

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

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no. 316 15 October 2011

Arthur Conan Doyle lost the manuscript of his first novel, and later professed horror at the thought that it should be found and published. As we now know, he rewrote much of it from memory, and *The Narrative of John Smith* has indeed been published. As it stands, it's not a long book, and next to nothing happens. I doubt it would have seen print in the 1880s, but now we're familiar with the author's life and work, and we're interested to follow his development as a writer, a thinker and a person. John Smith, perhaps Conan Doyle's vision of himself as an older man, is confined to his room by gout; the narrative consists of his reflections on life and his conversations with his doctor, his neighbours, his landlady, and the local curate – characters who are depicted with a lively authenticity. Nowhere else in his fiction does Conan Doyle discourse on such a range of topics – politics, religion, philosophy and much more – with the boldness of youth and often with the wisdom of maturity. Perhaps it's not a novel so much as a series of sketches: I was reminded of the *Sketches by Boz*, which is no bad thing. *The Narrative* is a precursor of *The Stark Munro Letters* and *A Duet*, rather than *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *The White Company* or *The Lost World*, but there are details here that would become important elements in the chronicles of Sherlock Holmes, Sir Nigel and Professor Challenger. The admirable notes are by Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower and Rachel Foss. (The British Library; £10.00; limited edition in slip-case £100.00; audiobook read by Robert Lindsay £19.59.)

In 1939 Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce played Holmes and Watson in two outstanding films for Fox, the first to set the characters in their true historical period. In 1942 Universal cast them in *Sherlock Holmes and the Voice of Terror*, the first of twelve films set in the present day. Amanda Field's recent book *England's Secret Weapon* examines the films in the context of their time. Now **Michael A Hoey**, whose father Dennis was the unforgettable Lestrade to Rathbone's Holmes, takes a different and equally interesting approach in *Sherlock Holmes & the Fabulous Faces: The Universal Pictures Repertory Company* (BearManor Media, <http://bearmanormedia.bizland.com/>; \$19.95). His personal acquaintance with many of the artistes who contributed to these and other Universal productions gives his biographical sketches an unusually engaging immediacy. It's fascinating to follow the careers of actors such as Reginald Denny, Mary Gordon, Olaf Hytten and Frederick Worlock. The critical summaries of the films themselves are perceptive, pertinent and equally engrossing. Michael Hoey has given us a book that's both important and entertaining.

Thomas Bruce Wheeler has devoted much time and energy to researching our capital city. After 2009's admirable *The New Finding Sherlock's London* comes *The London of Sherlock Holmes* (MX Publishing; www.mxpublishing.com/; £13.99/\$22.95/€17.99), which updates the earlier book to a degree that no other guide, I think, has seriously considered. As before, we're directed to more than 300 sites, each of whose significance is clearly and pithily stated. You can visit the locations of a specific adventure, explore the sites near each of a hundred railway or Underground stations, or take any of six walking tours in the footsteps of Holmes and Watson. But *The London of Sherlock Holmes* is ideally used in its e-book format where the map references are hyperlinked to Google Maps and over 400 photographs. As a step-by-step guide to the London of the Canon, it's unbeatable.

Exploring London with Sherlock Holmes: A TravelGhosts Guide by **John Sykes**, published by traveldiary.de Reiseliteratur-Verlag (http://shop.traveldiary.de/product_info.php?products_id=113; €9.95) is an unexpected and very charming little volume. The pursuit of a mysterious criminal takes Holmes and Watson on an erratic journey across London, taking in Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, the

Houses of Parliament and other famous locations, where they are helped – or hindered – by certain people, not all of them living, who were intimately associated with those places. The conversations with, say, the boxer Ben Caunt, César Ritz and Sir Horace Jones provide a delightful way of learning about Big Ben, the Savoy Hotel and Tower Bridge – all in the course of an exciting adventure. The book is also available in German as *Mit Sherlock Holmes durch London*.

The Moriarty Papers, compiled by Colonel Sebastian Moran (New Holland; www.ivypress.co.uk/books/the-moriarty-papers/; £7.99) is a delicious spoof, purporting to be a facsimile of the random documents found after the mysterious disappearance of Moriarty in 1914 and published a year later by Moran in an attempt to stave off bankruptcy. If we're to believe these records, Moriarty controlled Watson, Mycroft Holmes, Mrs Hudson, Irene Adler, and pretty much the entire Metropolitan Police. Oh, and Florence Nightingale. And he was the instigator of just about every mystery investigated by Sherlock Holmes. The diary extracts, letters, photographs, diagrams of his mad inventions, and so forth are ingenious and very funny, as are Moran's laconic comments; they also show a considerable knowledge of the Canon. *The Moriarty Papers* is (are?) great fun.

Fire Storm is the fourth of **Andrew Lane's** *Young Sherlock Holmes* novels for young adults (Macmillan Children's Books; www.youngsherlock.com/; £12.99). As we've come to expect, it's breathlessly exciting and intelligent. The fourteen-year-old Sherlock's schooling is dangerous but efficient: the lessons taught by the American bounty-hunter Amyus Crowe and the violin-playing spy (yes, honestly) Rufus Stone are preparing him for the unique career that he will create for himself. Crowe and his daughter Virginia have abruptly left Farnham, leaving an enigmatic clue that directs Sherlock and his friend Matty Arnatt to Edinburgh. Almost incidentally, Sherlock destroys Mrs Eglantine's hold over the Holmes family, but there are stronger forces ranged against them. A madman is determined to kill Virginia Crowe, and a powerful clan of thieves has Edinburgh under its thumb. Just two points: the Queen of the Night appears in *The Magic Flute*, not in *Three Oranges*, and the Admiralty Arch wasn't built until after Queen Victoria died.

The Breath of God by **Guy Adams** (Titan Books; www.titanbooks.com/; £7.99) is on a higher level entirely than his disappointing book *The Case Notes of Sherlock Holmes*. A mysterious and apparently supernatural murder brings John Silence, a so-called 'psychic doctor', to Baker Street. Despite Holmes's scepticism, subsequent attacks indicate the deployment of occult forces by members of the Order of the Golden Dawn. Joined by Thomas Carnacki, a bumptious young ghost-hunter, Holmes, Watson and Silence make their way to Scotland, where their help is eagerly awaited by Aleister Crowley... *The Breath of God* is thrilling, at times really spooky, and well-written, with obvious knowledge of the work of Algernon Blackwood, William Hope Hodgson, M R James and Arthur Conan Doyle. It really is a ripping yarn.

The earliest dated piece to depict Sherlock Holmes investigating the Whitechapel murders of 1888 is probably a French play, *Jack l'Éventreur* by **Gaston Marot** and **Louis Péricaud**, in 1889, now adapted into English by **Frank J Morlock** as *Sherlock Holmes vs Jack the Ripper* (Black Coat Press; www.blackcoatpress.com/; £12.99/\$20.95). To be accurate, as Jean-Marc Lofficier says in his introduction, 'the original play did not feature Sherlock Holmes and Nick Carter, but identifiable facsimiles thereof, for an audience that was already familiar with the Great English Detective and his indomitable American counterpart.' If Mr Morlock's version is faithful, then the characters clearly do represent Holmes and Carter – which is remarkable, as in 1889 the former had appeared only in *A Study in Scarlet*. The play, like the anonymous 1908