but are there any other leading prospects? Or compare page 4 of the July 2019 *Scuttlebutt* available online to the facsimile of the original in this *BSA*. There is more. Someday, perhaps, an original hard copy of a *Scuttlebutt* will be like an original *Strand* or even an original *Beeton’s*, and this *BSA* will be like an early facsimile. For now, though it is just fun, and perhaps thought-provoking, and that is enough.

THANKS

This year is like any other year in at least one way: all of us owe thanks to librarians. Here and now, we are especially grateful to Jessie Amaolo of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Reference Library and Tim Johnson of the Sherlock Holmes Collections in the University of Minnesota Libraries. They were instrumental in arranging for the appearance in this *BSA* of original works by Sidney Paget portraying scenes in *The Adventure of the Cardboard Box* (from Toronto) and *The Red-Headed League* (from Minnesota). Thank you very much!

Thanks also to you, reader, for reading. Please write, too, if you catch us in an error or think of something we ought to start or stop doing.

Ross E. Davies
February 23, 2020

³ See <https://archive.org/about/>.