

ARTHUR ² AND SHERLOCK

CONAN DOYLE AND
THE CREATION OF HOLMES

MICHAEL SIMS

Arthur and Sherlock

To
George Gibson
with admiration and affection

By the same author

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Arthur and Sherlock

Conan Doyle and the Creation of Holmes

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“What clue could you have as to his identity?”

“Only as much as we can deduce.”

“From his hat?”

“Precisely.”

“But you are joking. What can you gather from this old battered felt?”

“Here is my lens. You know my methods.”

—SHERLOCK HOLMES AND DR. WATSON
IN “THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE”

OVERTURE

Remembering

A shiny brass plate suspended from a wrought-iron railing along the street proclaimed

DR. CONAN DOYLE
SURGEON

Patients wishing to consult Arthur strode along Elm Grove until they were three doors from its west end, where it met King's Road. The sign stood before number 1, Bush Villas, the first of two narrow three-story houses squeezed between and sharing walls with other establishments. On the left, as seen from the street, rose the brick bell tower and elegant arching windows of the newly renovated Elm Grove Baptist Church. On the right stood the handsome curving façade of Bush Hotel, which advertised as both "Commercial and Family" and which boasted the largest billiard saloon in Southsea. Always preoccupied with sports and physical activity, broad-shouldered Arthur enjoyed playing billiards in the hotel and playing bowls on the broad green behind it.

The flat's large, square front windows faced almost due north and thus received strong light without glare. Patients entered through the arched entryway on the left, adjacent to the church, where the front door opened into a hall that led to a small waiting room and a consulting room on the ground floor. Stairs led up to the surgery and a private sitting room, and another flight climbed to a pair of bedrooms on the top floor, which patients never saw.

In early 1886, Arthur Conan Doyle was a few months shy of twenty-seven. For less than four years, he had operated—not always with success—a medical office in Southsea, a bustling residential section of Portsmouth, England. Lacking the funds to buy into an established practice, he had

resolved to build his own from scratch, and after a little research he decided upon Portsmouth as a promising setting. In local sporting circles and scientific societies, he was known for his sociability and his hearty, infectious laugh.

Four years after settling here, he was no longer so poor that he had to buy creaky chairs and a faded rug on credit to furnish the sitting room. He did not sleep in his ulster, as he had for the first couple of weeks at Bush Villas when he owned no bed linens. He did not have to cook bacon on a little platform rigged on a wall over the gas jet. He no longer borrowed money from his mother back home in Edinburgh. Gradually his income had climbed, but his fear of creditors had faded only when he married the petite and soft-spoken Louise Hawkins—nicknamed “Touie”—with whom he fell in love after caring for her younger brother during his last days. Patients still trickled in, but Arthur no longer peered anxiously down through the wooden blinds to count passersby who stopped to read his brass nameplate.

They were not rich, Touie and Arthur, but they were comfortable. The most important luxury that Arthur could now afford was more opportunity to write. Since moving to Southsea, he had spent as much time as possible at his desk, upstairs in the space to which patients were never admitted. He filled page after page with his neat, small script. Gazing thoughtfully out the window beyond his desk, he became so intimate with the view from his study window that later he wrote it into one of his novels—the sound of rain striking a dull note on fallen leaves and a clearer note on the gravel path, the pools that formed in the street and along the walkway, even a fringe of clear raindrops clinging to the underside of the bar atop the gleaming gate. With the windows open in warm weather, he could smell the damp earth.

Here Arthur wrote stories of mystery, adventure, and the supernatural, and rolled them up and inserted them into mailing tubes for the postman. Having once thought of these unsolicited writing efforts as returning quickly and reliably like carrier pigeons from the magazines and newspapers to which he sent them, he gradually met greater success. He also wrote articles about his hobby, photography, ranging from colorful accounts of steaming along the coast of Africa to technical advice on how to prepare lenses.

In the style of the time, however, most of his stories were printed anonymously, resulting in a growing reputation with editors while he remained unknown to the public. Finally he decided that he must write a novel. Only his name on the spine of a long work of fiction, he told himself, could begin to build readers' awareness of him. He had written one awkward little novel whose only copy had been lost in the mail, but he was determined to try again.

He was drawn to detective stories out of his own interest. He had long admired the logical mind of Edgar Allan Poe's unofficial detective C. Auguste Dupin. He had enjoyed the adventures of Émile Gaboriau's eagle-eyed police detective Monsieur Lecoq. The bold man-hunters of penny dreadfuls, Charles Dickens's Inspector Bucket from *Bleak House*, Wilkie Collins's Sergeant Cuff from *The Moonstone*, Anna Katharine Green's more recent New York policeman Ebenezer Gryce from *The Leavenworth Case*—many such detectives already cavorted in Arthur's imagination when he decided to create his own.

He had no experience with real-life detective work. As he turned over plot ideas in his mind, however, he recalled his years as a student at medical school in Edinburgh—his birthplace, to which he returned in 1876 at the age of seventeen, after boarding schools in England and Austria. And especially he thought about his favorite professor, a short, hawk-nosed wizard named Joseph Bell. A surgeon and a brilliant diagnostician, he had impressed his young student in many ways. Arthur had always admired Bell's oracular ability not only to diagnose illness but also to perceive details about patients' personal lives. Arthur thought of the professor's quirky habits—his intense gaze darting at fingertips and cuffs to read a patient's history of work and play, his attention to subtleties of accent, to mud splashes on boots. He recalled Bell's commanding way of speaking with such confidence that he won over every person who argued with him.

As a detective, Arthur thought, Joseph Bell would have approached crime-solving with systematic, modern knowledge. He would need practical experience in chemistry and forensic medicine, as well as encyclopedic knowledge of the history of crime. He must attend to the large implications of small details. Such a character would be a new development in crime fiction—a scientific detective.

In the late winter and early spring of 1886, at his window above Elm Grove, in his small office away from the scurry of marriage and medicine, among books and piles of papers, Arthur wrote page after page, sending his memory back almost a decade into the past.

Part 1

Dr. Bell and Mr. Doyle

The student must be taught first to observe carefully. To interest him in this kind of work we teachers find it useful to show the student how much a trained use of the observation can discover in ordinary matters such as the previous history, nationality, and occupation of a patient. . . . Physiognomy helps you to nationality, accent to district, and, to an educated ear, almost to county. Nearly every handicraft writes its sign-manual upon the hands. The scars of the miner differ from those of the quarryman. The carpenter's callosities are not those of the mason.

—JOSEPH BELL, M.D.

CHAPTER 1

A Super-Man

So now behold me, a tall strongly-framed but half-formed young man, fairly entered upon my five years' course of medical study.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

Arthur Doyle led the patient into a crowded gaslit amphitheater, through a cluster of medical students surrounding Dr. Joseph Bell's chair, and left him standing before the professor. The man's attitude was respectful but not servile. He did not remove his hat. In a Scottish accent, he explained that he had come to Edinburgh Royal Infirmary seeking treatment for the early stages of elephantiasis.

As usual with patients, at first Dr. Bell showed no expression, in his reserved way that seemed to young Arthur how a Red Indian in North America might behave. From childhood Arthur had enjoyed tales of the American frontier, and such imagery leapt easily to mind. Bell pressed his fingertips together as he leaned back in his chair, looked the patient over, and remarked for the benefit of his students, "Well, my man, you've served in the army."

"Aye, sir."

"Not long discharged?"

"No, sir."

"A Highland regiment?" Although he spoke with the crisp accent called "educated Edinburgh," Bell's high-pitched voice did not match the tanned, muscular body that made him look younger than his forty years.

"Aye, sir."

"A non-com officer?"

"Aye, sir."

Then came what seemed a far-fetched guess: "Stationed at Barbados?"

“Aye, sir.”

After the patient departed, Bell explained his inferences—that the man did not remove his hat because he had been in the military, that he had not been long out of service or he would have regained civilian habits, that his air of authority indicated he had been a noncommissioned officer rather than a common soldier. And obviously he was a Scot. “As to Barbados,” he added, “his complaint is elephantiasis, which is West Indian and not British.” The patient might have contracted the disease in other parts of the British Empire—India or Afghanistan as well as the West Indies—but apparently Bell’s deduction was correct.

Bell had received no prior information about the man other than Arthur’s note of his illness. Although he was an excellent surgeon and clinical teacher, as well as personal physician to Queen Victoria whenever she visited Scotland, Bell was most renowned for his diagnostic skills. He tended to begin an interview by deducing personal details about the patient’s illness, profession, and life by flicking his gray-eyed gaze—half-critical and half-sardonic, Arthur thought—from hat to elbows to boots. He maintained that an observant man ought to learn a great deal before the patient spoke. Regarding female patients, he went so far as to claim that doctors ought to foresee which part of her body a woman was about to discuss by her posture and how she held her hands.

When he explained his reasoning, Bell was lecturing, not inviting discussion. Few professors and students mingled at Edinburgh University in the late 1870s; sometimes no words were exchanged with individual students. Many sat or stood before the students and delivered lectures, the salient points of which were to be recorded in notes scribbled by the array of silent young men in their dark coats and ties—some mustached or bearded, but many youthfully clean-shaven like Arthur. Arthur would pay his four guineas for anatomy lectures, for example, and would be expected thereafter to diligently attend class. However, Bell was more personable, more interested in his students, than most professors. He was known as an unusually kind figure, especially to women and children, as well as to students as long as they were prepared for class.

After teaching systematic and operative surgery for years, Bell was appointed senior surgeon to the infirmary in 1878. He was among the “extra-academical instructors,” professors not directly employed by

Edinburgh University whose classes were recognized as available for credit toward a degree. Bell's own mentor, the legendary James Syme, had led a campaign to recognize extramural instruction, which had finally been authorized in 1855, while Bell was a student. Under this program, which had long been flourishing by the time Arthur enrolled in 1876, students could study with surgeons and others at the internationally renowned infirmary, as well as with other small groups of medical professionals headquartered around Surgeons Square—Park Place School, Surgeons' Hall, Minto House School, and others. They could attend classes or other instruction at the Royal Public Dispensary, the Edinburgh Eye Infirmary, the Royal Maternity Hospital, the Sick Children's Hospital, and elsewhere in the city. They could also study for credit in Leipzig or Paris or other recognized medical universities.

Tired-looking young men in black coats or tweed, laden with books and notebooks, poured from the gates to the hospital, tapping their walking sticks against the stones and at times stepping aside to avoid a carriage clattering down the cobblestones. Among the many wards in the grand three-winged, U-shaped Royal Infirmary building, two housed patients whose ailments were considered instructive to the students who thronged the wide central staircase, often dodging pairs of nurses carrying a patient between them in a sedan chair. I WAS NAKED AND YE CLOTHED ME, read one of the signs between Ionic columns out front, and the other I WAS SICK AND YE VISITED ME. The charity infirmary was the culmination of a century and a half of donation and subscription—and where money was short, glassmakers had glazed windows without charge and joiners had donated sashes. Completed in 1741, the infirmary was proving inadequate to succor the hordes of suffering poor, and additional buildings were rising.

For the first time in his life, Arthur felt engaged by a course and a teacher. Eager to help his mother through financial straits—at least to keep her from having to contribute to his college costs—he was trying to cram each year's classes into a half year so that he might spend the rest of the year assisting a doctor, getting his expenses covered and gaining experience. Eager to excel and curious about almost everything, he scrawled countless notes. At times it seemed to Dr. Bell that Arthur wanted to transcribe every word he said. Often, after a patient left, the student asked the professor to repeat details so that he might get them correct.

Joe Bell—as students and friends affectionately called him—was Arthur’s favorite professor. Rather short, with angular shoulders, an aquiline nose, and a weathered, ruddy face, he was an easily recognized sight around campus and town. Even at a distance, he was known by his twitchy, uneven walk—a brisk stride conquering a limp.

Working as clerk for the famed surgeon and teacher presented quite an opportunity for an ambitious student. Tall, broad-shouldered Arthur was quick-witted, forthright, and diligent; in his late teens, he was beginning to outgrow the rebellious temper of his early years. His eyes, with their unusual two tones of blue in the iris, were as busy as his professor’s.

Arthur had admired Bell’s theatrical diagnostic routine since before beginning work in the outpatient ward. Every six months, each surgeon appointed several dressers (assistants) to help him handle the traffic. Bell chose Arthur, along with a few other trusted dressers, from among many young men. Arthur did not think of himself as an outstanding student; he had earned grades of Satisfactory in all classes except for an S-minus in clinical surgery. But Bell came to consider him one of the most promising men who had studied under him—a youngster fascinated by all aspects of diagnosis and attentive to the large implications of small details. Surgical outpatients might walk in with any sort of complaint: wounds or chronic pain, ailments ranging from respiratory to gynecological. Bell demanded that students be prepared for whatever misfortune might appear. The new infirmary was completed in 1879, and during the next year fifteen thousand patients passed through its outpatient clinic.

Arthur and other efficient clerks interviewed patients in a side room and herded them quickly in and out of Bell’s examination. He sorted as many as seventy or eighty per day, noted details about their complaint or injury, and then brought them in one by one for a consultation—during which he often thought Bell learned more with a glance than had Arthur with his queries. When Arthur began working as clerk, Bell warned him that outpatient interviews required familiarity with the uniquely Scottish slang employed by uneducated locals. Although his parents were Irish, Arthur had been born in Edinburgh—on Picardy Place, in a three-story house of modest but handsome flats near the Gothic Revival parapets of St. Paul’s and St. George’s Episcopal Church. He assured Bell that he was fluent in the local vernacular. Inevitably, one of the first patients Arthur asked about his

ailment proved incomprehensible: he complained of a bealin' in his oxter. Bell was amused to have to explain to Arthur that the location of the pain was the armpit and the problem was an abscess.

"From close observation and deduction, gentlemen," Bell would declaim confidently, "you can make a correct diagnosis of any and every case." He was proud of his reputation as an intelligent observer. "However," he would add, "never neglect to ratify your deductions, to substantiate your diagnosis with the stethoscope—and by other recognized and everyday methods of diagnosis."

Bell would look over a patient and remark casually, "Cobbler, I see." Then came the explanation to students, the leap from a detail that not one of the young men had observed: a worn place on the inside of the knee of a patient's trousers. It was where a cobbler rested his lapstone, across which stretched the leather that was to be hammered into greater strength.

He pointed out to students other clues of profession that he insisted they ought to observe at a glance. Once he immediately identified a patient as either a slater or a cork-cutter: "If you will only use your eyes a moment you will be able to define a slight hardening—a regular callus, gentlemen—on one side of his forefinger, and a thickening on the outside of his thumb—a sure sign that he follows the one occupation or the other."

Once Bell's clerk brought in a mother and child. The doctor exchanged greetings with her and asked casually, "What sort o' crossing did ye have from Burntisland?"—a town in Fife, on the Firth.

"It was good," she answered.

"And had ye a good walk up Inverleith Row?"

"Yes."

"And what did ye do with the other wain?"

"I left him with my sister in Leith."

"And would ye still be working at the linoleum factory?"

"Yes, I am."

To students Bell explained his mutually supporting surmises: that the woman had a Fife accent, that Burntisland was the closest town in Fife, and that the fingers of the woman's right hand bore a dermatitis peculiar to workers in the Burntisland linoleum factory. "You notice the red clay on the edges of the soles of her shoes," he added pointedly, "and the only such clay within twenty miles of Edinburgh is the Botanical Gardens. Inverleith

Row borders the gardens and is her nearest way here from Leith.” And although she was carrying a coat with her, it was obviously too large for the boy accompanying her, so he must have an older sibling.

“Quite easy, gentlemen,” remarked Bell on another occasion, “if you will only observe and put two and two together.”

One of Arthur’s predecessors as Bell’s assistant, a student named A. L. Curor, had idolized Bell as Arthur did, and later called him “a super-man.” Bell’s family agreed with such students. When he traveled by train with his family, he entertained his children by observing details about their fellow passengers and, once the strangers had departed, by deducing their private lives from such clues. He would tell his children the occupations and habits of the strangers with whom he had exchanged nary a word, as well as their likely destination. Later his daughter remembered, “We thought him a magician.”

CHAPTER 2

Your Powers of Deduction

It is no wonder that after the study of such a character, I used and amplified his methods when in later life I tried to build up a scientific detective who solved cases on his own merits and not through the folly of the criminal.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

The kind of diagnostic clairvoyance that so impressed Arthur was not limited to Joseph Bell. He was a member of a generation of observant, insightful European physicians who—with few diagnostic tools and tests available beyond a talent for quick observation—were in demand and lauded. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, medical professionals began to emphasize careful observation of patients and to reject traditional non-medical notions of the genesis of disease. Seldom since the Hippocratics of the fifth century B.C.E., who sought to discover the mechanistic processes by which disease invades a body—rather than to divine which deity or spirit to blame for the attack—had medicine focused more on careful observation as the key to diagnosis and treatment.

The Austrian physician and dermatologist Ferdinand von Hebra, founder in the 1840s of the renowned Vienna School of Dermatology, demonstrated similar perception, especially in observing bodily traces of profession and personal history. To diagnostics he brought experience in postmortem pathology and extensive work on scabies and eczema. Hebra's mentor, the Bohemian clinician and pathologist Joseph Škoda—the first professor to lecture in German rather than Latin at the University of Vienna—guided Hebra into this formerly neglected and even disdained specialty. He thought the young man's aptitude for diagnostic observation and extrapolation, as well as his talent for lively fact-based lecturing, could contribute greatly.

Often Hebra asked not a single question before stating a patient's ailment, age, weight, region of birth, and recent activities. He advised students, when examining a skin eruption, to look for scratch marks rather than to merely ask the patient if the eruption itched. A callus on the ball of a thumb would tell Hebra that the patient was a hatter. Velvety skin and a pink nose signaled a drinker of brandy or beer. In grasping a patient's hands he would notice a pinprick-scarred forefinger and tell his students, "This man is a tailor."

Like Joseph Bell, Hebra was considered an entertaining professor as well as a knowledgeable one. One student not studying medicine remarked that he didn't "care a rap about dermatology" but that he found Hebra's lectures more entertaining than a show at Vienna's famed Theater an der Wien.

Once a patient limped in and sat down to unwind a bandage he had tied around his leg. Hebra announced to his students, "This man is a Croat, fifty-five years of age, has pulmonary tuberculosis—and is a tailor by occupation."

Students who recalled their professor's previous recognition of a tailor from finger scars knew that he had not yet touched this man's hands. They were skeptical this time.

"Wouldn't you know he was a tailor?" Hebra demanded. "Look at that little strip of drab cloth he has tied around the bandage. Tailors use that stuff for vest linings."

In an era in which tradesmen and laborers tended to wear predictable, almost uniform-like clothing and to work repetitively with their hands, such assessments required educated scrutiny but not second sight. In the early 1750s, in *The Rambler*, Samuel Johnson—one of Arthur Doyle's favorite historical figures, thanks to James Boswell's quirky biography—had employed this well-known characteristic in a beautiful analogy:

As any action or posture, long continued, will distort and disfigure the limbs; so the mind likewise is crippled and contracted by perpetual application to the same set of ideas. It is easy to guess the trade of an artizan by his knees, his fingers, or his shoulders: and there are few among men of the more liberal professions, whose minds do not carry the brand of their calling, or whose conversation does not quickly discover to what class of the community they belong.

Johnson's observational skills were not entirely literary. He personally investigated the notorious Cock Lane Ghost, helping expose what Boswell called "the imposture" behind the scenes. A century after Johnson's remarks, and a decade after Arthur's birth, a Frenchman published an influential survey of the diagnostic value of stigma (visible characteristics of disease) resulting from occupational labor. Auguste Ambroise Tardieu, a French specialist in forensic medicine and toxicology, explored the topic at length in *A Study of the Physical and Chemical Changes Caused in Certain Parts of the Body by the Practice of Diverse Professions, to Assist in Medical-Legal Research of Identity*. Tardieu described other such perceptive diagnosticians. They included the Frenchman Jean-Nicolas Corvisart, a cardiology pioneer and personal physician to Napoleon; Corvisart's pupil Guillaume Dupuytren, an openly freethinking surgeon and anatomist so renowned that he inspired Honoré de Balzac's story "The Atheist's Mass" and was mentioned in Gustave Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*; and Armand Trousseau, a French internist who defined what came to be called Trousseau's early signs of malignancy from cancer—and who later diagnosed them in himself and soon died.

In medical school, Arthur attended the Friday clinics held in the infirmary's surgical amphitheater, in the attic of the main building. Semicircular tiers of benches surrounded the polished deal operating table, below which stood a tin tub filled with sawdust that could absorb blood. Not surprisingly, uncertain students cowered before Dr. Bell's authority and confident presence. They had witnessed his absolute control over both students and patients. When a prospective patient made it clear that he was unwilling to fraternize with common students while awaiting a chance to consult Bell, the doctor simply threw him out of the clinic.

Once, after a patient limped in and stood before the gathered students without taking off his coat, Bell turned to a nervous young man in the lecture audience and demanded, "What is the matter with this man, sir? Come down, sir, and look at him!"

The student walked hesitantly down to the patient.

"No!" squawked Bell. "You mustn't touch him!" He commanded the cowering student firmly, "Use your eyes, sir! Use your ears. Use your brain,

your bump of perception,” he added, invoking the already debunked “science” of phrenology. He returned to his usual theme: “And use your powers of deduction.”

The young man warily looked the patient over and finally volunteered a diagnosis: “Hip-joint disease, sir!”

Bell leaned back in his chair and steepled his long, delicate fingers under his chin. “Hip-nothing!” he snorted derisively. “The man’s limp is not from his hip, but from his foot—or rather from his feet. Were you to observe closely,” he continued, “you would see that there are slits, cut by a knife, in those parts of the shoes where the pressure of the shoe is greatest against the foot. The man is a sufferer from corns, gentlemen, and has no hip trouble at all.”

Then Bell went on to reveal that his first diagnosis was trivial compared to what else he had observed: “He has not come here to be treated for corns, gentlemen. We are not chiropodists. His trouble is of a much more serious nature. This is a case of chronic alcoholism, gentlemen.” The patient must have been mortified as Bell enumerated details of his appearance: “The rubicund nose, the puffed, bloated face, the bloodshot eyes, the tremulous hands and twitching face muscles, with the quick, pulsating temporal arteries—all show this.”

Slyly Bell reiterated his point about confirmation: “These deductions, gentlemen, must, however, be confirmed by absolute and concrete evidence.” He pointed out that poking from the patient’s right-hand coat pocket was the top of a whiskey bottle.

On another occasion, Bell read—and revealed to the class—the life of a student instead of a patient. A young man had failed dismally in his efforts to diagnose a patient’s illness under the fierce eye of Dr. Bell, who then snapped, “Get out your notebook, man, and see whether you can’t express your thoughts that way.”

He turned to the amused class and invoked the biblical Isaiah and Matthew: “The gentleman has ears and he hears not, eyes and he sees not!”

Bell turned back to the student, who, in nervously taking a notebook from his pocket, had dislodged a letter. He tried and failed to hide it.

“You come from Wales, don’t you, sir?” demanded Bell, a Scot himself, Edinburgh born and raised. “I thought so! A man who says *silling* for *shilling*, who rattles his *R*’s, who has a peculiar, rough, broad accent like

yours, sir, is not a Scotchman. You are not an Irishman; you are not an Englishman. Your speech smacks of Wales.”

He turned away from the squirming and blushing young man for a moment and addressed the other students, explaining that he had further confirmation of his deductions beyond the man’s enunciation. He had observed that the dropped letter was addressed in a feminine hand to “Mr. Edward Jones—that is his name, gentlemen”—and postmarked the day before at Cardiff. “Cardiff is in South Wales, and the name Jones proclaims our friend a Welshman.”

To Arthur and his fellow students, Joe Bell seemed irresistibly colorful. He would roll up to a university entrance in his low barouche, with its double facing seats—behind them a half roof folded like a bellows, in front an elevated driver in livery calling to Bell’s paired bay horses, whom his children had named Major and Minor. Old-timers at the hospital realized that, whether deliberately or unwittingly, Bell mimicked his own revered mentor, Professor James Syme, an innovative surgeon and renowned professor who had died in 1870. Bell stopped, however, before copying his teacher’s yellow carriage with its gaudily painted C-spring suspension.

He also credited Syme with diagnostic acumen greater than his own, although few of Syme’s other students later emphasized this trait. Bell liked to quote Syme’s motto: “Try to learn the features of disease or injury as precisely as you know the features, the gait, the tricks of manner of your most intimate friend.”

After graduating from Edinburgh University in 1859, the year of Arthur’s birth, Bell had served as house physician under Syme at the Royal Infirmary. Syme had been a legend at the university, an exemplar of the genius and commitment of which the medical school liked to boast. Interested in chemistry from childhood, he discovered in his late teens that coal tar, the oily sludge resulting from coal processing, could be used to produce a solution of caoutchouc or india-rubber—and thus could be employed to waterproof textiles such as silk. Glasgow chemist Charles Macintosh patented a variation of this method and went on to produce a new kind of waterproof coat soon named after him.

Bell's positions at the university had included Hospital Surgeon, Demonstrator of Anatomy, and Surgeon to the Eye Infirmary, but he was acclaimed beyond Edinburgh. For several years, he had been editor of the respected *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, which was known throughout Europe and America. He was known for his influential textbook, *A Manual of the Operations of Surgery for the Use of Senior Students, House Surgeons, and Junior Practitioners* ("My aim has been to describe as simply as possible those operations which are most likely to prove useful, and especially those which, from their nature, admit of being practised on the dead body"). He came from a long line of Edinburgh physicians, including his grandfather Charles Bell, who described what came to be called Bell's palsy. The Bell generations of sons alternated the names Benjamin and Joseph.

Nor had it taken Bell long to build this impressive résumé. At the age of twenty-one, he read a brilliant paper on epithelial cancer to the usually skeptical and contentious Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh, who responded with a standing ovation. William Turner, who had been a distinguished professor of anatomy since 1865, said of Bell's two-year tenure as Demonstrator of Anatomy early in his career, "Whilst discharging his duties he acted as my junior, and acquired a well-deserved popularity amongst the students from his powers of observation, his clearness of exposition, his capacity for taking trouble to help them in their difficulties, and by his words of encouragement."

Arthur too considered Bell kind and admirably conscientious with students and patients. The professor was sincere in his claim that he asked nothing of students that he had not already accomplished himself, and he taught compassion as much as diagnosis. Bell felt that commitment to his fellow human beings was a religious duty. A passionate naturalist, hunter, and gardener, he traced both his love of the world and his yearning to help humanity to his faith. Upon his marriage in 1865, his mother told his wife that he had been "dedicated to God in his cradle," and the newlyweds committed a tithe of their income to the church. His wife died in 1874. When Arthur met him two years later, Bell was still a silently grieving man with two young daughters and a son to raise. Despite his many commitments, he seldom missed a Sunday in church with them.

He had long been demonstrating his faith through deeds; both his high-pitched voice and his halting gait resulted from his own courage. In the early 1860s, as an overworked medical assistant, young Joe Bell had tended agonized and dying patients during numerous epidemics. The serpentine Water of Leith, which lazily bisected Edinburgh, might as well have been a sewer for all the filth it carried. During the preceding few years, Edinburghers had been brought down by cholera, typhoid, and smallpox, and early 1864 saw the exhausted city reeling from an even more devastating outbreak of diphtheria. Fate spared Arthur, who was not yet five years old.

Diphtheria was named from the Greek word for leather. Its effect was sadly memorialized in the nickname for Spain's epidemic year of 1613—El Año de los Garrotillos, “The Year of Strangulations.” The disease produced gray mucus and a leathery membrane in the throat, resulting in choking as well as sore throat, swollen and inflamed tonsils, fever, and usually inflammation of the heart.

The University of Edinburgh's own Francis Home had described the appearance of diphtheria's choking gray membrane as “blankets of a bed that has been laid in.” Home promoted the local slang word *croup*, an onomatopoeic term for a noise in the throat, into the official name of the respiratory illness that caused the noise—although diphtheria was more severe. A Berwickshire-born surgeon who served as the school's inaugural professor of *materia medica* (the origins, composition, and attributes of medicines), performed the world's first vaccination against measles, and even served as surgeon of dragoons in Flanders, Home was one of the titans to whom students such as Joe Bell feared they might never measure up.

The effects of the disease had been known for centuries, although only recently had physicians recognized that what they were now calling diphtheria was identical to illnesses known in the mid-eighteenth century as epidemic croup, malignant sore throat, and the terrifying name *morbus strangulatorius*. Speculations about its cause ranged from gases produced by decaying animals to cold weather, from a marshy atmosphere to the inevitable supernatural explanations. Fortunately, magic was no longer proposed as etiology. Moreover, the discovery in 1876, during Arthur's freshman year in medical school, of a microscopic bacterium that causes

anthrax suggested that the cause of diphtheria might soon be found, after so many centuries of suffering.

In 1864, miserable with empathy for children choking from diphtheria's mucus, Bell yearned to devise a method for removing it. No one had yet been able to invent an implement that could efficiently suction out the mucus. Finally, by sucking on a pipette, he drew the infected mucus from the throat of a child on whom he was operating—an act that pulled some of it into his own mouth.

Afterward he suffered from the disease himself for many months. During his convalescence, when the pain was declining after three miserable weeks of a fiercely infected throat, friends observed for the first time a nasal twang in Bell's voice. He could feel a flapping membrane in his throat that seemed to disrupt enunciation. After three more weeks, he was almost mute and experiencing an alarming double vision. Although the pain in his throat lessened, swallowing became more difficult. Often part of a swallow of liquid came back into his nasal passages, requiring a pinch or two of snuff to clear his head. One leg almost ceased to function and he began to experience chest pain.

Prescribed rural bed rest by no less an authority than Syme himself, Bell retired to the family estate in Glendoick, north of Edinburgh on the river Tay. After losing the ability to walk alone even with a cane, Bell finally surrendered to the need for someone to hold one of his arms—and then for two people, one on each side. Eventually he was able to swallow again. Gradually speech returned, but his voice remained high-pitched. It was a full four months after the onset of his own diphtheria before Bell felt he could walk with most of his old speed, and he never lost the limp. By January 1865, Bell was presenting a talk to the Medico-Chirurgical Society, which was later published in the *Journal* as an admirably calm and detailed third-person account of what readers gradually realized was an autobiographical drama.

Having long since triumphed over dangerous illness, Joseph Bell made it clear that compassion was as crucial to medicine as a clever diagnosis. Demonstrating that clues invisible to the untrained eye could quickly inform a keen observer of another person's character and history, he showed Arthur and other students that his diagnoses were not mere theater. He taught that experience must be buttressed by tireless study of the

professional journals. Reinforcing these lessons through his indulgence of Arthur's questions about methods, Bell served as a model of both scientific intelligence and moral commitment. Arthur never forgot his mentor's demonstrations or their implications.

CHAPTER 3

Art in the Blood

“Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms.”

—SHERLOCK HOLMES, IN ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, “THE GREEK
INTERPRETER”

In a narrow cul-de-sac in Edinburgh lurked one of Arthur’s most vivid memories of his childhood. Growing up poor, amid other rowdy boys sporting in the closes and wynds of the city, he had had to learn to fight. Always a feud simmered between boys on opposite sides of the street. Having battled his way to the top of his own group, as temporary king of the poor lads from the flats, one day he went up against the top rich boy from the villas across the way. They tackled each other in a villa garden. Evenly matched, they kept at it without declaring a winner until both were bloody and exhausted.

“Oh, Arthur,” his mother exclaimed when she saw him, “what a dreadful eye you have got!”

“You just go across and look at Eddie Tulloch’s eye!” replied her unrepentant son.

On another occasion, a bootmaker’s lad on an errand, carrying a green baize bag, encroached upon the territory of Arthur and his chums. Arthur stepped up to fight him, and the boy responded by swinging the boot-filled bag against his head, knocking him almost unconscious.

He did not avoid fights on the street, but at home Arthur sought a quiet corner and a book. Born to an artistic legacy, he had been drawn to literature from his earliest memory, and from a young age he encountered writers. His father’s side career as a painter and illustrator, as well as the

greater reputation of other family members, had introduced Arthur and his siblings to notable writers and artists, some of whom came to call. The Edinburgh Doyles were not well off, unlike some other branches of the family, and at times Arthur squirmed with embarrassment when wealthier relatives and other strangers visited his parents' modest flat. One such visitor was a tall, smiling, prematurely white-haired man of about fifty. He seemed ancient to Arthur, who could not have been more than four, as he dandled the little boy on his knee. Later, as a young man, Arthur proudly recalled that he had once sat on the lap of William Makepeace Thackeray, author of *Pendennis* and *Vanity Fair*.

His father, Charles Altamont Doyle, was the brother of English-born Richard "Dickie" Doyle, a well-known *Punch* illustrator and creator of the magazine's famous logo of Punch and Judy. Charles and Dickie were the sons of Irish caricaturist and lithographer John Doyle, famous under the pen name "H.B." for his sedate political caricature that eschewed the kind of grotesque personification employed by predecessors such as Thomas Rowlandson.

Charles was himself a talented artist, but he had not achieved the skill or renown of his relatives. Elegant, bearded, witty, but a lover of drink, Charles was a hopelessly impractical man, creative but undisciplined—and haunted by personal demons. He had worked for decades as an architectural draftsman, one of several assistants to the prominent architect Robert Matheson. As Scotland's Clerk of Works, Matheson was known for his Italian Renaissance public buildings, including the New Register House in New Town, which he designed to complement Robert Adam's original eighteenth-century Register House.

Charles's most important work in Matheson's office was helping to design a fountain for Holyrood Palace. This was a commission from the young Queen Victoria, who wanted Holyrood to have a forecourt fountain reminiscent of one erected by James V in the early sixteenth century at Linlithgow Palace in West Lothian. When completed, the Holyrood fountain rose almost twenty feet above the cobblestones, sporting a rearing unicorn and a round-hatted piper above a ring of traditional lion heads pouring water into the surrounding moat. On the master sketch of this artifact, which Matheson described as "more in the class of a work of Art than ordinary Building work," Charles's signature appeared alongside

Matheson's—an unusual degree of recognition under Matheson, who took most such credit for himself. Charles also submitted a design for one of the grand windows of the Glasgow Cathedral, but his name did not appear on the list of contributing artists.

Over the years, Charles Doyle had illustrated numerous books. In 1877 he still possessed enough skill to draw sixty fanciful, elegant pictures for *Our Trip to Blunderland* by “Jean Jambon,” a pseudonym comically Gallicizing the first name and other initials of John Hay Athole Macdonald, Solicitor General for Scotland. Macdonald had amused himself during his off-hours by writing a nonsensical, pun-filled children's book so taken with Lewis Carroll's *Alice* tales that it cited them in the first paragraph.

But Charles's sporadic career was in decline. His earlier illustrations for London publishers were little known in Scotland. Rather than sell his infrequent watercolors and drawings, he sank to trading them for spirits, and thus one Edinburgh pub accumulated a private gallery of Doyle artwork. By the time that Arthur was three years old, his father was sometimes so drunk that he could neither recall his own name nor rise from a crawl on the floor. He was even caught drinking furniture varnish.

Charles might sneak any small item out of the house to exchange it for drink. His humiliated wife would find herself facing irate tradespeople who presented bills for goods she had never seen—only to learn that Charles had bought them on credit and sold them for secret cash. At times he resorted to burgling his children's coin boxes. To escape confinement in his room during one of his drinking bouts, Charles had been known to strip off his underwear, tie it together with bed linen, and risk his life and dignity using this cloth rope to climb out a window and scramble down a wall of the house.

Despite her frustrations and disappointments, Mary Doyle seems to have remained loyal toward and affectionate with Charles. “To know him was to love him,” she said later. Arthur seems to have tightly closeted his father's secrets and discussed them little, if at all, with friends, alluding to them only obliquely in surviving letters to his mother.

For a quarter of a century, Charles labored in the Office of Works, a position he had held since the age of nineteen. At no point could his annual salary plus artwork fees have surpassed £300—too modest an income to house, feed, and educate a large family. As long ago as the early 1860s,

barely thirty years old, Charles had been drinking so heavily and missing so many days that the Office of Works placed him on half pay for most of a year. His considerable talent and his amiable disposition endeared him to his superiors, Robert Matheson and Andrew Kerr, and the pair tolerated his flaws until they became unbearable. In June 1876, a few months before Arthur's return to Edinburgh, the office retired Charles during restructuring. He was only forty-four. The retirement report provided a sanitized public version: Charles Doyle had "discharged his duties with diligence and fidelity," and therefore he was granted an annual pension of £150.

Either Mary kept significant details from Arthur or he persisted in denying them. When she told him the retirement news in a letter, he asked innocently if his father had been unwell or if there might be some other reason for his retirement.

Thus most of the responsibility for the welfare of the children fell upon Arthur's lively, resourceful, gray-eyed mother, whom he adored and idealized. It was she who provided emotional stability and introduced him to a love of learning. She told Arthur about Gustave Flaubert and Théophile Gautier, about the Goncourt brothers. Mary was gently chaffed in the family for reading even while performing household chores. He always remembered her stirring porridge with a spurtle—a stick shaped to prevent lumps in the oats—in one hand while the other held the *Revue des Deux Mondes* close to her nearsighted eyes. In the *Revue*, with its familiar brownish-yellow cover, Arthur first glimpsed the mostly fictional Middle Ages of chivalry and derring-do that captured his imagination.

Such devotion to literature helped inspire her son. Arthur's skill with words improved rapidly when he read to his mother while she knitted. He first learned to read French by such independent means as laboriously spelling out and pronouncing the captions of illustrations in a volume of Jules Verne. Verne's first popular novel was *Cinq semaines en ballon* (*Five Weeks in a Balloon*), serialized in a magazine and then published in book form in 1863, when Arthur was four. During Arthur's early childhood, many of Verne's most popular works were published, including *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, and

From the Earth to the Moon. They whetted Arthur's appetite for adventure and helped hone his fluency in French.

Mary also developed an appreciation for the U.S. physician and essayist Oliver Wendell Holmes, author of such popular works as *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*, published the year before Arthur's birth. His vivid anecdotes about the triumph of modern medicine helped shape Arthur's views. The surname Holmes was spoken respectfully in the Doyle household.

Mary had an entire flock to worry over. When Arthur returned to Edinburgh from boarding school at the age of seventeen, his older sister, Anne Mary Frances Conan, called Tottie and later Annette, was barely twenty but already working as a governess in Portugal. She sent home every penny she could spare. Constance Amelia Monica (Conny) was twelve, and Caroline Mary Burton (Lottie) was ten. Arthur's only brother, John Frances Innes Hay, nicknamed Duff, was three and a half. Jane Adelaide Rose, called Ida, was only one, and during Arthur's first year of medical school his mother gave birth to another girl, Bryan Mary Julia Josephine, soon nicknamed Dodo.

The Doyle family's financial straits, especially following Charles's loss of his Office of Works position, had finally led Mary to resort to running a boardinghouse. Perhaps this development felt like closing a circle for Arthur's parents. Around 1850, when Charles Doyle first came to Edinburgh, he had found lodging with a widow, whose daughter, the alluring Mary, soon caught his eye. But Arthur was ashamed of this situation, which he regarded as a fall from grace, and as the eldest son, he felt the burden of his siblings' and parents' expectation that he would rescue the family.

CHAPTER 4

Seven Weary Steps

Stonyhurst, that grand mediaeval dwelling house . . . Year by year, then, I see myself climbing those seven weary steps and passing through as many stages of my boyhood.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

Despite the hard work in his college medical studies with Joe Bell, Arthur was much happier than he had been during his early childhood at Newington Academy in Edinburgh—his last extended experience of the city prior to eight years of boarding school. As a child he had walked only a couple of blocks, to Salisbury Place, for this first immersion in school, where the one-eyed, pockmarked headmaster, Patrick Wilson, wielded his tawse—a leather thong with slits and tails—with sadistic glee.

Life was a little better during two years under gentler Father Francis Cassidy at Hodder Place down in Lancashire in northern England, but the other teachers were not so kind. And Hodder, where Arthur spent two long years bare of holidays except for six weeks each summer, was the preparatory school for nearby Stonyhurst. At the renowned Jesuit school, masters punished infractions with fierce blows across the hand from a boot-sole-size strip of india-rubber called a toley. Afterward, Arthur could not use his battered, throbbing hand even to turn a door handle and leave the room. The next morning, he would find it difficult even to grasp his portion of dry bread and watered milk in the incongruously elegant, marble-tiled dining room.

Proud, defiant Arthur yearned for respect and affection, but he refused to bow to bullying by supposed educators. He not only tried to bear punishment with a stoic lack of expression; he sought opportunities for mischief to prove that his spirit remained unbroken. Gradually, Arthur

realized that he was more often beaten than many of his classmates, but he seems to have assessed this ratio as proof of his independence. Again and again he needed to prove himself—to others and to himself.

Fellow students learned that Arthur was a born storyteller who could enliven a rainy half-holiday (Wednesday and Saturday afternoons) with tales of heroic derring-do. Rapt students sat or squatted on the floor, resting chin in hand, and gazed at Arthur perched atop a desk. Although sometimes he demanded his payment of tarts before he would begin, and even though he might stall in midscene until a snack of apples reignited his narrative, the students applauded his storytelling. Gradually, he began to yearn for a more prominent and lasting venue.

Although only one friendship remained after Stonyhurst days, with a student named Jimmy Ryan, Arthur got along well with most other students, such as classmate Patrick Sherlock, who was a distant relative of Arthur's Irish aunt Jane Doyle. Probably young Patrick reminded Arthur of William Sherlock, the controversial divine who wound up dean of St. Paul's Cathedral in London in the late 1600s; Arthur's favorite historian, Thomas Babington Macaulay, featured Sherlock prominently in his *History of England*. Arthur often ran across this surname. Resentfully immersed in theology at Stonyhurst, the increasingly freethinking young man also may have been familiar with the writings of William Sherlock's son. Thomas Sherlock's defense of Christian doctrine regarding miracles was said to have helped inspire the philosopher David Hume—one of Edinburgh's legendary sons, and a luminary in the Scottish Enlightenment—to write his determinedly rational "Of Miracles," a notorious chapter in his 1748 *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. And 1868, the year that Arthur turned nine, saw publication of *A Lost Name*, a novel by the Irish ghost story writer and Gothic novelist Sheridan Le Fanu, which featured a character named Carmel Sherlock.

Arthur also resented the endless drilling in Latin and Greek and mathematics. He disliked Homer in his native tongue and he disliked Euclid in any language. Yet, between Hodder and Stonyhurst, he plodded through the seven classes, one concentrated in each year: elements, figures, rudiments, grammar, syntax, poetry, and rhetoric. His weakest subject was chemistry—Stonyhurst was advanced enough to have recently constructed a

chemistry laboratory—but nonetheless Arthur wrote home threatening to frighten his siblings with chemical experiments.

At Stonyhurst Arthur discovered in himself a previously unrealized store of talent and imagination. In 1874, the year he turned fifteen, he watched other boys suffer loudly over an assignment to write poetry on the theme of Moses and the parting of the Red Sea. Arthur, in contrast, having loved verse as far back as he could remember, jumped into the task with glee: “Like pallid daisies in a grassy wood, / So round the sward the tents of Israel stood . . .”

The next year he edited Stonyhurst’s college magazine, wrote a lot of poetry, and astonished himself by passing the matriculation exam of the University of London, the usual ending of the Stonyhurst curriculum, with honors—and Arthur’s surprised friends carried him around a playground in celebration. His view of his own prospects was changing. He had begun to feel that he had potential.

Not all his masters were impressed, however. Arthur had too long balked at the restrictions of school. When he told one professor that he was considering becoming a civil engineer, the blunt reply was “Well, Doyle, you may be an engineer, but I don’t think you will ever be a civil one.”

Despite being surrounded by the grim Church of Scotland, the Irish Doyles—originally the Anglo-Norman name D’Oil—had remained Catholic. Arthur’s father was fervent, his mother sincere while compassionately rejecting the concept of eternal hellfire. Yet, when Stonyhurst offered to remit Arthur’s tuition fees if his parents committed him as a Jesuit, his mother refused. Arthur was grateful. As a child, of course, he had accepted his parents’ religion without question. But gradually the judgmental ferocity and narrow-mindedness of his professors, along with his reading of philosophical and scientific books and articles, helped steer Arthur away from Catholicism. When he heard a prominent priest proclaim that everyone outside the Church was damned for eternity, he found himself horrified and disgusted. Gradually he was turning away from organized religion’s claustrophobic and newly minted cosmos, from its many doctrines he considered irrational and unfair. He could admire some of the church’s hallowed traditions, its incense and music, its role in ethics and upholding orderly behavior. But he could not embrace its dogma.

There followed a year at another Jesuit school, Stella Matutina, near Feldkirch, in the beautiful Vorarlberg province of western Austria, amid the snow-capped Tyrolean Alps high above the Bodensee. A measure of kindness from masters at Feldkirch began to help tame Arthur's rebellion and anger. Here he read German until, as he told his mother jokingly, he stopped reading English books. True, when speaking quickly he might accidentally modify a neuter noun with a feminine adjective, but he progressed rapidly.

Students were required to walk three abreast during their semiweekly hikes, with every foreigner accompanied by two Germans to encourage learning the language; by the spring of 1876, Arthur found that he could make himself understood during a three-hour ambulatory chat. He claimed in a letter to his mother that he had read an eight-hundred-page German history of Europe. While stumbling often, he found himself fluent enough to perceive the occasional error in this tome—such as when the author split Admiral Hyde Parker into two admirals, one named Hyde and one named Parker.

In the school band, Arthur proved strong enough and strong-winded enough to play the bombardon, a bass tuba so large that his classmates once stuffed his pillow and sheets into its throat. Rejoicing in outdoor activity, as always, he hiked forty-two miles in the Alps with a heavy iron-tipped alpenstock on his shoulder. Back indoors, he founded and edited a handwritten school “newspaper” he titled *The Feldkirchian Gazette*, which he wrote in his own school notebooks in violet ink. Onto these ambitious pages he slapped the bold motto “Fear not, and put it in print,” but immediately he learned the consequences of such ambition. Thanks to his scrawled editorial protesting that the masters often read students' letters before distributing them, the school banned Arthur's first venture into periodicals after only two issues.

Arthur had always been not only a reader but also a writer. By the age of five, he was writing a thirty-six-word saga in large childish letters in his foolscap notebook—illustrated with marginal scrawls by the author—recounting a battle between a tiger and a man. It ended badly for the latter. A surviving fragment of this scrawled story indicates how well Arthur armed his characters: “each man carrying a knife gun pistle.” The family liked to quote Arthur's remark upon finding his protagonist vanquished so

quickly: “It is very easy to get people into scrapes, and very hard to get them out again.”

On the way home in August 1876, after glimpses of Strasbourg and Basel and elsewhere, Arthur stopped in Paris. He arrived with twopence in his pocket and immediately spent one of them on a reviving drink of licorice and water. Unable to afford a cab, he left his trunk at the train station and tramped the hot summer streets along the stinking Seine toward the home of his great-uncle and godfather, Michael Conan, from whom he had inherited a middle name and a love of learning. At the foot of the Champs-Élysées, he saw the Arc de Triomphe some distance away, oriented himself, and walked until he found his uncle’s flat on the Avenue de Wagram.

Although they had never met, Michael had encouraged Arthur for years. “I shall look to his development with great interest,” Michael had written to his sister before her precocious boy had even reached his fifth birthday. He advised her to teach Arthur multiplication, division, maps, and geography before sending him to school. “As to Arthur’s future development, that, apart from Nature’s endowments, will much depend upon the mother who cherishes him and at once secures his love and respect.” Following his eighth birthday, Michael had sent Arthur a children’s history of France—enlivened with color illustrations of queens and kings in their grand robes and crowns—and assured him that, with his mother’s fluency in the language, he would soon be reading the book’s text. It had sparked the boy’s imagination.

Michael Conan turned out to be a fiery, broad-shouldered Irish intellectual, a former editor of the *Art Journal*, who spent the sweltering summer days in his shirtsleeves. He and Arthur got along famously. Conan encouraged his obviously intelligent grandnephew to read the American short-story writer Edgar Allan Poe, who had died in 1849 at the age of forty. Apparently he didn’t know that Arthur had admired Poe since boyhood and had kept a copy of his *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* at Feldkirch. In fact, back home in Edinburgh in September, Arthur was taking breaks from pre-enrollment medical study with a tutor to read Poe aloud and terrify his younger siblings.

CHAPTER 5

Athens of the North

Travellers who have searched the whole world round have found no fairer view.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *THE FIRM OF GIRDLESTONE*

Arthur turned seventeen in the summer of 1876, about the time he returned to the picturesque city of his childhood. Edinburgh nested atop three hills in the narrow valley between the Pentlands to the south and the Firth of Forth two miles to the north and east. It was rich in adjectives for the winds that bedeviled it—*scowthering* and *blae*, *nirly* and *snell*. From some vantage points, a watcher gazing northeast across the Firth, toward where it opened into the German Ocean (as locals called the North Sea), could glimpse a beacon from the Gothic tower of a lighthouse five miles off on the Isle of May. Warning shipmasters since 1816, it had been updated twenty years later with a refractor lens that made its flame visible from afar.

Dawn mists rose from the valley until they dwindled to a plume above medieval Edinburgh Castle. Perched on a craggy basalt cliff, the castle rose several stories from the summit, which towered four hundred feet above the base. On the inland side rose a turret from whose crown of lancet windows archers had rained arrows upon besieging armies since the twelfth century.

The castle was so high that its time gun could be heard far in every direction. This civic reminder had been fired at one P.M. every day but Sundays since early 1861, before Arthur turned two, alerting Leith ship captains and New Town shop owners to set their clocks, while every man on Princes Street reached for a waistcoat pocket to check his watch. The sound carried so far from the castle that its instigator, Charles Piazzi Smyth, Scotland's Astronomer Royal, prepared a concentric map showing the

number of seconds it took the gun's boom to reach each distance, for even more accurate timekeeping.

Prior to the invention of modern cannon, this fortress had been considered almost impregnable—and because it controlled Edinburgh, and thus Scotland, it had weathered many a siege. The castle stood so high that shepherds in Fife to the north could turn from shearing to glimpse it like a mirage on the horizon. Mariners sailing in from the northeast could peer up at its battlements long before they reached the shore. It provided an unparalleled view of the region—northward to the jagged peaks of the Grampians, eastward across a thousand dirty rooftops toward the storied height of Arthur's Seat, southward to the Pentlands. A travel guide to Scotland published in 1859 boasted that the view from the castle combined “in one vast expanse the richest elements of the beautiful and the sublime.” The view of the city from the sea, the mountainous terrain, and Greek Revival architecture had earned Edinburgh the nickname “Athens of the North.”

The castle cast its royal shadow across a bustling market down in the city. The drum and bugle accompanying a changing of the guard could be heard above the clatter of carriage wheels, the taunts of street urchins, the rumble of passing trains. Dense with public houses and shops, bristling with turnpike stairs and crow-stepped gables, the Grassmarket had been a public site since the fifteenth century. In Arthur's time it was still renowned for its cattle and horse trading. The venerable White Hart Inn was there, and the Black Bull, with its marble relief columns framing the entrance, and above them the words SPIRIT J. WILKINSON MERCHANT. Next door stood the Carriers Warehouse, where one-horse wagons clustered out front, piled with goods covered in tightly stretched tarpaulins against the frequent rain. To proclaim that their wares had traveled from exotic climes, the Tobacco & Snuff Manufactory featured above its sign a bust of a turbaned man, perhaps formerly the figurehead on a ship's prow. Beneath it, wagons uncoupled from their horses projected handy rails on which loungers could lean to smoke and gossip.

The Grassmarket had once been home to Edinburgh's public executions, including most famously that of a fishwife named Maggie Dickinson. Hanged in 1724 for murdering her own baby, she woke during transportation of her body home. Her attendants were astonished to realize

that she had passed out rather than died. Judged to have served her sentence—and possibly to have been rescued by God—she was freed. Afterward, however, hanging sentences in Scotland were revised to read “until dead.”

With the town reduced to ashes more than once, only the castle itself, and Holyrood Palace at the other end of the slanting ridge now called the Royal Mile, had withstood the flames—to be plundered later by Cromwell’s army. By the late 1870s, as Arthur attended his classes, Holyrood’s crumbled abbey stood amid gasworks and breweries, as if its Gothic entrance fronted a stage set across which the red-uniformed guard paced mechanically back and forth.

Between the Castle and the University, in hilltop Greyfriars Kirkyard, orange-breasted robins and a clowder of plump cats wove among the chiseled names of Scottish history and the iron mortsafes that had protected graves from “resurrection men” such as William Burke and William Hare, who robbed graves and murdered the poor back in the 1820s.

Clustered below and east of the castle, the dark streets of Old Town sprawled in medieval disarray—poorly bracketed upper stories bulging above greasy streets so narrow that a man walking could stretch out his arms and touch a grimy wall on either side. Once Edinburgh’s tall buildings had housed aristocracy, until crowding and plague had driven them to the suburbs. By the 1870s, however, soot-flecked washing fluttered on clothes poles jutting from the windows of once proud houses that bore above their door a scutcheon with a tarnished coat of arms.

The view from many windows was a dreary prospect of slate roofs topped with red chimneys spouting eye-smarting clouds of smoke—with now and then the rooftop scrabble of a blackened urchin sweeping a chimney. Not surprisingly, the city had held on to its Middle Scots nickname, “Auld Reekie” (Old Smokey). Not only the smoke stank. So did the foul breath of tanneries and glue factories, and the effluvia from chamber pots emptied into street carts or into the streets themselves. At least the winds that buffeted the high elevation helped to dispel the stench.

There was so little space for the city to sprawl horizontally that it had instead climbed vertically. After their social betters fled, the poor were crowded into stacks of filthy flats—on the lower floors, sometimes two abreast with pigsties or stables. By the time Arthur first toddled down the cobblestones beside his mother, many of the former slums—tottering

buildings locally called *lands*—had fallen. The Great Fire in 1824 had burned for five days, gutting or bringing to the ground such monuments as Old Assembly Hall, as well as more than two dozen tenements—some as tall as fourteen stories, said to be the tallest in Europe—from the High Street to Borthwick’s Close, including the birthplace of James Boswell in Parliament Close. Many hovels and tenements were torn down and replaced with safer and cleaner modern housing, but poverty and crowding still defined the Old Town.

He could stand high on the wind-plagued North Bridge, which joined Old Town to the cleaner streets and neoclassical buildings of New Town, and see the monuments to civic progress and mercantile ambition that had helped turn Edinburgh into a world-renowned center of intellectual labor. He was studying medicine in part because the university boasted one of the finest medical departments in the world. In the eighteenth century, the Scottish Enlightenment had flowered in this center of research and publishing—philosopher and mathematician Dugald Stewart, economist Adam Smith, geologist James Hutton, and many others. Walter Scott, Arthur’s favorite novelist in his later youth, had been born in College Wynd, by the Cowgate, not far from Arthur’s own birthplace; had lived in George Square by the university that Arthur attended every day; and had died only a generation before Arthur’s birth. Ambition and artistry were in the very air of Edinburgh.

But Edinburgh was not a refuge in which Arthur could forget his troubles. His father’s financial unreliability and the end of his career at the Office of Works placed an ever greater financial burden upon Mary. Finally, considering the limited alternatives available to a genteel woman, she decided to take in boarders. In 1875, a twenty-two-year-old medical student who was in the last half of his senior year had rented a room. Literary, poetic, but practical enough to study medicine, Bryan Charles Waller came from a respectable family in Yorkshire. He was only six years Arthur’s senior, but he seems to have soon developed a curious relationship with Mary Doyle—one about which family records later remained silent. At first Arthur liked him, and “Dr. Waller,” as Arthur called him, advised the eager young man to pursue medicine. By May 1876, just before Arthur left

Feldkirch, he was telling his mother that surely Dr. Waller would agree that Arthur would have “hard work getting up the subjects” for medical school, considering his ignorance of trigonometry and the later books of Euclid. But a tutor was found and Arthur was accepted at the university.

When Arthur returned to Edinburgh in September, fresh from his last year of boarding school and eager to see his beloved Mam, he learned that she was not going to be at home. Mary would be visiting at Massongill House, Bryan Waller’s family manse in Yorkshire. Arthur was either too innocent to consider the implications or too private to mention them to anyone. For reasons that remain mysterious, it wasn’t long before Waller rose above the level of lodger to the point of paying the entire Doyle family’s rent.

Meanwhile, facing a forced retirement, Charles tried sporadically to create artwork. In 1876 he painted one of his more cheerful (and least bizarre) works: a watercolor of many colorful skaters on the frozen white Duddingston Loch. Situated under the steep southern promontory of Arthur’s Seat, the loch offered boating among swans in summer and skating by torchlight at dusk in winter. Scotland was said to be the home of ice skating as a sport, and the Edinburgh Skating Club was already over a century old. Arthur enjoyed the Edinburgh region’s football and golf, hills to be climbed, trails to be hiked, and lochs on which to curl and slide and skate. When Arthur learned from his mother that his father had left the Office of Works, he remarked that perhaps this change would permit Charles to complete his skating picture soon. But if the family had dreams of a rise in Charles’s artistic reputation following this change, they were disappointed.

CHAPTER 6

No Man of Flesh and Blood

I do not think that life has any joy to offer so complete, so soul-filling as that which comes upon the imaginative lad, whose spare time is limited, but who is able to snuggle down into a corner with his book knowing that the next hour is all his own.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, “JUVENILIA”

Daily, on his way to classes and the clinic, Arthur walked past a den of temptation at 54 and 55 South Bridge, in the shadow of the university: James Thin, Bookseller. Although Thin sold new books as well, the majority of his many rooms were devoted to the diverse plunder of auctions and estate sales—shelf after groaning shelf boasting the kind of serious volumes that Thin’s tradition-minded, classically trained scholars sought or were pleased to stumble upon. Only strict organization could prevent chaos among such plenty. Thus one entire room was devoted to medicine, another to theology, another to law. Thin sold few novels.

An Edinburgh institution since 1848, Thin’s shop had seen Macaulay and Carlyle browse and gossip. Diminutive, skittish Thomas de Quincey had prowled its shelves, mostly after sunset, his opium-ravaged teeth looking caved in and making his lower lip jut when he spoke with his usual fine manners. The university’s eccentric Professor John Stuart Blackie would dash across Bridge Street to inquire about books, weaving between carriages and shoppers, his black gown flapping around his knees.

The intent expressions and occasional exclamations of delight from Thin’s patrons—often whiskery old men tottering atop ladders, from which they browsed fat arcane volumes—reminded one observer of Dominie Sampson, a schoolmaster in Walter Scott’s 1815 novel *Guy Mannering, or The Astrologer*. Scholarship was revered in Edinburgh. The fictional

Sampson was one of sixty-plus figures capering on the two-hundred-foot-tall Scott Monument, whose Gothic Revival excesses on Princes Street celebrated Edinburgh's favorite contemporary writer.

James Thin's siren call to impecunious Arthur was a window card informing him that for threepence he could purchase any volume in the large tub beneath the sign. Thruppence was precisely his daily budget for a midday meal and beer. As he neared the bookshop on his way for food, Arthur wrestled with two kinds of hunger, and most days his body bested his mind. About once a week, however, he skipped lunch and stopped at the tub of books.

Unable to even aspire to fine editions, he would happily sort through these volumes, which had been evicted from more valuable real estate within the shop. Patiently he exhumed logarithmic tables, deceased almanacs, and the annotated navel-gazing of Scottish theologians, setting each book aside, digging deeper in the hope of treasure. Often he found some. One day he would take home Jonathan Swift's dense satire on Christianity, *Tale of a Tub*, and the next Alain-René Lesage's picaresque novel *Gil Blas*—tomes whose thick leather bindings and faded gilt recalled better days in the library of a gentleman.

One day he picked out a stubby volume armored in dour brown leather: a treatise on warfare, written in Latin. He opened the front page and found on the flyleaf, in a firm angular hand, a signature that had faded to yellow—*Ex libris Guilielmi Whyte 1672*—from an era that had already captured his imagination, and in a handwriting that seemed to begin writing a story in his mind. The past seemed deliriously romantic to him. He bought the book. In general, however, despite his endless drilling in Latin and Greek at Stonyhurst and before, he felt that an English translation was an irresistible shortcut to ancient greatness. To that end, in this tub Arthur found all four volumes of Thomas Gordon's acclaimed edition of the Roman historian Tacitus, battered but no less readable.

He ran across the essays of Joseph Addison, who founded an age of literate journalism when he launched *The Spectator* in 1711 with Joseph Steele. Further fueling his passion for British history, Arthur read the classic account of the English Civil War by Edward Hyde, the first Earl of Clarendon. He enjoyed the poems of the seventeenth-century courtier George Villiers, the second Duke of Buckingham, and those of the

eighteenth-century satirist Charles Churchill. Although he ranged widely, he turned most often to the writers of Scotland, Ireland, and England for his instruction and entertainment.

Arthur's appetite for books had begun at an early age. However much he fought other boys during his rambles on the streets, at home in the evenings and on weekends he dived into books as a refuge. As a child he read so quickly that the nearby library informed his mother that he would not be allowed to borrow more than two books per day.

In 1874, at the age of fifteen, Arthur had spent his three-week Christmas holiday with relatives in London, where he saw the renowned actor Henry Irving play Hamlet and where he admired the glittering swords in the armory of the Tower. Foremost on his pilgrimage, however, was Westminster Abbey. Despite his passion for British history, Arthur first sought out not the gilt-bronze supine Edward III on his sarcophagus, not the marble effigy of Mary, Queen of Scots with her white hands eerily raised in prayer, but the South Transept, nicknamed "Poets' Corner." There, below the grand rose window, near the grave of Chaucer and the bust of Milton, he paid his respects to the mortal remains of Thomas Babington Macaulay. "His body is buried in peace," read the gravestone, "but his name liveth for evermore." It was the kind of antique diction and heroic sentiment that quickened Arthur's pulse.

The Scottish historian and politician had, for Arthur, opened a window in the formerly opaque wall of history. For years, moving from school to school, Arthur had packed in his luggage a tired copy of Macaulay's 1843 collection *Critical and Historical Essays*. These diverse writings had first appeared in the Whig journal *Edinburgh Review*. Macaulay was typical of the *Review's* commitment to a serious and stylish engagement with literature and history in longer, more thoughtful essays.

Macaulay had long since become Arthur's favorite writer. At the bookshop's discount bin, forgoing lunch one day, he found a newer but still tattered and lovingly read copy of the *Essays*. With its dramatic big-brush portraits of figures such as Machiavelli and Frederick the Great, Francis Bacon and John Bunyan, the collection fed Arthur's appetite for history but also sparked a yearning to imitate Macaulay's grandeur and sweep.

Although some critics complained about Macaulay's smug patriotism, especially in his somewhat fictionalized history of England, as a young man Arthur admired Macaulay's authoritative tone and his curiosity about different levels of society. The adolescent boy had lingered particularly over his idol's grand flourishes, provocative asides, and vivid attention to the texture that brought a scene to life. Later Arthur agreed with the criticisms.

But other writers also appealed to his imagination. Before he could even understand them as a child, Arthur was given a set of Walter Scott's novels bound in olive-green cloth. Later, despite his mother's advice that he ought to sleep instead, he read them in bed by candlelight, unable to tear himself away from the heroics. He admired Scott's adventurous tales so much that his first copy of the author's 1820 novel *Ivanhoe* suffered an untimely demise. Carrying it about with him as a boy, Arthur absentmindedly left it on a grassy creek bank and found it days later downstream—washed ashore like a drowning victim, muddy and bloated.

Critics such as John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle argued that *Ivanhoe*, set at the end of the twelfth century, inspired the revival of English interest in medieval history that still flourished during Arthur's time. It also established a mental image of the fabled Robin Hood, appearing for the first time in this novel under the name Locksley, as a merry outlaw so adept with a bow that he can split another's arrow. "This must be the devil, and no man of flesh and blood," whisper the yeomen; "such archery was never seen since a bow was first bent in Britain." Arthur thrilled at such scenes.

From an early age, he was aware that Scott could be long-winded and discursive, but Arthur thought that once he turned his attention to the action at hand, he conjured scenes like a sorcerer—the texture of everyday life in Elizabethan England in *Kenilworth*, the treacherous rivalries of the Byzantine Empire during the First Crusade in *Count Robert of Paris*. Only a few years before Arthur discovered Scott, a commentator had praised the national icon, "whose novels have not only refreshed and embellished the incidents of history, but have conferred on many a spot, formerly unknown to fame, a reputation as enduring as the annals of history itself." Since these early days of reading, Arthur had sometimes wished that Scott had turned his imagination to the figures of his own time rather than spent so many years conjuring the past.

Arthur also loved martial poetry. He found nothing more inspiring than a vision of a stout-hearted soldier marching into battle against the odds. He admired valor the way he loved all things that struck him as manly—boxing, patriotism, hunting. At Stonyhurst he had finally succeeded in memorizing all seventy eight-line stanzas of Macaulay’s heroic lay “Horatius,” which opened with a driving meter that Arthur found irresistible:

Lars Porsena of Clusium

By the Nine Gods he swore
That the great house of Tarquin
Should suffer wrong no more.
By the Nine Gods he swore it,
And named a trysting day,
And bade his messengers ride forth,
East and west and south and north,
To summon his array.

He loved reading about adventures as much as he loved adventuring. As a young child, he admired above all other writers the Irish American novelist Mayne Reid, especially such works as his 1851 dime novel *The Scalp Hunters: A Romance of the Plain*. Its opening words helped conjure Arthur’s romantic view of the American West:

Unroll the world’s map, and look upon the great northern continent of America. Away to the wild west, away toward the setting sun, away beyond many a far meridian, let your eyes wander. Rest them where golden rivers rise among peaks that carry the eternal snow. Rest them there.

You are looking upon a land whose features are un-furrowed by human hands, still bearing the marks of the Almighty mould, as upon the morning of creation; a region whose every object wears the impress of God’s image. . .

Follow me, with the eye of your mind, through scenes of wild beauty, of savage sublimity.

After several pages of ecstatic description, Reid exclaimed, “These are the Rocky Mountains, the American Andes, the colossal vertebræ of the continent!”

Immersed in such books ever since he had learned to read, Arthur as a boy spent his time imagining hand-to-hand combat with fierce Red Indian braves and finding his wounds nursed by a charming squaw. Having mentally voyaged from Hudson Bay to Cape Horn, he knew how to behave aboard a ship. In his mind he carried a long-barreled Kentucky rifle and was sure he understood how to elude pursuers by running down a brook to throw bloodhounds off his scent. He still bore with him these stirring tales—and a vision of himself as an adventurer—when he strode along Edinburgh's hilly streets toward the university.

CHAPTER 7

Ode to Opium

The healthy skepticism which medical training induces, the desire to prove every fact, and only to reason from such proved facts—these are the finest foundations for all thought.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, “THE ROMANCE OF MEDICINE”

By the time Arthur enrolled in 1876, the University of Edinburgh was a renowned center of medical education. The Royal College of Surgeons was founded in 1505, during the reign of James IV, its “Seill of Cause” granted in response to a bill of supplication presented by “Surrgeanis and Barbouris within the Burgh of Edinburgh.” At the time, alongside scourges and hanging, other royally approved public torture included vise-pinching noses, boring holes through tongues, and nailing ears to a log. In the 1870s the College of Surgeons looked back respectfully on the temerity and foresight of its founders—who, in the school’s genesis myth, dared to found an enclave of learning amid barbarism.

Youngest of the Scottish universities, Edinburgh had been teaching surgery and anatomy since early in the sixteenth century. The notion of a qualified professional physician, however, was relatively recent. Not until 1858, the year before Arthur’s birth, did the British medical establishment publish a register of accredited medical men. The profession had been advancing dramatically throughout the first half of the century, and all around Arthur were the recent fruits of research and experimentation. Shedding the cobwebs of the past, the largely progressive university was defining itself in opposition to more conservative Anglican institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge, where many influential faculty members still opposed such flourishing new ideas as Darwinian natural selection.

Like astronomy and geology and biology, medicine was growing in its understanding and in its technologies. Since their infancy in the seventeenth century, microscopes had become more advanced, enabling the detailed study of cellular structure, from tree xylem to human blood. The idea of inoculation—the introduction of smallpox virus into individuals who were not immune—had been explored earlier in China, Africa, and India, but not until 1796 did Englishman Edward Jenner effectively demonstrate the value and methods of inoculation in ways that the European medical community could no longer mock. In the 1840s a steel hypodermic syringe was first used to administer a subcutaneous injection—physicians having overcome two centuries of opposition to the method after early attempts had sometimes been fatal.

One of the great names in Edinburgh University's recent history was James Young Simpson, who announced the anesthetic virtues of chloroform in 1847, sixteen years after its discovery. The new painkilling tool was quickly adopted in many areas. In the mid-1840s, dentist Horace Wells revived a notion originally proposed half a century earlier by the great chemist Humphrey Davy: the inhalation of nitrous oxide for pain relief. A colleague administered the so-called laughing gas to Wells while another colleague extracted one of his teeth without causing great pain. About the same time, a patient requesting to be mesmerized before surgery on his ulcerated tooth instead found himself inhaling sulfuric ether—one of many new weapons in the ancient struggle against pain.

Joseph Bell was not the only Edinburgh professor who inspired Arthur with the thrill and the modern relevance of medicine. For example, the renowned Charles Wyville Thomson, a professor of natural history in his mid-forties, taught zoology. In 1876 he returned from serving as Chief Scientist aboard HMS *Challenger*, having persuaded the Royal Society to fund adaptation of a naval vessel into a floating laboratory for study of the world's barely known ocean life.

William Rutherford was the professor of physiology after serving as Fullerian Professor of Chemistry. He was short but broad-shouldered, and his enormous barrel chest projected a stentorian voice not softened by a beard that reminded Arthur of Assyrian bas-reliefs. He turned forty about

the time Arthur met him. Having grown up in the tiny village of Ancrum Craig, in rural Roxburghshire on the southeastern coast of Scotland, and gone on to study in Vienna, Paris, and Berlin, Rutherford spoke with a curious accent. Dissecting a frog, he would exclaim, “Ach, these Jarman frags!” He had the presence and authority to cope with winter class sizes—250 students in his practical physiology course and twice as many in systematic physiology. He was famously adept at combining lecturing and demonstration. Often Rutherford began almost shouting his lecture from the hall, before reaching the classroom and his desk, not yet visible when he began, “There are valves in the veins . . .”

Arthur studied chemistry under Alexander Crum Brown, whose many contributions to science included a system of diagramming chemical compounds by denoting atoms with their symbols inside circles linked to the nucleus with a dashed line. Brown was known for his kindness and his unflappable manner. When a chemistry experiment that was supposed to result in a fire or explosion failed to do so, some men in the class were guaranteed to supply a shout of “Boom!” Brown would emerge from where he had taken refuge against the expected blast, calmly say, “Really, gentlemen!” and proceed with the class.

Henry Littlejohn was in his late forties when Arthur enrolled. Like Joe Bell, he was Edinburgh born and an alumnus of the university and of the Royal College of Surgeons. He had also studied at the Sorbonne. In 1854 the Royal College of Surgeons elected him a fellow and the Edinburgh Town Council appointed him Police Surgeon. The next year, he presented his first lecture in the School of Medicine and soon became known for his theatrical persona at the lectern. Gesturing dramatically, he presented with clarity and startling wit his perspective on topics ranging from the hygiene of slum dwellers to the drainage system of ancient Rome. Soon he was lecturing on forensic medicine. In 1861, following the collapse of a tenement that resulted in thirty-five deaths and countless injuries, the Edinburgh Town Council appointed Littlejohn as Edinburgh’s first Medical Officer of Health. His career partnered science and law enforcement.

Some professors influenced Arthur more by reputation than by presence. Robert Christison, for example, retired in 1877, but his legacy haunted the classrooms. He studied in Paris with the chemist Pierre Jean Robiquet and the Minorcan-born French toxicologist Mathieu J. B. Orfila, who was

renowned for his studies of arsenic poisoning. Christison began teaching by following criminal investigations and trials in Scotland's *State Trials*, informed by the best French texts. He first became known to the general public for his role in the 1828 trials of William Burke and William Hare—the notorious grave robbers who turned murderers to supply anatomists' need for corpses at a time, prior to the Anatomy Act of 1832, when only executed criminals were available for dissection. Christison served as a medical witness in the trial; later, as medical advisor to the crown for Scotland, he formulated guidelines for the examination of corpses. Beginning on the side of prisoners in the Justiciary Court, sought by king's counsel seeking loopholes for their clients, he was soon retained as a regular counsel across the aisle, on behalf of His Majesty's courts.

Christison was legendary by the time Arthur entered his realm. Besides serving often as a forensic witness, he had extended and surpassed Orfila's pioneer work in toxicology. And, like his colleague Joseph Bell, Christison had not hesitated to gamble his health—even his life—on research. After reading accounts of traditional “ordeal by poisoning” rituals among the natives of Old Calabar, a British colony along the Niger River on the southwestern coast of Africa, Christison experimented with the so-called Calabar ordeal-bean. In response to overwhelming evidence of the legume's toxicity, including eyewitness accounts of grisly deaths, Christison prevailed upon his colleagues, including Syme, to cultivate it and supply him with fresh beans. He first tested the poison on animals, including a rabbit, every detail of whose death within five minutes he noted, and he recorded that slugs who nibbled the first fleshy cotyledons that pushed up through the soil from the vegetating bean were dead within twenty-four hours.

Despite noting that “this poison is one of great intensity of action,” Christison ingested some of it himself, and when he experienced few symptoms he increased the dosage. He compared the sensations' progress with his previous experience of Indian hemp, opium, and morphia. “Being now quite satisfied that I had got hold of a very energetic poison,” he told the assembled members of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1855, “I took immediate means for getting quit of it, by swallowing the shaving water I had just been using, by which the stomach was effectually emptied.” Arthur paid close attention to such stories of scientific daring.

While he studied with these eminent men, most of Arthur's energy was concentrated on lectures, textbooks, and medical articles. One of his most frequently consulted texts was *The Essentials of Materia Medica and Therapeutics* by Alfred Baring Garrod, an English physician who taught those topics at University College London, where he had also founded a museum of materia medica. Most physicians concocted and dispensed their own medications. It was essential to understand the therapeutic properties of an ever-growing arsenal, as well as to appreciate modern reassessments of traditional treatments that had emerged from sources such as medieval physick gardens. Thus Garrod had issued revised editions every few years since the acclaimed first in 1865.

Arthur bought the sixth edition in 1878. A fellow of the Royal Society, Garrod was renowned for promoting lithium to treat gout, because he discovered that it dissolved crystals of uric acid—elevated percentages of which he found in the urine of gout patients—and for naming and describing rheumatic arthritis. Arthur signed the flyleaf and began annotating the book throughout. He pored over the encyclopedic volume, underlining items and making notes on almost every page, summarizing sections in marginal notes. He noted that hemorrhoids ought to be treated with “Ointment of Galls and Opium” and included details about how to treat “a bad gonorrhoea.” He turned to the back and wrote on the endpapers his own abbreviated recipes for concocting medications. Directions for making opium included “Evaporate excess Colour between Calico.”

The back pages and other parts of the book wound up scribbled over with accounts of how patients might respond to particular drugs. Many of these notes Arthur composed in jaunty mnemonics and initialed *ACD*. He devoted fourteen rhyming lines, for example, to “Corrosive Sublimate as a Poison.” In his “Ode to Opium,” scribbled on an inside page, he rose to a gritty lyricism while still amusing himself:

I'll tell you a most serious fact
That opium dries a mucous tract
And constipates and causes thirst
And stimulates the heart at first
And then allows its strength to fall
Relaxing the capillary wall.

The cerebrum is first affected,
Contracted pupils are detected
On tetanus you mustn't bet
Secretions gone except the sweat
Lungs and sexuals don't forget.

CHAPTER 8

Drinking Poison

Several times in my life I have done utterly reckless things with so little motive that I have found it difficult to explain them to myself afterwards.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

Knowing the measure of his own ignorance, Arthur ran an advertisement for work during his time off from actual medical classes: “Third year’s student, desiring experience rather than remuneration, offers his services.” In the summer of 1878, he worked with Dr. Charles Sidney Richardson, who attended the poor in Sheffield, in Yorkshire, England. This position lasted only three weeks; later Arthur stated that he and Richardson parted “by mutual consent.” He wrote of Yorkshire, “No woods, little grass, spouting chimneys, slate-coloured streams, sloping mounds of coke and slag, topped by the great wheels and pumps of the mines.”

From dismal Sheffield he escaped to spend a few weeks with Doyle relatives in Maida Vale, amid the bustle and grandeur of London. He was so poor, and apparently so disappointed by the short-lived position with Richardson, that he seriously considered the offers of military recruiting sergeants who were set up in Trafalgar Square looking for burly, dejected young men. They offered the traditional earnest payment of one shilling. This exchange—a practice discontinued the following year—was equivalent to a handshake, and would have been followed by a visit to a magistrate and further payment for enlistment.

But Arthur resisted. He reminded himself that his mother had worked hard to provide him with a promising future. Still, he volunteered to serve as a medical dresser on ambulances in Turkey during the Russian War, but

the latest in a long history of bloody conflicts was over before he could be shipped out.

The next answer to his advertisement arrived grandly postmarked Ruyton-of-the-Eleven-Towns, a village in Shropshire smaller than its name, where he worked with Dr. Henry Francis Elliot. Arthur didn't mind laboring hard, even from dawn to midnight, but he found that he hated the unsuspected loneliness of serving as a medical assistant. After he wandered into his employer's drawing room now and then, to speak to Mrs. Elliot where she sat with her baby, the doctor informed him sharply that he was defying custom: the assistant was to keep to himself and not socialize with the physician or his family. At one point Arthur wrote to his mother that he had worked three months without a chat with anyone, beyond an occasional word when he was invited into Elliot's company for "a smoke."

This temporary position was also memorable for the way it tested Arthur's nerve. During a celebration at a historic site, a cannon's fuse was lit. Instead of firing, however, it exploded, raining shrapnel onto a bystander. A frantic messenger raced to Elliot's house, only to return with his inexperienced young assistant instead. Arthur found himself gazing at a lump of iron projecting from the head of a man who lay in bed. He had to decide immediately. He grasped the projecting iron near the man's hair and tugged it out. When he did so, below the blood he could see clean white bone, which told him that the iron had not reached the man's brain. He stitched the wound. Arthur's decisive response inspired new confidence in himself—and, he noted, in those around him.

The next year Arthur's summer position with Dr. Reginald Hoare in England's Midlands was paid—a token £2 per month. Arthur was still raw, but learning as quickly as he could. He liked Hoare. His luxuriant beard and country lad's shoulders belied a canny professional who could turn three-shilling treatments and one-shilling prescriptions, eked from the paupers of Aston in central Birmingham, into an annual income of £3,000.

Doing his part, however, kept Arthur scurrying day and night. Some evenings, already exhausted, he would be handed a scribbled list of as many as a hundred medicaments to weigh, measure, stir, and package in their boxes and phials. Try as he might, he made mistakes. He was known, for example, to occasionally prepare detailed directions for a patient's pill box that, when opened, proved empty.

* * *

During his busy first few weeks with Dr. Hoare in Birmingham in June 1879, Arthur risked his life in a dangerous experiment. Sometime earlier, while suffering from neuralgia, he had given himself several doses of an alkaloid pain depressant called gelseminum. It was derived from the plant *Gelseminum* (later *Gelsemium*) *sempervirens*, a twining yellow-blossomed vine native to tropical and subtropical American woodlands, called variously evening trumpet flower or yellow jasmine. Many parts of the plant were saturated with toxic alkaloids of the strychnine family. Arthur's pain continued unabated at first, so he exceeded the prescribed dosage—and observed no ill effects.

Alfred Baring Garrod addressed gelseminum at length in his *Materia Medica*. Under the heading *Tinctura Gelsemii* in his copy, Arthur underlined key parts of Garrod's description: "It has been employed in various forms of neuralgia, rheumatism, and muscular spasm, as a sedative . . . Death results from apnoea, due to paralysis of the respiratory muscles." To the ailments it would treat, Arthur scrawled the marginal addendum "also for Chorea and inflammation."

Underneath these notes he wrote "Fraser" and underlined it. Formerly Robert Christison's assistant, Thomas Richard Fraser assumed the position of professor of materia medica upon his mentor's retirement in 1877. Like Christison, Fraser was known for his adventurous and personal approach to pharmacology. It had been launched with his gold-medal-winning thesis on the ordeal-bean of Calabar, a further examination of the poison with which Christison had experimented. By Arthur's time, Fraser was a prominent figure. The year he became professor of materia medica, he was invited to join the Royal Society, and in 1878 he became dean of the medical faculty. Arthur studied with him during his second year.

"Though much used in America," Garrod said of gelseminum, "it has hitherto been little investigated in this country." In the United States, physicians often prescribed gelseminum for pain accompanying a variety of ailments, including influenza, ague, and menstrual cramps. Gelseminum was less accepted throughout Europe—and not approved for the British pharmacopoeia—because its confirmed dangers outweighed its possible virtues. Arthur must have known that no medical professional doubted its

threat. In an 1832 article, the U.S. physician William Tully was already warning of the dangers of exceeding recommended dosages: “If a quantity larger than is barely necessary . . . is administered, it produces . . . ultimately even stupor, coma, and death.”

During the late 1870s, several medical scientists devoted extensive research to gelseminum. For example, *The Lancet* had been publishing a series of well-researched articles on it by Sydney Ringer, a professor of therapeutics at Garrod’s own University College, and William Murrell, a demonstrator of physiology at the same institution. Founded by surgeon and reformer Thomas Wakley in 1823, *The Lancet* had become an indispensable organ of British medicine, and as an ambitious student Arthur would have been expected to follow each issue closely.

Thus he could not have missed the series by Ringer and Murrell. Reporting research on frogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, and a poodle, they concluded, “In all these experiments, death appears to have resulted from asphyxia.” In the spring of 1876, Ringer and Murrell reported administering gelseminum to six human beings on seventeen occasions, “in doses sufficient to produce decided toxic effects.” Patients described a predictable succession of symptoms: brow pain, giddiness, eyeball pain, dimming of sight, double vision, drooping eyelids, and restricted movement of the eyeball. “The patient next complains of weakness of the legs, and we have never pushed the drug beyond the production of this symptom.” They analyzed the effect on respiration and circulation, body temperature, mental faculties, and other phenomena. A physician reported that in 1866 he took gelseminum “through mistake,” reporting that his most frightening symptom was almost total blindness for several hours.

In June 1878 *The Lancet* concluded its gelseminum series with two articles on it “as a toxicological agent.” Because of the drug’s unpopularity in Britain, most of the material for this survey derived from U.S. sources. Standards there were so lax that one U.S. physician ordered a patient to take a dose of gelseminum tincture and declared that if she held up a finger and saw only one—thus not yet experiencing double vision—she could risk another dose. Physicians reported many deaths—a pregnant woman who overdosed on gelseminum, a woman who died after receiving it as a painkiller following an abortion, and sailors who plundered a barrel of what they mistakenly thought to be alcohol but was actually tincture of

gelseminum. One doctor had witnessed the deaths of three children from overdose.

Yet Arthur boldly imitated the dangerous exploits of Robert Christison and Thomas Fraser with the calabar bean. Tincture of gelseminum was created by mixing dried gelseminum roots and rhizomes, which were available as gelseminum powder, with standard percentages of alcohol and water. Arthur measured his dosage of the milky yellow fluid in minims. The minim had been introduced in 1809 as a more precise unit than a drop, formerly the standard measure. Apothecaries had long known that viscosity and other factors caused the size of a drop to vary, so finally they standardized a minim as equaling 1/60th of a fluid drachm or 1/480th of a fluid ounce. Arthur employed a graduated glass pipette called a minimometer to measure out his self-poisoning. He administered gelseminum to himself in increasing dosages and monitored its effects, in order to determine which amounts might truly constitute an overdose—and what his symptoms might be during the process. During this time he denied himself tobacco because he feared it might skew his results.

Rather than increase his dosage in increments, he quickly escalated it as he took gelseminum at roughly the same hour each day. He started on a Monday morning at 10:30 by swallowing forty minims of the bitter liquid with no apparent effect, and on Tuesday sixty minims also seemed harmless. Wednesday's dose was ninety—already exceeding the limit established as fatal. Twenty minutes after he took it, Arthur rose from his chair and found himself giddy. His limbs felt weak. He checked his pulse and found it thready but not frightening. Soon the symptoms faded away.

He soldiered on. Thursday morning found him swallowing 120 minims. Soon he felt giddy again, but not as severely as on Wednesday. He felt almost normal until he walked outdoors at about one o'clock, when slowly he realized that he was having difficulty seeing distant scenes. To focus his eyes, he had to concentrate and squint. Nonetheless, on Friday he administered to himself 150 minims—double the supposedly fatal dosage. He found that at this advanced level his giddiness all but disappeared. In its place, however, he gradually developed barely surmountable lethargy and an agonizing frontal headache. Severe diarrhea kept him running to the chamber pot—which surely prevented his being available to assist Dr. Hoare.

Despite these frightening symptoms, despite his body's many ways of warning that it was greatly agitated by the poison, the weekend found Arthur raising his bet against fate. On both Saturday and Sunday morning he took 200 minims of gelseminum—over a third of an ounce. The headache returned with a vengeance. Diarrhea became so constant and severe on Sunday that he resolved to end the experiment. Despite feeling overwhelmingly depressed, despite a hammering headache, he made a note of the dosage and counted his pulse. It was weak but steady.

Against the odds, Arthur survived. He wrote up his experiment and sent it to the *British Medical Journal*. He carefully described his symptoms and summarized his conclusions. "A healthy adult may take as much as 90 minims with perfect immunity," he declared flatly, failing to mention that he was a robust young man whose body was used to being pushed to its limits in boxing, hiking, and other rigorous activities. "I feel convinced that I could have taken as much as half an ounce of the tincture," he remarked, "had it not been for the extreme diarrhoea it brought on."

His account appeared as a letter to the editor in the issue of September 20, 1879, titled simply "Gelseminum as a Poison." He signed it "A.C.D.," and included Dr. Hoare's address: Clifton House, Aston Road, Birmingham. It was his first publication about medicine. In its bodily risk, it was worthy of Christison's and Fraser's example. Whether a form of bravado or despair, of professional hero worship or personal self-torture, this antic verged on the suicidal—and wound up a public statement of reckless disregard for danger that would soon find other expressions.

Intemperance

I walked ever among pitfalls and I thank all ministering angels that I came through, while I have a soft heart for those who did not.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

“Would you care to start next week for a whaling cruise?” asked Claud Currie, a friend and fellow student. In his senior year, Arthur had been wearily studying for an examination when Currie approached. It was February 1880, and beyond Arthur’s books and papers the window showed a blustery raw day. Students at Edinburgh University were much freer than those in English universities, and, like others, Arthur rented his own room off campus.

It was common practice for a whaling ship to take along a medical student as a poorly paid doctor in search of experience. Currie had served in such a capacity once before and had been invited again. “I find at this last moment that I can’t go,” he explained, “and I want to get a man to take my place.” The *Hope*, departing from Peterhead on the northeastern coast of Scotland, was heading for the Arctic. “You’ll be surgeon. Two pound ten a month and three shillings a ton oil money.”

It was decent pay, although going on the expedition would require that Arthur drop out of school for several months. With no expenses aboard, he could save money—and his imagination yearned for escape, for new horizons. Exhausted by the scholarly grind, Arthur postponed finishing medical school.

He departed Shetland on a cold day in March. A three-master with a steam screw, the *Hope* stood out among the Peterhead whaling fleet—once proud but declining after its predations had helped reduce the whale population to a fraction of its former glory. Only forty-five feet long from

iron-reinforced bow to stern, and twenty-eight feet wide amidships with a seventeen-foot depth, the *Hope* was fortified with iron inside the double planking at the waterline. She could shove her way through Arctic ice floes.

Arthur's role was hardly burdensome. Save on those rare occasions when he was called upon for medical assistance, he served as clerk—one day compiling a list of hosiery, the next dispensing tobacco. Like Charles Darwin when he sailed as naturalist aboard the *Beagle* with Captain Robert FitzRoy in the 1830s, Arthur was intended to be captain's companion as much as anything else. The captain dined with officers, not with crew, who supped with their own class. But Arthur found that he enjoyed the company of the mates as much as that of the captain. He was drawn to their strapping vitality and wild ways. Neither classed nor bunked among the mates, he did not think of himself as one of them, but after boxing with the steward, he found that the latter's black eye raised the crew's estimation of their college-educated medico.

Although he drank a lot himself, the drunkenness aboard ship shocked Arthur. In his journal he noted that one drunkard was clearly suffering with delirium tremens—a topic he knew personally from experience with his father—and he felt that the man ought to have been taken to the infirmary rather than the brig.

Many dangers awaited Arthur at sea in the Arctic. Frequently he even found himself in the water. He fell off the slippery decks or icy floes often enough that the sardonic captain nicknamed him the "Great Northern Diver," after the fishing bird known in North America as the common loon. As the medical man and an educated young gentleman, he was not expected to participate in hunts. Eager for adventure and fond of blood sports, however, he rowed out to whales in impossibly tiny, tossing boats, and looked a dying whale in the eye. He bludgeoned and skinned seals and shot walrus. He sent occasional reports home to his mother, telling her more details than most mothers would want to know, as if teasing her with the dangers and risk of this work he did not have to do—but which he had embraced. Piercing cold, strangely lit nights, and alien creatures crept into his imagination. He had proved himself with common men and officers, had faced the cold and darkness and grown stronger. The Arctic cowed him no more than the poison with which he had dosed himself the year before.

* * *

The *Hope* docked in Peterhead in September 1880. In early 1881 he visited family in Ireland for an extended stay. There, hundreds of miles from other family and from college, Arthur became infatuated with a succession of young women, but his flirtations seldom amounted to much, and he complained about several women in letters. He wrote to a friend that he had met a nineteen-year-old who placed first in her class in the most difficult examination open to women at Trinity College—where she was a bursar, as Scots called students on scholarship—but that she did not talk to him at the dinner table, did not like to dance, would not play accompaniment to a song, and generally showed herself “an addle-headed womanly fool.” On this same trip, however, Arthur met a young woman named Elmore “Elmo” Welden. After a week of flirting, he wrote to his mother that he would happily marry Miss Welden, but that there were also other girls he longed, at least in passing, to marry. Little came of any of these flirtations and brief romances.

In August 1881, delayed by a year largely because of the whaling voyage, Arthur was awarded his degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Master of Surgery at a ceremony in Edinburgh. In a letter he sketched himself waving the diploma aloft, above the caption “Licensed to Kill.” He attended the funeral of a family friend. With his wide-ranging enthusiasm for outdoor activities, he had adopted photography as a hobby, and soon he was off to the Isle of May to photograph birds among friends who were hunting, hoping to record the trip and write it up for the *British Journal of Photography*. They accepted it. “After Cormorants with a Camera” appeared in two October installments of the flourishing weekly, and Arthur added another periodical to his résumé. Later the same year it was reprinted in *Anthony’s Photographic Bulletin* in the United States—his first writing published there.

He used a folding Meagher camera, with a bellows body and a half dozen backs that would hold the plate but permit it to be fully withdrawn. He became something of an encyclopedia about every new interest. Although he already carried an ash tripod, he fashioned for himself a monopod, a walking staff with an iron spike at one end and an adjustable ball-and-socket joint for the camera base at the other. The spike enabled the one-

legged camera stand to penetrate four inches into soil and thus become as steady as a tripod without the trouble and weight. In his growing enthusiasm for photography, Arthur didn't hesitate to advise other photographers in his first article.

Charles Doyle, Arthur's father, left almost no written traces in his first few years after retirement in 1876. Friends had long urged Mary Doyle to have her volatile, drunken husband removed from their home and placed in professional care, insisting that it was the only way to save his life—and to restore some calm and order to her own. Yet she hesitated.

Finally she relented. Perhaps she saw this advertisement:

INTEMPERANCE—Home for Gentlemen in Country House in the North of Scotland. Of very old standing. Home Comforts. Good Shooting, Trout-Fishing and Cricket. HIGHEST REFERENCES. Apply MR. D FORBES, BLAIRERNO HOUSE, DRUMLITHIE, FORDOUN, KINCARDINESHIRE.

It appeared, among many notices under the heading “Homes for the Intemperate,” in the comprehensive annual *Medical Directory*, which claimed to include “statistical and general information respecting the universities, colleges, schools, hospitals, dispensaries, societies, poor-law service, asylums for the insane, public services, &c, &c.” Over the years it had featured advertisements for everything from “pure and healthy leaches” to the Equilibrium Carrying Chair for transporting invalids on staircases. Such institutions as Blairerno House were one of the era's attempts to help both alcoholics and their families, trying to rise above the abuse that previous generations had heaped upon both. Drumlithie was on the coast north of Dundee, almost to Aberdeen—roughly a hundred miles from Edinburgh.

In early 1881 at the latest, if not before, Blairerno House gained a new inmate. Although Charles Doyle had behaved with notorious disregard for others, he seems to have avoided criminal charges, and he had not been violent. Thus he must have agreed to his own incarceration. In Scotland, the Habitual Drunkards Act of 1879 defined institutions described as licensed retreats for inebriates, and required that the patient submit a signed and witnessed letter admitting to habitual drunkenness as defined by the law.

In the foothills of the Grampian Mountains, Blairerno was a house of only two stories, with thick stone walls, and surrounded by numerous outbuildings. Specializing in treating alcoholics, David Forbes, the director of Blairerno House, lived on-site, supported by an all-female ménage: wife, daughter, two sisters, and five servants. The eighteen male inmates—who included a music teacher, a medical student, two accountants, a tobacco manufacturer, a retired military officer, a “landed proprietor,” and now Mr. Doyle, “architect and artist”—were a genteel lot who apparently inspired few worries. That shooting was an option indicates a lack of fear on the part of the staff. Nonetheless, Charles tried to escape numerous times and developed a reputation as an amiable but troublesome patient.

Arthur described the event with glib euphemisms in a letter to his sister Lottie. “We have packed papa off to a health resort,” he wrote on April 9, 1881. Otherwise, he seems to have maintained a tight-lipped silence about intimate misfortunes. In letters to his family and friends, Arthur complained at times about money and magazine publishers and other topics, but he had become adept at keeping his darker worries to himself—or at least out of his written records. Later he occasionally wrote about these issues in fictional terms, but he barely alluded to the realities.

Arthur was the man of the family now. In September 1881 his sister Lottie, only fifteen and a half years old, traveled to join their older sister Annette in Portugal, to also work as a governess. Lonely, hardworking Annette had been there for years, living on as little as possible and sending the rest home. Lottie began the same kind of life. Arthur felt increasing urgency in his desire to contribute, and he daydreamed about rescuing his mother from work, his sisters from their own faraway labors. Except for rare holidays, not since his early childhood had the Doyle family all been together under the same roof.

In October 1881, Arthur was twenty-two. Wondering about his future, needing any kind of steady income, he went to sea again. He served for three months as medical man aboard the *Mayumba*, a decrepit steamer that creakingly purveyed cargo and passengers between Liverpool and the western coast of Africa. The voyage was fraught with danger from the first. The *Mayumba* barely remained afloat during a hurricane just after it

departed Liverpool—the storm that sank the SS *Clan Macduff*, whose loss received considerable attention in the British newspapers. Later Arthur realized that during the hurricane the *Mayumba* must have passed near the sinking *Clan Macduff*. While he attended frightened and sick female passengers, Arthur's own cabin was flooded, but his camera equipment remained dry in a tight deal box.

Not until Madeira was the weather calm enough to permit photography. The peak of Tenerife proved annoyingly fog-shrouded, but there were many other opportunities for memorable photographs during the voyage. A week of calm sea off Sierra Leone gave Arthur time to lie under an awning and admire the flying fish “as they flickered, like bars of silver, over the crests of the waves.” At Fernando Po (the island of Bioko), he photographed a horrific former slave barracoon and a shark that circled the ship just below the surface. At Old Calabar, the British colony sixty miles up the Calabar River from the coast—the region associated with the poison experiments of Robert Christison and William Fraser—he photographed a personage he described as “a native prince,” who complained that the image did not resemble him. Many men were struck down with fever, and at least one died of it, on Christmas Eve. At Lagos, Nigeria, Arthur succumbed, and he lost several days to delirium. But his remarkably tough body triumphed and he found himself back on deck, barely able to stand but feeling that he had won another battle.

Despite the misfortunes dealt to the voyage, Arthur further tempted fate. While the *Mayumba* was near the Cape Coast Castle, one of the former slave forts on the Gold Coast, he dived into the water and swam alongside the hull. Shortly afterward, as he sat drying himself on deck, he spied a shark's fin cutting the surface of the water. Once again he had understood the risks and ignored them—just as he had done with gelsemium and while whaling in the Arctic. He realized that he often acted out of bravado, dismissing the likelihood of peril, but he seemed unable to predict in advance when he might again feel the urge to prove himself.

Aboard the ship Arthur met the renowned U.S. minister and orator Henry Highland Garnet. Born a slave in Maryland in 1815, Garnet had been a powerful force in the abolitionist movement, but eventually founded the African Civilization Society in the hope of repatriating former slaves and their descendants back to Africa. After the Civil War, he became the first

black minister to preach to the U.S. House of Representatives. Recently President James A. Garfield had appointed Garnet as Minister and Consul-General to Liberia. On the western coast of Africa, the Republic of Liberia had been founded in 1847 by people of African ancestry fleeing oppression in the United States. Although he arrived successfully in Liberia, Garnet died a few weeks after this voyage.

Arthur greatly enjoyed conversing with Garnet aboard ship. He had become desperate for literate conversation, and he and Garnet discussed writers such as George Bancroft, author of *History of the United States of America, from the Discovery of the American Continent* and other works, and John Lothrop Motley, author of *Causes of the Civil War in America* and many other volumes of history. At one point, conversing learnedly with an accomplished black man, Arthur realized that Garnet himself must once have been a slave. "This negro gentleman did me good," wrote Arthur later, "for a man's brain is an organ for the formation of his own thoughts and also for the digestion of other people's, and it needs fresh fodder."

The *Mayumba* returned to Liverpool in mid-January 1882. Arthur wasted no time in quickly turning experience into writing. In March and April the *British Journal of Photography* published his two-part article, "On the Slave Coast with a Camera." While describing photographic experiences, he fleshed out his account with vivid glimpses, literary snapshots of action, and snippets of witty dialogue. Mostly he played his discomforts and fears for comedy, but he closed by saying, "Better a week in the Welsh mountains with a light camera and a good companion than all the lights and shades of fever-haunted gorilla-land." And he had opened the article by saying that to anyone considering travel to the west coast of Africa, he offered Punch's memorable advice regarding marriage: "Don't." To his mother he said flatly that he did not intend to continue as a shipboard medico, that he could make more money in the same amount of time with his pen.

CHAPTER 10

Dr. Conan Doyle, Surgeon

I had everything to gain and nothing in the whole wide world to lose. And I had youth and strength and energy, and the whole science of medicine packed in between my two ears. I felt as exultant as though I were going to take over some practice which lay ready for me.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS*

Whatever tensions in the Doyle family may have swirled earlier around Bryan Waller, the former tenant who had grown into Mary's financial helper and possibly more, they came to a head in early 1882. Surviving letters reveal no other details, but in April Arthur wrote to his sister Lottie that he "nearly frightened the immortal soul" out of Waller and that the other man "utterly refused to fight." Arthur liked to brag to his family, and often exaggerated in letters (at times comically), which explains his claim to Lottie that when he was finished with Waller the fellow did not leave his house for twenty-three days. He told his sister that although he and Waller had since managed a "nominal reconciliation"—which seems unlikely had they actually stooped to fisticuffs—Waller had left Edinburgh.

Meanwhile, also in early 1882, Arthur applied for every sort of medical position he found listed and was rejected each time. Desperate, he accepted an unrealistically promising offer from a former fellow student. Capricious and volatile Dr. George Budd—who had been only a year ahead of Arthur in medical school—had harried his schoolmate into accepting a position with him in Plymouth, on the coast of Devon. Yet six weeks later Budd withdrew it. Later Arthur learned that Budd had read his letters to and from his mother and learned of his complaints about Budd's presumptuousness and volatility; and Arthur had to admit that Budd's own complaints about

Arthur's bohemian disarray were justified. His promised job ended as suddenly as it had begun.

With hardly a spare shilling in the pocket of his tweeds, Arthur decided he needed to regain momentum. His research indicated that Portsmouth, a shipping and military port between Plymouth and Brighton, across the Channel from Normandy, offered a range of potential patients and no surplus of doctors. Barely twenty-three years old, already a veteran of medical school, of Arctic and African voyages, and of apprenticeship work, Arthur was eager to launch an independent career as a medical man. Unable to buy into an established practice, he would have to build his own from scratch.

He arrived in June. Old fortified Portsmouth struck him as gray and drear, but he liked the holiday atmosphere, the piers and hotels and promenades, in the prosperous neighborhood of Southsea. Portsmouth was guarded by the Isle of Wight and was in fact an island itself, with the city containing all of low-lying Portsea Island, which stood between Langstone Channel to the east and Portsmouth Harbor to the west. Southsea faced southward into Spithead, the western end of the Solent, the strait that separated the Isle of Wight from the Hampshire coast and which bustled with yachts and men-of-war parading before its three round forts.

Arthur bought a map and strolled to his hotel through unfamiliar streets. He carried only his ulster, probably a tin box for the top hat that was de rigueur for a young professional man, and a bulky leather portmanteau. The bag was heavy with photographic equipment and glass plates, clothing, books, and a large brass sign that he had had made in Plymouth—DR. CONAN DOYLE, SURGEON.

Filthy urchins scuttled by on bare feet. Frequently Arthur stepped over tracks for the horse-drawn tram system whose bustling terminus was at Clarence Pier, where his steamer had docked at the jetty with its view of Victoria Barracks and the broad green parade ground. Around him dozens of boxy tram cars clattered on miles of track, with passengers comfortable behind windows but the driver exposed to rain on a chariot-like platform behind the two horses. Bath chairs, like baby perambulators for adults, were also available to push tourists in rickety comfort.

Arthur needed at once to make sense of the city's labyrinthine streets. He must rent a house, ideally some distance from other doctors'

establishments. Like most cities in England, Portsmouth needed more doctors. Over the last three decades, the town had cleaned itself up a bit, but it was still dirty and unhealthy. Robert Rawlinson, one of the first health inspectors appointed under England's urgently needed Public Health Act in 1848, had visited Portsmouth and written at length about its sad state. Tiny houses were packed with too many occupants. Behind each ran an open sewer, which helped create ideal conditions for the cholera epidemic that killed a thousand people the next year. Inspecting the barracks area that Arthur later walked past upon his arrival, Rawlinson wrote, "At present the soldiers' wives and families inhabit one of the most wretched, crowded and unhealthy quarters of the town; and the usual haunts of the sailor, when on shore, are dens so vile and degraded that language cannot describe them." Conditions had improved by the time Arthur arrived, but even basic sanitation was little known among the lower classes.

Arthur spent his first week locating and examining unoccupied houses that fit his needs. Then he chose one and moved into his new headquarters: number 1, Bush Villas, on a bustling tree-lined street named Elm Grove. The rent was £40 per annum. Living on desperate optimism, Arthur worried that the estate agent would demand a deposit, but nothing further was required once he invoked the name of his famous uncle Dickie, the cartoonist.

A wrought-iron railing helped distinguish his building from the Elm Grove Baptist Church on the left and the Bush Hotel on the right. The church had been renovated during the last few years, its face opened up with more windows to compensate for the shading block of villas across the street. By the time Arthur arrived, its grand brick façade and arched windows dominated the neighborhood, with the weathervane atop its spire obeying the winds from more than a hundred feet above Elm Grove. Nearby were bustling shops. The trees for which the street was named offered inviting shade and softened the boulevard's commercial air.

At a sale in Portsea, Arthur bought a tired old bed and trickled away a few precious pounds on basic furniture for the sitting room—a table, three chairs, and a small rug. On tick (credit, from "on ticket") he bought a red lamp, England's universal symbol of a physician, and placed it in a front window. Arthur slept several nights wrapped in his ulster before his reliable mother sent blankets. The portmanteau, in the back room with nothing but a

stool beside it, became his pantry and table. With no other furniture in his bedroom upstairs, he sat on the bed and ate from a tin of corned beef. Gradually he improved the furnishings—hanging white curtains in the downstairs front room, for example, to improve his office’s appearance from the street. He asked his mother to send knickknacks, as well as Poe’s poems and Bret Harte’s stories.

* * *

At first he could not afford to have the gas turned on, but soon it was available in his bedroom and kitchen and hall; downstairs the consulting room was fitted for gas but the waiting room was not. Once it was on, Arthur rigged a platform above the jet on the wall so that it would support a small pan. He cooked many a slice of bacon this way, and felt that with tea and bread it made a quite acceptable meal. Now and then he splurged on a saveloy, a spicy sausage originally made from pig brains. Preoccupied with language, history, and medicine, he probably knew that the word *saveloy* had descended from the Latin word *cerebellum*.

Desperate to attract patients, Arthur peered down at the street through wooden Venetian blinds, counting passersby who stopped to read the brass nameplate he had hung on the railing before his entryway. One day twenty-eight people paused in twenty-five minutes, the next day twenty-four in only fifteen. He put up a second plate, this one confiding that he offered free consulting hours from ten to one on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays—“to get,” he wrote to his mother, “the good will of the poor.”

It wasn’t long, however, before he discovered that few patients dropped in during free hours. And he worried that offering such a discount might lower his professional status in the neighborhood. A friendly fellow physician nearby, William Royston Pike, advised Arthur—perhaps self-servingly—to take down the sign, arguing that such a ploy might prove helpful in some areas but that it could be counterproductive in an exclusive neighborhood such as Southsea.

Arthur also became friends with Dr. William Henry Kirton, a young dentist whose office was across the street, and Kirton recommended him to patients. Fledgling dentists had an easier time attracting business because, unlike physicians, they were legally permitted to advertise. One Southsea

dentist paid every week to have his name run in large type along the margins of the local directory's advertisement pages. Arthur could not employ such lures. He had been at Bush Villas for six days before his first patient appeared—a woman seeking a vaccination. He spent two shillings and sixpence purchasing the requested vaccine from London, but the woman could pay only one and six. Realizing the irony in this transaction, he confided to a family friend that many more such patients would result in his selling his newly acquired furniture.

On his first evening in Southsea, Arthur had been out strolling when he came upon a rough lout kicking a woman. Arthur intervened and later reported that he “emerged from the fray without much damage.” To his surprise, one of his first patients was this man, who clearly did not recognize his former opponent. Arthur doctored him, charged him a pittance, and sent him on his way.

Gradually other patients trickled in. The first were either too poor to pay their usual doctor or simply curious about the newcomer. Most physicians earned a high percentage of their income by selling drugs to patients, and Arthur counted upon this tradition. From shelves in the back room, stocked with medicaments bought wholesale on tick, he dispensed enough to pay for his groceries—if not enough to contribute substantially to his rent.

At times patients fell into his lap. “A man had the good taste to fall off his horse the other day just in front of the window,” he wrote his mother, “and the intelligent animal rolled on him.” He quickly doctored the victim, and soon the story was in the local papers—a useful flurry of free advertising.

Usually confident, even cocky, Arthur was discovering in himself a talent for self-promotion, and he knew that most of all he needed to get into the community and let his prospective patients see him as their neighbor. He enjoyed meeting new people. Fond of colorful characters—and quick to turn them into anecdotes for his letters and even fictional characters for the stories he was beginning to write—he came to know many of the local oddballs.

One tall old neighbor whose haughty scowl reminded Arthur of a horse would sit grandly in her window, as still as a cameo, until one of her unpredictable fits inspired her to skim a china plate out the window at an innocent passerby on the street. Whenever she experienced one of these

outbursts, she would bestow some of her prized pottery upon Arthur—only to demand it back when she calmed down. Once he kept a pottery jug for his troubles, although she complained. With other neighbors he sometimes bartered medical care for food. Arthur felt guilty knowing that when the epileptic grocer had a new seizure, it meant afternoon tea and butter for Dr. Conan Doyle.

Arthur also faced many sad experiences as a young doctor. Once a poor woman begged him to tend her daughter, whom he found lying on a rickety cot in their modest sitting room. Holding a candle, he bent over the bed, shocked to find by the flickering light that the patient was a young woman—she turned out to be nineteen—with pained brown eyes and tormented-looking, unnaturally thin arms and legs.

“Oh, if God would only take her!” moaned her mother.

Arthur later recalled how such painful experiences helped turn him away from the traditional religion of his upbringing and boarding school. He lost any sense that life in this world is a spiritual obstacle course leading to the next, and as a result, he found himself no longer able to believe the hoary old stories about a benevolent God.

A Wealth of Youth and Pluck

I found that I could live quite easily and well on less than a shilling per day, so I could hold out for a long period.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

Arthur's brother, Innes, arrived in mid-July 1882, traveling with the rolled-up carpet that Mary Doyle had sent to smarten up her elder son's bare consulting room. Only nine years old, dark-haired, clad in knickers, Innes lit up the eight-room house with energy and enthusiasm. Arthur had invited him, offering to take over the cost of supporting him, with the idea that his little brother would help around the house and office. Eager to circumvent his mother's doubts, Arthur assured her that Portsmouth was a "far healthier town" than Edinburgh.

He had first requested that his mother send his fourteen-year-old sister Constance. He agreed with the common idea that a physician lost face with patients if he answered the office door himself, and he was eager to assign this task to one of his siblings. When Mary Doyle vetoed the idea of sending her young daughter, Arthur badgered her into sending Innes instead. Although he was fond of his siblings and hoped to reduce his mother's financial burden, he also wanted help in presenting himself from the first as a successful physician. Always sensitive to how others perceived him, he didn't even want to be seen polishing his own brass nameplate out front, so he sneaked out to do it late at night. Hoping to look older and more impressive, he had grown a mustache.

The morning after the boy's arrival, while Arthur got the teakettle boiling over a reluctant fire and prepared cold salmon and bread with butter and marmalade, Innes rushed out to buy a newspaper. The government of Egypt was in turmoil and Britain had dispatched troops to guard the Suez Canal,

which had connected the Red Sea and the Mediterranean since its decade of construction was completed in 1869. Perhaps imitating his big brother, Innes was already preoccupied with the fortunes of Britain's sprawling empire. Some days they waited outside a newspaper office for the day's issue, with its fresh news of the bombardment of Alexandria. Innes found the parading soldiers at the Victoria Barracks stirring and inspiring. Some days he wandered down to the beach on his own, volunteering to help fishermen on their boats.

Arthur enjoyed the company of his siblings, and of children in general. In the summer of 1877, he had taken his sisters Lottie and Conny along on a holiday ramble with his Stonyhurst friend Jimmy Ryan to the Isle of Arran, in the Firth of Clyde on the western coast of Scotland. There he was surprised to encounter, of all people, Dr. Joe Bell from Edinburgh. Two years later, while working in the Midlands as assistant to Dr. Reginald Hoare, he had spent his spare time entertaining the physician's six- and ten-year-old children by making paper cutouts of French Zouave soldiers—distinctive and colorful in baggy trousers and short jackets—and the more familiar English Guardsmen with their sashes and tall fur hats. His imagination leapt quickly to military images. At Hodder at the age of nine, he had mailed home toy French foot soldiers as gifts for his sisters.

Arthur and Innes had a good time together. "I am very happy to know that I have a little brother," Arthur had written home from Stonyhurst, at the age of fourteen, in response to his mother's letter about Innes's birth, and he had grown ever more fond of the boy's company. Most evenings in Southsea, the beautiful warm weather lured Arthur and Innes outdoors. Arthur led treks for miles down winding streets, along docks where foreign ships' oddly colored flags snapped in the wind, past both recent artillery fortifications and antique long-barreled cannon called *sulverin*. The military history of Britain cast its shadow over the island—and, to Arthur's patriotic and imaginative eyes, lent it glamour. Founded in the twelfth century by a Norman merchant, Portsmouth had grown slowly for three centuries. Then Southsea had grown up around, and been named for, one of Henry VIII's "device forts," built in the mid-1500s to protect the southern coast, like Pendennis Castle in Cornwall or Yarmouth guarding the western end of the Solent on the sloping shores of the nearby Isle of Wight. For centuries

Portsmouth had been a center of royal shipbuilding. Everywhere Arthur and Innes turned, history flavored the town.

Arthur enrolled Innes at Hope House Day School in Green Road, under master Thomas Henry Vickery. Rudyard Kipling, who was six years Arthur's junior, had attended the same institution, which he later described as "a terrible little dayschool." But the good-humored lad settled into his new routine. Whenever he was home from school, Innes brought life and humor into the house. From the beach he brought home crabs that scuttled from room to room until Arthur or Innes didn't see one and accidentally stepped on it with a sickening crunch.

Although it seems to have had little effect on his energy, Innes arrived with a lump in his neck along his throat. Probably a temporary glandular problem, it quickly improved. Arthur thought that spending much of his time outdoors—the boy soon glowed with ruddy health—contributed more to Innes's recovery than did the doses Arthur administered of *syrupus ferri iodidi*, a greenish iron-rich medicament that physicians and druggists concocted for a variety of ailments.

By the middle of August, Innes was writing to their mother, "We have vaxenated a baby and got hold of a man with consumption." He also recounted how a Gypsy pulled his cart, loaded with chairs and baskets, up to their door and began urgently ringing the bell. Later Arthur thought that this farcical experience epitomized his chaotic early days in Southsea.

"Go away!" Arthur shouted downstairs toward the door, but the man kept ringing.

Innes went to the door, lifted up the flap of the letter box, and yelled out a repetition of Arthur's command.

The man swore at Innes and demanded to see the doctor.

Innes ran upstairs to tell Arthur that the Gypsy was a patient. Abruptly changing his tone, Arthur hurried downstairs to open the door. It turned out that the poor man was so determined because his child was suffering from measles.

"We got sixpence out of them," Innes wrote to his mother.

Under the circumstances, Innes naturally absorbed his older brother's preoccupation with money. Always looking over his shoulder at creditors, Arthur kept careful tallies of income and expenses; in letters to his mother he often itemized his parsimonious budgeting. Sometimes, when Mary

Doyle tried to send money, Arthur refused, once writing, “Lord knows I am as poor as Job but have a wealth of youth and pluck.” During the same time, he confidently declared to her, “There is nothing I put my mind to do that I have not done most completely.”

Despite his swagger, often he accepted her contributions or even requested help. Prior to his arrival in Portsmouth, he had insisted that she lend him £5 by return mail, but he was optimistic that soon he would not need to beg for help. He prophesied that within five years his annual income would rise to £1,000. During his first difficult months in Southsea, however, he went so far as to answer an advertisement he saw for a physician who would be willing to move to the Terai, in Nepal south of the Himalayas.

Ashamed of his poverty, and still a volatile young man, Arthur was quick to turn shame into anger when presented with a bill—as when he swore at a clothes cleaner and threw money at him. To his mother he confessed that his indignation at being dunned was exceeded only by his outrage when a patient dared to object to his own demand for prompt payment. Once he ended a letter to a friend by remarking that he saw a “taxgatherer” coming and needed to bid her farewell so that he could hide under a table.

During his first year in Southsea, Arthur earned only £154, too little to even require a tax payment, as he noted on a form to the government. The form was returned with a scrawled commentary: *Most unsatisfactory*. Arthur wrote underneath those words *I entirely agree* and mailed it back. Inevitably such cheek led to an audit, but Arthur’s scribbled ledger of evidence resulted in a draw, and he departed on good terms with the laughing auditors.

However low his income, Arthur had to have access to books, so he joined a circulating library. Libraries had come a long way since the chained tomes of Renaissance Oxford. By the 1880s many kinds of libraries had sprouted to meet the growing demand during a century of rising literacy: subscription libraries, reading societies, circulating libraries, collections for medical schools and botanical gardens, book clubs devoted to poetry or fiction. Arthur read a great deal of history and science—not limited to medicine—but he also had an almost insatiable appetite for fiction.

After centuries in which poetry had represented the summit of literary achievement, fiction had climbed in the nineteenth century to a position as the most popular form of literature. It was also ever more critically esteemed, especially after the publication of such monumental works as Leo Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in 1869, George Eliot's *Middlemarch* a couple of years later, and Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* in 1875. "We have become a novel-reading people, from the Prime Minister down to the last-appointed scullery maid," Trollope had observed in 1870, at a lecture in Edinburgh. "Poetry we also read and history, biography and the social and political news of the day. But all our other reading put together hardly amounts to what we read in novels."

By Arthur's time, all but the wealthiest readers joined libraries and borrowed novels rather than purchased them. Earlier major writers such as Charles Dickens and his primary rival, William Makepeace Thackeray, had issued most of their novels in monthly (or sometimes weekly) installments, and Trollope's angry and satirical *The Way We Live Now* had been one of the last significant publications in that form. Periodical publication also had its faults. But most British writers of book-length fiction in the 1880s targeted the market dominated by Charles Edward Mudie and his vastly popular Mudie's Lending Library and Mudie's Subscription Library. The library trade was dominated by what had long been known as "three-decker" novels, after the three decks of seventeenth-century warships. The preceding century had seen popular novels such as Oliver Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* issued in two volumes and Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa* in seven. But such variety had been boxed into uniformity by the powerful libraries, which now all but insisted upon the three-volume format that had dominated the fiction market throughout Arthur's youth.

Digressions and subplots proliferated not because of a particular taste for literary corpulence but out of authors' need to fill the space that Mudie demanded. Many novelists conceived and planned their tales with the requisite format in mind. When *Far from the Madding Crowd*, Thomas Hardy's fourth novel and first commercial success, was published in 1874, the American novelist and critic Henry James complained, "The work has been distended to its rather formidable dimensions by the infusion of a large amount of conversational and descriptive padding." In a private letter, Charles Reade, the author of Arthur's favorite novel, *The Cloister and the*

Hearth, had complained of the “childish egotism” motivating writers such as “the Tri-Volumniors.”

Arthur worked hard but was not entirely deprived of a social life. He joined the Literary and Scientific Society and attended its meetings and dances. He played cricket. Friends who visited included Claud Currie, whose inability to ship out on the *Hope* had opened the door for Arthur’s great Arctic adventure a couple of years earlier. One friend pronounced number 1, Bush Villas, to be “palatial” and “charming,” and called the consulting room “swagger”; another was surprised by the shortage of cutlery but impressed with the site’s potential as a medical practice.

As he settled into a new routine in Southsea, Arthur began to concentrate spare time on writing. Late into the night he scrawled stories—imitative at first, clearly beginner’s work, but stories. Carefully he copied them onto fresh foolscap, rolled them up, inserted them into mailing cylinders, and entrusted them to the postal service, which promptly returned them—like, he thought, paper boomerangs. Still, now and then he tasted success, enough to encourage him. He crafted some stories to order—one about a Derby sweepstakes, which he wrote in imitation of the style of the popular Welsh writer Rhoda Broughton, author of novels such as *Not Wisely, but Too Well* and the popular supernatural story “The Truth, the Whole Truth, and Nothing but the Truth.”

Arthur sent a brief story called “That Veteran” to *All the Year Round*. This legendary weekly could still honestly run atop every double-page spread of its two-column pages the heading *Conducted by* | *Charles Dickens*, twelve years after the beloved author’s death, because his son, Charles Junior, had inherited the editorship. Finally, after months of waiting, Arthur received a check for £2.50, about half what he expected. Even after all this time, the magazine postdated the check by four days—a practice, a bank clerk informed Arthur when he went to deposit it, not only illegal but also a howling alarm of bad credit. It did not seem a good omen for his writing career.

CHAPTER 12

The Circular Tour

After ten years of such work I was as unknown as if I had never dipped a pen into an ink bottle.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

During his first few months at Bush Villas, Arthur turned his imagination to his whaling voyage two years earlier. The dramatic scenes of the Arctic, its ethereal beauty, and the romantic melancholy it inspired had remained with him, and he drew upon vivid memories to write a ghost story, “The Captain of the ‘Pole-Star,’” which he sold to *Temple Bar* for a satisfying ten guineas. It showed no great originality in his conception of a ship captain haunted by the ghost of his former love, who lures him onto an ice floe, where he dies. But the setting was vivid, the atmosphere forbidding, and Arthur conjured a dramatic sense of tragic fate. Turning toward his own experience for background, resurrecting scenes he had witnessed—he even made the narrator a young ship’s doctor—he soon rose above his first tales situated in exotic but poorly imagined settings such as the Australian gold fields or the North American frontier.

During 1883, continuing to harvest his seafaring memories, he wrote “J. Habakuk Jephson’s Statement” and began sending it to magazines. Arthur was fascinated by the already legendary fate of a British merchant brigantine named the *Mary Celeste*. He had been reading about it for more than a decade. In early December 1872, when Arthur was thirteen, the 282-ton ship was found derelict four hundred miles east of the Azores, with its cargo of seventeen hundred barrels of industrial alcohol still in the hold but threatened by three feet of sloshing water. The ship had been at sea for a month, its last log entry dated November 25. Unmanned but still under full sail, it was drifting toward Gibraltar. Its captain, his wife, their young

daughter, and seven crewmen had vanished—along with the ship’s single lifeboat. One of her pumps had been disassembled, but there was no sign of violence or accident to explain the absence of people. Pirates would have looted; a storm would have wrecked. During the intervening decade, despite government investigations and idle speculation, no trace of the family or crew had been found.

For some reason, Arthur changed the name of the ship from *Mary Celeste* to *Marie Celeste*, while keeping the real name of the captain and even of the rescue ship, the *Dei Gratia*. Most of his account was fictional. To make his own story more eerie, for example, Arthur claimed that both of the ship’s lifeboats were present. He added the supernatural-sounding detail that the ship, despite its abandonment, had remained so becalmed that a thread bobbin had not even rolled off the sewing machine.

In the summer of 1883, Arthur was delighted when “J. Habakuk Jephson’s Statement” was accepted by James Payn, editor of *The Cornhill*, probably the most distinguished publisher of short fiction in Britain. The esteemed monthly—to whose pages Arthur had long aspired—had been founded in 1859 by the since legendary editor George Murray Smith. He was the son of George Smith, cofounder of the publishing firm Smith, Elder & Co., which was known for the high quality of its offerings, ranging from Charles Darwin’s scientific travelogue, *Zoology of the Voyage of the Beagle*, to Charlotte Brontë’s novel *Jane Eyre*. To steer *The Cornhill*, the primary rival of Dickens’s monthly *All the Year Round*, Smith hired William Makepeace Thackeray, Dickens’s primary rival as a novelist. *The Cornhill*’s status was such that Queen Victoria chose it to serialize her *Leaves from the Journal of Our Life in the Highlands*.

James Payn was a writer himself, author of moderately popular novels such as *Lost Sir Massingberd* and *Richard Arbour, or The Family Scapegrace*. He had written many stories before venturing to tackle a novel. After more than a decade editing Edinburgh’s own *Chambers’s Journal*, he had become editor of *The Cornhill* as recently as 1883, when Leslie Stephen, the former editor, stepped down.

When Arthur got his hands on a copy of the January 1884 issue, there was his story, the lead, with half the first page taken up by a striking illustration of a half-naked black African. To Arthur’s delight, his story did

not disappear into the void. A year later the *Boston Herald* reprinted it, apparently construing it as a factual account.

Meanwhile, Arthur's 1882 *London Society* story "Bones, or, The April Fool of Harvey's Sluice" had been reprinted in 1885 by the U.S. publisher Dodd, Mead in volume four of its anthology *Tales from Many Sources*. Therein Arthur and other young British authors such as Thomas Hardy stood amid their better-known colleagues—Wilkie Collins, popular children's author Juliana H. Ewing, James Payn, and Charles Reade. It was Arthur's first appearance between book covers.

A second soon followed. In October 1887 the editor George Redway included "J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement" in his prominent three-volume anthology *Dreamland and Ghostland: Strange Stories of Coincidence and Ghostly Adventure*, which bore the misleading extended subtitle *Embracing Remarkable Dreams, Presentiments, and Coincidences, Records of Singular Personal Experience by Various Writers, Startling Stories from Individual and Family History, Mysterious Incidents from the Lips of Living Narrators, and Some Psychological Studies, Grave and Gay*. Redway chose a couple of Arthur's other stories as well, but only those narrated in the first person in a manner that might be interpreted as factual. Thus Arthur's imagined details, including the newly French-sounding name *Marie Celeste*, soon became part of the ship's myth.

"Have you seen what they say about your *Cornhill* story?" a friend called to Arthur on a Portsmouth street one winter day in early 1884. He was waving a London evening newspaper.

Eager for praise but cautiously donning a modest expression, Arthur peered over his friend's shoulder as the man turned to the column and read aloud: "*The Cornhill* this month has a story in it which would have made Thackeray turn in his grave."

Arthur said later that the alleged friend escaped assault only because there were witnesses nearby on the street.

This incident reminded Arthur of the rare benefits of anonymity. Mostly, like other writers, he experienced only the frustrations attending anonymous publication. Soon, however, praise helped balance the scales. More than one reviewer speculated that the author of "J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement"

was Robert Louis Stevenson. This mistake was flattering—Arthur admired the work of his fellow Scot—but it did nothing to enhance Arthur’s own reputation, except with editors. Distant critical applause could not be heard at Arthur’s upstairs desk in Southsea.

But Stevenson himself suffered the same questions of identity when he published shorter tales rather than novels. Less than two years earlier, Arthur had picked up a two-year-old issue of *The Cornhill*, dated September–October 1880, and with excitement read a long story, “The Pavilion on the Links.” Not until later that year did he, along with many other readers, confirm the authorship of this story—and of others he had enjoyed—when they appeared together in *New Arabian Nights*, under the byline of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Such speculation was rampant in publishing. Most fiction published in periodicals at the time was unsigned. Political journalists earlier in the century had worn anonymity as their armor, and afterward it remained in fashion. Although his editorship drew readers, Charles Dickens had used writers’ anonymity to mask the extent of his own contributions to his periodicals *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. Dickens felt that such intrusive editing lent his periodical a unified voice, an overall house style, but many contributors considered it an erasure of their individuality. By Arthur’s time, anonymous publishing was slowly expiring but not yet dead. Publishers had realized that a famous author’s name on the cover or masthead would lure subscribers, and that anonymity had at times disguised slanderers and other irresponsible writers. And writers were increasingly eager to gain credit for their labors.

Gradually the ambitious Arthur decided that only with publication of a novel could he draw attention to his work. In 1883 he wrote his first novel, a rather awkward and static tale with the bland title *The Narrative of John Smith*. In it Arthur gazed into a mirror and wrote about a medico who yearned to write fiction. Arthur made an effort to step outside himself by making the narrator twice his own age and handicapped with gout, thus forced to narrow his focus onto a stack of blank paper, but it was an unconvincing personation. He speculated on the origins of religion, on the urge to write, on politics, on women, on life in general. The book was more a series of sketches and miniature essays than a novel.

Finally Arthur sent out the manuscript—only to have it lost in the mail. It was never received by the publisher and never returned to the author. To his inquiries, the post office replied on its standard blue forms that they had no record of it. Arthur tried rewriting it from memory, but he seems to have given up in frustration or simply lost interest, perhaps because this freshman project went stale as he outgrew it. He never finished the rewrite.

Summoning his usual determination, he tried again. During 1884 and 1885, Arthur wrote a novel entitled *The Firm of Girdlestone*. The melodramatic plot somewhat resembled that of *A Lost Name*, an 1868 novel by Sheridan Le Fanu, the celebrated Irish master of ghost stories and Gothic thrillers. Stepping considerably outside his own experience this time, Arthur told the story of the escalating chicanery perpetrated by John Girdlestone, founder of the London firm of Girdlestone and Company, and his son Ezra, in their desperate attempts to hide the financial ruin caused by the elder Girdlestone's speculations. Arthur moved from a static structure for *The Narrative of John Smith* to a frenetic one for *The Firm of Girdlestone*. He told his sister that his book abounded in exciting murder scenes, and added, "I would need a private graveyard to plant all my characters in."

Arthur didn't try to hide his contempt for the Scrooge-like financiers. When three crew members die on one of the firm's ships, the younger Girdlestone remarks mercilessly, "We know very well what that means. Three women, each with an armful of brats, besieging the office and clamouring for a pension."

From the beginning, Arthur realized that the novel was derivative and uninspired. To his mother he described it as "fairly good as light literature goes nowadays." But he kept sending it out. Publishers just as reliably returned it, in what Arthur later described as "the circular tour" that manuscripts take from writer to editor and back to writer like homing pigeons. Privately sharing their opinion, he felt that he couldn't blame publishers for not snapping up *Girdlestone*.

CHAPTER 13

The Unseen World

There is great promise, I think, in the faces of the dead. They say it is but the post-mortem relaxation of the muscles, but it is one of the points on which I would like to see science wrong.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *THE STARK MUNRO LETTERS*

In December 1883, Arthur's lighthearted short story "Selecting a Ghost" appeared in *London Society*, which over the preceding couple of years had also published "The American's Tale," "The Gully of Bluemansdyke," and others of his stories. This time, rather than trafficking in spooks of his own, Arthur mocked the claims of spiritualist mediums that they could summon ghosts on demand. The narrator, Silas D'Odd, has grown wealthy in the grocery business and as a consequence has bought a castle, Goresthorne Grange, but he is shocked to learn that the moldering corridors lack a ghost: "As the presence of a kennel presupposes that of a dog, so I imagined that it was impossible that such desirable quarters should be untenanted by one or more restless shades."

D'Odd and his wife turn to her cousin, who has already furnished the castle with a crest and fake family portraits. Eventually, under the influence of a drug, D'Odd finds several ghosts applying to him for work at Goresthorne. "I am the invisible nonentity," sighs one. "I am electric, magnetic, and spiritualistic. I am the great ethereal sigh-heaver." Other ghosts appear—an old woman who says, "Sir Walter was partial to me"; a cavalier who boasts, "There is a blood stain over my heart . . . I am patronised by many old Conservative families"; a vague presence who quavers, "I snatch letters and place invisible hands on people's wrists." Finally a horrific vision of rotting bones in a shroud murmurs, "I am the embodiment of Edgar Allan Poe . . . I am a low-caste spirit-subduing

spectre . . . Work with grave-clothes, a coffin-lid, and a galvanic battery.” In the end Silas D’Odd discovers that he was hallucinating under the influence of chloral.

Arthur may have been mocking himself in part, because during this time he began to explore spiritualism, the belief that after death disembodied spirits can communicate with the living. During his years in Southsea, Arthur read dozens of books about spiritualism, which in its alleged physical manifestations claimed to provide demonstrable evidence—rather than demanding a leap of faith—that the human spirit survives death. His earliest memory was the sight of his dead maternal grandmother in June 1862, before his fourth birthday. In 1881, while still in Edinburgh, he had attended a spiritualist lecture entitled “Does Death End All?” Now, in Southsea, he thought obsessively about this topic. In 1876, the great naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace, who had recognized the importance of natural selection at the same time as Charles Darwin, published a collection of three long essays about spiritualism, *On Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*. Arthur read this book attentively, along with dozens of other volumes exploring the question of whether some part of a human being’s personality and character—some essence or distillation—might survive and even transcend the death of its vehicle.

In early 1885, a Southsea colleague and friend, Dr. William Royston Pike, consulted with Arthur about a patient—a young man named John (inevitably nicknamed Jack) Hawkins, who suffered from seizures that seemed to be growing steadily worse. Arthur accompanied Pike and examined the pale and feeble patient, who was twenty-five, only a month older than himself. Sadly, he confirmed the older doctor’s diagnosis of the seizures’ cause—cerebral meningitis, an inflammation of the tissues surrounding the brain. Usually it was fatal.

When examining Jack, Arthur met the rest of the Hawkins family. A Gloucestershire widow, Emily Hawkins had moved to Southsea only a few months earlier with her son Jack and her daughter Mary Louisa. Nicknamed “Touie,” Jack’s sister was almost twenty-eight. The family rented a terraced flat not far away, overlooking the sea and Southsea Common. Soon Jack grew worse, and apparently because of conflicts at their lodging, Arthur

offered his own spare bedroom at Bush Villas to Jack. This way he could attend the boy himself at a moment's notice. Emily Hawkins already had one son in a Gloucester mental asylum, and naturally preferred that Jack not go to a hospital—the last resort for the sick because of the mortality rate in such institutions.

Although it was a generous and romantic gesture, apparently Arthur expected to also get paid for this on-site medical work. In his autobiographical novel *The Stark Munro Letters*, the patient's family asks the narrator to recommend lodging and Munro offers his own house. "Both ladies thanked me a very great deal more than I deserved," he remarks; "for after all it was a business matter, and a resident patient was the very thing I needed." When he offered to take in Jack Hawkins, Arthur was in financial straits. Again unable to meet his bills in Southsea, he had recently forwarded some to his faithful mother, knowing that she would pay them, as she had in the past.

Jack's condition had been steadily worsening, and he died on the twenty-fifth of March, only a few days after moving into Arthur's house. Two days later, Arthur rode with the Hawkins family as Jack's coffin was conveyed from Bush Villas—a hearse parked outside must have been a poor advertisement for a physician—to the relatively new Highland Road Cemetery. During this time 40 percent of the burials at Highland Road were of children. Many had not dodged illness and accident to reach adulthood, and their small gravestones stood in solemn rows with the larger stones of their kin as Arthur's patient was laid to rest.

Hardly had Arthur returned to Bush Villas when a policeman arrived to interrogate him about Jack's death. There was a question about whether anyone might profit from it, especially this little-known young physician, in whose house the patient had quickly expired. Fortunately, Dr. Pike had examined Jack, at Arthur's request, only the night before his death. Pike's professional opinion of the case, along with his established reputation, freed Arthur from suspicion.

Arthur found the death of his young patient traumatic, professionally and personally. But there were larger philosophical implications. For some years, Arthur had described himself as an agnostic and skeptic. Gradually, however, he had begun to yearn for greater spiritual satisfaction than he found in a materialist's view of life. Now and then he even attended a table-

rapping session, in which a medium in a darkened parlor claimed to communicate with the spirits of those who had “crossed to the other side,” as spiritualists liked to say. Arthur struggled to accept the mediums’ oracular ambiguity and theatrical table-rapping as evidence. The death of Jack Hawkins prompted further speculation along these lines.

* * *

Arthur’s father was not dead, but his absence from the family was almost as final. In early 1885 Charles Doyle, while still an inmate at Blairerno, somehow got his hands on a bottle and, furiously drunk yet again, began to believe that God was ordering him to escape. In struggling to obey, he broke a window. When he tried to leave, staff restrained him, and he fought back, striking everyone within reach.

As a consequence, in May, Charles left the facility aimed at helping peaceable alcoholics. He was moved to where a professional staff was better prepared to deal with volatile behavior—not far south, to the Royal Lunatic Asylum in the village of Hillside, north of Montrose. Founded in 1781 as the Montrose Lunatic Asylum, Infirmary & Dispensary, largely through local private subscription, it had received its first royal charter in 1810, and was the oldest such institution in Scotland. It had grown in both quality of treatment and accommodations for inmates during its century of existence. In 1858 new buildings were built on nearby Sunnyside Farm, primarily a long three-story hospital in the Tudor revival style. Locally the entire institution came to be called Sunnyside. The old buildings remained part of the hospital, and it was in these that a befuddled Charles found himself.

His behavior at Blairerno had been so alarming that the authorities took action even before notifying Mary or Arthur. Admission of a patient on an emergency basis, according to the lunacy laws in Scotland, required examination by two physicians, both of whom had to submit their medical evaluation to a sheriff. Charles was quick to supply Sunnyside with just cause. Immediately he informed one of the doctors, James Ironside, that he was receiving messages “from the unseen world.” With his growing interest in spiritualism, Arthur may have been impressed by this remark. When the

other doctor, James Duffus, began questioning Charles, the patient began swearing and calling the doctor and his staff devils.

Charles also maintained that he had been to Sunnyside before, which was untrue, and claimed first that his brother was dead and then that he was living. He was unable to summon the names of his children. Both doctors certified Charles's inability to function on his own, and the sheriff authorized his incarceration. Charles joined the five hundred or so patients at Sunnyside, the great majority of whom were paupers cared for out of charity, with about eighty patients whose family paid their way.

Charles seemed to be in good overall physical health. But Dr. Duffus wrote of the new patient, "Has been weak minded & nervous from his youth, and from his own account took refuge in alcoholics very early to give him courage &c.. . . Is, or was a clever draughtsman, & is the brother of the Doyle connected with *Punch* in its early days." Charles also confessed to Duffus that while drunk he had attacked a servant girl at Blairerno.

Apparently the Doyle family accepted the admitting physicians' assessment of Charles, for he remained at Sunnyside. Mary began to worry that if Charles were free he would quickly kill himself with drink, and possibly harm someone else along the way. However sad it was for Arthur that his father was institutionalized, Sunnyside was an alternative that the family could contemplate without shame. Dr. James Howden, the superintending physician, rejected the barbarism of the past and wanted his institution to remain in the vanguard of compassionate treatment. "We must not . . . lose sight of the great principle of non-restraint . . . which has revolutionised the treatment of the insane," he wrote, "so that the modern asylum has the character and aims of a Hospital and a Sanitorium rather than of a Prison or a Poorhouse." Reform in such arenas was a growing movement. Novelist Charles Reade had also written *Hard Cash*, an exposé of the abuse and exploitation of inmates housed in private insane asylums—a novel that, like the crusading works of Charles Dickens, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and others, had effected real change in the world.

Thus Sunnyside was not a place of punishment. Entertainments ranged from magic lantern shows to picnics and dances. The constantly touring D'Oyly Carte Opera Company, a collaboration between theater impresario

Richard D'Oyly Carte and the comic opera team of lyricist W. S. Gilbert and composer Arthur Sullivan, even brought its troupe to Sunnyside.

At first Charles was so confused he didn't understand where he was or how he had gotten there. "Does not remember in the afternoon," wrote one physician of him, "whether he was out in the morning." In mid-July a physician at Sunnyside wrote that during the preceding week Charles had been weak and confused, complaining "of an overpowering presentiment that he was going to die, that he would die in 48 hours." Charles consulted twice with a priest, prayed often, and read his prayer book. From Blairerno, David Forbes informed the Sunnyside physician that Charles had often behaved in this way. More than once, Forbes had seen Charles lie down as if to die, only to gradually "come to life again."

Although he was generally considered an equable patient, his troubles grew worse rather than better. In mid-November, an attending physician wrote of Charles, "This morning took an epileptic attack of general convulsions, the first fits we have known him have." There had been no record of epilepsy before, but the disease sometimes had been known to follow other traumatic damage to the body—such as toxic levels of drink. Afterward Charles did not recall the seizure. Gradually such attacks occurred more frequently, and his memory declined until he could not be expected to recall even the most recent events. He was hidden away from society and family. For Charles, it was not the afterlife so much as his own daily life that became the unseen world.

The next year, in his story "John Barrington Cowles," which was published in *Cassel's Saturday Journal*, Arthur described a character with telling details: "As I supported him towards his lodgings I could see that he was not only suffering from the effects of a recent debauch, but that a long course of intemperance had affected his nerves and his brain."

The death of Jack Hawkins at Bush Villas naturally precipitated a greater intimacy between the Hawkins family and Arthur. Even as they grieved, Touie and her mother felt guilty that Arthur had unwittingly invited such trauma into his life. Soon Arthur found himself drawn to the quiet but amusing Touie. Petite, with childishly small hands and feet, Touie radiated quiet poise. She had a glint in her eye suggesting that she was ready for

humor, but she refused to laugh at insults or at jokes performed at someone else's expense. Quickly their interest blossomed into romance. Although there is no record of dramatic passion on either side, Arthur confessed later that quiet little Touie inspired his most protective masculine urges.

On the sixth of August, four and a half months after Jack's death, the Reverend S. R. Stable united Arthur and Touie as husband and wife in the Thornton-in-Lonsdale parish church, in Yorkshire—near Bryan Waller's estate at Masongill, where Arthur's mother had been living since about 1883, paying a nominal rent to Waller.

A. Conan Doyle, MD, wrote Arthur precisely on the register. The license noted that he was the son of Charles Doyle, artist. Touie signed as *Louise Hawkins*, revising as usual her birth name, Mary Louisa. She would have still been mourning the death of her brother, and probably there were few guests. Although Arthur may not have been happy about it, Bryan Waller was present; he signed as witness to Touie's signature. Arthur's sister Conny, home from Portugal, was present, as was Innes, now a rambunctious twelve-year-old.

Several of Touie's siblings had died already, and as a consequence she received a larger share of her father's estate than otherwise would have been the case. For one thing, she received a greater percentage of profits from businesses and rents from properties. Her father's will had also insisted upon no hearse to convey his coffin but rather that it be carried to the gravesite on the shoulders of honest, sober workingmen, each of whom was to be paid £1.

With no family money of his own to add to the equation, soon Arthur responsibly signed up for life insurance policies. But his new legal situation meant that thenceforth he would be in charge of Touie's income, which came to £100 per year. Thus from the date of their wedding he faced fewer worries about money. Arthur wrote little in his letters and elsewhere about the early days of the marriage, and at first it seems to have had little overall effect on his life. During their honeymoon in Ireland, he often played cricket.

Gradually, as he settled into marriage, and as he accepted Touie's legacy as a part of their combined income, Arthur began to devote more time to writing. His short stories had built up a small reputation within the publishing world, but he needed to write a novel. He thought he had a good

idea for a book-length adventure in the flourishing genre of detective stories. He began to imagine how a mind such as Dr. Joseph Bell's would sparkle if turned to the solving of crimes.

Part 2

Prophets and Police

Every writer is imitative at first. I think that is an absolute rule; though sometimes he throws back on some model which is not easily traced.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

The Method of Zadig

Voltaire taught us the method of Zadig, and every good teacher of medicine or surgery exemplifies every day in his teaching and practice the method and its results.

—JOSEPH BELL

When Arthur sat down to create a scientific detective, he was not only joining the flourishing genre of crime fiction; he was also conjuring the latest incarnation of a persistent ideal in literature. Now and then across the millennia, amid the chaos and unfairness of society, a writer had imagined a just, rational hero whose eagle eye and respect for evidence enabled him to stride boldly free of bias and preconception. As Arthur well knew, Edgar Allan Poe was not the first writer to imagine the critical observation and rational analysis of evidence. Poe consciously sent Dupin following in the footsteps of distinguished predecessors, particularly a biblical prophet and a supercilious philosopher.

The biblical book of Daniel, dated by modern scholars to the second or third century B.C.E., comprises both legendary Aramaic court tales and visions of apocalypse. One of the former stories about Daniel—lion tamer, dragon killer, and prophet—describes his investigation of a crime. A man of noble heritage, Daniel is among the Hebrews exiled in Babylon. Like “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” one of the Daniel stories is a locked-room mystery.

“Why do you not worship Bel?” demands the Persian king Cyrus of Daniel. The name Bel was actually a title, meaning roughly “master” or “lord,” and among the Hebrews it seems to have been associated particularly with Marduk, a Mesopotamian deity who later became the patron god of Babylon.

“Because I do not revere idols made with hands,” replies Daniel, “but only the living God who made heaven and earth and has dominion over all flesh.”

“You do not think Bel is a living god? Do you not see how much he eats and drinks every day?” Each evening twelve measures of flour, forty sheep, and six containers of wine were placed as offerings before the holy statue of Bel.

“Do not be deceived, O king,” Daniel says with a smirk and a laugh. “It is only clay inside and bronze outside; it has never eaten or drunk anything.”

The furious Cyrus calls for his seventy priests of Bel and offers an ultimatum: “Unless you tell me who it is who consumes these provisions, you shall die. But if you can show that Bel consumes them, Daniel shall die for blaspheming Bel.”

Daniel shrugs. “Let it be as you say.”

The priests make their preparations and inform Cyrus that they are leaving for the night. “You, O king, set out the food and prepare the wine. Then shut the door and seal it with your ring. If you do not find that Bel has eaten it all when you return in the morning, we are to die. Otherwise Daniel shall die for his lies against us.”

The priests depart. Cyrus places his offerings before the statue of Bel. With only the king beside him, Daniel instructs his servants to bring ashes from fires and to spread them across the floor inside the temple. Only then do they leave, with the king using his signet ring to seal the door behind them.

The next morning the king returns with Daniel, sees the unbroken seal, and asks rhetorically, “Are the seals unbroken, Daniel?”

“They are unbroken, O king.”

Cyrus himself opens the door and peers in at the now empty table that the night before had groaned with offerings, and he praises his god. “You are great, O Bel. There is no deceit in you.”

But Daniel won’t yet permit Cyrus to enter the room. From the doorway he indicates the dusting of ashes on the floor. “Look at the floor, and consider whose footprints these are.”

“I see the footprints of men, women, and children!” says the king.

Daniel examines the footprints and shows Cyrus that the priests were using a secret entrance under the offering table. Each night they had been entering the temple, with their wives and children, to feast upon the offerings. The furious king rounds up all his priests, who show Cyrus the secret door. He orders them all killed. Furious and disappointed, he turns the statue of Bel—indeed, the entire temple—over to the proto-detective. Daniel destroys them.

In his revelation of what actually happened behind the scenes, Daniel provides the kind of narrative satisfaction that would later draw readers such as Arthur Conan Doyle to this kind of story—a reconfiguring of the reader's assumptions, the replacement of what seems to have happened with what actually happened. He also proves the value of diligent attention to physical clues.

More than two millennia later, in the late 1740s, the French philosopher and satirist François-Marie Arouet, who wrote under the nom de plume Voltaire, published *Zadig, or, The Book of Fate*. Although Voltaire presented Zadig as a Babylonian philosopher, the author's satire was aimed straight at the inequalities and trumpery of mid-eighteenth-century Europe. In a life as engineered for rhetorical points as that of *Candide*, Voltaire's later creation, Zadig encounters every kind of misfortune, from war to thwarted love. He remains strictly rational, so attentive to the overlooked clues around him that he seems to possess supernatural insight.

In Voltaire's account, Zadig is strolling outdoors when he is accosted by a royal eunuch, who with his attendants is searching the thickets and fields. "Young man, have not you seen, pray, her majesty's dog?"

"You mean her bitch, I presume," replies Zadig with the kind of omniscient smugness that Edgar Allan Poe would later assign to Dupin.

"You are very right, sir, 'tis a spaniel bitch indeed."

"And very small," Zadig remarks. "She has had puppies too lately. She's a little lame with her left forefoot and has long ears."

The eunuch asks, naturally, which way the dog ran.

But Zadig replies that he hasn't seen her, and that he didn't even know the queen had such a dog until the eunuch mentioned it.

This comic routine plays out again when the king's favorite horse escapes its groom and the huntsman asks Zadig if he has glimpsed it.

"No horse ever galloped smoother," replies our hero. "He is about five foot high. His hoofs are very small. His tail is about three foot six inches long. The studs of his bit are of pure gold, about twenty-three carats. And his shoes are of silver, about eleven pennyweight apiece."

"Whereabouts is he?" asks the relieved huntsman.

"I never set eyes on him."

Naturally the eunuch and the huntsman think that Zadig is lying, for some obscure reason, because clearly he has seen both animals. They drag Zadig before a judge, who condemns him to be whipped. Before the sentence can be executed, both the dog and horse are found and returned to the king. Clearly Zadig is innocent. The judges rescind the whipping but charge Zadig with lying and fine him four hundred ounces of gold.

Zadig relents and divulges his detective-style observational method. First he noticed a small dog's footprints in sand that showed a streaked pattern between them wherever the sand rose, indicating that it was a bitch with pendant teats, thus mother of a recent litter of pups. Slight brushings alongside the front paw prints suggested the presence of long ears. One consistently faint paw print indicated lameness. As for the horse, Zadig noticed its tracks in the road were equidistant, indicating that they were made by a trained galloper. In a lane only seven feet wide, the horse's tail had brushed dust off each side, so its tail must be at least three and a half feet long. The philosopher saw leaves knocked off a tree at a height of five feet. The golden bridle and silver shoes had left marks on different kinds of stone.

The resulting notoriety attracts so much adoring attention that Zadig resolves to keep his mouth shut in the future.

Nine years before Voltaire died in 1778, Jean Léopold Nicolas Frédéric Cuvier was born in France. He became one of the great zoologists, well known to Arthur as Baron Cuvier. Although he vehemently opposed the evolutionary ideas of Lamarck and others, who maintained that animals had changed slowly over time in response to their environment, Cuvier

demonstrated that extinction had occurred—a revelation that dealt a major philosophical blow to the ecclesiastical view of a static and perfect nature.

In Arthur's time Cuvier was honored mostly for his extensive work in the comparative anatomy of animals, living and extinct. One of his most influential contributions to natural philosophy was his discovery that to an educated eye a single bone can reveal much about the structure and behavior of the creature that once possessed it, because of the predictable correlation between various parts of animals' bodies. Unearthing fossils in every direction, scientists used Cuvier's discovery as the cornerstone of paleontology, and such similarities were part of what Darwin later reinterpreted as evidence of kinship.

"Today," wrote Cuvier, "someone who sees the print of a cloven hoof can conclude that the animal which left the print was a ruminative one, and this conclusion is as certain as any that can be made in physics or moral philosophy." Then he evoked Voltaire's contribution to his thinking about scientific detective work: "This single track therefore tells the observer about the kind of teeth, the kind of jaws, the haunches, the shoulder, and the pelvis of the animal which has passed: it is more certain evidence than all of Zadig's clues."

The Footmarks of Poe

Edgar Allan Poe, who, in his carelessly prodigal fashion, threw out the seeds from which so many of our present forms of literature have sprung, was the father of the detective tale, and covered its limits so completely that I fail to see how his followers can find any fresh ground which they can confidently call their own. For the secret of the thinness and also of the intensity of the detective story is, that the writer is left with only one quality, that of intellectual acuteness, with which to endow his hero. . . . On this narrow path the writer must walk, and he sees the footmarks of Poe always in front of him.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Before the evolution of detective stories into a genre that would draw Arthur's attention and ambition in the 1880s, fictional detectives first had to appear in other literary landscapes. Originally most such protagonists were not actual detectives, either official or private. An investigating amateur of the time was likely an innocent victim of a conspiracy or someone otherwise caught in a crime, one who pursued justice or revenge without recourse to official law and its enforcers.

This was the approach taken, for example, by English radical William Godwin in his scandalous 1794 novel *Things as They Are, or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*. In Godwin's tangled philosophical novel—a dramatization of some of the ideas he had expressed a year earlier in his *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice and Its Influence on Morals and Happiness*—he intended to show the ways in which innocent victims suffer from the byzantine mazes of an unjust society. With a talent for mishap worthy of Zadig, whose adventures had appeared half a century earlier, Caleb Williams works with all the resolve of a detective, but primarily to

save himself from the threat of violence and undeserved prosecution. He does not decipher clues à la Poe's later detective Auguste Dupin.

Edward Bulwer-Lytton moved further along the road toward an actual detective story in his 1828 novel *Pelham: or, The Adventures of a Gentleman*. Henry Pelham, however, is a snobbish young dandy who strives to liberate a friend unjustly arrested for murder. Legal shenanigans, atmospheric settings, menacing strangers, obscure clues, misleading circumstantial evidence—all the elements were there. Rising above his disdainful upbringing, Pelham collaborates with felons, masks himself as a priest, and ultimately triumphs. But he remains an avenging friend, a devoted amateur, not a detective.

Often such stories were also shrouded in Gothic trappings that distracted from the case and distinguished them from what Arthur came to think of as a detective story. Other writers approached the genre—including the German fabulist E. T. A. Hoffmann, for example, in his story “Mademoiselle Scuderi.” The bloody Inquisition brings death to Mademoiselle Scuderi's door, and she responds courageously and intelligently. However, she is not an investigator—not a trained professional such as Inspector Bucket, not a miraculously gifted amateur such as Auguste Dupin. Her methods could not be described as an organized investigation. For a long time, few talented writers crossed the Rubicon into constructing their narratives around the solving of a crime.

Born in Boston in 1809 to itinerant actors who died during his early childhood, Edgar Poe was adopted by the Allan family of Richmond, Virginia. They sent him to boarding schools in England, but he was back home by the age of eleven. In 1826 he enrolled in the University of Virginia and soon built up gambling debts that prompted him to leave college and join the army. Every move in his life was accompanied by trouble with demons such as alcohol and gambling. At the age of twenty-seven he married his thirteen-year-old first cousin, Virginia Clemm, with whom he adopted the kind of life his parents had lived, following work from city to city, first to Philadelphia, then Baltimore and New York City.

Poe was still in his teens when his first book was published—*Tamerlane and Other Poems*. Although he was a writer of great individuality, Poe—

born only a few years after the close of the eighteenth century—was rooted in Gothic melodrama. Upon his death in 1849 at the age of forty, he bequeathed literature a legacy that haunted the following decades with its seductive reek of depravity. Readers found it hard to forget the plague of the Red Death or William Wilson facing his doppelgänger. After closing a volume of Poe, the horrible crimes in the stories remained all too vivid—Montresor walling up Fortunato in a dank vault, a dead man’s heart that beats on in the ears of his murderer, the vengeful shriek of a black cat entombed with its murdered mistress. In stories about the glories and dangers of balloon travel, mesmerism, and voyages to the moon, Poe explored the possibilities of scientific (and pseudoscientific) discovery, joining a tradition that dated back to tales such as *Icaromenippus*, Lucian’s satirical second-century account of a flight to the moon. In Arthur’s youth this tradition had been rejuvenated by his favorite French adventure novelist, Jules Verne. His knowledge of science was apparent in his essay “Eureka: A Prose Poem,” which lyrically explored astronomers’ puzzlement over the question of why the night sky is black if space boasts an infinite number of stars. Other essays ranged from “The Philosophy of Furniture” to “The Rationale of Verse.”

Aside from Poe’s tales of fantasy and the macabre, crime fiction was also never the same after he contributed a few stories to the genre. Arthur particularly enjoyed Poe’s detective stories about an eccentric Frenchman named Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin, who showed off his ratiocinative skills in three cases. Poe’s offhand innovations included bringing back his detective protagonist for further adventures.

Two months after Poe became editor of the flourishing young Philadelphia periodical *Graham’s*, readers of the April 1, 1841, issue turned to page 165 and found, filling the lower half of the page, a poem entitled “Comparisons” by Charles West Thomson. An ordinary, safe poem of its time, it sprinkled a few obvious analogies between human life and that of ephemeral natural phenomena, opening with

A leaf upon the stream,
When the brook is rushing by
In its glorious summer dream,—
Such am I.—

Then, turning the page, unsuspecting readers encountered a story different from the usual magazine fare represented by Thomson's poem—a story so different, in fact, that it would soon be acclaimed as founding a new genre. There, in capitals near the top of page 166, appeared

THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE.

BY EDGAR A. POE.

Its opening read like a philosophical essay: "It is not improbable that a few farther steps in phrenological science will lead to a belief in the existence, if not to the actual discovery and location of an organ of *analysis*." For later editions, Poe removed the opening reference to phrenology, with its vision of a corporeal seat for analytical thought. But he retained his overall theme of the sensual delight in deciphering puzzles:

The mental features discoursed of as the analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis. We appreciate them only in their effects. . . . As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which disentangles. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations that bring his talent into play. He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, of hieroglyphics, exhibiting in his solutions of each a degree of acumen which appears to the ordinary apprehension preternatural.

Readers who kept going soon found themselves not in a philosophical discussion but in the presence of a new kind of story: the account of an investigation, an unraveling of a puzzle by means of reason and observation. The criminal as folk hero fighting an unjust society and royal whim—a staple of popular literature from the ballads of Robin Hood to Henry Fielding's 1743 fictionalized account of the real-life criminal Jonathan Wild and beyond—had suddenly been joined by the intellectual crime-fighter as hero. And soon Poe's readers were wandering in the dark alleyways of the penny newspapers, illuminated by a brilliant mind and a vivid writing style. Originally Poe had titled the story "The Murders in the Rue Trianon." The change to "Rue Morgue" was a wise decision, adding a chilling whiff of death from the first page.

Poe's surprised readers did not know how to think of this curious character Dupin. With London's metropolitan police force having been

founded as recently as 1829, only twelve years before Poe's story, the notion of a detective—professional or amateur, official or private—was unknown to most readers. In the story Poe did not even use the word *detective*, which had not yet been employed in this context.

Thus reviewers turned to other analogies to describe Dupin's talent. "The reader is disposed to believe that this must be the actual observation of some experienced criminal lawyer," wrote a commentator in the *Pennsylvania Inquirer*, in response to Dupin's debut, "the chain of evidence is so wonderfully maintained through so many intricacies, and the connexion of cause and effect so irresistibly demonstrated." The *Ladies' National Magazine* said flatly, "Mr. Poe is a man of genius . . . 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' is one of the most intensely interesting tales that has appeared for years."

None of Poe's work was more influential than this clever and revolutionary tale that, however outrageous its premise of murder by ape, eschews the supernatural in deciphering the mystery at its core. Poe brought Dupin back for two further adventures. He appeared next in "The Mystery of Marie Rogêt," published in *Snowden's Ladies' Companion* in installments that appeared in late 1842 and early 1843. It was inspired by the real-life murder in New York of an American woman named Mary Cecelia Rogers, but Poe moved the story to Dupin's Paris and Gallicized the victim's name. Many other details he borrowed with little change from newspaper accounts. While pretending to show how Dupin "unravelled the mystery of Marie's assassination," Poe later bragged, "I, in fact, enter into a very vigorous analysis of the real tragedy in New York." Such long-winded analysis weakened the story. With little action or dialogue, it was more of an essay, analyzing the popular evidence regarding a brutal crime that had obsessed the popular press in both Europe and the United States.

In December 1844, a third and final Dupin case appeared in a publication called *The Gift: A Christmas and New Year's Present for 1845*. "The Purloined Letter" was decidedly a detective story, and one that emphasized Dupin's skill as an armchair puzzle solver. In the 1840s Poe wrote other stories that addressed investigative techniques and the unraveling of tangled clues, launching a number of ideas that soon became characteristic of the genre. He wrote the first story in which a detective springs a surprise on a murderer to elicit a confession ("Thou Art the Man"), and the first in which

a detective shadows a suspect through urban throngs (“The Man of the Crowd”). “The Gold-Bug” featured a Dupin-like logician named William Legrand—another impoverished aristocrat, but this time in New Orleans rather than Paris—and centered on a treasure hunt and the deciphering of a coded message.

Planning “Rue Morgue” so carefully—later he described it as “written backwards”—Poe was taking to its limit his notion of the need for unity of effect in fiction. He well understood that, knowing his solution before setting pen to paper, he wrote like a magician whose first job was to misdirect the viewer’s eye. “These tales of ratiocination owe most of their popularity to being something in a new key,” Poe wrote to the American poet Phillip Pendleton Cook. “I do not mean to say that they are not ingenious—but people think them more ingenious than they are. In the ‘Murders in the Rue Morgue,’ for instance, where is the ingenuity of unravelling a web which you yourself (the author) have woven for the express purpose of unravelling?”

Poe was writing only a few decades after Baron Cuvier explained his discoveries regarding the correlation of body parts in animals. In “Rue Morgue,” the detective hands a volume of scientific writings to the narrator and says, “Read now this passage from Cuvier.” Dupin consults the great zoologist in part because they have similar methods—the reconstruction of a full scene from a few pieces of evidence.

In “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” the bodies of a young woman and her mother, Mademoiselle Camille L’Espanaye and Madame L’Espanaye, are found inside a locked apartment on the fourth floor of a house in the Rue Morgue in the Quartier St. Roch in Paris. They have been the victims of a brutal murder. Wild cries in the night draw a crowd and gendarmes. They find the daughter’s still-warm body stuffed inside the fireplace’s chimney, and the mother’s sprawled in a paved courtyard behind the building—her throat slashed so viciously that, when the gendarmes try to raise the body, her head falls off.

Dupin informs the narrator that he knows G——, the prefect of police, who will grant permission for the amateur puzzle lover to examine the scene of the crime. Dupin resembles a Gothic protagonist in taste and

mannerisms, but he strolls through Poe's bloody story like the embodiment of reason. The narrator of "Rue Morgue" serves primarily as audience for a disquisition, and—despite the bloodshed—the case remains for Dupin an intellectual exercise.

In time Dupin unravels the mystery and reveals that the murderer was an orangutan who had escaped from his owner, an irresponsible mariner. Frightened by the women's response to him, the ape acted blindly and killed Madame L'Esplanaye—readers eventually learn—by holding the razor and mimicking gestures he had seen his master perform at a shaving mirror. Dupin places an advertisement in *Le Monde*, a paper known for its shipping news, claiming to have captured on the morning of the murder "a very large, tawny Ourang-Outang of the Bornese species." The sailor snaps at the bait—and, captured by Dupin and his Boswell, he confesses all in a manner that became a common denouement in detective stories.

Naturally Poe was himself drawing upon much that he had read. Just as his 1839 doppelgänger story "William Wilson" had been inspired in part by a similar idea in Washington Irving's little-known story "An Unwritten Drama of Lord Byron," so did his detective story have roots in many sources. Even his villain was not conjured purely out of his own arabesque imagination. The American poet and soldier David Humphreys was known for his late eighteenth-century satirical poem "The Monkey Who Shaved Himself and His Friends." The titular primate, Jacko, imitates his barber master's gestures with a razor. After wounding a dog and cat, Jacko tries to carry out an action he has often watched his master perform—shaving himself. But of course the monkey doesn't understand the danger. In the end he "drew razor swift as he could pull it, / And cut, from ear to ear, his gullet."

Mischievous simians had cavorted in European fiction since before Voltaire's *Candide* mistook two women's monkey paramours for attackers. Poe's choice of a particular animal villain—an orangutan—had a more direct ancestor in the work of another writer close to Arthur's heart. Walter Scott's 1832 novel *Count Robert of Paris*, the master's penultimate book and one of which Arthur was quite fond, featured a homicidal "Ourang Outang." Scott described it as having "a strange chuckling hoarse voice," and later it emits "a deep wailing and melancholy cry, having in it something human, which excited compassion."

Poe's murderer also emits terrifying cries. In the first newspaper account of the murders, Dupin reads that "the inhabitants of the Quartier St. Roch were aroused from sleep by a succession of terrific shrieks." The gendarme reports loud and drawn-out screams. He hears a gruff Frenchman and also a shrill voice, "that of a foreigner." Poe had fun with the witnesses. A Frenchman thinks the shrill voice is that of an Italian; a Dutchman is certain it was French; possibly German, says an Englishman; undoubtedly English, insists a Spaniard. But of course it is an orangutan, screaming like Walter Scott's orangutan but waving a razor like David Humphreys's monkey.

Poe imitated other aspects of Scott's orangutan's behavior. "Something then, of very great size, in the form of a human being," wrote Scott, "jumped down from the trap-door, though that height must be above fourteen feet." Eventually the ape kills a man who is in the midst of a speech professing his lack of belief in God. Poe's orangutan enters and departs through a high window, then murders the two women—the mother by cutting her throat: "With one determined sweep of its muscular arm it nearly severed her head from her body."

For Poe, as for many of his contemporaries, apes represented the dark side of humanity—not fallen angels so much as the devils of our lesser nature. In his later story "Hop-Frog" (originally subtitled "The Eight Chained Ourangoutangs"), he brought back this alarming creature—that is, he has the titular dwarf persuade the vicious king and his companions to dress as orangutans before he sets them on fire in revenge for their torment of him and the innocent Trippetta. The villains' dressing as apes was equivalent to confessing their low character.

The kind of horrific story represented by "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" was not uncommon in the penny press of Poe's day. Sensational "true" accounts of crimes sold newspapers and magazines. What Poe brought to the field was a new character and a new approach—a story centered not on the brutality of the crime itself, although he provided buckets of blood, but on the discovery of its perpetrator, which required a focus upon the intelligence and methods of the investigator. This was not a species of fiction that could have existed prior to notions of the value of evidence instead of divination, investigation instead of accusation, trial instead of torture—all working within a justice system that at least made gestures toward fairness. The fictional detective was a modern character for

a busily changing era, a kind of scientist relying upon reason as a guide through the age-old battles of violence and crime.

How Do You Know That?

As to work which is unconsciously imitative, it is not to be expected that a man's style and mode of treatment should spring fully formed from his own brain.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, "PREFACE," *THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES*

Between "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and Arthur's decision to write a detective story, other writers followed Poe in the footsteps of the prophet Daniel and the philosopher Zadig. Some followed Poe's lead into a new kind of crime story. But one, like Voltaire and the unnamed author of the biblical saga, wrote a similarly observant character into a different kind of tale.

Alexandre Dumas *père* did not write detective stories. After beginning his career as a dramatist, he wrote a series of novels about Marie Antoinette, many other novels, essays and articles on contemporary topics, an encyclopedia of gastronomy, and volumes recounting his travels to Florence, Switzerland, and elsewhere. By Arthur's time, however, his most renowned contribution to literature was the trilogy nicknamed the d'Artagnan Romances.

The first of these rousing adventure novels set in sixteenth-century France, *The Three Musketeers*, appeared in 1844, and a sequel, *Twenty Years After*, was published the following year. Then, a century after Voltaire put the observant Zadig through his adventures in observation and deduction, Dumas assigned the same role to d'Artagnan. A mammoth, 268-chapter third installment, titled *The Vicomte of Bragelonne: Ten Years Later*, appeared in installments between 1847 and 1850. The sprawling narrative included the entire adventure later entitled *The Man in the Iron*

Mask. And it featured memorable scenes of d'Artagnan working as a detective.

For the creation of his most famous Musketeer, Dumas had been inspired by the adventures of the real-life Charles Ogier de Batz de Castelmore, the actual Comte d'Artagnan—or rather by the version of d'Artagnan who swaggered through a semi-fictional memoir published in 1700. Although Dumas was interested in the real-life crime and intrigue surrounding him in mid-nineteenth-century France, in writing some scenes of *The Vicomte of Bragelonne* he was clearly paying tribute to his revered Voltaire. Zadig's example hovers over d'Artagnan's every move.

In his scenes of d'Artagnan as detective, moreover, Dumas may have been influenced by Auguste Dupin. In 1846, the year before *The Vicomte* began monthly serialization, a French translation of Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue" was published in three installments in the Paris newspaper *La Quotidienne*. "Un meurtre sans exemple dans les fastes de la justice" ("A murder unprecedented in the records of justice") appeared anonymously, with not only a new title but both place and character names altered—and with Auguste Dupin transformed into Henry Bernier. But substantially the story was the same. There were no international copyright laws, so translating an American story without crediting its original author was not illegal.

Indeed, four months later a rival newspaper, *Le Commerce*, ran a separate anonymous translation, much shorter than the first, entitled "Une sanglante énigme" ("A bloody mystery"). When the author of the latter story was accused of plagiarizing the former, he replied, "It is not in *La Quotidienne* but in the stories of E. Poe, an American scholar, that I took . . . the central idea of the story." One result of this piracy was a great deal more notice for Poe than would have been the case otherwise. Following this flurry of attention, however, Poe did not become truly well-known in France until after the poet Charles Baudelaire began translating stories and a few poems in 1848, with the majority following after 1852.

In the later pages of Dumas's *Vicomte de Bragelonne*, the arrogant swordsman d'Artagnan performs his detective work when sent by Louis XIV to confirm or refute a minister's account of an alleged hunting accident. "You will, therefore, go there, and will examine the locality very carefully," commands the king. "A man has been wounded there, and you

will find a horse lying dead. You will tell me what your opinion is upon the whole affair.”

When d’Artagnan reports to the king after his investigation, he resurrects the participants’ actions in preternatural detail. “The weather was very well adapted for investigations of the character I have just made,” he reports, “it has been raining this evening, and the roads were wet and muddy—”

“Well, the result, M. d’Artagnan?”

The specifics d’Artagnan reveals naturally impress the king with his perception: “One of the riders was more impatient than the other, for the footprints of the one were invariably in advance of the other about half a horse’s length . . . His horse pawed the ground, which proves that his attention was so taken up by listening that he let the bridle fall from his hand . . . The one who had remained stationary traversed the Rond-point at a gallop, about two-thirds of its length, thinking that by this means he would gain upon his opponent; but the latter had followed the circumference of the wood.”

Some particulars Dumas drew straight from Voltaire.

“He who followed the circumference of the wood was mounted on a black horse.”

“How do you know that?” demands the king.

“I found a few hairs of his tail among the brambles which bordered the sides of the ditch . . . The horse of the cavalier who rode at full speed was killed on the spot.”

“How do you know that?”

“The cavalier had not time even to throw himself off his horse, and so fell with it. I observed the impression of his leg, which, with a great effort, he was enabled to extricate from under the horse. The spur, pressed down by the weight of the animal, had plowed up the ground . . . Sire, while the dismounted rider was extricating himself from his horse, the other was reloading his pistol. Only, he was much agitated while he was loading it, and his hand trembled greatly.”

“How do you know that?”

“Half the charge fell to the ground, and he threw the ramrod aside, not having time to replace it in the pistol.”

“Monsieur d’Artagnan, this is marvellous you tell me.”

“It is only close observation, sire, and the commonest highwayman could tell as much.”

During Arthur’s youth, Daniel, Zadig, and d’Artagnan were well-known figures in the popular imagination. The Bible was still the primary source of European society’s accepted myths; Voltaire was read by most literate Europeans; and Dumas was one of the most popular novelists of the nineteenth century. Thus, in 1880, when Arthur was nearing the end of medical school and adventuring aboard the *Hope*, the August issue of *Popular Science Monthly* ran a thoughtful essay by Thomas Huxley entitled “On the Method of Zadig: Retrospective Prophecy as a Function of Science,” and expected that its readers would understand the analogy and the reason for it.

Arthur admired Huxley. A renowned natural scientist and educator who had earned the nickname of “Darwin’s Bulldog” for his eloquent defense of his friend Charles Darwin’s ideas about natural selection and nature’s slow change over time, Huxley explored in this essay the idea that scientists were, in a sense, prophets looking into the past rather than the future. Their methods might at first make their deductions look as mysterious as soothsaying—but only until those methods were explained and the evidence examined. “The foreteller,” Huxley argued,

asserts that, at some future time, a properly situated observer will witness certain events; the clairvoyant declares that, at this present time, certain things are to be witnessed a thousand miles away; the retrospective prophet (would that there were such a word as “backteller”!) affirms that, so many hours or years ago, such and such things were to be seen. In all these cases it is only the relation to time which alters—the process of divination beyond the limits of possible direct knowledge remains the same.

Born in 1859, the year that finally saw publication of Charles Darwin’s long-gestated masterpiece, *On the Origin of Species*, Arthur had grown up amid the nineteenth century’s revolutionary scientific thinking about the interpretation of nature—that the earth itself hoarded hard evidence that defied and ultimately might supplant written revelation. At the University of Edinburgh he had been surrounded by respectful discussion of such

evidence-based thinking. Although Joseph Bell was a devout Christian, his teaching of diagnostics had relied entirely upon the interpretation of factual clues.

In Arthur's imagination, Bell's legacy fit in well with such figures as Zadig, d'Artagnan, and Dupin. But Bell possessed a trait that the others did not. He was dramatic, theatrical proof that seeming clairvoyance beyond the limits of direct knowledge was possible in the real world. It was not fantasy. And unlike Daniel and Zadig, Dr. Bell had practiced his wizardry not on kings but on ordinary human beings—soldiers, fishwives, street urchins—and, like the retrospective prophets of science, he had divined their past, their recent actions, even their character. Arthur had witnessed it with his own eyes.

Games of Chess, Played with Live Pieces

These games of chess, played with live pieces, are played before small audiences, and are chronicled nowhere. The interest of the game supports the player. Its results are enough for justice.

—CHARLES DICKENS, “THE DETECTIVE POLICE”

Although Poe wrote detective stories as logical fantasies, he was conjuring his detective in a new era. Unlike ancient biblical prophets and fictional Babylonian philosophers, Dupin deciphered clues amid an established network of metropolitan police. During the century prior to Arthur’s birth, the complex task of keeping the civil peace may have evolved more slowly than some other aspects of the social contract, but it did see a halting progression forward. The royal promise of relative security that had once been known in England as the “king’s peace” had long since failed to meet the needs of a burgeoning society. Efficient policing required that both officers and detectives earn the trust of the public. Partnership between police and citizenry could evolve only through familiarity and some measure of respect.

Before the mid-eighteenth century, victims of misdeeds in England had recourse to few methods of justice or recompense. People accused of a crime might find themselves pursued by a bounty hunter, a fierce professional perhaps paid by bail bondsmen. Inhabiting the shadow of the law alongside bounty hunters were characters called thief-takers, who were usually in the employ of those few victims who could afford to pay for pursuit or retribution. Naturally such an arrangement lent itself to chicanery. Some thief-takers, for example, acted clandestinely as go-betweens,

returning to their owner goods that had been stolen by the thief-taker's own secret partner.

In 1749, real-life crime detection and literature began the collaboration whose fruits surrounded Arthur as he turned his hand to detective fiction. In that year, almost a century before Poe's "Murders in the Rue Morgue," Englishman Henry Fielding saw publication of his picaresque novel *Tom Jones*. An ambitious and industrious man who worked from a Bow Street office rather than an ivory tower, Fielding was also chief magistrate of London. In the same year he launched an organization soon called the Bow Street Runners.

Although in some respects the Runners were more like private detectives than like police officers, they were in many ways the first modern police force. They were paid out of allocated government funds, for example, a kind of salary that divided them from their juridical ancestors. Originally there were only eight. Dashing about with official backing, they arrested offenders, served subpoenas and other writs, tracked bail jumpers. Attracting both favorable and critical attention in the press, the Runners helped prepare the English public for the idea of an organized metropolitan police.

What was needed was an official police department—despite such an institution's own fertile ground for corruption—to respond to crimes and to capture criminals. Not until a third of the way through the next century, however, did a new law create a metropolitan police force. In 1829, eight years before Victoria became queen and thirty years before the birth of Arthur Conan Doyle, the popular Home Secretary Robert Peel succeeded in getting Parliamentary approval for his proposed Metropolitan Police Act. He insisted that if Parliament wanted him to prevent crime rather than to merely track perpetrators, they must support this innovation. A guarantee of arrest, he argued, was a stronger crime preventive than severity of punishment—on, he might have added, those rare occasions when arrest actually followed. The police act replaced the antique plexus of watchmen, parish constables, thief-takers, and Bow Street Runners with a reasonably organized force.

Robert Peel's new police officers were nicknamed "bobbies" in England and "peelers" in Ireland. Peel had earned his reputation while launching the Royal Irish Constabulary during his tenure as Chief Secretary for Ireland, in

which his job was to maintain “order”—as defined by the English occupying force. Within a decade of the bobbies’ founding, the Bow Street Runners were gone.

Another factor nudging fiction writers toward detective stories were the popular tales and books claiming to be memoirs of real-life investigators. In 1811 Eugène François Vidocq, a French criminal turned policeman, founded the Brigade de la Sûreté, a civil police and detective bureau. Soon Napoleon Bonaparte turned the Sûreté into a national police force. A tireless self-promoter, Vidocq starred in ghosted memoirs detailing his adventures, beginning in 1828, then in openly fictionalized accounts capitalizing upon his notoriety. The public thrilled to his pursuit of criminals, his undercover operations in disguise, and his accounts of training other agents who, like himself, wanted to leave behind a life of crime and embrace law enforcement.

But Vidocq’s secret-police activities and sometimes violent methods resulted in scandal, a reorganization of the Sûreté, and ultimately his own resignation. In 1833 he founded the first known private inquiry agency, which also provided bodyguards and other security officers. Meanwhile, the books about him had inspired authors such as Honoré de Balzac and Victor Hugo, both of whom wrote often about criminal activities, and would later serve as models for Émile Gaboriau in France and Anna Katharine Green in the United States.

Soon London saw a bold new figure striding down the street. These officers were a tough-looking lot—tall, sturdy, dressed in blue top hat and tailcoat. This modest uniform was intended to make them look as different as possible from the red-coated and metal-helmeted soldiers who had often served as military police on the streets. Bobbies were armed with only a wooden truncheon and a pair of handcuffs. At first they carried a wooden rattle to summon other officers, but it turned out to be too cumbersome and not loud enough. A whistle replaced it.

But bobbies were there to prevent crimes or to respond to them immediately, not to decipher clues and investigate the crimes discovered or interrupted by uniformed officers. Not until the 1830s, after uniformed bobbies began patrolling streets, did the word *detective* even appear. The English word *detect*, meaning to catch or discover someone in the act of committing a crime, dates from the first half of the fifteenth century in

English, and derived from the Latin *detegere*, meaning “to uncover.” The new meaning described a new job. A centralized police force, charged with preventing and responding to crime, required a division assigned to solve crimes and hunt down their perpetrators—a detective bureau, including plainclothes detectives who could operate in disguise or at least without uniforms announcing their identity before they could even strike up a conversation with a wary publican.

The department’s need to work incognito at times inspired fears that in reality this new creation, the detective, was merely a government spy authorized to mingle with and entrap respectable citizens. Vidocq’s reputation for secret-police activity had accompanied his reputation for crime-solving across the Channel, and English newspaper readers were quite familiar with the genuine risks of government spying. Not until 1842, following the public outcry over a scandalous case in London that helped create a more welcoming political atmosphere for it, did Scotland Yard create the Criminal Investigation Department. At first it comprised only two inspectors and six sergeants.

Not surprisingly, intelligence of the logical, deductive, fictional kind was not the most eagerly sought trait for detectives in the real world. When police administrators surveyed the uniformed ranks for potential detectives, they first looked for courage, strength, and fortitude. They demanded familiarity with the dark city streets and their teeming crowds—from the hardworking ironmongers, haberdashers, and other shop owners to the “swell mob” of dandified pickpockets, the skilled cracksmen, the bludgers, the squealers and finks, the opportunistic mutcher lifting tuppence from a drunk. Arthur knew enough about the world, and had read enough real-life accounts of crime, to know that his intellectual detective would need extensive experience of the criminal underworld.

The first officers to sign up for detective work included an enterprising young man named Charles Field, who soon rose through the ranks to become inspector at the Woolwich Dockyards and finally chief of the Detective Branch before he retired in 1852. The English journalist George Augustus Sala described Field as “clean-shaven, farmer-like.” His ordinariness in dress and mien were calculated professional attributes.

Charles Dickens, at the height of his fame and influence, met and admired Field and soon wrote articles about him for his periodical *Household Words*—articles that helped promote the concept of vigilant police detectives in the public imagination, including a vivid and atmospheric tribute entitled “On Duty with Inspector Field.” The word *detective* was still unfamiliar enough in 1850 for Dickens to wrap it in quotation marks in the title of his first article on these innovators, “Three ‘Detective’ Anecdotes.” But soon the term flourished in the thriving daily, weekly, and monthly periodicals.

In an essay, “The Detective Police,” Dickens, with typical enthusiasm and impatience for change, apostrophized the new detectives by contrasting his vision of them with his memory of their predecessors. “We are not by any means devout believers in the old Bow Street Police,” he wrote, despite his comical but rather admiring portrait of them in his second novel, *Oliver Twist*.

To say the truth, we think there was a vast amount of humbug about those worthies. Apart from many of them being men of very indifferent character, and far too much in the habit of consorting with thieves and the like, they never lost a public occasion of jobbing and trading in mystery and making the most of themselves. Continually puffed besides by incompetent magistrates anxious to conceal their own deficiencies, and hand-in-glove with the penny-a-liners of that time, they became a sort of superstition. Although as a Preventive Police they were utterly ineffective, and as a Detective Police were very loose and uncertain in their operations, they remain with some people a superstition to the present day.

On the other hand, the Detective Force organised since the establishment of the existing Police, is so well chosen and trained, proceeds so systematically and quietly, does its business in such a workmanlike manner, and is always so calmly and steadily engaged in the service of the public, that the public really do not know enough of it, to know a tithe of its usefulness. . .

Such are the curious coincidences and such is the peculiar ability, always sharpening and being improved by practice, and always adapting itself to every variety of circumstances, and opposing itself to every new device that perverted ingenuity can invent, for which this important social branch of the public service is remarkable! For ever on the watch, with their wits stretched to the utmost, these officers have, from day to day and year to year, to set themselves against every novelty of trickery and dexterity that the combined imaginations of all the lawless rascals in England can devise, and to keep pace with every such invention that comes out. . .

A frequent writer for *Household Words*, George Augustus Sala, remembered in his autobiography that Dickens was seldom heard discussing higher literature or indeed intellectually ambitious art of any kind. “What he liked to talk about was the latest new piece at the theatres, the latest exciting trial or police case, the latest social craze or social swindle, and especially the latest murder and the newest thing in ghosts.” Dickens’s worshipful applause for detectives did not escape Sala’s notice. “Dickens had a curious and almost morbid partiality for communing with and entertaining police officers,” he wrote. This public approbation may have also had a pleasing incidental effect. “Any of the Detective men will do anything for me,” Dickens wrote to Bulwer Lytton in 1851.

One of Charles Field’s colleagues, Inspector Jonathan “Jack” Whicher, became even better known. (Dickens disguised him as Witchem in some admiring articles, in which he referred to Field as Wield.) Among the first eight members of the new Detective Branch that Scotland Yard formed in 1842, Whicher soon earned the respect of his colleagues, one of whom later dubbed him “the prince of detectives.” Like most successful detectives, he strove for near invisibility. His smallpox scars did not make him stand out because many people wore such a visible medical history.

Whicher achieved renown, and helped the public begin to accept the notion of professional investigators making their way through the populace without uniforms. Although he was criticized at times, he was applauded, and steadily promoted, for his successes—from capturing the valet who stole Leonardo da Vinci’s *Virgin and Child* and other paintings in 1856 to the scandalous murder at Road Hill House in 1860. The always bloodthirsty national press kept hounding the police to solve the brutal killing of a small boy, Francis Saville Kent, whose corpse was found in a privy just outside his family home with his throat slashed. Against public opinion and departmental doubts—both of which helped to damage his reputation for some time—Whicher persisted in his conclusion that the boy had been murdered by his sixteen-year-old half sister, Constance Kent. Eventually she confessed and Whicher was vindicated, leading to a growing conviction that he was all but infallible.

Apparently Dickens’s assistant editor on the monthly periodical *Household Words*, Henry Wills, wrote the first public description of an actual police detective. In an article entitled “The Modern Science of Thief-

Taking,” Wills described Whicher—in his first appearance under the alias Witchem—as he first met him on the stairs at a public gathering, during which the detective witnessed dismay on the faces of those miscreants who recognized their official nemesis despite his undistinguished face.

“On the mat at the stair-foot there stands a plain, honest-looking fellow, with nothing formidable in his appearance, or dreadful in his countenance; but the effect of this apparition . . . is remarkable . . . You never saw such a change as he causes, when he places his knuckles on the edge of the table, and looks at the diners *seriatim*.” With cautious mutual respect, Whicher and the thieves recognized each other.

Whicher calmly ordered a Frenchman and three others to leave London. They agreed immediately to do so, and he accompanied them to the train station. Afterward, as Wills walked on the platform with him, Whicher explained that the criminals were members of “a crack school of swell-mobsmen,” meaning a gang of petty thieves—pickpockets and burglars.

From its title to its closing, Wills’s article furthered detectives’ growing reputation as heroic figures who acquired power over criminals through detailed knowledge of them. Reinvented as modern and scientific, thief-taking was presented as a combination of observation, evidence, and courage—an idealized image of science in the pursuit of justice.

Dickens and Wills were quick to praise the virtues of these new public servants, and then quick to exploit their encounters with them. As a consequence of his acquaintance with Dickens, Inspector Field helped inspire the first detective in a literary novel—Inspector Bucket, “a detective officer,” in Dickens’s 1852 novel *Bleak House*. Built around a long-running legal battle over discrepancies in conflicting wills—the case of Jarndyce and Jarndyce progressing with glacial slowness through the Courts of Chancery—the novel is saturated with images of fog and muck. Within the depraved cosmos of *Bleak House*, the kindhearted Inspector Bucket serves as a moral figure, almost heroic, as he searches for a murderer and then for the missing Lady Dedlock. Dickens also employed his detective as a narrative wild card—a man who may reenter the story at any point, and who will materialize in a room without even a creak in the floorboards. Omniscient as well as omnipresent, he has Dickens’s own legendary

photographic gaze: “He looks at Mr. Snagsby as if he were going to take his portrait.”

Some years after Dickens invented Inspector Bucket, his friend and colleague Wilkie Collins made a detective one of the major characters in his 1868 novel *The Moonstone*. Ever since his 1859 success *The Woman in White*, Collins had been almost as famous as Dickens. Other popular books had followed—*No Name*, *Armada*, and then *The Moonstone*. Many more works came from his busy pen. Collins also wrote a memorable story that served as a transition between earlier forms of fiction and detective stories. Usually republished as “Anne Rodway’s Diary,” but originally published in 1856 under a different title as part of a series, it featured a smart and resourceful young woman who must investigate injustice.

Collins’s writing demonstrated unusual sympathy for female characters and also for the poor, even the drug-addicted poor. His account in *The Moonstone* of the delusory effects of opium grew out of his personal experience. He became addicted to laudanum to lessen the pain of his “rheumatic gout,” a form of arthritis, and even wrote of his own paranoid hallucinations, including the existence of a “ghost Wilkie” who at times shadowed his every move.

The Moonstone, however, was more than a sensation novel. Intelligent, witty, complexly plotted, narrated by several different characters with varying perceptions of the events they had witnessed, it proved hugely successful. The plot revolves around the titular gem, a diamond stolen in India—long before the story opens—from the head of a sacred statue of Chandra, the Hindu god of the moon. In a supernatural story, the god would have exacted revenge upon the heathens. In a story of suspense and detection, however, the guilty human beings torment themselves and others without divine intervention.

Like Dickens, Collins indicated his detective’s perception with a scientific gaze. He made Sergeant Cuff a less intimidating character overall than Inspector Bucket, although one who had a distinctly forbidding demeanor when meeting strangers:

When the time came for the Sergeant’s arrival, I went down to the gate to look out for him.

A fly from the railway drove up as I reached the lodge; and out got a grizzled, elderly man, so miserably lean that he looked as if he had not got an ounce of flesh on his bones in any part of

him. He was dressed all in decent black, with a white cravat round his neck. His face was as sharp as a hatchet, and the skin of it was as yellow and dry and withered as an autumn leaf. His eyes, of a steely light grey, had a very disconcerting trick, when they encountered your eyes, of looking as if they expected something more from you than you were aware of yourself. His walk was soft; his voice was melancholy; his long lanky fingers were hooked like claws. He might have been a parson, or an undertaker—or anything else you like, except what he really was. A . . . less comforting officer to look at, for a family in distress, I defy you to discover, search where you may.

Inspired by actual police officers they had known, Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins used the factual to help them conjure the fictional. Eccentric and observant men themselves, they showered quirks and insight upon their imaginary detectives, and in doing so made them memorable beyond the boundaries of *Bleak House* and *The Moonstone*. But they did not assign either Inspector Bucket or Sergeant Cuff central roles in their respective novels. The first novelist to make a logical, attentive detective into his central character was a Frenchman who had been inspired in part by a fictional Frenchman created by an American writer. As Arthur liked to point out, many roads in the development of crime fiction lead back to Edgar Allan Poe.

Poe's expeditions into fantasy and the macabre drew more attention than his detective puzzles, perhaps in part because supernatural stories were the oldest form of fiction and detective stories the newest. For a quarter century after "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" appeared in 1841, in fact, what Poe called his "tales of ratiocination" seems to have inspired few disciples in the crime genre. But eventually one writer responded enthusiastically to Poe's stories about an eagle-eyed amateur detective: the Frenchman Émile Gaboriau. Inspired also by the real-life policeman Vidocq, as well as by the novels of his countrymen Honoré de Balzac and Victor Hugo—which often dealt with crime and criminals—Gaboriau introduced a policeman referred to by his colleagues as Monsieur Lecoq, who appeared in several subsequent novels. In his modest debut in 1866, when Arthur was seven, Lecoq appeared as a relatively minor character in *L'Affaire Lerouge* (usually translated into English as *The Widow Lerouge* or *The Lerouge*

Case), which featured an amateur detective named Père Tabaret. Lecoq rose to the starring role six years later with a novel named after him. Promoted all over Paris with mysterious posters bearing only the title to build up advance interest, *Monsieur Lecoq* was an immediate sensation, and soon Gaboriau was a household name. Gaboriau knew how to keep readers turning pages, and he knew how to promote his work. Arthur greatly enjoyed the adventures of Monsieur Lecoq, noting later, “Gaboriau had rather attracted me by the neat dovetailing of his plots.”

After years in the French cavalry, Gaboriau began the best possible training for a thriller writer. He served as secretary to the dramatist and novelist Paul Féval, who wrote everything from swashbucklers to vampire stories. Féval kept Gaboriau researching forensic details in morgues and among the offices of the Sûreté. In an odd tribute, Gaboriau later swiped the nickname of the villain in one of Féval’s novels, Lecoq (the Rooster), and gave it to his own protagonist—himself a criminal turned policeman, like Eugène François Vidocq.

Although he was one of many writers influenced by the “memoirs” of Vidocq, Gaboriau was too good a writer to merely imitate Vidocq, Poe, or anyone else. His stylish and entertaining novels helped create the police procedural and influenced many later writers such as Anna Katharine Green. Gaboriau excelled at planting clues and strewing red herrings, but he was just as interested in the investigative routine employed by his police detectives. He admired patient legwork and careful interrogation. He also spent more time than many of his later colleagues in bringing his characters to life, fleshing them out as individuals—rich in quirks and contradictions—and in conjuring the boulevards and countryside of France through which they make their cautious way. His dialogue was lively and his descriptions sparkled. He conjured rural fields and police stations, backstreet pubs and palaces.

Gaboriau tended to bifurcate his novels into detective story and Gothic family drama. In the first part a crime is discovered, an investigation carried out, and a culprit revealed; in the second part, the detective tends to vanish for a time while the author reveals the tangled history of mistakes and cruelties that led to the murder. At times they read like two related books joined together, not always the most compelling of structures. Anna Katharine Green, whose books clearly show Gaboriau’s influence,

sometimes used this approach. Arthur enjoyed this kind of two-part story and absorbed it as a standard approach to writing thrillers.

All around Arthur, in medical school and in his wide-ranging extracurricular reading, in newspapers and magazines and books, he saw evidence that scientists were a kind of detective. Detective-minded Joe Bell was a scientist to the core. But only Gaboriau had demonstrated that a detective—busily noting and analyzing details, as well as building a mental and physical library of criminal cases—needs to be a kind of scientist.

Part 3

Mr. Holmes and Dr. Watson

No writer is ever absolutely original. He always joins at some point on to that old tree of which he is a branch.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

Dr. Sacker and Mr. Hope

His results, brought about by the very soul and essence of method,
have, in truth, the whole air of intuition.

—EDGAR ALLAN POE, “THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE”

“*A tangled skein*,” Arthur scribbled in one of his cheap red marbled notebooks. He was considering possible titles and images for the detective novel that had begun to grow in his imagination. For this note he may have been recalling a prominent image in Émile Gaboriau’s 1867 novel *The Mystery of Orcival*, featuring Monsieur Lecoq. In one passage Gaboriau describes an investigator’s thoughts: “The difficulty is to seize at the beginning, in the entangled skein, the main thread, which must lead to the truth through all the mazes, the ruses, silence, falsehoods of the guilty.” It had been translated into English in 1871, only two years before Gaboriau’s death; Arthur was twelve at the time.

Later Arthur crossed out *A Tangled Skein* and replaced it with the title *A Study in Scarlet*, which he explained in Chapter 4. “I must thank you for it all,” says Holmes to Watson, who persuaded him to look into the mystery. “I might not have gone but for you, and so have missed the finest study I ever came across: a study in scarlet, eh? Why shouldn’t we use a little art jargon. There’s the scarlet thread of murder running through the colourless skein of life, and our duty is to unravel it, and isolate it, and expose every inch of it.”

Holmes’s remark still echoed Gaboriau. In setting this new title above his melodrama, however, Arthur seemed to be aiming for a more artistic tone than the usual blood and thunder of the thriller field. A study was an artist’s preliminary sketch, or in literature a thoughtful survey. In using the term in a finished work, united with a particular color, Arthur aligned himself with

the Aesthetic movement—with writers and critics such as Walter Pater and the young Oscar Wilde. Pater's 1873 *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* was considered a sacred text of Aestheticism, and the notoriously decadent Algernon Charles Swinburne had published in 1880 a book entitled *Studies in Song*. *L'art pour l'art* was the unofficial group's motto, "art for art's sake," implying that art was divorced from the burden of moral education that had bowed its back through centuries. One of the best-known painters among the Aesthetics was James Abbott McNeill Whistler, American-born but long settled in London, who was famous for works such as his 1862 painting "Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl," and his 1871 portrait of his mother titled "Arrangement in Grey and Black, No. 1." Thus the title *A Study in Scarlet* lent Arthur's novel an artsy frisson of vice.

From the very first, Arthur thought in scenes. Under the title he wrote in his notes,

The terrified woman rushing up to the cabman. The two going in search of a policeman. John Reeves had been 7 years in the force, John Reeves went back with them.

Soon memories of Joe Bell at Edinburgh played like a stage drama across Arthur's imagination. He remembered his aquiline face, his sharp, perceptive gaze. He imagined that if a keen observer à la Dr. Bell applied himself to crime instead of to medicine, he would represent an almost invincible combination of perception and knowledge—at least in the stage-managed world of popular fiction.

Real-world crime detection was more haphazard and erratic. Forensics encountered resistance from tradition, like the rest of science. One of the most dramatic advances in criminal investigation—the detection of previously overlooked fingerprints and their value as a form of identification—had been initiated in India in the 1850s. But a systematic approach for it had been proposed only as recently as 1880, by a Scottish surgeon named Henry Faulds. In 1886, the year that Arthur wrote *A Study in Scarlet*, Faulds presented his idea to London's police department—which dismissed it as far-fetched and impractical.

But as yet Arthur had little interest in actual criminal investigation. Instead he began to envision his detective as a kind of awe-inspiring genius

who dazzled a befuddled world with his insight. Such an omniscient character would sound insufferably smug narrating his own triumphs, however, and with access to his thoughts a reader might too soon perceive the puzzle pieces coming together. Thus, like Poe's Dupin, he would need a Boswell. Arthur was transforming the doctor who inspired him into a detective, and he made this assistant into a physician. The scientific training and humanitarian outlook of medicine shaped Arthur's outlook on many topics.

On another page he wrote at the top, *Study in Scarlet*. Below this new title he listed his main characters, beginning with a name for the physician who would narrate: *Ormond Sacker* [or Secker]—*from Sudan*. The given name Ormond probably occurred to Arthur because of the Great Ormond Street Hospital, near the British Museum in Bloomsbury. Founded in the early 1850s as the Hospital for Sick Children—the first such institution in England—it had grown from a mere ten beds to a major center well-known to physicians and medical students across the nation. Charles Dickens was an important early promoter.

The surname Sacker or Secker may have come from a small lane called Secker Street behind St. John's Church near London's other important center for helping the unprotected: Royal Waterloo Hospital for Children and Women. Perhaps Arthur picked up several names for his novel from a single glance at a London map or a stroll around this neighborhood; at times he visited relatives and friends in the city and always happily explored. On the other side of the Royal Waterloo from Secker Street was Stamford Street, and a young man named Stamford became the second person to show up in the novel.

Arthur was a passionate walker and often tramped the streets of Southsea or farther across Portsmouth, with or without his brother, Innes. Only a block from his home on Elm Grove was the parallel Belmont Street, and therein lived one William Rance. Arthur may well have known Rance or seen his name, because he assigned this uncommon name to the police constable who had originally appeared in his notes as John Reeves. Other names in *A Study in Scarlet* may have derived from neighborhood strolls. Madame Charpentier, proprietor of a boardinghouse in the novel, may have owed her name to Arthur's neighbor Ernest G. Charpentier. Farther down

Elm Grove from Bush Villas was Sunnyside, the home of one James Cowper, whose surname would adorn a Mormon character.

Arthur gave one of the police inspectors a French surname that was quite uncommon in England—Lestrade. This name appears not once in London directories of the period. Probably Arthur was remembering Joseph Alexandre Lestrade, a fellow alumnus of both Stonyhurst and the University of Edinburgh, who received his Bachelor of Medicine and Master of Surgery degrees in 1883; they would have had many reasons to know each other at university.

He assigned a less unusual name, Gregson, to the other inspector, perhaps derived from a crusading missionary and temperance advocate, the Reverend J. Gelsen Gregson, who was a distinguished member of the Baptist church in Elm Grove, close by Arthur's flat in Bush Villas. In 1882, the year that Arthur moved to Southsea, Gregson published a memoir of his missionary work in the Afghan War, *Through the Khyber Pass to Sherpore Camp and Cabul*; its preface was dated from Southsea. It was precisely the kind of book to which Arthur was drawn. Gregson, the optimistic founder of the Soldiers' Total Abstinence Association, retired to Southsea in 1886, the year that Arthur wrote *A Study in Scarlet*.

In identifying his detective, Arthur did not want to use a Dickensian kind of moniker that implied character—not "Mr. Sharps or Mr. Ferrets," he said later. Yet he yearned for something unusual. He scrawled lists, considering various combinations of given names and surnames, including Sherrington Hope.

Finally he settled upon Holmes as his detective's surname, likely because of his and his family's fondness for the writings of Oliver Wendell Holmes. But Holmes was also a name one often saw around England. It was particularly associated with London in the minds of many, because of the popular volume *Holmes's Great Metropolis: or, Views and History of London in the Nineteenth Century*, published in 1851, the year of the Crystal Palace exhibition. Sherrington evolved into Sherrinford, and Arthur's new hero was to be Sherrinford Holmes.

Reserved, wrote Arthur about his protagonist in his red notebook. — *Sleepy eyed young man—philosopher*. He assigned him a trait reminiscent

of a Poe character: *collector of rare Violins*, adding, *An Amati*, designating the Italian family of violin-makers considered to rank with the Stradivari and Bergonzi families.

Thinking of Dr. Bell, Arthur gave Holmes “sharp and piercing” gray eyes and a thin nose that lent his face an aquiline vigilance. There, however, the physical resemblance ended. Arthur envisioned a hero more physically impressive than short, limping Bell—a square-jawed, dark-browed man, over six feet tall and lean as a whippet. In the novel, he radiates confidence and vigor. When Watson meets him, Holmes’s hands, stained with ink and laboratory chemicals, offer a surprisingly strong handshake. But they can manipulate scientific instruments with a delicate touch.

Arthur thought of another useful detail—he had a store of such mental images from his medical school days in Edinburgh—and wrote “chemical laboratory.” As for “young man,” Arthur thought of both Watson and Holmes as roughly his own age. He was twenty-seven in early 1886.

But the given name Sherrinford did not satisfy Arthur. He considered others. Besides his Stonyhurst classmate Patrick Sherlock, and the William Sherlock who cavorted through Macaulay’s *History of England*, and fictional characters such as Carmel Sherlock in Sheridan Le Fanu’s novel *A Lost Name*, Arthur must have also encountered the name Sherlock in the context of crime-solving. During his time in medical school in Edinburgh, London’s metropolitan police force already included one Chief Inspector William Sherlock of Division L in Lambeth, who was often mentioned in British newspapers amid their extensive reports of crime and investigations. The adventures of Sherlock were reported in *The Times* and *The Home Chronicler*, as well as in other periodicals. The 1881 census listed Inspector Sherlock as stationed at Kennington Road in Lambeth. In February 1881, *The Portsmouth Evening News* reported a rowdy inquest into a murder that had occurred at Chatham in northern Kent. Chief Inspector Sherlock had been sent from London to assist the Chatham authorities in their investigation.

Beginning in 1882, as he settled in Southsea, Arthur read *The Portsmouth Evening News* and other papers religiously, with his usual appetite for news wed to a fresh desire to situate himself within an unknown community. In January 1883, the newspaper reported that a brawl at the Anchor Inn on crime-ridden York Street had resulted in arrests. As a consequence, the

paper noted, Inspector Sherlock was in court at Westminster, the area of central London around Parliament on the northern bank of the Thames. In the same week *The Times* reported another of Sherlock's exploits.

The 1881 post office directory listed a second Sherlock in the London police department—a Chief Inspector James Sherlock of Division B in Rochester Row. There was even an Inspector Thomas Holmes—and, in coincidence's nod to Gaboriau, an Inspector John Le Cocq. Arthur may well have consulted this directory. He set his crime scene at “3, Lauriston Gardens, off the Brixton Road,” a neighborhood within Division L, and thus under the jurisdiction of Chief Inspector William Sherlock. Although the Brixton Road was a real London thoroughfare, probably Arthur invented Lauriston Gardens as a tribute to his hometown. He could not have walked around Edinburgh without treading Lauriston Street, Lauriston Place, or Lauriston Park.

For reasons that can never be known for certain, the name Sherlock occurred to Arthur as a replacement for Sherrinford. He kept the beloved surname and named his detective Sherlock Holmes.

Along with memorably christening his genius of a detective, Arthur changed the name of his narrator from the dandified-sounding Ormond Sacker to a more prosaic John Watson. For this name, he may have been recalling Dr. Patrick Heron Watson in Edinburgh, or his friend James Watson who lived in Southsea (though he may have met James Watson after creating Holmes). The Conservative solicitor and senior Scottish legal figure William Watson, Baron Watson, received considerable attention in the press, having served as Lord Advocate throughout Arthur's time in Edinburgh, and afterward as Lord of Appeal in Ordinary. Or perhaps Arthur was influenced by the fame of Sir Thomas Watson, whose death in late 1882 drew adulatory attention to the ninety-year-old doctor. A former president of the Royal College of Physicians, as well as physician-in-ordinary to Queen Victoria, Watson was considered a noble embodiment of Arthur's profession. Arthur may have heard of Watson as early as his medical school days, because the famed physician had also studied in Edinburgh. And Arthur could not have missed laudatory obituaries for Watson in the *British Medical Journal*, *The Lancet*, and numerous

newspapers, including *The Times*, which called Watson “eminent.” Clearly Arthur had read Sir Thomas Watson’s writings. In a later Sherlock Holmes story, he borrowed a memorable image from the 1843 tome *Lectures on the Principles and Practice of Physic*, in which the real-life Watson remembered an old man who was said to be able to chalk a billiard cue with his gouty knuckles. Wherever he got the name, Arthur’s point seems to have been that “John Watson” sounded like an ordinary Englishman. He would provide a mundane, level-headed, John Bull view of the detective’s genius and foibles.

Poe had revealed almost nothing about his nameless narrator, who exists primarily to marvel over Dupin’s abilities and quirks; and in Gaboriau’s novels, Lecoq’s mentor and occasional companion Père Tabaret did not narrate the events. Arthur had bigger plans for his detective’s sidekick. Eventually he even parenthetically subtitled *A Study in Scarlet* “Being a Reprint from the Reminiscences of John H. Watson, M.D., Late of the Army Medical Department,” and began it with a brief sketch of Dr. Watson’s life prior to the fateful meeting with Mr. Holmes.

Arthur would have read often in Garrod’s *Materia* about University College in London. Known earlier as London University and later as the University of London, it was where Garrod taught. It was also where Ringer and Murrell, authors of the gelsemium series in *The Lancet* that seems to have prompted Arthur’s dangerous self-poisoning in 1879, worked as well. Such associations may have inspired him to associate Dr. Watson with this institution. Arthur wrote that Watson was awarded his Doctor of Medicine degree at University College in 1878, at which time his creator was halfway through medical school. Clearly Arthur envisioned Watson as close to his own age.

Reconsidering Watson’s likely military history, Arthur crossed out “Sudan” and wrote “Afghanistan” in his notebook. Although he himself had never served in the military, he envisioned Watson as a wounded veteran, a man likely to be brave and resourceful. The final English defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo in 1815 had left the far-reaching British Empire with no powerful international rivals beyond Russia. Some members of the English military elite worried—unrealistically, it soon turned out—that Russian troops in Asia were inching toward India, which the English famously considered the “jewel in the crown” of the ill-gotten British

Empire. The first Afghan War, from 1838 to 1842, had been the opening move in a bloody international chess game between England and Russia to control central Asia. A combined force of British and Indian soldiers invaded Afghanistan in 1838, but during a three-year war were unable to maintain a puppet government and were defeated. From 1878 to 1880, during Arthur's time in medical school, the English again invaded Afghanistan. Despite extensive fighting and attempts at treaties, Afghan troops were ultimately able to repel the aggressors.

Arthur decided to have Watson serve in Candahar, the capital of Afghanistan, with the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers, a real British infantry regiment. Watson says that he fought in the Battle of Maiwand with the Berkshires, officially called Princess Charlotte of Wales's (Berkshire) Regiment. A village fifty miles northwest of Candahar, Maiwand had been the site of the bloody and mortifying final British defeat in 1880. Arthur was weaving recent history and revived public interest into his story. In 1886, as he wrote *A Study in Scarlet*, a gigantic iron statue of a lion was erected in Reading, Berkshire, the regimental home of the 66th Foot, as a tribute to British soldiers who died at Maiwand.

At the time of the battle, the Berkshires had actually still been called the 66th Foot; like the Northumberland, they underwent a name change the following year. But Arthur didn't worry about such details. Never one to fret over what he considered irrelevant minutiae, Arthur dashed his pen across the page, summoning idea after idea that he did not bother to confirm as accurate. He assigned Watson the title of assistant surgeon, for example, unaware that it had been eliminated in 1872. In the real British army, in the late 1870s Watson would have been an acting surgeon, within a lieutenant's pay grade. Later Arthur also had Holmes refer offhandedly to "that little thing of Chopin's" that he once heard the Moravian violinist Wilma Norman-Neruda play very well, and he adds, "Tra-la-la-lira-lira-lay." Never mind that Chopin composed no pieces for solo violin and there was no record of Madame Norman-Neruda having ever played Chopin. This was, after all, fiction.

Watson remarks that he has "neither kith nor kin in England, and was therefore as free as air." He "naturally gravitated to London," he says, "that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained." In this attitude too Arthur was echoing Poe's narrator,

who remarks, "With sickness of heart, the wanderer will flee back to the polluted Paris as to a less odious because less incongruous sink of pollution." Arthur was still heavily under the influence of his literary ancestor.

Bohemians in Baker Street

Sherlock Holmes [is] a bastard between Joe Bell and Poe's Monsieur Dupin (much diluted).

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, IN A LETTER TO ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Lived at 221 B Upper Baker Street, wrote Arthur in his notebook, under his narrator's name. Like Poe, Arthur was careful to locate the hero's headquarters quite specifically. Dupin lives—and is consulted by the gendarmerie—at number 33, Rue Dunot, in the aristocratic and artistic Left Bank neighborhood of the Faubourg St. Germain, in Paris. Arthur's choice of Upper Baker Street was in Westminster, London—the locale of the real Inspector Sherlock.

At the time of his writing, Baker Street was not more than a quarter of a mile long. North of where Marylebone Road crossed it, it divided into Upper Baker Street, where house numbers continued upward to include 221. Later, however, Arthur crossed out *Upper* and situated his heroes in the southern end of Baker Street, thus making the address 221 purely fictional.

Baker Street was dense with London history. During the eighteenth century, William Pitt the Elder, twice prime minister, had lived in Upper Baker Street, beside Regent's Park. The street had known the home of the glamorous Sarah Siddons, the Welsh tragedienne renowned for her haunting portrayal of Lady Macbeth, and the birthplace of novelist Edward Bulwer, later Lord Lytton. Madame Tussaud opened her first waxwork exhibition at the Baker Street Bazaar in 1835.

Poe's Dupin is an indolent aristocrat who resides with the narrator in a "time-eaten and grotesque mansion," because his family's impoverishment has reduced him to frugality—but not to industry that might overcome the

need for it. The more modern Arthur, in contrast, placed Holmes and Watson in a shared second-story (first floor, in British usage) flat on a busy urban thoroughfare near Regent's Park. The *B* in the street number indicated that their flat was on the second floor within a larger building, which Arthur probably envisioned as one of the eighty or so flat-fronted, four-story Georgian terraces in this desirable neighborhood. Some London addresses used *bis* after a street number, a common French term referring to a house that had formerly been a single residence but was later divided into flats, and at times *bis* was shortened to merely *B*.

In the published book, Dr. Watson and Sherlock Holmes settle down in their new chambers and launch a memorable partnership:

We met next day as he had arranged, and inspected the rooms at No. 221B, Baker Street, of which he had spoken at our meeting. They consisted of a couple of comfortable bed-rooms and a single large airy sitting-room, cheerfully furnished, and illuminated by two broad windows. So desirable in every way were the apartments, and so moderate did the terms seem when divided between us, that the bargain was concluded upon the spot, and we at once entered into possession. That very evening I moved my things round from the hotel, and on the following morning Sherlock Holmes followed me with several boxes and portmanteaus. For a day or two we were busily employed in unpacking and laying out our property to the best advantage. That done, we gradually began to settle down and to accommodate ourselves to our new surroundings.

Arthur employed a reliable literary method of bringing a fictional character to life and building suspense on the page: he permitted Dr. Watson to puzzle over Sherlock Holmes's paradoxes, and to become preoccupied with the enigma of his new roommate's personality and character. From the moment they move into Baker Street together, each day of their acquaintance brings Dr. Watson a new glimpse of Holmes's mysterious ways.

"The reader may set me down as a hopeless busybody," says Watson,

when I confess how much this man stimulated my curiosity, and how often I endeavoured to break through the reticence which he showed on all that concerned himself. Before pronouncing judgment, however, be it remembered, how objectless was my life, and how little there was to engage my attention. My health forbade me from venturing out unless the weather was

exceptionally genial, and I had no friends who would call upon me and break the monotony of my daily existence. Under these circumstances, I eagerly hailed the little mystery which hung around my companion, and spent much of my time in endeavouring to unravel it.

Watson takes a sheet of paper and catalogues the quirks of his new housemate, under the heading “Sherlock Holmes—his limits.” Drawing upon memories of Joe Bell, Arthur had Watson note that Holmes’s knowledge of geology is “practical, but limited. Tells at a glance different soils from each other. After walks has shown me splashes upon his trousers, and told me by their colour and consistency in what part of London he had received them.” Arthur assigned Holmes a similarly specialized knowledge of botany, rather like his own. “Well up in belladonna, opium, and poisons generally,” writes Watson. “Knows nothing of practical gardening.” He notes that Holmes’s understanding of chemistry, in contrast, is “profound.”

The young doctor’s mysterious new acquaintance seems to understand British law on a practical basis rather than a theoretical one, and knows anatomy in the same way. He can box, play the violin, and handle a sword and a singlestick (cudgel). At first, Watson sees Holmes as shockingly ignorant of literature, astronomy, and philosophy, yet Holmes soon turns out to be a ready encyclopedia of sensational literature: “He appears to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century.”

Not surprisingly, Watson is preoccupied with a simple question: What does Holmes do for a living? There is no hint of inherited money paying his bills. He spends many hours away from Baker Street, in chemical laboratories and dissection rooms and on unexplained adventures, yet he confirms Stamford’s statement that he is not a medical student. He does not seem to be reading for a degree in any of the sciences.

“Yet his zeal for certain studies was remarkable,” observes Watson, “and within eccentric limits his knowledge was so extraordinarily ample and minute that his observations have fairly astounded me.” Why, Watson keeps asking himself, would a man pursue such obscure knowledge? “No man burdens his mind with small matters unless he has some very good reason for doing so.”

Arthur assigned Holmes an intriguing trait that seems to have been based upon his own character: “Nothing could exceed his energy when the working fit was upon him; but now and again a reaction would seize him,

and for days on end he would lie upon the sofa in the sitting-room, hardly uttering a word or moving a muscle from morning to night.” At times Watson suspects that Holmes may be addicted to some kind of drug, which in the second Holmes novel would prove to be the case: He takes cocaine when he feels benumbed by the routine of everyday life—that is, when no criminal puzzle presents itself. But no drug shows up in *A Study in Scarlet*.

By unconsciously pouring into Holmes some of his creator’s personal inconsistencies and inchoate rebellion, Arthur painted him as a hero who was larger-than-life but believably complex. Like protagonists such as d’Artagnan, Holmes is both intelligent and fearless. Many thriller writers had created their protagonist as a kind of heroic alter ego. Physical courage came so naturally to Arthur, however, that he did not have to imagine a contempt for danger and bestow it upon Sherlock Holmes. He merely drew upon his own casual bravery in the face of poison overdoses, thrashing whales, boxing sailors, and circling sharks.

From the first, however, Arthur envisioned his detective as outside the predictable loyalties of earlier heroes, naturally above bourgeois morality. In mocking the functionaries of law and order, Holmes can even sound like Robin Hood or other laughing rogues. Disdain for the established police force—and especially for detectives who strode through society without an identifying uniform—had alternated, since its founding, with optimistic respect for the new kind of policing.

Not one to fall into slavish hero worship himself, Arthur gave Watson a skeptical eye for his new friend’s arrogance, vanity, and other foibles. This narrative ploy permitted him to round out the relationship and raise it above the worshipful acolyte role played by Poe’s narrator. Watson misses, however, what the reader perceives, which is that sometimes Holmes is pulling his roommate’s leg. He claims, for example, to have no idea who Thomas Carlyle may be. He absurdly pretends ignorance of the heliocentric cosmos of Copernicus—and gullible Watson swallows the bait, at least at first.

“You appear to be astonished,” remarks Holmes about Watson’s response to his claimed ignorance of astronomy. “Now that I do know it I shall do my best to forget it.”

“To forget it!” exclaims Watson.

“You see, I consider that a man’s brain originally is like a little empty attic, and you have to stock it with such furniture as you choose. . . . It is of the highest importance, therefore, not to have useless facts elbowing out the useful ones.”

“But the Solar System!”

“What the deuce is it to me?” Holmes exclaims; “you say that we go round the sun. If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work.”

But Holmes, playing his game, does not describe what his work may be.

Sometimes the inconsistencies in Holmes’s character resulted from Arthur’s own slapdash, devil-may-care approach to writing. He didn’t worry about details and apparently considered internal consistency a minor virtue in fiction—not one on which he was going to lavish much attention. Soon Holmes reveals that, like his creator, he is quite knowledgeable about history and science. As the novel unfolds, Watson discovers that Holmes can casually cite obscure passages in the scientific writings of Darwin, such as the great scientist’s idea that human beings’ appreciation for the rhythms of music may have predated spoken language. A walking encyclopedia of the history of crime and detection, Holmes maintains an extensive scrapbook/catalogue of criminal references. Arthur may have recalled a scene from the 1871 novel *A Terrible Temptation*, by one of his favorite writers, Charles Reade. In it a character maintains a vast personal filing system:

Underneath the table was a formidable array of note-books, standing upright, and labelled on their backs. There were about twenty large folios, of classified facts, ideas, and pictures; for the very wood-cuts were all indexed and classified on the plan of a tradesman’s ledger; there was also the receipt-book of the year, treated on the same plan. . . . Then there was a collection of solid quartos, and of smaller folio guard-books called Indexes. . . . By the side of the table were six or seven thick pasteboard cards, each about the size of a large portfolio, and on these the author’s notes and extracts were collected from all his repertoires into something like a focus, for a present purpose.

Despite his patriotism and fierce ambition and commitment to a medical career, despite his preoccupation with money and his devotion to family,

Arthur liked to think of himself as bohemian. The term derived not from inhabitants of the actual Kingdom of Bohemia—which, in 1867, had become part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—but from *bohémien*, originally the French term for Romany people often described in English with the word *Gypsy*. A decade before Arthur's birth, in the satirical novel *Vanity Fair*, William Makepeace Thackeray—who later dandled Arthur on his knee in Edinburgh—expressed the bourgeois view when he wrote of Becky Sharp as she wandered Europe, “She became a perfect Bohemian ere long, herding with people whom it would make your hair stand on end to meet.”

In 1863, an anonymous essayist in *The Westminster Review* had written,

As the phrase “Egyptian” was once generally used in our own country to describe a vagrant of any clime or tribe, so the term “Bohemian” has come to be very commonly accepted in our day as the description of a certain kind of literary gipsy, no matter in what language he speaks, or what city he inhabits . . . A Bohemian is simply an artist or littérateur who, consciously or unconsciously, secedes from conventionality in life or in art. In its essence, Bohemia is, or was, a protest against the subjection of human life to money-making, and of human intellect to conventional rule.

Looking back later, Arthur thought that at sixteen, in 1874, he had been too Bohemian for his relatives in London. In *A Study in Scarlet*, in a scene of almost marital domesticity, he even had Watson smoke his pipe and keep awake for Holmes's return from a late-night jaunt by reading Henri Murger's *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*, the semi-autobiographical story cycle about starving artists in Paris that had created the current international image of bohemianism. Such themes suited Arthur's title, with its echoes of the decadent Aesthetic movement.

But Holmes, not Watson, best demonstrated Arthur's own resistance to conventionality. Working for himself, bragging about his genius, at times sleeping all day and tracking miscreants by night, disdaining money, snubbing Scotland Yard detectives and other representatives of authority and convention, mapping a world without the supernatural, demonstrating the potential of sheer intellect—Holmes was a revolutionary combination of attributes. Arthur had merged the characters he met in real life and in fiction, embodied his own reckless bravery and burgeoning passion for

justice, and married a Romantic vision of science to the myth of the heroic adventurer. At the age of twenty-seven, he had conjured a new kind of hero.

A Little Too Scientific

The fatal mistake which the ordinary policeman makes is this, that he gets his theory first, and then makes the facts fit it, instead of getting his facts first of all and making all his little observations and deductions until he is driven irresistibly by them into an elucidation in a direction he may never have originally anticipated.

—JOSEPH BELL

Arthur's admiration for Edgar Allan Poe and Émile Gaboriau, which had begun in his boyhood, flowered into his own incarnation of a smug, brilliant detective. Thus he imagined Dr. Watson comparing his new roommate's talents to those of both Monsieur Lecoq and Auguste Dupin—only to meet with a dismissive response. In his early notes for *A Study in Scarlet*, Arthur wrote down snatches of dialogue as if taking dictation: “Lecoq was a bungler—Dupin was better. Dupin was decidedly smart. His trick of following a train of thought was more sensational than clever but still he had analytical genius.”

Despite his amateur status, Dupin is known to the gendarmerie. He undertakes the case in “The Purloined Letter” at the behest of his acquaintance “Monsieur G——, the Prefect of the Parisian Police.” Neither Dupin nor his companion is impressed with G——’s intelligence. “We gave him a hearty welcome,” says the narrator; “for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen him for several years.” G—— “had a fashion of calling everything odd that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute legion of oddities.”

Arthur gave his detective a similar contempt for the official police force in *A Study in Scarlet*: “There is no crime to detect, or, at most, some

bungling villainy with a motive so transparent that even a Scotland Yard official can see through it.” Of the two official detectives in *Scarlet*, Holmes remarks, “Gregson is the smartest of the Scotland Yarders; he and Lestrade are the pick of a bad lot.”

Dupin was an amateur with a talent for logic. Holmes, in contrast, while not a policeman, was also not a layman. By dint of burning the midnight oil in library and laboratory, as well as extensive experience in the real world, he had turned his passion for observation and minutiae into a position as consulting detective. While it was unlikely that any actual police detectives had ever begged a private inquiry agent to assist them, as Gregson beseeched Watson’s new roommate, at least Holmes was a young professional with a growing reputation.

Holmes often echoes Dupin and Gaboriau in other ways. “Experience has shown, and a true philosophy will always show,” says Dupin in “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt,” “that a vast, perhaps the larger portion of the truth arises from the seemingly irrelevant.” And Monsieur Lecoq remarks, “This is one of those vulgar details whose very insignificance makes them terrible, when they are attended by certain circumstances.” In a later Holmes story, the detective remarks to Watson about a clue, “It is, of course, a trifle, but there is nothing so important as trifles.”

Arthur was not one to deny his influences—and perhaps he foresaw that readers could not miss his debts. In the published book, Watson remarks to Holmes, “You remind me of Edgar Allan Poe’s Dupin. I had no idea that such individuals did exist outside of stories.”

But Arthur had no intention of making his fictional detective speak generously of forebears. Just as Poe placed a critique of the criminal-turned-detective Vidocq into the mouth of Dupin, so did Arthur have Holmes mock Dupin. “Now, in my opinion,” scoffs Holmes, puffing at his pipe, “Dupin was a very inferior fellow . . . He had some analytical genius, no doubt; but he was by no means such a phenomenon as Poe appeared to imagine.”

Watson asks about Lecoq.

“Lecoq was a miserable bungler,” fumes Holmes in reply; “he had only one thing to recommend him, and that was his energy. That book made me positively ill. The question was how to identify an unknown prisoner. I could have done it in twenty-four hours. Lecoq took six months or so.”

Clearly Holmes is referring to Gaboriau's *Monsieur Lecoq*. "It might be made a text-book for detectives to teach them what to avoid."

* * *

One notable contrast between Arthur's detective duo and Poe's is exemplified by how they meet. Dupin and his narrator bump into each other while seeking "the same very rare and very remarkable volume" in "an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre." The two men are barely in and of the world. Despite Dupin's emphasis on reason and evidence, they exist in a murky, candlelit landscape familiar to readers of Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*.

In contrast, Arthur opened Chapter 1 of *A Study in Scarlet* with Dr. Watson seeking affordable lodgings. Young, wounded, exhausted, and of a naturally modest disposition, he seems to stride out of the real world in a way that Poe characters never manage.

Poe was born in 1809 and died at the age of forty, a decade before Arthur's birth. His natural bent was Romantic and Gothic. In Edinburgh half a century down the literary road, Arthur grew up reading Mayne Reid melodramas of the American western frontier—and reading Edgar Allan Poe. Later, as he sat at his Southsea desk in the mid-1880s and conjured Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, his imagination naturally returned to the work of one of his favorite writers, and to the analytical detective who had intrigued him since boyhood. By this time, however, Arthur was influenced by plainspoken, more realistic adventure writers who eschewed Poe's cobwebs. He admired, for example, his fellow Scot Robert Louis Stevenson and the American Bret Harte. And his admiration showed in his work; in 1884 at least one *Cornhill* reader had attributed Arthur's own "J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement" to Stevenson, and Arthur had written stories such as "The American's Tale" in imitation of Harte's tales of gold rush mining towns on the American frontier.

In creating his own detective, Arthur would naturally recast Dupin's influence in his own later, less Romantic era. He also drew from the real-world inspiration of Dr. Bell, who strode among suffering patients, noting their occupational scars and mud-splashed boots—and weaving from such seemingly unrelated clues a narrative of their lives. Poe was knowledgeable

about the natural and theoretical sciences, as his wide-ranging essay “Eureka” and other works demonstrate, but he did not endow his detective with a scientific approach to crime-solving. Borrowing from Voltaire, he gave Dupin a playful kind of observant genius that lends itself to the logical deciphering of puzzles.

Poe had not had the good fortune to study with Joseph Bell. He could assign Dupin a theory of observation, and he could detonate verbal fireworks about logic. But apparently Poe himself did not have the trained observational skills to bestow upon his brainchild. Arthur did. He was no detective himself, but he had witnessed such talents at work. Years of training with one of the most acclaimed diagnosticians of his time had left Arthur aware that such insight was not only possible but an art and science that one could cultivate.

Sherlock Holmes, in contrast to Dupin, embodies Arthur’s faith in science as both an instrument of progress and an intellectual adventure. In *A Study in Scarlet*, Watson runs into his old friend Stamford, who had been a surgeon’s assistant under him at St. Bartholomew’s Hospital Medical College—the oldest continuously operating hospital in Britain, dating back to the twelfth century. Like so many others, this link may have been inspired by Arthur’s real life. Sir Thomas Watson, the Dr. Watson whose death received so much attention a few years before Arthur wrote his first detective novel, was involved with the hospital popularly known as Bart’s.

Young Stamford mentions that an acquaintance named Sherlock Holmes is also seeking a roommate. “He is a little queer in his ideas,” warns Stamford, “—an enthusiast in some branches of science.”

“A medical student, I suppose?” asks Watson.

“No—I have no idea what he intends to go in for. I believe he is well up in anatomy, and he is a first-class chemist; but, as far as I know, he has never taken out any systematic medical classes. His studies are very desultory and eccentric, but he has amassed a lot of out-of-the-way knowledge which would astonish his professors.”

Stamford hesitates about explaining further until Watson worries that this Holmes character may have some terrible flaw. “Is this fellow’s temper so formidable, or what is it?” he demands.

“It’s not easy to express the inexpressible,” protests Stamford. “Holmes is a little too scientific for my taste—it approaches to cold-bloodedness.”

Arthur saw himself as brave and indomitable, and he wanted to convey the same traits in Holmes—before Dr. Watson even meets him. In Stamford's ensuing description of young Holmes's character, Arthur drew from his own experience, including his dangerous experimentation with overdoses of gelseminum seven years earlier. "I could imagine his giving a friend a little pinch of the latest vegetable alkaloid," Stamford says cheerily of Holmes, "not out of malevolence, you understand, but simply out of a spirit of inquiry in order to have an accurate idea of the effects."

Many plants naturally produce alkaloids, including hyacinth, ragwort, periwinkle, and hemlock. Morphine was the first to be isolated by scientists, from the opium poppy, in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Other alkaloid toxins include strychnine, cocaine, nicotine, and even caffeine. Thanks in part to his heavily underlined copy of Alfred Baring Garrod's textbook from medical school, Arthur knew his *materia medica*. He must have smiled as he put in Stamford's mouth further words about Holmes's commitment to science: "To do him justice, I think he would take it himself with the same readiness."

"Very right, too," says Watson.

"Yes, but it may be pushed to excess." Then Arthur brought in memories of the reputation of figures such as Robert Christison at medical school: "When it comes to beating the subjects in the dissecting-rooms with a stick, it is certainly taking rather a bizarre shape."

"Beating the subjects!"

"Yes, to verify how far bruises may be produced after death."

In a high-ceilinged chemical laboratory, amid the flickering blue flames of Bunsen lamps and worktables glittering with test tubes and retorts, Stamford introduces them: "Dr. Watson, Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

The tall young man offers a surprisingly firm handshake and remarks casually, "You have been in Afghanistan, I perceive."

As they depart later, Watson asks Stamford, "How the deuce did he know that I had come from Afghanistan?"

"That's just his little peculiarity," replies Stamford with a smile. "A good many people have wanted to know how he finds things out."

After devoting much of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” to a reprint of the newspaper account of the tragedy, Poe later has Dupin hold forth at great length about what he deduced from the contradictory statements of witnesses quoted therein and from what he himself observed in his examination of the crime scene. But Poe actually devotes only a small paragraph to the examination itself, and only a single sentence to how his detective behaved: “Dupin scrutinized everything—not excepting the bodies of the victims.”

In contrast to Poe’s omission of Dupin’s actual methods, in Gaboriau’s 1867 Lecoq novel *The Mystery of Orcival*, the French author described the young policeman’s ardor for the overlooked physical evidence of a crime scene:

They ascended to the room in question, and M. Lecoq, forgetting his part of a haberdasher, and regardless of his clothes, went down flat on his stomach, alternately scrutinizing the hatchet—which was a heavy, terrible weapon—and the slippery and well-waxed oaken floor. . . .

“When the assassin threw the hatchet, it first fell on the edge—hence this sharp cut; then it fell over on one side and the flat, or hammer end left this mark here, under my finger. Therefore, it was thrown with such violence that it turned over itself and that its edge a second time cut the floor, where you see it now.”. . .

He knelt down and studied the sand on the path, the stagnant water, and the reeds and water-plants. Then going along a little distance, he threw a stone, approaching again to see the effect produced on the mud. He next returned to the house, and came back again under the willows, crossing the lawn, where were still clearly visible traces of a heavy burden having been dragged over it. Without the least respect for his pantaloons, he crossed the lawn on all-fours, scrutinizing the smallest blades of grass, pulling away the thick tufts to see the earth better, and minutely observing the direction of the broken stems.

Following in the muddy footsteps of Lecoq rather than Dupin, bloodhound Sherlock Holmes trusts to the value of his prey’s spoor—the traces, all but invisible to untrained and less gifted eyes, that enable him to reconstruct the tragedy.

As he spoke, he whipped a tape measure and a large round magnifying glass from his pocket. With these two implements he trotted noiselessly about the room, sometimes stopping, occasionally kneeling, and once lying flat upon his face . . . For twenty minutes or more he

continued his researches, measuring with the most exact care the distance between marks which were entirely invisible to me, and occasionally applying his tape to the walls in an equally incomprehensible manner. . . .

“They say that genius is an infinite capacity for taking pains,” he remarked with a smile. “It’s a very bad definition, but it does apply to detective work.”

In “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Auguste Dupin and his narrator stroll Parisian streets—always at night, because at dawn they close the shutters and read and sleep by “the ghastliest and feeblest of rays” from candles. During one of these nocturnal rambles, Dupin reveals how he appears to have read the thoughts of his companion—one of the moments that Sherlock Holmes later mocks. When Dupin explains, his train of observation and reasoning is painfully unconvincing. “He boasted to me, with a low chuckling laugh,” remarks the narrator, “that most men, in respect to himself, wore windows in their bosoms, and was wont to follow up such assertions by direct and very startling proofs of his intimate knowledge of my own.”

Yet Poe did not substantiate this claim by providing the reader with examples of Dupin’s insight into the narrator’s character. Instead he described a behavior that strikes an almost ridiculous Gothic note: “His manner at these moments was frigid and abstract; his eyes were vacant in expression; while his voice, usually a rich tenor, rose into a treble which would have sounded petulantly but for the deliberateness and entire distinctness of the enunciation.”

Arthur, in contrast, felt that his hero ought to demonstrate his genius, not merely proclaim it. When reading detective stories, he found it annoying that the hero often triumphed through luck or through methods that were never explained to the reader. Thus, after he has examined the crime scene in Chapter 3, Holmes explains to skeptical police inspectors, “There has been murder done, and the murderer was a man. He was more than six feet high, was in the prime of life, had small feet for his height, wore coarse, square-toed boots and smoked a Trichinopoly cigar. He came here with his victim in a four-wheeled cab, which was drawn by a horse with three old shoes and one new one on his off fore leg. In all probability the murderer

had a florid face, and the finger-nails of his right hand were remarkably long. These are only a few indications, but they may assist you.”

Holmes’s approach is evidence-based. For example, in one instance he remarks, “There is no branch of detective science which is so important and so much neglected as the art of tracing footsteps. Happily, I have always laid great stress upon it, and much practice has made it second nature to me.” Holmes not only discerns that two men had been present before the horde of constables merged to investigate the crime, he even estimates the height of one from his stride, and imagines the fashionable dress of the other from impressions of his elegant boots.

Readers could overcome their skepticism about Holmes’s extraordinary abilities because Watson was there first—wondering aloud, demanding explanations. This narrative point of view also permitted the detective to hold forth.

“You appeared to be surprised,” remarks Holmes, “when I told you, on our first meeting, that you had come from Afghanistan.”

“You were told, no doubt,” replies Watson.

At this point, sitting at his desk in Bush Villas only six years after completing his studies in Edinburgh, Arthur again conjured specific demonstrations of Joseph Bell’s insight that he himself had witnessed. The memories were still fresh.

“I *knew* you came from Afghanistan,” insists Holmes. “From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind, that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however. The train of reasoning ran, ‘Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair.’” (Indeed, Stamford told Watson that he looked “as thin as a lath and as brown as a nut.”) “He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly,” Holmes continues. “His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan.”

CHAPTER 21

The Book of Life

I began to think of turning scientific methods, as it were, onto the work of detection . . . I thought to myself, “If a scientific man like Bell was to come into the detective business, he wouldn’t do these things by chance. He’d get the thing by building it up scientifically.” So, having once conceived that line of thought, you can well imagine that I had, as it were, a new idea of the detective—and one which it interested me to work out.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, IN AN INTERVIEW

Early in the process of planning his detective novel, scribbling in his notebook and drawing upon his memories of Dr. Bell, Arthur imagined Holmes having written an article about his scientific method of detection—and foresaw Watson’s impatient response to it:

“What rot this is” I cried—throwing the volume petulantly aside “I must say that I have no patience with people who build up fine theories in their own armchairs which can never be reduced to practice—”

Arthur kept this idea in the final version. In the second chapter of the published book, after they settle into their rooms at 221B Baker Street, Watson runs across an unsigned article, “The Book of Life,” in a magazine. Its author claims that, through the systematic observation of seemingly minor details, one could deduce a great deal of personal information about a stranger.

From a drop of water, a logician could infer the possibility of an Atlantic or a Niagara without having seen or heard of one or the other. So all life is a great chain, the nature of which is known whenever we are shown a single link of it. Like all other arts, the Science of Deduction and Analysis is one which can only be acquired by long and patient study nor is life long enough to allow any mortal to attain the highest possible perfection in it. Before turning to those moral and mental aspects of the matter which present the greatest difficulties, let the enquirer begin by

mastering more elementary problems. Let him, on meeting a fellow-mortal, learn at a glance to distinguish the history of the man, and the trade or profession to which he belongs. Puerile as such an exercise may seem, it sharpens the faculties of observation, and teaches one where to look and what to look for. By a man's finger nails, by his coat-sleeve, by his boot, by his trouser knees, by the callosities of his forefinger and thumb, by his expression, by his shirt cuffs—by each of these things a man's calling is plainly revealed. That all united should fail to enlighten the competent enquirer in any case is almost inconceivable.

“What ineffable twaddle!” exclaims Watson in this version. “I never read such rubbish in my life.”

Holmes reveals that he wrote the article himself. “I have a turn both for observation and for deduction,” he says with rare understatement. “The theories which I have expressed there, and which appear to you to be so chimerical are really extremely practical—so practical that I depend upon them for my bread and cheese.”

Soon comes Holmes's revelation that will subvert Watson's goal of a relaxed convalescence after his wounding at Maiwand: “I am a consulting detective, if you can understand what that is. Here in London we have lots of Government detectives and lots of private ones. When these fellows are at fault they come to me, and I manage to put them on the right scent. They lay all the evidence before me, and I am generally able, by the help of my knowledge of the history of crime, to set them straight. There is a strong family resemblance about misdeeds, and if you have all the details of a thousand at your finger ends, it is odd if you can't unravel the thousand and first.”

Always Holmes demonstrates that his experience is informed by extensive reading. For example, “the forcible administration of poison,” he tells Watson, “is by no means a new thing in criminal annals. The cases of Dolsky in Odessa, and of Leturier in Montpellier, will occur at once to any toxicologist.”

In the essay that Watson derides, Holmes uses the term *deduction* instead of *induction* in the way that many English speakers commonly did during the nineteenth century—as almost a synonym for *inference*. He even refers to his own “rules of deduction.” Technically, as well-educated Arthur probably knew, *deduction* means reasoning from the general to the particular, as in “All human beings are mortal. Queen Victoria is a human

being. Therefore Queen Victoria is mortal.” Certainly Holmes employs this kind of thinking as well. He propounds a theory and then sets out to test it, like any good scientific thinker—often disproving his original theory through discovery of new information. But most of his method was based upon induction. He reasoned from the particular to the general, as in “This man’s footprints are very far apart. Only tall men can manage such a stride. Therefore this man is tall.” *Deduction*, however, had also been one of Joseph Bell’s favorite words, so naturally Arthur placed it in the mouth of his Bell-inspired detective.

In conjuring Holmes’s scientific approach, Arthur was not only echoing Zadig and Dupin; he was also exploring the concepts of Francis Bacon, who by Arthur’s time had come to be considered the patron saint of rational inquiry. At times he invoked Bacon explicitly. “One’s ideas must be as broad as Nature if they are to interpret Nature,” remarks Holmes to Dr. Watson. Even the phrase *to interpret nature* was associated, in the minds of the nineteenth-century educated class, with Bacon. His 1620 magnum opus, *Novum Organum*, had been subtitled *True Suggestions for the Interpretation of Nature*. Originally titled *Novum Organum Scientiarum* (“New instrument of science”), it was Bacon’s manifesto on the foundations of what would later be called the scientific method.

Bacon argued against excessive respect for traditional text-revering approaches and in favor of evidence-based research. In doing so, he embodied, clarified, and furthered the philosophical yearning of his age—for greater knowledge and understanding of those matters that might reasonably be expected to fall within the human ken. In fact, Bacon explicitly defined “inductive history” as “historical matters consequentially deduced from phenomena, facts, observations, experiments, arts, and the active sciences.”

Arthur almost certainly read the long biographical and critical essay on Bacon by Thomas Babington Macaulay, one of his favorite writers. Macaulay (who employed the term *induction* correctly) misrepresented Bacon’s primary method as one in which the observer gathers details without a preconceived theory with which to unite them—the idea that induction can only follow informed observation. Macaulay summarized what he considered Bacon’s tiresome obviousness with his notorious pie analogy: “I ate minced pies on Monday and Wednesday, and I was kept

awake by indigestion all night . . . I did not eat any on Tuesday and Friday, and I was quite well.’”

Arthur portrayed Bacon’s theme of the everyday demonstration of observation by turning Dr. Bell into Mr. Holmes. And even the confidence that Holmes’s prescience inspires in others was echoed in one of Bell’s later remarks: “The patient, too, is likely to be impressed by your ability to cure him in the future if he sees you, at a glance, know much of the past. And the whole trick is much easier than it appears at first.”

One of Watson’s first compliments to his roommate proved how much he has been won over by Holmes’s demonstrations of his technique: “You have brought detection as near an exact science as it ever will be brought in this world.”

And Arthur placed in Watson’s observation a telling glimpse of Holmes’s human side: “My companion flushed up with pleasure at my words, and the earnest way in which I uttered them. I had already observed that he was as sensitive to flattery on the score of his art as any girl could be of her beauty.”

A Basilisk in the Desert

I had written in *A Study in Scarlet* a rather sensational and overcoloured picture of the Danite episodes which formed a passing stain in the early history of Utah.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *OUR SECOND AMERICAN ADVENTURE*

Not all of Émile Gaboriau's books featured the police detective Monsieur Lecoq. He was prominent, however, in the 1867 novel *The Mystery of Orcival*, which was translated into English in 1871, when Arthur was twelve. Gaboriau divided this tale into two parts. The first recounted the detective's brilliant investigation of a violent murder and the second included a flashback tracing events leading to the murder and to the perpetrator's flight.

Arthur employed this structure, which was not unique to Gaboriau, in writing *A Study in Scarlet*. After only seven lively and amusing chapters, he left Holmes and Watson in London and whisked readers across the Atlantic to North America—and back in time to 1847. Arthur had never visited the New World, but like adventure writers from Homer to Robert Louis Stevenson, he instinctively turned toward underexplored regions as exotic settings. As early as “The American's Tale,” an awkwardly slangy story published in *London Society* in 1880, he had employed the violent U.S. frontier in this way. That he would inevitably get many details wrong didn't worry him. He was quick to subordinate facts to story.

He ended Part 1 with Holmes capturing Jefferson Hope, the killer of Enoch Drebbler at 3, Lauriston Gardens. Then came Part 2, “The Country of the Saints,” which provided the history of the incidents that led to the murder. Arthur wrote Hope's story in the third person.

In seeking appropriate villains for his melodrama, Arthur settled upon a group often excoriated in the English press at this time: Mormons. It was a canny ploy. Adherents of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints had been controversial ever since Mormonism's founding in the late 1820s in upstate New York by convicted confidence artist Joseph Smith. In 1830 Smith published the Book of Mormon, written in awkward imitation of the style of the King James Bible. Smith claimed that he had translated ancient golden plates written in the "Reformed Egyptian Alphabet," and that their buried location—and translation key—had been revealed to him by an angel named Moroni. Amid religious and civil controversy, including violent clashes with locals and eventually with the federal government, Mormon groups gradually migrated from New York to Ohio, then to Illinois and Missouri—ever westward, toward the less-governed, less-observed frontier.

Joseph Smith became embroiled in many contentious relationships within his own church, and in 1844 he was killed by a mob that attacked the jail where he was being held for trial. A new leader, Brigham Young, rose to prominence and led the migration farther westward. The Mormons finally settled in the Salt Lake Valley region of Alta California, Mexico, which in 1850 became what it still was when Arthur wrote *A Study in Scarlet*: the U.S. territory of Utah.

Arthur saw zealous—and often quite successful—Mormon missionaries around him in English society. During the single decade of the 1850s, they baptized forty-three thousand English converts into their church. Although polygamy had been forbidden in England since the Bigamy Act of 1603, many poor people seem to have weighed the risks of a new faith against the narrow avenues and high walls of the English class system—and opted for change.

The Book of Mormon forbade polygamy, but among elders Smith encouraged it. In 1876 the Doctrine's prohibition against it was removed. Soon novelists began exploiting this controversial practice, in part through accounts of virtuous women described as having resisted indoctrination and thus escaped the life of sin planned for them. At times the heroine's virtue was threatened in titillating detail. Readers could absolve their lapse into prurience, however, through the piety with which victims condemned their tormentors. Church leaders were portrayed as licentious and vain, their

followers as bovine and fainthearted. Drink, forbidden by Mormon doctrine, was presented as commonplace.

Stories about evil Mormons had been popular throughout Arthur's life. His childhood favorite author, Captain Mayne Reid, wrote one, *The Wild Huntress*, published in 1861, when Arthur was two years old. In Maria Ward's didactic 1855 novel *Female Life Among the Mormons*, the heroine, Ellen, recounts how Joseph Smith personally sabotaged her betrothal and how she fell under his spell. "His presence was that of the basilisk," she recalls. "He exerted a mystical magical influence over me—a sort of sorcery that deprived me of the unrestricted exercise of free will."

In 1885, the year before Arthur wrote *A Study in Scarlet*, one of his favorite writers, Robert Louis Stevenson—collaborating with his wife, Fanny Van de Grift Stevenson—published a sequel to his popular 1882 story collection *New Arabian Nights*.

Arthur greatly admired Stevenson's writing and found himself trying to emulate his friendly, vivid style. Also an Edinburgh native, Stevenson was nine years Arthur's elder and a fellow alumnus of Edinburgh University—where he had also taken classes with Joseph Bell. Stevenson was born into a family of engineers who specialized in lighthouse design. In the first decade of the nineteenth century, his grandfather, the renowned Robert Stevenson, built the Bell Rock lighthouse on the reef of Inchcape, the notorious graveyard of ships off the southwest coast of Angus. But the young Stevenson had abandoned engineering for literature. His first great success, *Treasure Island*, had appeared in 1883, to wide acclaim. Two years later, just before Arthur began writing *A Study in Scarlet*, saw publication of Stevenson's novel *Prince Otto*, a fanciful but politically charged adventure story.

More New Arabian Nights: The Dynamiter comprised a series of stories within stories, narrated by various characters, with titles such as "Story of the Fair Cuban" and "Narrative of the Spirited Old Lady." The Stevensons set their first framed story, "The Destroying Angel," in Utah among violent Mormons. The Stevensons portrayed the Danites, their titular "angels," as a network of spies and assassins spanning the globe, imposing the will of Brigham Young on both apostates and "Gentiles" (non-Mormons). These

were not uncommon ideas. A novel published only eight years before Arthur wrote *A Study in Scarlet* bore the subtitle “A Terrible Tale of the Danites of Mormon Land.”

The Danites were founded as a secret vigilante group in 1838 while the Mormons were headquartered in Missouri. Four years earlier, Joseph Smith had started a private militia he called the Armies of Israel, and this may have been the origin of the Danites. Persistent rumors of a band of Mormon assassins emerged from Utah, but the church denied that such a group existed after the tumultuous early days in Missouri.

In the Stevensons’ story, a family is threatened by the all-spying church that wants their money and their daughter. Terrified, they try to flee under cover of darkness, only to find the symbol of the Mormon Eye, which they had been taught to associate with church omniscience, drawn on a rock face. They turn back. The father is killed and the mother submits to an assisted suicide, leaving the narrating daughter in the hands of a manipulative old man who has long been secretly arranging a marriage with her. At the end of her story, the person to whom she recounts this saga doubts its truth—permitting the authors to exploit anti-Mormon sentiments without committing to them.

Seldom hesitating to borrow from other writers, Arthur incorporated generous helpings of *The Dynamiter* into *A Study in Scarlet*. He could not resist the dramatic potential of the evil Danites, whom he dubbed “Avenging Angels” instead of “Destroying Angels,” the term used by Stevenson and others. He titled Chapter 5 of Part 2 “The Avenging Angels.” Arthur gave the girl (and later young woman) in his story the name of the mother in the Stevenson tale, Lucy. Early in Part 2, a band of Mormons rescues a man named John Ferrier and the orphaned Lucy, whom Ferrier then adopts.

Like the Stevensons and many other writers, Arthur created an innocent young woman whose virtue is threatened by the conniving elders. But he trumped the Stevensons by making his villain Brigham Young himself, who had died less than a decade before Arthur began writing his novel. At one point, Young comes to Ferrier to ask why he has no wives, and to proclaim of Lucy, “She has grown to be the flower of Utah, and has found favour in the eyes of many who are high in the land.”

But Lucy has fallen in love with Jefferson Hope, a man outside the faith—a forbidden love. Two young men, the ungentlemanly and threatening Enoch Drebbler and Joseph Stangerson, visit Ferrier to insist upon Lucy's hand in marriage. He throws them out, which results in their threats of both human and divine reprisal. Ferrier urgently begs help from Hope. Ferrier winds up killed by Stangerson, and afterward Lucy is forced to marry Drebbler. She dies a month later, and Jefferson Hope swears vengeance upon the killers. Unlike other writers about Mormons, Arthur did not indulge in sexual titillation; the marriage and death of Lucy occur offstage.

After years away, Hope returns in search of his enemies, only to find that they have fled the Mormons. He tracks them across the United States and eventually to England. In recounting his story to Holmes and Watson, Hope describes how he got a job driving a hansom cab in London in order to search for Drebbler and Stangerson. The hansom was a two-wheeled vehicle that seated a pair of passengers behind a low double door that guarded their shoes and clothes from mud and excrement flung up by the horse's rear hooves; the top-hatted driver stood outside at the back, holding the reins through a loop on the roof.

Hope watched and waited. In the revelatory last chapter of *A Study in Scarlet*, Hope admits that he returned to the scene of his crime, searching for his lost ring, only to find the house surrounded by police. He evaded them by acting drunk, thus deliberately attracting attention instead of trying to avoid it. In this ploy too, Arthur was imitating Gaboriau. The murderer in *Monsieur Lecoq* attracts attention the same way, in order to get himself jailed alongside an already arrested accomplice.

A fan since boyhood of stories about the American frontier, Arthur admired Mark Twain's writing and is unlikely to have missed Twain's amusing and vivid 1872 book *Roughing It*, which recounted Twain's embroidered adventures in the western United States, including run-ins with Mormons. Twain sketched one brute reputed to be one of the Destroying Angels, whom Twain defined as "Latter-day Saints who are set apart by the Church to conduct permanent disappearances of obnoxious citizens."

Arthur's magpie mind seems to have plucked a term from Twain's account that appeared in no other contemporary book or article about the Latter-day Saints. "They may be darned sharp," says Jefferson Hope about his Mormon pursuers, "but they're not quite sharp enough to catch a

Washoe hunter.” The Washoe were a tribe of Native Americans long established in the region of Lake Tahoe; one of the Nevada Territory’s nine original counties was named Washoe. Twain remarks that “Washoe is a pet nickname for Nevada,” and employs it many times within his passages set in Utah and Nevada. But apparently the term was otherwise unknown until Arthur used it.

The overwrought historical background story was not equal in quality to the rest of *A Study in Scarlet*, lacking the texture and style of the Sherlock Holmes scenes, as well as the personal warmth of Dr. Watson as narrator. But it provided Holmes with an interesting opponent and allowed Arthur to stretch his wings as a writer.

And naturally the story ended with the triumph of this brilliant new detective. When Sherlock Holmes lures him into a trap, Jefferson Hope surrenders and remarks admiringly, “If there’s a vacant place for a chief of the police, I reckon you are the man for it. The way you kept on my trail was a caution.” It was the end of his trail. Hope turns out to be suffering from “an aortic aneurism,” as Watson diagnoses it, and dies in his cell without appearing before a magistrate.

After Père Tabaret, the amateur private detective in Gaboriau’s *The Widow Lerouge*, solves the case, he thinks about his primary rival on the police force: “This investigation will bring him honor, when all the credit is due me.” In *A Study in Scarlet*, after Holmes explains final details of his deductions to Watson, they read in *The Echo*:

It is an open secret that the credit of this smart capture belongs entirely to the well-known Scotland Yard officials, Messrs. Lestrade and Gregson. The man was apprehended, it appears, in the rooms of a certain Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who has himself, as an amateur, shown some talent in the detective line, and who, with such instructors, may hope in time to attain to some degree of their skill. It is expected that a testimonial of some sort will be presented to the two officers in fitting recognition of their services.

Upon reading this passage, Sherlock Holmes bursts out laughing. “Didn’t I tell you so when we started? That’s the result of all our Study in Scarlet: to get them a testimonial!”

“Never mind, I have all the facts in my journal,” murmurs Watson, “and the public shall know them.”

Rather than end on Watson’s prophetic words, Arthur could not resist echoing Edgar Allan Poe one more time. Poe garnished many of his innovative stories with old-fashioned trappings, including quotations in other languages. He introduced “The Purloined Letter” with a Latin epigraph by the first-century Roman philosopher Seneca, closed “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” with a line in French from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s 1761 epistolary novel *Julie, or the New Héloïse*. In context, the Rousseau quotation—Dupin’s final words in the last sentence of the story—becomes a sarcastic commentary upon the bureaucratic incompetence of the official police force. Of G——, the prefect of police, Dupin remarks that “he has ‘*de nier ce qui est, et d’expliquer ce qui n’est pas*’”: “to deny what is and to explain what is not.”

In the closing paragraph of *A Study in Scarlet*, Arthur invoked the classics with a quotation spoken by Sherlock Holmes, whom Watson had first imagined to be ignorant of most literature: “In the meantime you must make yourself contented by the consciousness of success, like the Roman miser—‘*Populus me sibilat, at mihi plaudo / Ipse domi simul ac nummos contemplor in arca.*’” The line, from Horace’s *Satires*, translates, “The public hisses at me, but I am pleased with myself in private when I look at the money in my box.”

It was not a particularly apt remark when proclaimed by a young man who had no client and had earned no fee during the investigation of the Lauriston Gardens murder. Not surprisingly in a novel written in only six weeks, the closing quotation reads like a last-minute touch with little thought behind it. Perhaps Arthur felt that he owed one last payment to Edgar Allan Poe, who had lent him so much capital to invest in the creation of Sherlock Holmes.

A Born Novelist

If the secret history of literature could be written, the blighted hopes, the heart-sickening disappointment, the weary waiting, the wasted labor, it would be the saddest record ever penned.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *THE NARRATIVE OF JOHN SMITH*

“Arthur has written another book,” Touie Doyle was soon writing to Arthur’s sister Lottie, “a little novel about 200 pages long, called *A Study in Scarlet*.”

But no one seemed eager to publish Arthur’s new book. Laboriously, he made a fair copy of the manuscript in his neat round hand, rolled it up and inserted it into one of the standard mailing tubes, and sent it out to publishers. He had not been surprised when publishers refused to gamble on *The Firm of Girdlestone*. But he was disappointed to find *A Study in Scarlet* making the same old circular tour. He considered this new novel superior to its predecessor.

Optimistically, he sent the manuscript to James Payn at *Cornhill*, who had published “J. Habakuk Jephson’s Statement.” Arthur hoped for serialization in that magazine. Payn replied that he liked the tale but that it was too short for a novel and too long for a story. Arthur agreed. And clearly *A Study in Scarlet* would never be picked up by the lending libraries, even if he could sell it as a magazine serial, for Mudie’s seldom gambled on one-volume debut novels.

Nonetheless, in May 1886 Arthur sent the manuscript to J. W. Arrowsmith, a publisher situated in Bristol. It was a reasonable bet. In 1877 Arrowsmith had renamed the firm after succeeding its founder, printer William Browne, and had experienced growing success, especially since founding *Arrowsmith’s Annual* in the early 1880s.

Yet in July Arrowsmith returned *A Study in Scarlet*. Determined not to give up, Arthur mailed it to a couple of other publishers. Each rejected it. Finally he thought to send it to Ward, Lock & Company, which specialized in sensational popular novels.

While Arthur was trying to sell *A Study in Scarlet*, a detective novel by the New Zealand novelist Fergus Hume demonstrated just how much commercial potential this field offered to hardworking (and lucky) authors. Hume first self-published *The Mystery of the Hansom Cab* and soon sold the copyright for £50—which he must have regretted, because the novel eventually sold a hundred thousand copies in Australia and half a million through the widely distributed Jarrold edition from London.

In the Australian gold rush era, Melbourne police assign the working-class detective Gorby to unravel the story of a corpse found in a hansom. Hume's debt to Gaboriau was so obvious that an 1888 parody was entitled *The Mystery of a Wheelbarrow, or Gaboriau Gaborooed, an Idealistic Story of a Great and Rising Colony*. Like Arthur, however, Hume was quick to reference his own genealogy, even having characters cite earlier detective story writers, from Poe to Anna Katharine Green. To keep the reader acquainted with Gorby's thought processes during the investigation, Hume gave him a curious habit: "Being a detective, and of an extremely reticent disposition, he never talked outside about his business, or made a confidant of anyone. When he did want to unbosom himself, he retired to his bedroom and talked to his reflection in the mirror." After Poe, Dickens, Collins, Gaboriau, and Hume, readers expected detectives to be eccentric.

In Ward, Lock's offices in Salisbury Square—the publisher had outgrown its birthplace in Fleet Street—Arthur's mailing tube crossed the desk of George Thomas Bettany. A former professor of botany and biology at Cambridge, Bettany edited several of Ward, Lock's series, including Popular Library for Literary Treasures, Science Primers for the People, and the Minerva Library of Famous Books. He was also the London editor of the distinguished U.S. periodical *Lippincott's*.

Overworked, like most editors, Bettany thought this little novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, might be outside his area of expertise. He took it home to his wife, the former Mary Jean Hickling Gwynne, who had studied medicine and who wrote fiction herself under the name Jeanie Gwynne Bettany. Her novel *The House of Rimmon* had been published by Remington in 1885, and Ward, Lock was publishing *Two Legacies* in 1886.

“I should be glad if you would look through this,” Bettany recalled saying, “and tell me whether I ought to read it.”

She read through the pages and enthusiastically reported back to her husband, “This is, I feel sure, by a doctor—there is internal evidence to that effect. But in any case, the writer is a born novelist. I am enthusiastic about the book, and believe it will be a great success.”

In late October Arthur received Ward, Lock’s reply.

Dear Sir,

We have read your story *A Study in Scarlet*, and are pleased with it. We could not publish it this year, as the market is flooded at present with cheap fiction, but if you do not object to its being held over until next year we will give you £25/— (Twenty-five Pounds) for the copyright.

We are,

Dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

Ward, Lock & Co.

30 October 1886

Disheartened by this less-than-enthusiastic—and only modestly remunerative—response, Arthur replied immediately, on the first of November, with a request that Ward, Lock pay him royalties instead of purchasing the copyright in its entirety.

The English mail was efficient, as usual. “We regret to say,” replied Ward, Lock on the following day, “that we shall be unable to retain a percentage on the sale of your work as it might give rise to some confusion. The tale may have to be inserted with some other, in one of our annuals, therefore we must adhere to our original offer of for [*sic*] the complete copyright.”

Arthur agonized over his next decision. He was offended by the contract offered, but he also hated to think of his latest creation stagnating in a

drawer for months or years instead of garnering his career a little more of the attention he felt he was beginning to deserve. Finally he agreed to Ward, Lock's terms.

A few weeks later, he wrote a painful letter concluding the bargain:

November 20th 1886

In consideration of the sum of Twenty-Five Pounds paid by them to me I hereby assign to Messrs. Ward, Lock & Co., of Warwick House, Salisbury Square, E.C. Publishers the Copyright and all my interest in the book written by me entitled A STUDY IN SCARLET.

A. Conan Doyle, MD

Bush Villa, Southsea

Eventually publication was scheduled for more than a year later, in the 1887 issue of *Beeton's Christmas Annual*.

In 1852 an English publisher named Samuel Orchard Beeton, barely in his twenties, made his name by gambling on publication of an incendiary anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, by an American woman named Harriet Beecher Stowe. The same year, he launched a pioneering periodical, *The Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine*. The son of a Cheapside publican, Beeton yearned to pursue a more ambitious profession.

In 1856 he married a smart and enterprising young woman, Isabella Mary Mayson, who soon became renowned in her own right as the mage of practical domesticity, Mrs. Beeton. The couple made themselves a household name by publishing many diverse volumes, such as *Beeton's Dictionary of Useful Information*, *Beeton's Historian*, *Beeton's Book of Birds*, *Beeton's Book of Chemistry*, even *Beeton's Book of Jokes and Jests*. The Beetons first published *Mrs Beeton's Book of Household Management* in 1861, with sequels and related volumes snatched up by an eager public. Beeton founded an equally original and successful periodical for children, *Boy's Own Magazine*.

When Mrs. Beeton died in 1865, her devoted husband was all but crippled by grief. Already they had lost three children. The following year, however, fate dealt Beeton another blow. Following a banking collapse in May, many businesses closed. Beeton's only path to escaping bankruptcy

lay in selling the copyrights of all his publications. The publisher Ward, Lock and Tyler bought them, retaining the experienced Beeton at a handsome salary. The company had been known as Ward and Lock until a third partner named Tyler joined in 1865. When Tyler departed in 1873 it reverted to its earlier name, so that by the time Arthur submitted the rolled manuscript of his brief novel in 1886, the firm was again merely Ward, Lock & Company.

By this time *Beeton's Christmas Annual* was a small-format magazine, of the size known in publishing as demy octavo, roughly eight and a half inches tall by five and a half inches wide. Some version of this holiday issue had appeared every winter since 1860. During its first decade, it had remained blandly noncommittal about contemporary affairs, but in 1872 and 1873 Beeton turned in a new direction and included political satire. Ward, Lock complained, despite the high sales and newspaper attention the satire drew, and Beeton lost his job. He died of tuberculosis in 1877, twelve years after his wife. Immediately the publisher changed the format of *Beeton's* annual Christmas issue to feature short stories—including three by Mark Twain in the first new issue—and plays intended for home performance.

Arthur had seen his stories in Christmas issues of several magazines. He had published one in the *Boy's Own Paper*, for example, every Christmas since 1883, beginning with his own holiday story, “An Exciting Christmas Eve; or, My Lecture on Dynamite.” In 1886 “Cyprian Overbeck Wells. A Literary Mosaic” appeared. By Arthur's time, the *Beeton's* annual miniature anthology was so popular that a contemporary review described it as “an old institution, and as regularly looked for as the holly and the mistletoe.” Thus Arthur was pleased to learn from Ward, Lock that his novel would appear in the 1887 issue of *Beeton's Christmas Annual*—the entire short novel in the December issue, not serialized, and in a venue likely to attract notice.

He was not the only family member contributing to periodicals. Back home in Scotland, near the coast north of Edinburgh, in Montrose Royal Asylum, a small in-house magazine had been launched, ambitiously titled *The Sunnyside Chronicle*. Arthur's anxious, capricious, talented father soon channeled his frustrated creativity into writing and drawing for it.

In mid-October 1886, two weeks before Ward, Lock offered to buy the copyright of *A Study in Scarlet*, Joseph Bell retired from the Edinburgh Infirmary. As Bell himself later wrote, for thirty-two years he had “never willingly spent a day in Edinburgh without entering its gates.” He was forty-nine, and was leaving only because the Infirmary’s bylaws specified limits to various positions, including his role as senior surgeon. He had been on the full-time staff for fifteen years.

“Lord,” he wrote in his diary, “comfort me I pray thee in my sadness in parting from my dear Wards and dear friends and nurses.”

With Florence Nightingale as one of the organizers and a primary contributor of funds, a subscription began to honor Bell’s service to medicine and in particular to nursing. A few months later, in January 1887, a group called upon him at his home on Melville Crescent—a body of nurses and other staff and faculty representing not only the Royal Infirmary but also the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, the Princes Street Training Institution, and the Hospital for Incurables. They brought him enough tributes to furnish a new office, carrying in a pair of silver candelabra, a brass pen and inkwell set, a paperweight—and, as a setting for these, a beautiful oak writing table and chair.

Not that Joe Bell was going to retire from medicine. He was writing a textbook for nurses and remained editor of the *Edinburgh Medical Journal*. The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh elected him president. And in May, a ceremony in the Hall of the Royal College of Surgeons presented Bell with a large portrait of himself and a raft of testimonials from colleagues. “Mr. Bell’s whole career has been distinguished by the most honorable attention to his duties,” proclaimed his colleague Henry Littlejohn on behalf of the Infirmary,

whether as a teacher of systematic surgery in the Medical School, or as a teacher of clinical surgery in the Infirmary, whether as regards the patients committed to his charge, the nurses on his staff, or the students who thronged his classrooms and wards. An accomplished and dexterous surgeon, he secured the confidence of his patients and the public. His teaching powers were freely devoted to the nursing establishment of the Infirmary, while to the students he endeared himself by the practical character of his teaching and his frank and sympathizing manner.

In November 1887 the Royal Hospital for Sick Children appointed Bell surgeon to the children's ward, where almost half the cases were already attended by him because of his legendary way with young people. Herds of diseased, handicapped, and wounded children swarmed through the hospital. There were fractures and contusions resulting from falls on Salisbury Crag or from tenement windows, broken limbs from tram and carriage accidents. Birth defects of every kind were rampant: harelip, cleft palate, clubfoot, spina bifida. Neglect especially angered Bell. Frequently he treated small children who suffered from starvation, frostbite, eczema, ulcers, burns, and even genital injuries. He worked to both rescue the children and punish their alleged caretakers. A testament to scientific knowledge guided by compassion, the man who had served as Arthur's model for Sherlock Holmes was flourishing.

The Preternatural Sagacity of a Scientific Detective

I never at any time received another penny for it.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, ABOUT *A STUDY IN SCARLET*

In July 1887, during the busy summer while Arthur was waiting for *A Study in Scarlet* to appear in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, a brief letter of his was published in the spiritualist periodical *Light: A Journal of Psychical, Occult, and Mystical Research*. He wrote about his readings of Major General Alfred Wilks Drayson, Alfred Russel Wallace, and others, and added a curious assertion: “After weighing the evidence, I could no more doubt the existence of the phenomena than I could doubt the existence of lions in Africa, though I have been to that continent and have never chanced to see one.”

Recently Arthur had been, he claimed, debating whether to buy Leigh Hunt's book *Comic Dramatists of the Restoration* for research on a writing project, and he insisted that he had mentioned this thought to no one. Then he attended his first séance with a professional medium, who, claiming to be inhabited by a spirit, wrote a message for Arthur in pencil: “This gentleman is a healer. Tell him from me not to read Leigh Hunt's book.”

“Above all,” Arthur exhorted in this first public admission of his spiritualist leanings, “let every inquirer bear in mind that phenomena are only a means to an end, of no value at all of themselves, and simply useful as giving us assurance of an after existence for which we are to prepare by refining away our grosser animal feelings and cultivating our higher, nobler impulses.”

In November, the month in which Joseph Bell went to work as surgeon to the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Arthur finally saw his Sherlock Holmes novel in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. The periodical title ran across the top in relatively small black letters on a yellow band, and below it in much larger type appeared each year's issue title. In 1887 the lower band bore in bright red type, occupying a third of the cover, the words *A Study in Scarlet*. In the well-drawn illustration, a man in a frock coat was shown from behind, rising from a low-backed Windsor chair, his right hand grasping the chair's curving arm and his left reaching up toward a candle suspended in a holder from the *S* in *Study*. His tense posture implied shock and possibly fear; like Arthur's title, however, the cover illustration revealed nothing about the story within.

The issue went on sale in November for one shilling. Like most magazines, *Beeton's* was primarily a vehicle for commerce, and atop the early pages ran the heading *Beeton's Christmas Annual Advertiser*. The text and illustrations were black-and-white, but a few advertisers had paid for a three-color tipped-in insert on poorer-quality paper. Advertisements filled the first fourteen pages—announcements for everything from Sir James Murray's Pure Fluid Magnesia (“an excellent Remedy in cases of Acidity, Indigestion, Heartburn, Gravel, and Gout”) to Darlow's magnetic Lung Invigorator. Plaudits and promises for Steiner's Vermin Paste jostled those for Southall's Sanitary Towels for Ladies and the Patent Thermo Safeguard Feeding Bottle (designed to rescue “Thousands of Infants who are now being Ruined in Health”). The back cover of the magazine bore a full-page advertisement for Beecham's Pills, “A Marvelous Antidote” for everything from “Wind and Pain in the Stomach” to “Disturbed Sleep, Frightful Dreams, and All Nervous and Trembling Sensations, &c.”

After marching through this carnival of industry, Arthur found that the title page, opposite half-page advertisements for both Irish cambric pocket handkerchiefs and electrical treatments at Pulvermacher's Galvanic Establishment in Regent Street, bore, below a vestigial *A*, the words *STUDY IN SCARLET* in huge capitals, with *By A. Conan Doyle* prominent underneath. The other works in the 170-page volume—clearly minor by comparison, if allocated title page real estate was any clue—were described as “Two Original Plays for Home Performance,” a popular form of party entertainment.

This title page masked considerable real-life drama. The author and illustrator of the first play, *Food for Powder: A Vaudeville for the Drawing Room*, which began on page 96, was listed as R. André. This was the second tightly guarded pseudonym for William Roger Snow, a fifty-three-year-old outcast member of a prominent London family. His indiscretions with an Irish actress had wrecked both his military career and his marriage, resulting in the need to write for money under pen names unknown to both the military and his wife. Before hiding behind the name Richard André, Snow had disguised himself as Clifford Merton. Wildly prolific, under each nom de plume he was popular as both a writer and an illustrator for adults and children. He garnished the *Beeton's* edition of his farce with whimsical sketches of the characters.

The Four-Leaved Shamrock started on page 115, where it bore the informative subtitle *A Drawing-Room Comedietta in Three Acts*, as well as the performance note “May also be acted as a Charade to the word ‘Stoppage.’” Its author hid not a secret past but merely her gender behind a pen name. Catherine Jane—writing as C. J.—Hamilton had published three of her five novels, including *Marriage Bonds: Or, Christian Hazell's Married Life*, with Ward, Lock. She had also published some stories and her novel *Hedged with Thorns* under the pseudonym Retlaw Spring. Although born in England, Hamilton moved to Ireland after the death of her father, an Anglican vicar, and wrote from there. Later she was also known for her literate and celebratory nonfiction series *Women Writers: Their Works and Ways*. Hamilton's play was adorned with a few character portraits by the popular illustrator Matt Stretch, who portrayed the antics in a satirical mode reminiscent of illustrations for early Dickens by Hablot K. Browne (Phiz).

Then came another page of advertisements and the contents page, followed by seventeen more commercial pages, many of them featuring blurbs for books such as *The World's Inhabitants: Mankind, Animals, and Plants* and John Forster's *Life of Goldsmith*. When readers finally reached the official page 1, they could at least see ahead an expanse of text uninterrupted except by illustrations. Arthur's novella filled the next ninety-five pages.

Arthur was twenty-eight. Eight years had passed since the publication of his first story, “The Mystery of Sasassa Valley,” in *Chambers's Journal*.

Beeton's commissioned D. H. Friston to illustrate the work. Friston set the stage with a frontispiece portraying the moment when Sherlock Holmes peers through a large magnifying glass at the word *Rache* scrawled upon the wall of the murder scene at 3, Lauriston Gardens. Clad in bowler hat and a belted, caped Inverness—a Scottish style of cloak only recently adopted in England—Holmes may have looked more stylish than Arthur intended. With a receding lower lip and chin, however, Holmes lacks the forceful demeanor he presents in Arthur's novel. But Friston furnished him with an appropriately aquiline nose, equipped him with a magnifying glass, and portrayed him towering over the police detectives.

The second illustration doesn't even show Holmes's face. While Gregson and Lestrade argue, Holmes is bent over the corpse in the room at Lauriston Gardens, the caption reading, "As he spoke, his nimble fingers were flying here, there, and everywhere." No other illustrations appear until Part 2, when John Ferrier awakens in the desert to find himself and the little girl Lucy rescued by Mormons. Friston showed two men helping the ragged and worn Ferrier stumble along, while another man carries Lucy on his shoulders. For his final illustration, Friston captured the moment when Jefferson Hope comes to the besieged Ferrier family and offers to help spirit them away during the night.

In his mid-sixties, David Henry Friston was a well-known artist. After his first wife's death in 1854, with seven children to support, he worked prolifically. His paintings had been exhibited at the Royal Academy, British Institution, and Royal Society of British Artists, but he was better known for his illustration work. Between 1871 and 1872, he illustrated the serial publication of Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's sensuous vampire novella *Carmilla* in the short-lived London literary magazine *The Dark Blue*. His numerous illustrations for books had included at least two published by Ward, Lock. Like Matt Stretch and the pseudonymous Richard André, Friston had been providing drawings for *Beeton's* since 1885.

A Study in Scarlet was not the first work of Arthur's that Friston had been commissioned to illustrate. Working often at this time for *London Society*, he had illustrated four of Arthur's short stories during the last few years. For the Christmas 1881 issue, he illustrated both "That Little Square Box" and "The Gully of Bluemansdyke." The next year's Christmas issue saw Friston's drawings adorning Arthur's story "My Friend the Murderer." And

in December 1885, only weeks before Arthur began writing *A Study in Scarlet*, he saw that his *London Society* story “Elias B. Hopkins—The Parson of Jackman’s Gulch” had been illustrated by Friston.

Ward, Lock advertised the forthcoming *Beeton’s Christmas Annual* in the November 1 issue of *The Publishers’ Circular*, the fortnightly organ of the publishing and bookselling trade that had been founded half a century earlier, twenty years ahead of its current rival, *The Bookseller*. After exploiting their new author’s urgent desire for publication, Ward, Lock added insult to injury by misspelling his name.

JUST READY, IN PICTURE COVERS, ONE SHILLING, BEETON’S CHRISTMAS ANNUAL, 28th Season, the leading feature of which is an original thrilling Story entitled
A STUDY IN SCARLET
By A. Condon Doyle.

This story will be found remarkable for the skilful presentation of a supremely ingenious detective, whose performances, while based on the most rational principles, outshine any hitherto depicted. The surprises are most cleverly and yet most naturally managed, and at each stage the reader’s attention is kept fascinated and eager for the next event. The sketches of the “Wild West” in its former barren and trackless condition, and of the terrible position of the starving traveller with his pretty charge, are most vivid and artistic. Indeed, the entire section of the story that deals with early events in the Mormon settlement is most stirring, and intense pathos is brought out in some of the scenes. The publishers have great satisfaction in assuring the Trade that no annual for some years has equalled the one which they now offer for *naturalness, truth, skill, and exciting interest*. It is certain to be read, not once, but twice by every reader; and the person who can take it up and lay it down again unfinished must be one of those people who are neither impressionable nor curious. *A Study in Scarlet* should be the talk of every Christmas gathering throughout the land.

Then Ward, Lock placed at least a few advertisements in newspapers. An illustrated weekly, *The Graphic*, had garnered respect and influence in the world of European art since its founding eight years earlier, by the artist William Luson Thomas, as a more accomplished rival of the popular *Illustrated London News*, which was known for its sensationalism rather than for a commitment to serious visual artists. Thus the advertisement that appeared in the Saturday, November 26, issue would be seen by a variety of

readers, many of them culturally sophisticated. It simply quoted from the earlier announcement in *The Publishers' Circular*—including the misspelling of Arthur's name.

Ward, Lock's staff also mailed notices about their latest holiday *Beeton's* to various newspapers. Many columnists would announce the publication of a book or periodical even if they lacked space or time (or desire) to review it. Several papers took brief notice of Arthur's first published novel. One such note—with Arthur's name spelled correctly this time—appeared in *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper*, another rival of *The Illustrated London News*. Published every Sunday morning, *Lloyd's* had been flourishing ever since the repeal of the stamp tax in 1860 had permitted the publisher to lower the cost to a penny per issue.

"Beeton's Christmas Annual (Ward, Lock & Company)," read the notice in *Lloyd's* "Literature" column, "has for leading subject 'A Study in Scarlet' by A. Conan Doyle, a tale replete with stirring incidents, and described as a reprint of reminiscences of Army-surgeon Watson. The number also contains two original drawing room plays."

The 1887 *Annual* sold out of its tens of thousands of copies within a few weeks. When *The Graphic* published its review of the issue on the tenth of December, the reviewer omitted Arthur's name entirely, describing the author as anonymous and dismissing the book's originality. "It is not at all a bad imitation," puffed the reviewer on a more positive note, and then added perceptively, "but it would never have been written but for Poe, Gaboriau, and Mr. R. L. Stevenson. The hero of the tale is simply the hero of 'The Murder [*sic*] in the Rue Morgue.' Those who like detective stories, and have not read the great originals, will find the tale full of interest. It hangs together well, and finishes ingeniously."

Next, on the seventeenth of December, a review appeared in *The Glasgow Herald*, ranking Holmes much higher in relation to his ancestors—though this first laudatory review also misspelled Arthur's name. "The *piece de resistance*" of the current issue of *Beeton's*, the reviewer proclaimed, was

a story by A. Conair Doyle entitled "A Study in Scarlet." It is the story of a murder, and of the preternatural sagacity of a scientific detective, to whom Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin was a trifle, and Gaboriau's Lecoq a child. He is a wonderful man is Mr Sherlock Holmes, but one gets so

wonderfully interested in his cleverness and in the mysterious murder which he unravels that one cannot lay down the narrative until the end is reached. What that end is wild horses shall not make us divulge.

Two days later, a reviewer in *The Scotsman* gave Arthur's book unstinting praise:

The chief piece in "Beeton's Christmas Annual" is a detective story by Mr A. Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*. This is as entrancing a tale of ingenuity in tracing out crime as has been written since the time of Edgar Allan Poe. The author shows genius. He has not trodden in the well-worn paths of literature, but has shown how the true detective should work by observation and deduction.

This review ended with a prediction for Arthur: "His book is bound to have many readers."

Truth as Death

His brush was concerned not only with fairies and delicate themes of the kind, but with wild and fearsome subjects, so that his work had a very peculiar style of its own, mitigated by great natural humour. He was more terrible than Blake and less morbid than Wiertz.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, ON HIS FATHER’S ARTWORK

In the last half of the 1880s, during his years at Sunnyside asylum, Charles Doyle often sat outside on the grounds, with the breeze tugging at his sketchbook, and drew and painted. When he focused on the world around him, he produced impressively realistic work, including sketches of his fellows on a picnic. He painted a lyrical watercolor of a man and woman peacefully strolling on a lawn near Sunnyside’s handsome stone buildings with their crow-stepped gables and chimney pots. Through a window, Charles sketched a couple of the bare-faced rooks that socialized on the lawn. When one caught a worm and offered it to another, he asked underneath his drawing of this act, “Could unselfishness go further?”

Captivated by the elegant purple-and-green coleus adorning a Sunnyside dining table, Charles immortalized it in watercolor. He admired a curly-haired young housemaid on her hands and knees, polishing a floor, with her reflection visible below her—and sketched her in ink, tinting the result with watercolors. The young woman blushed and asked for a copy of the drawing, and Charles gave her one. Apparently his agreeable charm survived. He seems to have employed his artwork as a method of interacting with the staff and with other inmates; he posed for one group photograph with a large sketchbook firmly in hand.

Often Charles also drew images that none of his fellow inmates could see in the world around them. He conjured, for example, a giant squirrel

carrying a bonneted human baby. Sometimes, like his famous brother Dickie, Charles drew fairies—tiny figures avoiding rain under a mushroom umbrella, peering from behind Christmas holly leaves and berries, riding on the back of an exotic fowl. Fairies were something of a family preoccupation. Once Charles turned the sketchbook sideways and painted a tall, beautifully moonlit scene of the Sunnyside buildings at night, with a pageant of pale spirits, including ethereal horses, cascading down from the clouds to the lawn.

Charles portrayed himself interacting with a sphinx in various ways—kissing it, riding it, fleeing its attack. In one drawing, labeled “Busting Out,” he seems to be tearing his way through a piece of paper, squeezing through the rip he created, and dancing with joy after his escape. A fully dressed and long-bearded Charles shakes hands with a shrouded skeleton that claps him familiarly on the shoulder—while behind Charles a barely sketched-in angel reaches as if to grasp his left hand. But although he readily shakes the skeleton’s bony hand with his right, Charles’s left hand is firmly in his pocket and not available to angels. In the lower right corner, Charles titled this drawing “Truth as Death.”

No doubt Charles missed Mary, from whom he had been apart for years—since he first went to Dr. Forbes’s establishment for inebriates at Blairerno in 1881 (if not earlier). One scene in his Sunnyside sketchbook Charles conjured from memory or from yearning. In 1886 a home rule campaign was launched to set up a Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, following a similar movement in Ireland. Irish himself and having lived in Scotland for decades, Charles was concerned about the extent to which England would permit greater autonomy within the rest of the United Kingdom. Prime Minister William E. Gladstone’s support for Irish home rule was dividing the Liberal Party and helping erode its influence. During this time, Charles turned to plain India ink to portray himself, long-bearded and bespectacled, seated at the feet of his beloved Mary, intertwining his fingers around his knees and gazing adoringly at his smiling wife as she sews. Underneath he wrote affectionately, “Mary, my ideal home ruler. No repeal of the union proposed in this case.”

On October 6, 1887, Charles told a physician that he had encountered his wife on the Sunnyside grounds. He had, he claimed, talked with her for a long time. It was fiction.

* * *

Arthur had long admired his father's talent and ambition, and he was painfully aware that it was wasting away in secret. He tried to help Charles by bringing him aboard his new novel. In early 1888, Ward, Lock proposed to republish *A Study in Scarlet* as a stand-alone volume. Owning the copyright, the publisher did not require Arthur's permission, but sought his cooperation. Whether Ward, Lock proposed the idea as a marketing ploy or Arthur hatched the plan out of filial affection, he approached his father about drawing illustrations for it.

At this time Charles was worrying often about death. In March 1888 an attendant at Montrose noted that Charles spent at least half of one day in prayer, kneeling in the billiard room with devotional in hand. "Has no memory for anything recent," the record noted, "but remembers well things he learnt and people he knew years ago."

Whatever his emotional state, Charles produced six drawings for Ward, Lock. Not one, however, demonstrated the grace or imagination visible in his previous work, or even the level of skill that he could still summon on occasion for his sketchbook. When he received the first two from his father, in a package without any accompanying note, Arthur wrote to his mother that neither drawing was bad, although they were "somewhat unfinished." Arthur thanked his father. Somehow Charles found the energy and focus to send a gracious note in reply, including kind wishes for Touie. When recounting this experience to his mother, Arthur added a hopeful if unrealistic postscript: "Papa in his letter seemed fairly contented with his lot."

Clearly Charles did not pose his fellow inmates or asylum staff as models for the drawings, any more than he paid attention to his son's descriptions of the setting and characters. Arthur may have been surprised that Ward, Lock even accepted them for publication. The first drawing portrayed the moment when Inspector Lestrade opens the door at 3, Lauriston Gardens, ushering Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson into the presence of the corpse of Enoch Drebbler. The awkward figures, barely delineated in a cartoon outline unworthy even of *Punch*, show a bearded Dr. Watson towering over a scrawny, shoulderless figure that bears no resemblance to Arthur's description of Holmes. The single professional policeman present—a

goateed Lestrade—raises his hand in what Charles presumably meant to be a gesture of horror. With a shapeless hat pulled low over a broad forehead, above a simian face with sharpened chin, Holmes seems the least impressive person in the room. Ironically, the liveliest figure is the staring corpse of Drebbler, whose unnatural sprawl fills the foreground.

The other drawings were no less amateurish. Holmes appeared in three of the six. In one, a figure—which not only ignored Arthur’s description of Holmes but even failed to resemble Charles’s other two representations of him—sits behind a desk, pointing a finger and lecturing the ragtag band of urchins whom Watson describes as “half a dozen of the dirtiest and most ragged street Arabs that ever I clapped eyes on.” Holmes explains them to Watson: “It’s the Baker Street division of the detective police force . . . There’s more work to be got out of one of those little beggars than out of a dozen of the force. The mere sight of an official-looking person seals men’s lips. These youngsters, however, go everywhere and hear everything.” Later he dubbed the urchins the Baker Street Irregulars. Charles’s representation of these boys is barely sketched in; they could be ten years old or forty—as could the figure of Holmes. Seated nearby, the bearded Watson looks, as he does in the crime scene illustration, rather like Charles Doyle himself.

Loyally, however, Arthur promoted the drawings to Ward, Lock. Soon he was informing Lottie that he had come to terms with the publisher “for Papa’s drawings for the Study.” Apparently a friend of Arthur’s in Southsea, the architect Henry Ball, had agreed to create wood engravings from Charles’s drawings.

But actually Ward, Lock tried to talk Arthur down on the already modest price that he had proposed for Charles’s work. They offered only three guineas for the six blocks and Ball’s tracings of them. Still a little-known writer with no sway in the publishing world, Arthur wrote Ward, Lock a humiliating letter explaining that normally Charles Doyle received £5 per page for his work, but that, because Arthur was interested in the success of this edition of his novel, he had determined to make the drawings available to them for £3 per page. He said flatly that their alternative offer seemed so incredible he could only assume that it was an error of some kind. “Ward & Lock are perfect Jews,” he fumed to his mother. He insisted that he would rather burn the blocks than accede to such robbery.

In July 1888, Ward, Lock published the first stand-alone edition of Arthur's novel in their innovative shilling paperback series. The cover was cheap heavy paper, white, with *A Study in Scarlet* filling the top half with letters apparently intended to look exotically Eastern, and *By Conan Doyle* at an angle below. Charles Doyle's drawing of the murder scene at Lauriston Gardens, with Holmes, Watson, and Lestrade in the doorway, appeared as frontispiece. The caption read, "The single, grim, motionless figure which lay stretched upon the boards. (Page 31)." The other five drawings also occupied full pages.

Commenting upon this "story of thrilling interest," a publisher's preface mistakenly assured the reader that the Mormon subplot was as accurate as it was enthralling. It also proclaimed that "the unraveling of the apparently unfathomable mystery by the cool shrewdness of Mr. Sherlock Holmes" was fully equal to the "sustained interest and gratified expectation" of such recent best sellers as Archibald Clavering Gunter's romantic adventure *Mr. Barnes of New York* and Lawrence L. Lynch's Chicago detective novel *Shadowed by Three*. Rather than praise Charles's feeble drawings, the preface cited his pedigree:

The work has a valuable advantage in the shape of illustrations by the author's father, MR. CHARLES DOYLE, a younger brother of the late MR. RICHARD DOYLE, the eminent colleague of JOHN LEECH, in the pages of *Punch*, and son of the eminent caricaturist whose political sketches, signed "H.B.," were a feature in London half-a-century ago.

Apparently the tightfisted company never paid Arthur what he asked. In November Ward, Lock sent him a letter stating flatly that they owed him nothing beyond the amount they had already sent. Nor did the book ever make it into the railway stalls of bookseller W. H. Smith, a prized venue that may have been held out to Arthur as a lure to encourage his participation, perhaps because Ward, Lock had bought the rights to publish *Smith's Select Library of Fiction* in 1885.

He earned no more money for *A Study in Scarlet*, but here at last was a book with his name on the spine.

Not yet part of the larger publishing community, Arthur probably did not know about a recent precedent that cast Ward, Lock's no-royalties contract with him in an even harsher light. The Bristol firm of J. Arrowsmith—to which house Arthur had submitted *A Study in Scarlet*, to no avail—published its own Christmas annual, available for sixpence. In 1883 the third such featured a novella by Hugh Conway, the pseudonym for a lyricist, poet, and author of supernatural and mystery stories named Frederick John Fargus. Conway sold outright to Arrowsmith, for £80, the copyright to his romantic thriller *Called Back*, a melodramatic, coincidence-driven saga of amnesia, cured blindness, and second sight. He must have thought this a savvy transaction when *Arrowsmith's Christmas Annual* sold only half of its six-thousand-copy issue.

Early in 1884, however, the publisher issued the slim novel for a shilling in its paper-covered series, Arrowsmith's Bristol Library. Within a couple of months, thirty thousand copies had leapt from the train station bookstalls to distract commuters from rattle and soot. Arrowsmith behaved honorably, canceling its original contract with Conway and signing a new one to pay him a royalty for six years. Meanwhile, Conway collaborated on a dramatic adaption of his novel with J. Comyns Carr, an influential art critic, gallery director, theater manager, and playwright, known for his promotion of avant-garde painters such as the Pre-Raphaelites.

Thus by 1887, when Ward, Lock published Arthur's novel, Arrowsmith had sold more than 350,000 copies of the British edition of *Called Back*. Everyone seemed to be talking about it. It was also widely translated—as well as published, without payment, in the United States. During a flurry of popularity in Amherst, Massachusetts, for example, *Called Back* caught the attention of a little-known poet named Emily Dickinson. She admired Conway's book and wrote a poem with the title "Called Back." When she died a few days later, her gravestone read "Called Back, May 15, 1886." Conway himself had died suddenly of typhoid the year before.

While the behind-the-scenes history of Conway's novel did not inspire Ward, Lock to pay Arthur royalties for *A Study in Scarlet*, its success did demonstrate the commercial potential of adventurous thrillers.

Despite these setbacks and reminders of his shaky literary status, during 1887 Arthur had completed his ambitious novel *Micah Clarke*, set in late seventeenth-century England, amid the Protestant rebellion to overthrow the Catholic James II following the death of his brother, Charles II. Arthur seems to have chosen as his models in this historical outing three favorites—Alexandre Dumas, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Charles Reade. During 1886, Stevenson's novel *Kidnapped* had been serialized in the weekly children's magazine *Young Folks' Paper*, which had also seen first publication of *Treasure Island* and *The Black Arrow*. Blackwood's responded favorably to the first half of Arthur's manuscript of *Micah Clarke*, but after reading the second and third Arthur's cherished magazine did not buy the book. He all but begged them to reconsider, but they resisted his entreaties. Soon he sent it elsewhere.

In 1888 Arthur adapted the second half of *A Study in Scarlet* into a three-act play. And on the thirtieth of August of that year, he went to the Langham Hotel in Marylebone to dine with Joseph Marshall (usually known as J. M.) Stoddart, who was in London from Philadelphia, where he edited *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine of Popular Literature and Science*.

They dined in a room with gold-and-scarlet mosaic marble floors and towering plaster relief ceilings. Since the Langham's completion in 1865, the neo-Gothic grand hotel, with its several stories featuring long rows of elegant windows—arched, mullioned, traceried—had become one of the most renowned lodgings in Europe, offering not only an electrically illuminated entrance but also the first hydraulic lifts in the country, called “rising rooms.” The Prince of Wales had attended the grand opening, and the deposed Louis Napoleon III had spent much of his exile there.

Stoddart was known for seeking out authors he admired. He had invited two other guests—Thomas Patrick Gill, an Irish Member of Parliament, and the Irish writer Oscar Wilde, who was already a famous apostle of Aestheticism. Five years Arthur's senior, Wilde had recently published *The Happy Prince and Other Fables*—five fairy tales—but he was better known for his poetry, which had won Oxford's Newdigate Prize, and for plays such as *The Duchess of Padua*.

Arthur found Wilde charming and impressive. He liked his refined wit and his way of emphasizing rhetorical points with subtle gestures. When the quartet discussed how wars might be fought in the future, Wilde turned his face and raised a hand in a way that lent gravity to his single remark: “A chemist on each side will approach the frontier with a bottle.”

Conservative and supported by the Lippincott publishing firm in Philadelphia, committed to quality and handsomely printed on good paper, *Lippincott's* had grown steadily in reputation and influence since its debut in 1868—although it had never achieved financial independence. From the first issue, with its editorial guarantee of good pay for writers (“It is no part of the publishers’ plan to ask anyone to do something for nothing”), the magazine had been able to feature popular authors. Manuscripts arrived from all over the nation—from Frank R. Stockton in New England, from the pseudonymous Octave Thanet out west, from William Gilmore Simms in the South. The hugely popular mystery writer Anna Katharine Green, author of *The Leavenworth Case*, appeared in the pages of *Lippincott's*. Novelist Henry James, in his literary journalism mode, helped the magazine maintain a reputation for featuring some of the era’s best travel writing.

Lippincott's set out to follow *The Atlantic's* policy of printing serials only by American authors, but soon broke its rule with an Anthony Trollope novel and followed by publishing whichever English-language writers appealed to the editors and the readers. Still, it could not catch up with the nation’s two great literary magazines, *Harper's* and *Century*, both published in New York City. In 1886 *Lippincott's* moved from the more common two-column page to a single column, simpler to set and print. In 1887, the year before Stoddart met with Arthur, *Lippincott's* initiated a policy of publishing an entire novel in a single issue rather than serializing chapters. To squeeze between the covers of a single magazine issue, the novels had to be brief—“novelettes,” the editors called them.

J. M. Stoddart wine and dined his trio. By the end of the evening, Oscar Wilde had agreed to produce a novel, which became *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and Arthur had committed to write a second novel about Sherlock Holmes.

It was a heady time. During September 1888, four weekly issues of *The Pall Mall Gazette* published Arthur’s brief novel *The Mystery of Cloomber*, an antic adventure built around the occult powers of Indian mystics. “In our

opinion,” enthused The Portsmouth Evening News, “the construction of this story is an improvement upon that of ‘The Study in Scarlet,’ which, although deservedly popular, lacks dramatic sequence, and it will add materially to the growing reputation of Dr. Doyle.”

Watson's Brother's Watch

“It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important.”

—SHERLOCK HOLMES, IN “A CASE OF IDENTITY”

Steadied by his marriage and book contracts, Arthur was writing more than ever. Following the meeting with J. M. Stoddart, Arthur wrote a second Sherlock Holmes novel, *The Sign of Four*. He even used the Langham Hotel as a setting for one scene. From the first page, the more experienced Arthur was in control of the story in ways that he did not manage with *A Study in Scarlet*. He opened the novel with a shocking and decadent image that confirmed his indications in the first Holmes novel that the masterful detective and his Boswell were bohemians. Holmes sprawls in a velvet armchair, injecting a cocaine solution into his arm. Afterward he sighs blissfully and picks up an antique book. It is a moment worthy of Poe, but Arthur wrote it with a modern sense of pacing and immediacy, raising the curtain on a new drama about his eccentrics.

“Which is it today, morphine or cocaine?” asks Watson.

“It is cocaine, a seven-percent solution. Would you care to try it?”

“No, indeed,” replies Watson, and begins to argue with Holmes’s nonchalant attitude toward the drugs. “Count the cost!” he exclaims. “Why should you, for a mere passing pleasure, risk the loss of those great powers with which you have been endowed?”

“My mind rebels at stagnation,” explains Holmes pompously. “Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram, or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere. I can dispense then with artificial stimulants.”

Arthur gave this second Holmes novel greater emotional resonance than the first by sketching in more background for his characters—and by creating tension between them. Holmes demonstrates his methods by observing a particular reddish mud upon Watson's boots, which he knows to be unique to the region around the Wigmore Street post office, and because he knows that Watson has not written a letter he deduces that he went to the post office to dispatch a telegram.

Impressed, Watson nonetheless demands a more severe test. He hands over a watch, which he says has only recently come into his possession, and asks Holmes to observe and deduce. Without thinking of the artifact's possible emotional significance for Watson, Holmes delivers a shocking assessment. The initial *W.* suggests that it was from Watson's family, and since he acquired it only recently although his father has been dead for many years, it must have been in the possession of his elder brother. Then Holmes casually adds, "He was a man of untidy habits,—very untidy and careless. He was left with good prospects, but he threw away his chances, lived for some time in poverty with occasional short intervals of prosperity, and finally, taking to drink, he died. That is all I can gather."

Shaken, Watson accuses Holmes of charlatanry, and the detective must explain the clues—dents in the casing, pawnbrokers' numbers scrawled inside. Once again Arthur lent a story emotional depth by bringing in alcoholism, with a description of a watch that may have been in his own possession:

"Finally, I ask you to look at the inner plate, which contains the key-hole. Look at the thousands of scratches all round the hole,—marks where the key has slipped. What sober man's key could have scored those grooves? But you will never see a drunkard's watch without them. He winds it at night, and he leaves these traces of his unsteady hand."

Holmes reveals that he has written technical monographs on attending to what Watson calls his "extraordinary genius for minutiae"—on distinguishing between tobacco varieties, on tracing footprints. In fact, Arthur reveals in this second novel that both his protagonists are authors. He has made Watson into the detective's biographer or memoirist, as he hinted in the closing pages of *A Study in Scarlet*. He even has Watson refer to his "little brochure" about the Jefferson Hope case, and Holmes says, "I

glanced over it. Honestly, I cannot congratulate you upon it.” By presenting the stories as actual case records, and Watson as a reporting participant, Arthur added an exciting sense of immediacy and reader participation to the series.

“Detection is, or ought to be,” complains Holmes, “an exact science and should be treated in the same cold and unemotional manner. You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism, which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid.”

This was a sly setup, because Arthur saturated *The Sign of Four* with not only romanticism but actual romance. Watson is smitten with Holmes’s pretty young client, Miss Mary Morstan, from the moment she walks through the door at Baker Street.

She was a blonde young lady, small, dainty, well gloved, and dressed in the most perfect taste. There was, however, a plainness and simplicity about her costume which bore with it a suggestion of limited means. The dress was a sombre greyish beige, untrimmed and unbraided, and she wore a small turban of the same dull hue, relieved only by a suspicion of white feather in the side. Her face had neither regularity of feature nor beauty of complexion, but her expression was sweet and amiable, and her large blue eyes were singularly spiritual and sympathetic.

Oddly, Watson also refers to “the years that I had lived with him in Baker Street,” although *A Study in Scarlet* takes place only a few months after the two meet and clearly it is the only preceding case about which Watson writes. In *The Sign of Four* Arthur assigned Holmes a rather questionable motto that soon became famous. “How often have I said to you,” the detective asks Watson, “that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth?” Arthur had employed almost the same phrasing some years earlier, in his story “The Fate of the *Evangeline*.” After being rejected by such periodicals as *Blackwood’s*, the story had appeared in the *Boy’s Own Paper* in December 1885, only a couple of months before Arthur began writing the text of *A Study in Scarlet* and probably while he was plotting it. In the story, the narrator cites a fictional article from *The Scotsman* criticizing reckless opinions about the disappearance of the titular ship:

“It would be well,” the “Scotsman” concluded, “if those who express opinions upon such subjects would bear in mind those simple rules as to the analysis of evidence laid down by Auguste Dupin. ‘Exclude the impossible,’ he remarks in one of Poe’s immortal stories, ‘and what is left, however improbable, must be the truth.’”

Perhaps Arthur was deliberately satirizing such articles by introducing a spurious quotation, but probably he was merely following his usual practice of writing quickly without bothering to check facts. No such sentence, nor even one similar to it, appears in Poe’s Dupin stories. Whether or not during the intervening years a reader had pointed out this error to Arthur, in his second Sherlock Holmes novel he resurrected the concept and even its wording and gave it to his own creation.

Throughout *The Sign of Four*, Arthur wrote like a professional who was master of his melodramatic story and its colorful characters. “The Science of Deduction,” he called the first chapter, echoing Holmes’s phrase in his article “The Book of Life,” which Watson had mocked in the early pages of *A Study in Scarlet*. From the first, Arthur was proclaiming his new creation a scientific detective, and readers quickly learned that Holmes was a busy working professional.

Mary Morstan consults Holmes—and Watson, whom she invites to stay and listen to her statement of the case—to decipher the mystery of her father’s disappearance ten years earlier, in 1878. He left behind mostly “curiosities from the Andaman Islands.” For the last six years, Miss Morstan has been receiving once each year an anonymous package containing “a very large lustrous pearl.” She consults Holmes after receiving an anonymous letter that offers to explain her mysterious situation. Holmes and his eager sidekick agree to help. After Miss Morstan departs, Watson exclaims, “What a very attractive woman!” and Holmes replies, “Is she? . . . A client is to me a mere unit, a factor in a problem.”

In conjuring atmosphere for his story, Arthur wrote lyrically of London. After stating in the previous chapter that the story took place in July, he carelessly described a September evening—an error that he would write to J. M. Stoddart to correct only after he had submitted the novel to

Lippincott's, although it seems to have never been corrected in subsequent editions.

It was a September evening and not yet seven o'clock, but the day had been a dreary one, and a dense drizzly fog lay low upon the great city. Mud-coloured clouds drooped sadly over the muddy streets. Down the Strand lamps were but misty splotches of diffused light which threw a feeble circular glimmer upon the slimy pavement. The yellow glare from the shop-windows streamed out into the steamy, vaporous air and threw a murky, shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare. There was, to my mind, something eerie and ghostlike in the endless procession of faces which flitted across these narrow bars of light—sad faces and glad, haggard and merry. Like all humankind, they flitted from the gloom into the light and so back into the gloom once more.

Soon a four-wheeler cab carries them further into the mystery, to the home of Thaddeus Sholto, a bald young man so fearful he visibly trembles. He reveals that Miss Morstan's father is dead. Then he recounts the story of his own father's involvement with Captain Morstan. Major Sholto claimed that while they both served in the Thirty-fourth Bombay Infantry, he and Captain Morstan "came into possession of a considerable treasure," and that when they disagreed over its division, back home in England, Morstan died of a sudden heart attack. Remorseful about not sharing the treasure with the young Miss Morstan after her father's death, Major Sholto is in the act of telling his sons where the treasure is hidden when he dies while staring at a fearsome vision at the window: "It was a bearded, hairy face, with wild cruel eyes and an expression of concentrated malevolence."

As he had turned earlier to the Mormons of exotic Utah, Arthur now employed myths and stereotypes about the aboriginal pygmies of the Andaman Islands, an archipelago in the Bay of Bengal between India and Burma. Although he worked with several Englishmen, the actual murderer of Morstan and Sholto turned out to be a pygmy whom Watson describes with fear and revulsion: "There was movement in the huddled bundle upon the deck. It straightened itself into a little black man—the smallest I have ever seen—with a great, misshapen head and a shock of tangled, dishevelled hair. Holmes had already drawn his revolver, and I whipped out mine at the sight of this savage, distorted creature." The pygmy tries to fight

Holmes and Watson with the blowgun that has been his silent murder weapon all along, and they shoot him.

Arthur conjured memorable and dramatic adventures for his duo, from tracking creosote-scented footprints across London with a dog named Toby —“an ugly, long-haired, lop-eared creature, half spaniel and half lurcher”— to a rousing boat chase down the Thames at night. At the end of the exciting story, Arthur again turned to a flashback to reveal the saga prior to Holmes’s involvement, but in *The Sign of Four* he devoted only one long chapter to it, rather than a substantial section of the narrative, as he had done with *A Study in Scarlet*. At the end, Holmes, fearing boredom again, turns back to his seven percent solution of cocaine.

Before long, Arthur found his first Sherlock Holmes novel compared to those of Hugh Conway and Émile Gaboriau. In January 1889, Andrew Lang, literary editor of the relatively youthful *Longman’s Magazine* (the successor to *Fraser’s Magazine for Town and Country*), wrote a candid assessment of Holmes’s debut in his “At the Sign of the Ship” column for that periodical. His phrase “the horrors of recent months” referred to the brutal murders of several women, only a few months earlier, by an unidentified killer dubbed Jack the Ripper.

For a railway story, to beguile the way, few things have been so good, of late, as Mr Conan Doyle’s *Study in Scarlet*. It is a shilling story about a murder, unluckily, for the horrors of recent months do not dispose one to take pleasure in the romance of assassinations. However, granting the subject, this is an extremely clever narrative, rich in surprises, indeed I never was more surprised by any story than when it came to the cabman. To say more would be “telling,” but one may admit that the weak place in the tale, as in most of Gaboriau’s, is the explanation, the part of the story which gives the “reason why” of the mystery. However, with this deduction, Mr Conan Doyle comes nearer to the true Hugh Conway than any writer since the regretted death of the author of *Called Back*.

Arthur and Touie had even more exciting news at home than in the review papers. In January, Arthur delivered at home their first child, a daughter. Afterward he wrote to his mother that Touie was doing well and

that Mary Louise Conan Doyle had arrived without luggage, naked, and bald, which required immediate effort to address each problem.

The next month, on February 25, 1889, the book division of Longman published a one-thousand-copy first edition of *Micah Clarke*. Andrew Lang had encouraged purchase of the novel, and gratifying response from the press began on publication day. “It is a fullgrown book,” enthused the *Evening News*, “and contains some scenes and characters which will, we believe, be thought worthy of Scott.” A few days later the same periodical stated flatly, “Dr. A. Conan Doyle has gone at one stride into the front rank of novelists.” The reviewer insisted *Micah Clarke* was not only Arthur’s finest work to date but “*the* best historical novel that has been published for years.” *The Scotsman* said that it was a fine book for boys but much more. “Very interesting and very readable,” declared *The Manchester Guardian*, and the reviewer pronounced himself eager for Arthur’s next novel. One critic argued that Arthur had been too harsh in his treatment of the Puritans, another that he clearly had a bias in their favor. Soon the book appeared in the United States and throughout the Commonwealth, with reviewers from the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* to the *Otago (New Zealand) Daily Times* praising it. Arthur wrote to many friends, asking them to order his new novel.

Andrew Lang was not the only person closely following Arthur’s career as a writer. Either a family member was sending copies of favorable reviews to Charles Doyle or he was finding them in the Sunnyside library. In early 1889, after *Micah Clarke* was published, he devoted half a sketchbook page to notes about some of them:

Arthur’s Novel “Micha [*sic*] Clarke”

Reviewed on Scotsman 4th March 1889

Highly favourable,

“Glasgow Herald” 19th March 1889

“Mystery of Cloomber” Literary World 11th January 1889, as follows—

He proceeded to summarize the latter review. Then, crowding his sketchbook pages as usual, Charles drew below his tribute to his son’s success a three-leaved sprig of clover, scribbled for it a skinny body in

knickers and swallowtail coat, and wrote, “There is an Irish lilt in this shamrock.”

Although apparently happy for his son’s taste of success, Charles was not content to have his own talent wither in darkness. He also kept thinking of his failure to provide for Annette and Lottie, both of whom had worked as governesses and sent home money to help support their mother. In the summer of 1889, Charles complained at length to his diary:

I am certain if my many Vols of, well, I’ll say of not serious Work, were organised into some form submittable to the Public they would tickle the taste of innumerable men like myself—and be the Source of much Money which I should like to bestow on my Daughters, but Imprisoned under most depressing restrictions, what can I do?—

. . . my claim for Sanity is not best made by Enlarging on my common sense [*sic*—as in the possession of a Certain Class of ability demonstrated in this Book and proved by 30 years of Official Public Life, tho’ unfortunately not seen by certain Members of my own Family.

But his family had reason to believe that Charles could not survive outside the asylum. At about the same time as these private complaints to his journal, he became restless and excited. He claimed in the presence of attendants that he had already died and that the asylum was hell and the people around him were devils.

Dread of Madhouses

I was now once more at a crossroads of my life.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

In late 1889 a young Englishman named John Coulson Kernahan had joined Ward, Lock & Co. as a junior editor. The author of a quirky meditation on mortality in the form of a novel, *A Dead Man's Diary: Written After His Decease*, Kernahan was helping Frederick Locker-Lampson edit a new edition of his popular anthology *Lyra Elegantiarum: A Collection of Some of the Best Social and Occasional Verse by Deceased English Authors*, and would go on to write popular novels such as *The Child, the Wise Man, and the Devil*, as well as a fictional prediction of coming war with Russia, *The Red Peril*.

As junior editor at Ward, Lock, he quickly had ideas. Kernahan was also assistant editor of the U.K. edition of *Lippincott's*, and the February 1890 issue, which was about to go on sale, would feature the complete text of *The Sign of Four*, commissioned the year before by J. M. Stoddart. Later Kernahan said that he found the issue of *Beeton's* in which *A Study in Scarlet* had appeared barely more than a year earlier, and took the red-yellow-and-black volume to the managing director, James Bowden.

"Is there anything being done with this?" Kernahan asked.

Bowden shook his head. "It served its purpose, and did respectably as the *Annual*." He pointed out that the sales of the first book edition the year before were not impressive, however. "And few reviewers had anything to say of it."

"No," Kernahan admitted, "so many books appear at Christmas that reviewers are not likely to write at length, or even to notice the contents of one of the many Christmas annuals."

A Study in Scarlet, however, had been the work of an unknown writer. Times had changed, Kernahan insisted. This man Doyle had since published a historical novel, *Micah Clarke*, and here *Lippincott's* was about to publish a second Sherlock Holmes novel. "I am as sure as one can humanly be," Kernahan claimed that he insisted, "that there is a great future for stories in which Sherlock Holmes figures. As you have *A Study in Scarlet*, the very first story about Sherlock Holmes, I suggest that you reissue it as a book, by itself, attractively produced, and attractively illustrated." He made a prediction: "I believe it will have a huge sale, and go on selling for years."

Finally the director agreed.

The Sign of Four appeared in England and the United States simultaneously, in both editions of the February 1890 issue of *Lippincott's*. In England Arthur's contract with *Lippincott's* gave the magazine three months of exclusivity. After that period expired, the novel was reprinted in various English periodicals, beginning with the *Bristol Observer* from May to July, followed by the *Hampshire Telegraph and Sussex Chronicle*, the *Birmingham Weekly Mercury*, and others. On the seventh of June, and again on the fourteenth, the *Bristol Observer* printed unsigned illustrations of the novel that portrayed Sherlock Holmes wearing a deerstalker hat. In his text Arthur had not mentioned such a hat, but the illustrator was not afraid to take liberties; he also adorned Holmes with a small dark mustache.

The deerstalker, made of tweed with a bill in both front and back, had been nicknamed the "fore-and-aft cap." Deer stalking was not quite the same as deer hunting, which in England referred to unarmed gentry riding after trained deer hounds. *Stalking* was the term for more solitary armed hunting, especially for selective culling of herds of fallow, roe, and other deer for game management. A new *Handbook of Deer-Stalking* had been published as recently as 1880. The deerstalker's design not only shielded both the face and the back of the neck; most variations also had flaps that could be pulled down to cover the ears. It was strictly rural headgear. The *Bristol Observer* artist, however, portrayed Holmes wearing the hat in Westminster and along the Thames.

“A most interesting man to talk to,” one of Charles Doyle’s asylum attendants noted on January 20, 1890. Charles seems to have never lost his charm. But the same medical record noted that Charles was not sketching as often as he had formerly, and that the quality of his drawings had greatly deteriorated.

Three days later, Charles was transferred to the Royal Edinburgh Asylum. He had been in Montrose for almost five years. Institutions often transferred patients after a few years, partly in the hope that they might find a change of staff and setting invigorating. The General Board of Lunacy described Charles’s condition as “relieved,” and stated that he was suffering not only from alcoholism but also from epilepsy and deteriorating memory.

The Royal Edinburgh was on an estate in Morningside, in southwestern Edinburgh. In a way, Charles was going back home, but his family was scattered far afield, so Charles was no less alone than he had been at Montrose. His new setting was much larger, with twice as many patients. Under director Thomas Clouston, the Edinburgh Royal Asylum was expanding and modernizing. Originally opened in 1813 as the Edinburgh Lunatic Asylum, it had been launched with parliamentary funds derived from punitive fines from the 1745 Jacobite rebellion. There was a large building for charity patients as well, but Charles’s family could afford his £42 annual fee. After he was examined at the new facility and the staff realized how poor his memory was for recent events in his life, Charles was admitted with a new diagnosis: “epileptic insanity.”

Geographically, Charles was a long way from Arthur’s busy life in Southsea, but he was often on Arthur’s mind. The son suffered a tumult of emotions about his father—love, pity, shame, anger—and they showed up in his fiction. In December 1890, each weekly issue of *Chambers’s Journal* carried an installment of Arthur’s long story “The Surgeon of Gaster Fell.” In it the narrator suspects his neighbor, a surgeon, of trapping an elderly man in a cage, apparently for the sake of some dark experiment. But the story turns out to be the sad narrative of a family looking after their troubled father; the cage was an alternative to a fate the old man would have considered worse. “He has an intense dread of madhouses,” revealed the surgeon in the story’s closing note, “and in his sane intervals would beg and pray so piteously not to be condemned to one, that I could never find the heart to resist him.” When this story was reprinted years later, Arthur

deleted this too-revealing remark, but he left the fictional date of the story as 1885—the year that Charles Doyle had turned violent and been transferred from Blairerno’s easygoing home for inebriates to Montrose’s secure asylum for the insane.

Eleven months later, in November 1891, Arthur’s more explicit story “A Sordid Affair” appeared in the weekly *People*, which had serialized his sensationalist novel *The Firm of Girdlestone* the year before. The new brief story featured another fictional incarnation of Charles Doyle. A dressmaker’s husband, “a small man, black bearded and swarthy,” is an amateur artist. Formerly a clerk, his “long course of public drunkenness had ended in a raging attack of delirium tremens, which could not be concealed from his employers, and which brought his instant dismissal from his situation.”

Although exhausted by years of worry and trouble from her husband’s drunkenness, the dressmaker, Mrs. Raby, believes that she can help him conquer his demons. “It was always with others that she laid the blame, never with him, for her eyes were blind to the shattered irritable wreck, and could only see the dark-haired bashful lad who had told her twenty years ago how he loved her.”

Mrs. Raby makes a beautiful gray satin foulard dress on order for a customer—only to find it missing the next morning. Arthur was again drawing upon his own family’s sad experience when he wrote the scene in which Mrs. Raby rushes to a nearby pawnshop to find her newly made work hanging on a hook.

“That’s my dress,” she gasps.

The pawnbroker says, “It was pawned this morning, ma’am, by a small, dark man.”

Later, on the street, Mrs. Raby sees a crowd of boys jeering at “a horrid crawling figure, a hatless head, and a dull, vacant, leering face.”

She hails a cab, and someone helps her pile her husband into it.

His coat was covered with dust, and he mumbled and chuckled like an ape. As the cab drove on, she drew his head down upon her bosom, pushing back his straggling hair, and crooned over him like a mother over a baby.

“Did they make fun of him, then?” she cried. “Did they call him names? He’ll come home with his little wifey, and he’ll never be a naughty boy again.”

Arthur closed the story with an apostrophe to his mother (and possibly to his sisters and Touie): “Oh, blind, angelic, foolish love of woman! Why should men demand a miracle while you remain upon earth?”

* * *

Soon Arthur passed another literary milestone. Longmans, Green & Company published *The Captain of the Polestar and Other Tales* in England in March 1890 and the following month in the United States. Here Arthur’s early attempts at sensational fiction could cavort together for the first time—the title story alongside “J. Habakuk Jephson’s Statement,” his fictionalized take on the *Mary Celeste* ship; his horror story “The Ring of Thoth” partnering with his horrific story “John Barrington Cowles” to produce chills. “The Parson of Jackman’s Gulch,” which D. H. Friston had illustrated two years before his drawings adorned *A Study in Scarlet*, was thus rescued from the ephemeral moment of magazine publication, as were five other stories.

“Dr. Conan Doyle appears to be equally at home,” wrote *The Glasgow Herald* in its review, “with the eerie, the sensational, and the humorous. The *motifs* of all these stories are well selected and capitally worked out.” The reviewer seemed unaware of revealing Arthur’s carefully wrought surprises: “In ‘John Barrington Cowles’ the reader meets with a vampire or some similar gruesome monster disguised as a fascinating young lady. And this happens in Edinburgh!”

Arthur kept new short stories circulating, and many were accepted—most, of course, reflecting little about his father or other personal matters. As he looked around for new approaches, he thought of continuing his Sherlock Holmes cases in short form. He knew that readers were familiar with series of tales about a recurring character, from Dumas’s several novels about d’Artagnan to numerous accounts in the 1860s by Scotland’s first police detective, James McLevy. Arthur also understood that stand-alone tales with a recurring character would dodge the notorious pitfall in serializing longer works: the potential loss of interest from a reader who had missed one or more issues and had thus lost track of the narrative. A single recurring character of proven popularity would not only establish an author’s loyal readership but also bind readers to the periodical in which his

adventures appeared. This might be a selling point for a young author, to help him stand out from his many competitors who were equally eager to fill space in periodicals.

Adventures in the Strand

I should at last be my own master. No longer would I have to conform to professional dress or try to please any one else. I would be free to live how I liked and where I liked. It was one of the great moments of exultation of my life.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

The Strand, a historic thoroughfare in Westminster, ran for less than a mile along the busy north shore of the Thames, from Trafalgar Square to Temple Bar, the boundary between Westminster and London. There the Strand became Fleet Street. Angling northward from the Strand, crossing Exeter Street and emptying into Tavistock Street, was a minor avenue called Burleigh Street. From there, in a tiny, cluttered room on the top floor of an office building, in time for Christmas 1890 although dated January 1891, the publisher George Newnes launched the first issue of a new periodical dubbed *The Strand Magazine*.

Newnes and his colleagues had considered naming it *The Burleigh Street Magazine*. The cover, beautifully drawn by a flourishing young painter and designer named George Charles Haité—who was famed for his uncanny recall of scenes and colors—showed a glamorized view looking eastward down the Strand toward the eighteenth-century church St. Mary le Strand, with a corner plaque on a building in the foreground reading BURLEIGH STREET. When Newnes was planning the periodical, however, its actual address seemed a mouthful, and the Strand was so close by that he settled on the shorter title. Despite its parade in the 1890s of innocent shops that could not have looked less cosmopolitan, the street was significant in English history. It evoked aristocratic palaces and ecclesiastical gatherings that could help create and sustain an identity in the minds of readers. Here

John Evelyn had witnessed the Restoration of Charles II and had afterward written, "I stood in the Strand and beheld it and blessed God!" Burleigh Street held no such magic.

The youngest son of a Derbyshire Congregational minister, Newnes possessed more than his share of imagination and confidence. A decade earlier, in Manchester, he had launched *Tit-Bits*, an aptly named magazine filled with short and often sensational anecdotes distilled from many other popular sources. Newnes had famously hired Manchester's "Newsboys Brigade" to hawk his new publication on the streets, and within two hours they had sold five thousand copies of the first issue. Gradually it came to publish short articles, short fiction, and humor, and it had been hugely successful for him. He proved a genius at promotional gimmicks. The *Tit-Bits* Prize competitions had once awarded to a lucky reader an entire house in Dulwich, and Newnes had even masterminded an outrageous scheme whereby every issue of *Tit-Bits* contained an active railway accident insurance policy for the commuting reader. Soon his magazine left most other penny weeklies in the dust.

Newnes had been racing forward ever since, and had for several years been a popular Member of Parliament for Newmarket. Aware of the diverse and not always overlapping markets for periodicals, he had also founded *The Westminster Gazette*, a liberal political newspaper with modest circulation but wide influence, and *The Wide World Magazine*, which specialized in true-life adventure.

He was a few months away from forty when he launched the glossy, high-quality *Strand*. The technology of both printing and distribution had advanced greatly since the dense pages of Richard Steele's *Tatler*, issued thrice weekly in a single folio half-sheet in the early eighteenth century. From lithography to reliable mails to railway commuting, many factors were merging to support a flowering of new periodicals. Yet Newnes saw that British magazines were slow to take advantage of these advances. American magazines were developing an ever greater following in England—"because," wrote Newnes later, "they were smarter and livelier, more interesting, bright and cheerful." He resolved to launch a native magazine on the American model—a glossy, handsome journal that could compete with the established sixpenny monthlies, such as *Scribner's* and *Harper's*

from the United States, as well as England's own *English Illustrated* and the long-established *Cassell's Family Magazine*.

Early on, he hired as editor Herbert Greenhough Smith, a Cambridge man and a former *Temple Bar* editor. Dark-haired, mustached, peering through round spectacles, Smith labored at a cluttered desk in his tiny office on the top floor in Burleigh Street—a sanctum guarded by a phalanx of clattering typewriters, a recent invention that had caught on quickly, especially in publishing. Like Arthur, Greenhough Smith turned his middle name into a part of his surname. Born in Gloucestershire in 1855, he was only four years older than Arthur. To Newnes's dream of an eye-catching innovation—his uneconomical hope to publish an illustration on every page, to draw the browser's eye and keep the reader's active—Smith added his vision of a literate meeting of fiction and articles from at home and abroad. They planned to launch with only self-contained examples of both, rather than serializing longer work. Early issues included many translated stories by foreigners, such as the Frenchmen Guy de Maupassant and Alphonse Daudet and the Russians Alexander Pushkin and Mikhail Lermontov.

The Strand, with its attractive pale blue issues available at W. H. Smith's flourishing railway bookstalls for sixpence, was targeted at suburban and working-class readers. They soon learned that they could be assured of finding literate, intelligent entertainment without risk of moral or intellectual provocation. While supporting *The Westminster Gazette*, which was never financially independent, Newnes did not want politics and what he considered the indecencies of modern art to infect his popular magazine. The periodical quickly established a readership among the working class. The first issues sold two hundred thousand copies per month, roughly the same as the well-established *Cassell's* had managed during its heyday in the 1870s.

Just as *The Strand's* encouraging launch embodied changes in the world of publishing, so did the manner in which Arthur's stories reached the magazine's office. When, in early 1891, an envelope containing Arthur's first two stories about Sherlock Holmes crossed Greenhough Smith's busy desk, it came via A. P. Watt, a prominent literary agent whose clients

included the writer of the hour, the young Rudyard Kipling. Watt had recently taken on Arthur.

Like Arthur, Watt was a transplanted Scot, although a generation older—born in Glasgow in 1834. In earlier years, he had sold books in Edinburgh and read manuscripts for the London publisher Alexander Strahan, publisher of the periodicals *Good Words for the Young* and the *Sunday Magazine*. He became a partner in a new incarnation of Strahan & Company, established himself as an advertising agent, and in the late 1870s added the representation of authors to his résumé.

By 1881 he was promoting himself as a full-time literary agent. During the long history of literature, other people had at various times represented or advised writers. But Alexander Pollock Watt seems to have been the first to establish himself as a respected professional who shopped manuscripts to editors and represented authors in contractual negotiations in return for a percentage of the monies received from publishers. By the time that he expressed interest in Arthur's career, his representation could immediately raise an editor's estimation of a new author. A manuscript submitted under Watt's name from his first-floor office at 2, Paternoster Square, received an editor's attention in ways that a mailing cylinder from Southsea did not.

"I really do not know how a busy man like myself," wrote one publisher to Watt, "could ever manage to publish serial stories at all were it not for your assistance, which entirely saves one the trouble of ploughing through rubbish, and at the same time enables one to ascertain, at a moment's notice, exactly to what extent leading novelists are available for the purposes of serial publication."

By the time he represented Arthur, Watt claimed that he did not advertise, but he cleverly exploited other methods of self-promotion. Whenever his office changed address, Watt ran many announcements as a form of advertising free of claims and self-promotion. In 1891, he publicized recent changes in copyright law as a form of notifying writers and publishers that he was conversant in these legal technicalities. His primary form of self-promotion was his shameless distribution of admiring letters by his clients to potential clients. And when an author who later became prominent left Watt for another agent, Watt retained the absentee's name on his ever-growing client list.

With the explosion of serial and reprint options, as well as translations and other foreign rights, publishing was becoming more complex, ever more a competitive business. When a publishing house or magazine was on the market during these unpredictable times, moreover, Watt and other agents served as legal assessors of the value of the firm's copyrighted materials and physical office and warehouse. Agents' position as assessors also further demonstrated the value of copyrighted materials—the kind of copyright that Ward, Lock had deprived Arthur of in 1886 when they insisted upon buying *A Study in Scarlet* outright, withholding the possibility of future royalties. Authors were demanding more agency and fairness in the publishing enterprise. Agents positioned themselves not only as savvy legal representatives brokering individual publishing contracts but also as protective partners in career growth. And not all Watt's clients were authors. Publishers knew that, for a fee, they could farm out to Watt the task of selling serial rights or other potentially profitable sidelines that for some reason they could not handle themselves.

When Smith opened the envelope from Watt, he found two new stories by Arthur Conan Doyle. He was already familiar with Arthur's work. By this time, the young man had published numerous short stories in a wide variety of magazines, as well as the novels *A Study in Scarlet*, *The Sign of Four*, and *Micah Clarke*. Probably Smith had already dealt with Arthur personally. In March 1891, in only its third issue, *The Strand* published Arthur's slight and gimmicky story "The Voice of Science," featuring a gramophone, a brilliant invention that had been conjured only fourteen years earlier by the American Thomas Edison. At a party, instead of playing the scientific speech expected, the instrument reproduces a recitation of a character's vices, as quickly recorded behind the scenes by another character. In a review of the March issue of *The Strand*, Arthur was identified as "Mr. A. Conan Doyle, a popular American writer," but the error appeared only in the *Whitstable Times and Herne Bay Herald*.

Both of the new stories submitted by Watt were far superior to "The Voice of Science." They featured a character that Smith knew had appeared in two novels but never before in a shorter adventure—a cocksure young consulting detective named Sherlock Holmes. The author's handwriting across these neat pages was crisp and clear, as legible as print, and Smith thought that Arthur's writing voice now held a similar limpid clarity. Amid

the usual tide of mediocrity flooding an editor's desk, Smith decided that this young Conan Doyle fellow was writing precisely the sort of tale that *The Strand* had been hoping to publish. Smith claimed later that immediately after reading the stories he rushed into Newnes's office and held them out to his boss with a dramatic flourish.

Arthur's first experience with a literary agent went well. Before the first issue of *The Strand* appeared, Watt had asked £4 per one thousand words for "The Voice of Science" and had received it. Smith and Newnes were so enthusiastic about the new Sherlock Holmes stories that Watt negotiated an agreement with them under which Arthur would produce a total of six Holmes stories, one per month, for £200. In terms of both editorial enthusiasm and professional remuneration—entwined, as usual—Arthur had arrived.

Deerstalker

All the drawings are very unlike my own original idea of the man.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *MEMORIES AND ADVENTURES*

To illustrate the new series of Sherlock Holmes stories, George Newnes turned first to a young man named Walter Paget. He had drawn for *The Sphere* during the Boer War of the early 1880s, with the job of producing finished magazine illustrations from the rough front-line sketches sent by artists in the field. Walter was the youngest of three artists in a talented family. His eldest brother, Henry, painted technically good if uninspired portraits and historical scenes, with occasionally more exotic fare, such as “The Lady of Shallott,” in the manner of the Pre-Raphaelites.

But it was the middle brother, Sidney, who wound up illustrating the Sherlock Holmes stories. Born in London, a year Arthur’s junior, Sidney Paget drew marble busts at the British Museum for two years before studying at Heatherley’s School of Art in London and then enrolling at the Royal Academy for several years. He had been exhibiting in annual Academy shows since the age of eighteen. Instead of illustrating Arthur’s work himself, Walter Paget served as model for Sidney’s drawings and watercolors.

With his brother as inspiration, Sidney Paget conjured a more handsome figure than Arthur had envisioned. Arthur saw Holmes as over six feet tall but scarecrow thin, thus looking even taller, with a large aquiline nose jutting between close-set eyes. Walter Paget was better-proportioned, with a ruggedly handsome profile, and Sidney metamorphosed him into Holmes, from dimpled chin to high cheekbones and receding hairline. Like Arthur, Walter was in his late twenties at the time.

In the fourth story, “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” Paget portrayed Holmes and Watson riding in a train carriage, en route to the scene of a murder near the real town of Ross on the river Wye in Herefordshire. By this time, trains provided quick and easy access to the countryside for urban residents, but the journey was accompanied by soot and ash. Thus, even in warm weather, train passengers tended to equip themselves for travel much as their horse-drawn ancestors had, in sturdy traveling cloak and headgear. When Arthur wrote a scene in which Watson arrives at Paddington Station to meet Holmes for the journey to Boscombe Valley, he described his detective as “pacing up and down the platform, his tall, gaunt figure made even gaunter and taller by his long grey travelling cloak and close-fitting cloth cap.” In Paget’s drawing, Holmes and Watson are framed by the window, Holmes in profile and wearing one of the illustrator’s own favorite hats—a deerstalker.

Whether or not Paget saw the illustrations of Holmes wearing a deerstalker in the *Bristol Observer*’s serialization of *The Sign of Four* the year before, he often wore a deerstalker himself, a habit picked up in the country during his youth. Unlike the artist in Bristol, Paget understood the rules of fashion and did not assign the deerstalker to Holmes until he started out for the countryside. In the first stories for *The Strand*, Paget portrayed Holmes in a top hat—de rigueur for an urban gentleman—or in a bowler when wearing his Inverness cape. He might wear a tattered bowler when disguised as a drunken groom, or he might posture before Watson in a wide-brimmed hat when personating a clergyman. But soon, thanks to the high quality of Paget’s illustrations and the popularity of the series in *The Strand*, the deerstalker came to be associated with Sherlock Holmes.

In December 1890, eight and a half years after his arrival in Portsmouth, Arthur locked the doors of his Southsea medical practice. He had resolved to give up general medicine and become a specialist instead. With Touie, he moved briefly to Vienna, Austria, where he studied ophthalmology. By the end of March 1891, they were in London, where Arthur opened a new small practice at 2 Upper Wimpole Street.

Patients were few, and Arthur found time to write six Sherlock Holmes stories in quick succession. On the tenth of April, within a week of mailing

in the first story, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” he had finished a second, “A Case of Identity.” Ten days later he rolled up and mailed “The Red-Headed League.” Another week saw him completing “The Boscombe Valley Mystery.” He mailed “The Five Orange Pips” on the eighteenth of May.

The first story, “A Scandal in Bohemia,” appeared in the July issue, which went on sale on the twenty-fifth of June. Having wound up married after the romantic end of *The Sign of Four*, Dr. Watson visits Holmes in their old flat and participates in a charming adventure slight in detection but rich in atmosphere. In concept it bore a clear kinship with Poe’s “Purloined Letter,” but Arthur swept away the Gothic trappings and the disquisitions on logic and replaced them with humor and vivid scene-setting. In a daring move, he also provided a glimpse of an intriguingly smart foe—a woman who outwits Holmes in his very first short adventure.

The story opened with Watson’s comments on his friend’s analytical mind:

To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen; but, as a lover, he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer.

The masked King of Bohemia consults Holmes in his rooms at Baker Street, offering a fortune in return for a compromising photograph of him held by his former romantic interest, the American actress and opera singer Irene Adler. Through disguise and subterfuge, Holmes learns Adler’s hiding place for this memento. By the end of the story, however, he reveals himself as far more romantically minded than Watson had realized, and indeed emerges as not only a modern-sounding, science-minded hero but something of a gallant.

Sidney Paget drew ten illustrations to accompany “A Scandal in Bohemia.” He portrayed Holmes and Watson in their Baker Street sanctum, interacting with the king both early and late in the case, and out on the street. He also showed Holmes in disguise, as both a pious cleric and a bewhiskered, bibulous groom. Again Arthur had followed in the footsteps

of Gaboriau. As early as *Monsieur Lecoq*, Gaboriau had described the theatrical artistry of his young detective:

“And do you suppose he wouldn’t discover this surveillance?”

“I should take my precautions.”

“But he would recognize you at a single glance.”

“No, sir, he wouldn’t, for I should disguise myself. A detective who can’t equal the most skilful actor in the matter of make-up is no better than an ordinary policeman. I have only practised at it for a twelvemonth, but I can easily make myself look old or young, dark or light, or assume the manner of a man of the world, or of some frightful ruffian of the barriers.”

“I wasn’t aware that you possessed this talent, Monsieur Lecoq.”

“Oh! I’m very far from the perfection I hope to arrive at; though I may venture to say that in three days from now I could call on you and talk with you for half an hour without being recognized.”

In a later novel, *The Mystery of Orcival*, Lecoq remarks, “I have been a detective fifteen years, and no one at the prefecture knows either my true face or the color of my hair.”

In “A Scandal in Bohemia,” Arthur wrote explicitly of his own detective’s talents in this field: “It was not merely that Holmes changed his costume. His expression, his manner, his very soul seemed to vary with every fresh part that he assumed. The stage lost a fine actor, even as science lost an acute reasoner, when he became a specialist in crime.”

Strand readers responded with great enthusiasm. Clearly they were pleased to see the new hero return the following month, August, in “The Red-Headed League.” Built upon the absurd premise that a criminal might lure a pawnshop owner out of the way of a bank burglary by hiring him to go somewhere else and copy an encyclopedia by hand, the story was nonetheless filled with action and witty dialogue. With his usual disregard for details, Arthur jumbled the dates cited by characters, resulting in a misalignment of about six months.

Four more Holmes stories followed, one each month: “A Case of Identity,” “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” “The Five Orange Pips,” and “The Man with the Twisted Lip.” The public’s response was everything that Arthur could have daydreamed about when he was sending his early manuscripts on what he had called “the circular tour.”

In “The Five Orange Pips,” which appeared in *The Strand*’s November issue, Arthur returned to his scientific forebears who had drawn inspiration from Voltaire’s *Zadig* and who had themselves inspired Thomas Huxley and Arthur himself. He was demonstrating yet again that he saw Sherlock Holmes as a kind of scientist, in the manner of his real-life inspiration, Joseph Bell. But in doing so, he let Holmes fall into the logical, generalizing tone of Auguste Dupin. The scene merged Arthur’s inspirations:

Sherlock Holmes closed his eyes and placed his elbows upon the arms of his chair, with his finger-tips together. “The ideal reasoner,” he remarked, “would, when he had once been shown a single fact in all its bearings, deduce from it not only all the chain of events which led up to it but also all the results which would follow from it. As Cuvier could correctly describe a whole animal by the contemplation of a single bone, so the observer who has thoroughly understood one link in a series of incidents should be able to accurately state all the other ones, both before and after. We have not yet grasped the results which the reason alone can attain to. Problems may be solved in the study which have baffled all those who have sought a solution by the aid of their senses.”

Copies of the magazine seemed to leap off shelves. Many newspapers and magazines reviewed even short stories and articles published by their colleagues and rivals, and soon “A Scandal in Bohemia” was garnering attention from Exeter to Hull, from Sheffield to many venues in London. In Portsmouth, the *Evening News* of July 18 reported, “The many friends in Portsmouth of Dr. A. Conan Doyle are noting with pleasure his steady rise in literature. Dr. Conan Doyle is now one of the most attractive of modern writers, not only in the eyes of readers, but in the keener eyes of publishers and critics.”

With financial security, Arthur and Touie were able to invite his sister Conny to retire from working as a governess. She returned from Portugal and began living with her brother and sister-in-law, busily typing up Arthur’s stories on a newfangled typewriting machine. Dr. and Mrs. Conan Doyle hosted dinner parties. They rode their new toy, a tall two-seater tricycle, to visit friends. Touie was never as robust as her husband. Riding in Surrey with Arthur, Connie, and Innes, she had to admit she could not

bear the pace of cycling—but rather than end the journey, Arthur sent his wife home via train.

Meanwhile, all signs indicated a flourishing literary career for Arthur. A. P. Watt settled with Greenhough Smith that the magazine would pay the impressive price of £300 for a second half dozen Holmes adventures, regardless of their length. Arthur set to work with the confidence of an acclaimed and well-paid writer. While writing the new stories, however, he was knocked off his feet by a fierce bout with influenza. Three years earlier, the disease had taken the life of his sister Annette, and for several days he wondered if it might steal his as well. After a week of misery, he emerged from delirium to find his mind clear of distractions and his road ahead clearly visible. He resolved to no longer spend time on any aspect of medicine as a profession, to renounce it completely and devote himself to writing.

Soon he was selling his medical instruments.

Born in Ireland, Samuel Sidney McClure moved to the United States at the age of nine when his mother immigrated after the death of her husband. By the time he encountered Arthur's work, McClure (usually known by the initials S. S.) was in his early thirties and had long since founded the first newspaper syndicate in the United States. His network made available to many periodicals a steady stream of news stories, feature articles, cartoons, comic strips such as *The Katzenjammer Kids*, and opinion columns. Of more interest to Arthur's career, McClure's syndicate was also well-known for seeking out novels and story series for serialization.

After a working trip to London in 1889, McClure traveled north to visit with Andrew Lang at St. Andrews University. Lang informed McClure that the venerable firm of Longmans, Green & Company, founded as Longman in 1724, was about to publish *Micah Clarke*, by a relatively new author named Arthur Conan Doyle. Having recently reviewed *A Study in Scarlet*, Lang was still full of enthusiasm for it, and he told McClure that this "shilling shocker" was also good. As he traveled south to England, McClure found the tale of Enoch Drebber's murder on a newsstand and read it on the train. He resolved to get this new author to write something for the McClure syndicate.

Two years later, when Arthur's Sherlock Holmes stories began appearing in *The Strand* in 1891, McClure read them and judged them by the personal standard that had served him well: Did the story exert a pull on him—hitting him in his solar plexus, as he liked to say, rather than in his brain? He claimed to work by the rule of three: Each story that he considered buying had to survive three readings within a single week. Those that passed this test would garner his agency's support. He often found himself, while commuting homeward on a Philadelphia train after a long workday, missing his station because he had yet again been drawn into a story that he had already read.

The Holmes adventures passed McClure's test with flying colors, and he bought them for £12 apiece—a good price for reprints. When his syndicate began to distribute them in the United States, however, many magazine editors responded with less enthusiasm than had McClure himself. For one thing, editors complained that the stories were too long for syndicated work—eight or nine thousand words instead of the usual five or so. Thus editors had a difficult time placing them in newspapers and magazines. The stories were also slow to gain reader enthusiasm in the United States. Most of the first dozen had been reprinted there before readers began to sway editors. The gradually accumulating reader response, and a blossoming affection for the character himself, finally wooed editors to share McClure's view of Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes.

To My Old Teacher

Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself; but talent instantly recognizes genius.

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, *THE VALLEY OF FEAR*

In October 1891, four months after “A Scandal in Bohemia” launched the Sherlock Holmes stories in *The Strand*, and after the series had demonstrated broad popularity, Ward, Lock asked Arthur to write a preface for their new edition of *A Study in Scarlet*.

Still resenting the exploitative contract that Ward, Lock had offered for his first Sherlock Holmes novel, Arthur refused. He had money in the bank and a growing reputation.

They replied begging permission to use a subtitle for their new edition that would mention the now well-known name of Sherlock Holmes.

He refused.

The new year of 1892 was exciting for Arthur. Eleven years after leaving college in Edinburgh, he was tasting the fruits of success. The January issue of *The Strand*, which appeared in December 1891, featured the seventh Sherlock Holmes story, “The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle,” a lighthearted Christmas tale rich in wintry London atmosphere. It was followed by “The Speckled Band,” “The Engineer’s Thumb,” “The Noble Bachelor,” “The Beryl Coronet,” and “The Adventure of Copper Beeches.” The run finished in July.

Arthur was also still writing nonfiction. The January issue of *The Speaker*, edited by influential journalist Wemyss Reid, carried his essay on British humor, which highly praised the comic novel *Three Men in a Boat*

by Jerome K. Jerome. The same month, he met Jerome at a party of the informal Idlers' Club hosted by Robert Barr, a loudmouthed but kindhearted editor who was about to launch a new monthly, *The Idler*. There Arthur also met other young writers, including James Barrie, who had graduated from the University of Edinburgh in 1882, a year after Arthur, and who had since written three novels about his native Kirriemuir (disguised as Thrums), Scotland, and was making a name for himself as a playwright. Barr had grown up in Canada and built a reputation there and in the United States through his writing for *The Detroit Free Press*. Barr would later create Eugène Valmont, a vainglorious French sleuth who would serve as one of the inspirations for Agatha Christie's pompous Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot.

In May 1892, *The Idler* published its editor's own parody of Sherlock Holmes, "Detective Stories Gone Wrong: The Adventures of Sherlaw Kombs." With a parenthetical apology to his friend "Dr. Conan Doyle, and his excellent book, 'A Study in Scarlet,'" Robert Barr (under his old American pen name Luke Sharp) launched into a gentle skewering of this character so colorful and larger-than-life that he irresistibly invited burlesque:

I dropped in on my friend, Sherlaw Kombs, to hear what he had to say about the Pegram mystery, as it had come to be called in the newspapers. I found him playing the violin with a look of sweet peace and serenity on his face, which I never noticed on the countenances of those within hearing distance.

On the last day of May, Charles Doyle was transferred to Crichton Royal Hospital in Dumfries, southwest of Edinburgh, almost to the coast across from the Isle of Man. Diagnosed as a dipsomaniac, he was also described as afflicted with dementia; shortly after a visit by a physician, he could not recall it. "Facile and childish," one attendant said of him. He seemed unable to recognize even the staff he regularly dealt with. At sixty, he was gentle and quiet. "Certainly not dangerous to others," wrote a physician in Charles's file.

At first Charles became known as the patient who might praise the food or remark upon how well he slept. Gradually, however, he declined. Soon

he suffered more epileptic seizures. By the following summer, Charles was noisy and incoherent. Although restless, he spent months in bed.

On the third of October 1893, an attendant noted that Charles seemed in a good mood and happy with his surroundings. The patient solemnly gave the attendant a folded paper, saying that it was in gratitude for excellent service, and that it contained gold dust gathered during the night from moonlight that had fallen onto Charles's bed.

A week later, tossing on the same bed, Charles Doyle died of an epileptic seizure.

Arthur's financial worries seemed to be over, at least for a while. With *Micah Clarke* selling well and drawing new readers to *The Sign of Four*, and with his series of stories in *The Strand* making the name of Sherlock Holmes known far and wide, he could take a deep breath. In December 1891, he, Touie, and Mary Louise settled in South Norwood, on the southern side of London almost to Croydon, in a three-story, sixteen-room redbrick house with gated wall and balconies, bargeboard gable and chimney pots. This new domain on handsome Tennison Road was a long way from the surgery at Bush Villas. Norwood was named for the Great North Wood's vast tract of oaks, which had supplied shipyard timber and charcoal for centuries. It had been the haunt of generation after generation of Gypsies, some of whom found their way into Samuel Pepys's diary in 1688.

Arthur was quick to credit Joseph Bell for his role in inspiring the unique abilities of the suddenly famous consulting detective in Baker Street. During the eleven years since his departure from Edinburgh, Arthur had stayed in touch with his former professor. In early 1892, only halfway through the run of the first dozen Sherlock Holmes stories in *The Strand*, Arthur was interviewed by Raymond Blathwayt, a travel writer and journalist, for the May issue of the recently launched London monthly *The Bookman*.

Blathwayt and Arthur sat in the study, which Arthur had decorated with Arctic trophies and with drawings and paintings by his father.

How on earth, the reporter demanded of Arthur, had he evolved out of his "own inner consciousness" such an extraordinary person as Sherlock

Holmes?

Arthur laughed heartily. “Oh, but if you please, he is not evolved out of anyone’s inner consciousness. Sherlock Holmes is the literary embodiment, if I may so express it, of my memory of a professor of medicine at Edinburgh University.”

He provided anecdotes of Bell’s diagnostic technique and concluded, “So I got the idea for Sherlock Holmes. Sherlock is utterly inhuman—no heart—but with a beautifully logical intellect. I know nothing about detective work, but theoretically it has always had a great charm for me.”

Arthur was quick to cite his literary genealogy as well: “The best detective in fiction is E. A. Poe’s Monsieur Dupin; then Monsieur Lecoq, Gaboriau’s hero.”

Bell wrote to Arthur, perhaps in response to this interview. On the fourth of May, Arthur replied:

It is most certainly to you that I owe Sherlock Holmes, and though in the stories I have the advantage of being able to place him in all sorts of dramatic positions, I do not think that his analytical work is in the least an exaggeration of some effects which I have seen you produce in the out-patient ward. Round the centre of deduction and inference and observation which I have heard you inculcate I have tried to build up a man who pushed the thing as far as it would go—further occasionally—and I am so glad that the result has satisfied you, who are the critic with the most right to be severe.

In August, after concluding a year of monthly installments in the Sherlockian adventures, *The Strand Magazine* itself ran an interview with Arthur. They sent Harry How, a journalist known for his insightful interviews, to talk with their suddenly famous contributor.

How was effusive in his article:

Detectivism up to date—that is what Dr. Conan Doyle has given us. We were fast becoming weary of the representative of the old school; he was, at his best, a very ordinary mortal, and, with the palpable clues placed in his path, the average individual could have easily cornered the “wanted” one without calling in the police or the private inquiry agent.

During their conversation, Arthur not only mentioned Joseph Bell but showed off a framed photograph of him, sharp-eyed and eagle-nosed—that

immortalized him from a dozen years earlier, when Arthur studied with him.

After talking with Arthur, Harry How wrote to Bell in Edinburgh for more information from his point of view, and he received a typically modest reply.

2, Melville Crescent, Edinburgh, June 16, 1892.

Dear Sir, —

You ask me about the kind of teaching to which Dr Conan Doyle has so kindly referred, when speaking of his ideal character, “Sherlock Holmes.” Dr Conan Doyle has, by his imaginative genius, made a great deal out of very little, and his warm remembrance of one of his old teachers has coloured the picture.

He went on to give examples of how he and other professors tried to encourage observation and deduction among their students. Then he added a disclaimer:

Dr Conan Doyle’s genius and intense imagination has on this slender basis made his detective stories a distinctly new departure, but he owes much less than he thinks to yours truly,

Joseph Bell

Despite his disclaimers, Bell may have found the temptation to hold forth about his former student irresistible. Four months later, *The Bookman* followed up Blathwayt’s interview with an essay on Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes written by no less an authority than Bell himself. Arthur was astonished when he saw a listing for it and was eager to read it when it appeared.

Again, rather than take any credit, Bell cited his own revered mentor, James Syme, as someone whose teaching legacy had “made a mark on Dr. Conan Doyle’s method.” Then he made several interesting points about the appeal of Arthur’s detective stories.

Dr. Conan Doyle’s education as a student of medicine taught him how to observe, and his practice, both as a general practitioner and a specialist, has been a splendid training for a man such as he is, gifted with eyes, memory, and imagination. Eyes and ears which can see and hear, memory to record at once and to recall at pleasure the impressions of the senses, and an

imagination capable of weaving a theory or piecing together a broken chain, or unravelling a tangled clue, such are implements of his trade to a successful diagnostician. . .

Dr. Doyle saw how he could interest his intelligent readers by taking them into his confidence, and showing his mode of working. He created a shrewd, quick-sighted inquisitive man, half doctor, half virtuoso . . . He makes him explain to the good Watson the trivial, or apparently trivial, links in his chain of evidence. These are at once so obvious, when explained, and so easy, once you know them, that the ingenuous reader at once feels, and says to himself, I also could do this; life is not so dull after all; I will keep my eyes open, and find out things.

In a later interview, Bell went further:

I should just like to say this about my friend Doyle's stories, that I believe they have inculcated in the general public a new source of interest . . . They make many a fellow who has before felt very little interest in his life and daily surroundings think that after all there may be much more in life if he keeps his eyes open than he had ever dreamed of in his philosophy. There is a problem, a whole game of chess, in many a little street incident or trifling occurrence, if one once learns how to make the moves.

George Newnes was not one to waste time or opportunities. Only four months after "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches," the last of the first dozen Sherlock Holmes stories, appeared in the June issue of *The Strand*, Newnes capitalized upon the phenomenal success of his new favorite author by publishing a collection, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, illustrated with more than one hundred of Sidney Paget's pictures from the pages of the magazine. Soon Harper & Brothers in the United States published an edition, which included fifteen illustrations and a frontispiece by Paget. The book was hugely popular, removing Arthur's last doubts about his potential to make a good living as a writer.

Now there were three books out in the world showcasing the fictional legacy of Joseph Bell. In fact, Arthur had modeled aspects of Sherlock Holmes upon Bell so clearly that readers who had known the medical professor immediately caught the resemblance. The next year Arthur received a letter from former Edinburgh University student Robert Louis Stevenson. He was now famous. His rousing pirate saga *Treasure Island* had been published to universal acclaim in 1883, and the dark science

fictional novella *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* in 1886. Stevenson had also written two historical novels of the kind that Arthur loved; *The Black Arrow* had been serialized in 1883 and *Kidnapped* in 1886.

Suffering from tuberculosis, Stevenson had traveled to the tropics and settled in Samoa. In a letter to Arthur dated April 5, 1893, he blended the praise of a reader and the condescension of a rival.

Dear Sir, — You have taken many occasions to make yourself agreeable to me, for which I might in decency have thanked you earlier. It is now my turn; and I hope you will allow me to offer you my compliments on your very ingenious and very interesting adventures of Sherlock Holmes. That is the class of literature I like when I have the toothache. As a matter of fact, it was a pleurisy I was enjoying when I took the volume up; and it will interest you as a medical man to know that the cure was for the moment effectual.

Stevenson ended his letter with a question that hearkened back to his own studies at Edinburgh medical school: “Only the one thing troubles me: can this be my old friend Joe Bell?”

“I’m so glad Sherlock Holmes helped to pass an hour for you,” replied Arthur on May 30. “He’s a bastard between Joe Bell and Poe’s Monsieur Dupin (much diluted).”

Stevenson could see through Holmes to the inspiration behind. And he knew from visceral personal experience the mountains of paper and rivers of ink that a writer must exhaust before reaching success. But he could not have known how much affection, experience, admiration, and debt were distilled into Arthur’s words for the dedication on the first page of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Although he was only thirty-three when he penned the brief tribute, Arthur well understood his own journey—from racing up the wide infirmary staircases in Edinburgh to peering anxiously through wooden blinds at Bush Villas in Southsea to being applauded by George Newnes and Greenhough Smith as he, they, Sherlock Holmes, and *The Strand* soared to fame. Sherlock Holmes had bought Arthur’s home and enabled him to bring his sister Conny home from Portugal. So in the front of the book that brought him freedom and acclaim, Arthur inscribed simply:

To

my old Teacher
Joseph Bell, M.D., ETC.
of
2 Melville Crescent, Edinburgh

Acknowledgments

“Now, Watson,” said Holmes, as a tall dog cart dashed up through the gloom, throwing out two golden tunnels of yellow light from its side-lanterns, “you’ll come with me, won’t you?”

“If I can be of use.”

“Oh, a trusty comrade is always of use; and a chronicler still more so.”

—ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, “THE ADVENTURE OF THE MAN WITH THE
TWISTED LIP”

My wife, Laura Sloan Patterson, once again proved smart, witty, encouraging, and supportive, as she has through fourteen books during fifteen years together. Every day she improves my life and work. Recently we heard our three-year-old, Vance, say to himself, “Daddy is working on Sherlock,” which reminds me how much Laura has heard about the subject of this volume.

Thanks to my wonderful agent, Heide Lange, who has been guarding my career for two decades, and to her excellent assistants Stephanie Delman and Samantha Isman. George Gibson, my editor at Bloomsbury through seven books, helped me figure out my goals for *Arthur and Sherlock*, and then marched through various drafts. This book is dedicated to him as a token of appreciation for his talents and commitment as an editor, and of my admiration for his character as a gentleman. Thanks also to the rest of the crew at Bloomsbury USA: George’s former assistant Lea Beresford, my former publicist Carrie Majer, assistant editor Callie Garnett, assistant editor Grace McNamee, art director Patti Ratchford, managing editor Laura Phillips, production editor Jenna Dutton, publicist Sarah New, copy editor Sue Warga, proofer David Chesanow, and indexer Kay Banning. At

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In discussing the background of nineteenth-century detective fiction in *Arthur and Sherlock*, at times I drew upon my research and writing for anthologies I have edited on this topic. I would like to thank the excellent editors with whom I worked on those books: Michael Millman, the former editorial director of Penguin Classics who commissioned my first such collection, *Arsène Lupin, Gentleman-Thief*; Elda Rotor, the current editorial director of Penguin Classics, who commissioned my *Penguin Book of Gaslight Crime: Con Artists, Burglars, Rogues, and Scoundrels from the Time of Sherlock Holmes* and *The Penguin Book of Victorian Women in Crime: Forgotten Cops and Private Eyes from the Time of Sherlock Holmes*; and George Gibson, editor of all my books with Bloomsbury, who launched my Connoisseur's Collection series with them and thus edited *The Dead Witness: A Connoisseur's Collection of Victorian Detective Stories*. Elda also asked me to write an introduction to the Penguin Classics edition of Anna Katharine Green's novel *The Leavenworth Case*, the research for which further sketched in for me details of the genre and era.

Thank you to the invaluable crew at the Greensburg Hempfield Area Library, who track down obscure tomes with Sherlockian finesse: Sara Deegan, Jessica Kiefer, Christine Lee, and Aurea Lucas. Also many thanks to library director Linda Matey and to Diane Ciabattini and Donna Davis.

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Notes

OVERTURE: REMEMBERING

brass plate suspended from a wrought-iron railing: Stavert, frontispiece.

Patients wishing to consult Arthur strode along Elm Grove: Donald A. Redmond, 32.

number 1, Bush Villas: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 160, tells when he moved and where; 161 reproduces ACD's labeled sketch of the street; Stavert, 16, shows 1880s advertisement for the hotel, with view of house, church, and hotel; an 1879 architectural plan of the church's renovations, plus a description of the neighborhood, appeared in the 21 November 1879 issue of the *Building News*, available at http://archiseek.com/2012/1879-elm-grove-baptist-church-southsea-hampshire/#.VG5TXN5_a2w; a mid-1880s photograph, and a close-up of 1880 street map of Portsmouth, are at www.conandoylecollection.co.uk/lancelyn-green-downloads/05-summer-ACD.pdf.

Bush Hotel: See newspaper advertisement for hotel in Stavert, 16.

Arthur enjoyed . . . billiards in the hotel and playing bowls: Stavert, 15.

the arched entryway on the left: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 163; ACD's sketch, 161; photo of ACD at Bush Villas, 185

small waiting room: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 183.

his hearty, infectious laugh: Blathwayt comments upon this trait himself, as do others among ACD's friends and interviewers.

wooden blinds: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 167.

later he wrote it into one of his novels: ACD 1895, chap. 15. ACD asserted more than once that this novel was autobiographical, details of which have been confirmed by many scholars.

Only his name on the spine: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 8.

Bell would have approached crime-solving: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 8.

PART 1: DR. BELL AND MR. DOYLE

“Physiognomy helps you to nationality”: How, 188.

CHAPTER 1: A SUPER-MAN

“So now behold me, a tall strongly-framed”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 3.

crowded gaslit amphitheater: Liebow, 135.

how a Red Indian in North America might behave: ACD, quoted by Blathwayt.

“Well, my man”: Details in this opening section not otherwise cited derive from ACD’s own reminiscences, in his memoir *Memories and Adventures* (especially chap. 2, “Recollections of a Student,” and chap. 11, “Sidelights on Sherlock Holmes”), and from his comments quoted at length in How. See also Harold Emery Jones, who attended Bell’s medical classes alongside Conan Doyle, and who quoted only slightly different dialogue in a very similar account. Note, however, that both accounts were written after Sherlock Holmes’s own approach was famous.

accent called “educated Edinburgh” . . . tanned, muscular: Scarlett, 699.

Bell’s high-pitched voice: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 3.

observant man ought to learn a great deal . . . Regarding female patients: Saxby, 23–24.

some mustached or bearded: Based upon numerous photographs of students from this period, including of ACD; e.g., portraits from 1880 made in the studio of James Howie Jr. at 60 Princes Street; see www.edinphoto.org.uk/0_C/0_cabinet_prints_howie_6_edinburgh_medical_students_1880.htm.

Arthur would pay his four guineas: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 24; amounts and payment method confirmed in various contemporary university sources.

unusually kind figure: ACD, quoted in How.

especially to women and children: Liebow, 68, 85, 134.

appointed senior surgeon to the infirmary: Liebow, 125–126.

“extra-academical instructors”: Liebow, 125–126, 140–141.

Tired-looking young men in black coats or tweed: ACD, *Red Lamp*, “His First Operation.”

grand three-winged, U-shaped Royal Infirmary building: description of infirmary not otherwise cited derives from Grant, 4:297–300.

glassmakers had glazed . . . joiners had donated: Grant, 4:298.

trying to cram each year’s classes into a half year: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 3.

he scrawled countless notes: Bell, “Adventures”; Liebow, 130–131, 134.

the student asked the professor to repeat details: Bell's description of ACD's response, in Scarlett, 700; ACD's account, ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 3.

Joe Bell—as students and friends affectionately called him: Saxby, 13.

Rather short, with angular shoulders: Scarlett, 699; much of it echoed in Liebow.

His eyes, with their unusual two tones of blue: Stoker.

grades of Satisfactory in all classes: Miller, 60.

Bell came to consider him one of the most promising men: Saxby, 21–22.

Surgical outpatients might walk in: Liebow, 128.

during the next year fifteen thousand patients: Turner, 197.

Arthur and other efficient clerks interviewed patients: Liebow, 128, quoting ACD's former classmate, Dr. Clement Gunn

seventy or eighty per day: How, 186.

When Arthur began working as clerk: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 26.

He was proud of his reputation: Jones, vi.

“never neglect to ratify your deductions”: Jones, v.

“What sort o' crossing did ye have from Burntisland?”: *Lancet*, August 1, 1956. To conform with other quotations within my text, I have slightly modified the Scots dialect in this particular account to match the form of other quoted dialogue, without changing the wording.

“Quite easy, gentlemen”: MacGillivray, 121.

“a super-man”: Curor.

“We thought him a magician”: Quoted in Wallace, 27.

CHAPTER 2: YOUR POWERS OF DEDUCTION

“It is no wonder that after”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 1.

Škoda . . . guided Hebra: Finnerud, 225–226.

“This man is a tailor”: Quotations by Hebra and examples of his method derive from a student, Fox, 103–106. Klauder pointed me to Tardieu and Fox.

Auguste Ambroise Tardieu: See Tardieu.

Dupuytren . . . mentioned in Gustave Flaubert's novel: Flaubert mentions Dupuytren in chap. 11 of pt. 2. The Balzac story is available in many editions; for background, see Moulin.

in the attic of the main building: Grant, 4:298–299.

polished deal operating table . . . a tin tub filled with sawdust: ACD, *Red Lamp*, chap. 2, “His First Operation.”

the doctor simply threw him out of the clinic: Anecdote by ACD’s contemporary student C. E. Douglas, quoted in Liebow, 134–135.

“What is the matter with this man, sir?”: Jones, 14, is the source for this entire dialogue.

the life of a student instead of a patient: Jones, vi ff.

Joe Bell seemed irresistibly colorful: Some details (such as liveried coachman) from *Scarlett*, 699.

Bell mimicked his own revered mentor: Liebow, 129.

He also credited Syme: Harrison, *A Study in Surmise*, 234–235.

“Try to learn the features of disease”: Bell, “Adventures.”

Bell had served as house physician: Westmoreland and Key, 326.

he discovered in his late teens: See entry on Syme in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. (1911).

“My aim has been to describe”: Bell, *Manual of the Operations of Surgery*, ix.

brilliant paper on epithelial cancer: Liebow, 51.

“Whilst discharging his duties”: Liebow, 49–50.

Arthur too considered Bell kind: How, 186.

he traced both his love of the world: Liebow, 56–57.

his marriage in 1865: Anonymous, “Obituary, Joseph Bell, M.D.,” 456–457.

“dedicated to God in his cradle”: Saxby, 25.

His wife died in 1874: Anonymous, “Obituary, Joseph Bell, M.D.,” 456–457.

Water of Leith . . . a sewer: R. W. B. Ellis, from 1960 *Scotsman* article, quoted by Liebow, 68.

The disease produced gray mucus: Description of symptoms from Greenhow, 13.

“blankets of a bed”: Hume, “Frances Home,” 62.

promoted the local slang word *croup*: Moir, 506–507.

identical to illnesses known in the mid-eighteenth century: Greenhow, 12.

Speculations about its cause: Guilfoile, 25.

he drew the infected mucus: Saxby, 32–33.

Afterward he suffered from the disease: Bell, “Notes,” 816–817.

he never lost the limp: Liebow, 135.

By January 1865, Bell was presenting: Bell, “Notes,” 816.

CHAPTER 3: ART IN THE BLOOD

“Oh, Arthur,” his mother exclaimed: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 11–12.

at times Arthur squirmed with embarrassment: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 1.

Arthur, who could not have been more than four: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 1;
Thackeray died in December 1863.

Elegant, bearded, witty: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 1.

“more in the class of a work of Art”: Baker, xxi. Details about Matheson not otherwise cited derive from Baker.

grand windows of the Glasgow Cathedral: Beveridge, 265; Georgina Doyle, 31–32.

Our Trip to Blunderland: Jambon.

Rather than sell his infrequent watercolors: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 1; Beveridge, 265, quoting Mary Doyle.

so drunk that he could neither recall his own name: Beveridge, 265, quoting letter from Mary Doyle to Dr. James Rutherford at the Crichton Royal Asylum, dated December 3, 1892, and describing events “just thirty years ago—Decr. 62.” Other details of Charles’s behavior in this context not otherwise cited also derive from Mary Doyle, quoted by Beveridge. See also Baker, introduction.

“To know him was to love him”: Beveridge, 265.

At no point could his annual salary plus artwork fees have surpassed £300: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 1.

Office of Works placed him on half pay: Beveridge, 265, quoting Mary Doyle.

his superiors, Robert Matheson and Andrew Kerr: See letter from Mary Doyle, dated December 3, 1892, quoted in Norman, 128–130; also Georgina Doyle, 31.

“discharged his duties with diligence and fidelity”: Baker, xxiv.

he asked innocently if his father had been unwell: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 79.

He always remembered her stirring porridge: ACD, *Stark Munro*, chap. 3.

he read to his mother while she knitted: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 2.

He first learned to read French: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 2.

as the eldest son, he felt the burden: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 3.

CHAPTER 4: SEVEN WEARY STEPS

“Stonyhurst, that grand mediaeval”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 2.

one-eyed, pockmarked headmaster: Ibid., 11; Lycett, 26.

Father Francis Cassidy: Ibid., chap. 1.

tolley: Ibid., chap. 1.

Proud, defiant Arthur yearned for respect and affection: Ibid.

half-holiday (Wednesday and Saturday afternoons): Holden, 106–107.

Rapt students sat or squatted: ACD provides these details in “Juvenilia,” although two and a half decades after the fact; they seem a bit too storylike.

Jimmy Ryan . . . classmate Patrick Sherlock: Miller, 110.

relative of Arthur’s Irish aunt: Lycett, 122.

Macaulay, featured Sherlock prominently in his *History of England*: Macaulay, 1:248, 569, 582; 2:548; 4:passim; and other examples.

His weakest subject was chemistry: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 32–33.

“Like pallid daisies in a grassy wood”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 2.

passing the matriculation exam . . . with honors: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 73.

“Well, Doyle, you may be an engineer”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 17.

originally the Anglo-Norman name D’Oil: Ibid., 8.

helped steer Arthur away from Catholicism: Evolution of his attitudes discussed in *ibid.*, chap. 2, “Under the Jesuits.”

he stopped reading English books: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 81 (letter to Mary Doyle, May 1876).

he might accidentally modify a neuter noun . . . Admiral Hyde Parker: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 78.

the *Feldkirchian Gazette*: Miller, 40.

By the age of five, he was writing: ACD, “Juvenilia.”

“each man carrying a knife gun pistle”: Only thirty words of this story, usually titled “The Story of a Bengal Tiger,” survive, reprinted many places and visible in a scan of the original at https://www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php?title=The_Story_of_a_Bengal_Tiger.

On the way home in August 1876: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 2.

“I shall look to his development with great interest”: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 18–19 (letter from Michael Conan to Mary Doyle, April 11, 1864).

encouraged his obviously intelligent grandnephew to read . . . Poe: Cawthorne, 4–5.

Arthur had admired Poe since boyhood: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 74.

kept a copy of his *Tales* . . . at Feldkirch: Lycett, 481 n. 47.

to read Poe aloud: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 93 (letter to Dr. Bryan Charles Waller, September 9, 1876).

CHAPTER 5: ATHENS OF THE NORTH

“Travellers who have searched the whole world round”: ACD, *Firm of Girdlestone*, chap. 5.

two miles to the north and east: Black, *Black’s Guide to Edinburgh*, 2.

It was rich in adjectives for the winds: Stevenson, *Edinburgh*, 95.

watcher gazing northeast across the Firth: Stevenson, *Edinburgh*, 1.

German Ocean: a common nineteenth-century English name for what is now called the North Sea; Stevenson uses the term in *Edinburgh*, 1.

towered four hundred feet: Campbell, 119.

its time gun could be heard: Stevenson, *Edinburgh*, 1879, 87–88; Gilbert, 132.

The castle stood so high that shepherds in Fife: Stevenson makes the point about the ship visible in Fife in *Edinburgh*, 14; the rest I pieced together from photographs.

“in one vast expanse”: Black, *Black’s Picturesque Tourist*, 26.

“Athens of the North”: Ibid., 27.

a bustling market down in the city: Description of the Grassmarket in this paragraph derives largely from 1870s photographs by George Washington Wilson.

The drum and bugle . . . could be heard: Stevenson, *Letters*, letter of October 14, 1873.

bristling with turnpike stairs . . . since the fifteenth century: Ibid., 2:230.

Holyrood’s crumbled abbey stood: Stevenson, *Edinburgh*, 3, 86.

Greyfriars Kirkyard: Stevenson, *Edinburgh*, chap. 1.

dark streets of Old Town: Description of Old Town derives primarily from *ibid.*, chap. 2.

The view from many windows: ACD, “Southsea.”

hovels and tenements were torn down: Ballingall, 82; Stevenson, *Edinburgh*, 17ff.

“Dr. Waller,” as Arthur called him: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 79 (letter from ACD in Feldkirch to Mary Doyle, April 1876).

“hard work getting up the subjects”: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 80 (letter from ACD to Mary Doyle, May 1876).

Bryan Waller’s family manse in Yorkshire: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 153.

paying the entire Doyle family’s rent: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 74–75.

a watercolor of many colorful skaters: See *Figures Ice-Skating*, by Charles Doyle, at www.artnet.com/artists/charles-altamont-doyle/figures-ice-skating-n1E0Pj_6_9oVJy2ITKItHw2; sometimes cited elsewhere as “Skaters on Duddington Loch.”

Duddingston Loch: Stevenson, *Edinburgh*, 104–105.

Edinburgh Skating Club: Information on sports in Edinburgh at this time largely from Gerald Redmond, ch. 2, “The Traditional Sports of Scotland,” esp. 54ff.

perhaps this change would permit Charles to complete his skating picture: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 79 (letter from ACD in Feldkirch to Mary Doyle, April 1876).

CHAPTER 6: NO MAN OF FLESH AND BLOOD

“I do not think that life has any joy”: ACD, “Juvenilia.”

James Thin, Bookseller: ACD, *Memories and Adventures* recounts his threepence purchases but does not name the bookshop; however, scholars (e.g., Lycett, 57) agree that ACD’s mention of the location and description of outdoor sale bins, etc., firmly indicate that it was James Thin, already a legendary shop beside the university. Full address in various contemporary publications, including *Publishers’ Weekly*, and a store advertisement in *Bookmart: A Monthly Magazine of Literary, Library, and Bibliographical Intelligence*, August 1887, 116.

Thomas de Quincey: for description, see Anonymous, “Booksellers of Today”; Froude, 1:415 (letter from Thomas Carlyle to John Carlyle, November 29, 1827).

reminded one observer of Dominic Sampson: Anonymous, “Booksellers of Today,” 83–84. Most of the description of Thin’s shop derives from this article.

James Thin's siren call to impecunious Arthur: ACD, *Through the Magic Door*, chap. 1. Titles and reading details in this chapter derive largely from this source, esp. chap. 1, unless otherwise cited.

a treatise on warfare, written in Latin: Ibid., chap. 8.

he dived into books as a refuge: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 1.

the nearby library informed his mother: ACD, "Juvenilia," seems to disagree with *Memories and Adventures*.

three-week Christmas holiday: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 67. For descriptions of tombs, see *Westminster Abbey* (Radnor, PA: Annenberg School Press/Doubleday, 1972),

"His body is buried in peace": ACD, *Through the Magic Door*, chap. 1, says that he visited grave at age sixteen. For the inscription, see www.westminster-abbey.org/our-history/people/thomas-babington-macaulay.

It was the kind of antique diction: ACD remarks upon this point throughout "Juvenilia" as well as in *Memories and Adventures*.

Macaulay was typical of the *Review*'s commitment: Ferris, 1.

Macaulay had long since become: ACD, *Red Lamp*, chap. 1.

as a young man Arthur admired Macaulay's authoritative tone: Ibid.

he read them in bed by candlelight: Ibid., chap. 2.

He admired Scott's adventurous tales: Ibid., chap. 2.

John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle argued: Chandler, 317.

"This must be the devil": Scott, *Ivanhoe*, chap. 13.

Arthur thrilled at such scenes: ACD, *Red Lamp*; ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chaps. 2, 3, and elsewhere.

"whose novels have not only refreshed": *Black's Picturesque Tourist*, 38.

Arthur . . . wished that Scott had turned his imagination: ACD, *Red Lamp*, chap. 2.

Arthur also loved martial poetry: In ACD, *Red Lamp*, chap. 1, and many places elsewhere, ACD discusses notions of manliness and poetry.

"Unroll the world's map": Mayne Reid, 7, 12.

Arthur as a boy spent his time imagining hand-to-hand combat: ACD, "Juvenilia." All of the examples of his reading adventures in this paragraph derive from this source.

CHAPTER 7: ODE TO OPIUM

“Surrgeanis and Barbouris within”: John Smith, 1. Other details about the college’s early days in this paragraph derive from Smith, 2–5.

Oxford and Cambridge, where many influential faculty members still opposed: Lightman makes this point, 22.

William Rutherford: *Dictionary of National Biography*, 1901, 333–334. Biographical details not otherwise cited derive from this source.

250 students in his practical physiology course: obituary by J.G.M. in *Nature*, April 20, 1899, at www.nature.com/nature/journal/v59/n1538/abs/059590a0.html.

Henry Littlejohn: Anonymous, “Sir Henry D. Littlejohn,” 648. Summary of Littlejohn’s teaching style drawn mainly from this obituary, written by a former student.

appointed Littlejohn as Edinburgh’s first Medical Officer of Health: Lycett, 26.

He studied in Paris: Christison, *Life*, 1:280ff. Much of the summary of his career derives from these two volumes.

Christison was legendary by the time: Anonymous *Scotsman* obituary, January 28, 1882.

Calabar ordeal-bean: Christison, “Properties,” 193–204.

A fellow of the Royal Society, Garrod was renowned: Storey, 1189–1190.

Arthur signed the flyleaf: Billings, 37.

underlining items and making notes on almost every page: Billings, 38.

“Evaporate excess Colour between Calico”: Quotations from and descriptions of ACD’s copy of *Materia* not otherwise cited derive from Billings.

“I’ll tell you a most serious fact”: Miller, 59.

CHAPTER 8: DRINKING POISON

Several times in my life: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 5.

“Third year’s student”: Ibid., chap. 3. The account of working with both Richardson and Hoare derive from this chapter.

“by mutual consent”: Ibid., chap. 3.

“No woods, little grass”: ACD, *Stark Munro*, chap. 5.

earnest payment of one shilling: Pulsifer, 327; ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 3.

He reminded himself that his mother had worked hard: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 4.

he had worked three months without a chat: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 111–12 (letter to Mary Doyle, October 19, 1878).

Arthur found himself gazing at a lump of iron: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 5.

Arthur risked his life in a dangerous experiment: ACD first mentions administering gelseminum to himself as an experiment in a letter to Mary Doyle dated June 1879 (ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 117); an earlier letter to Mary noted that he arrived in Birmingham on June 2 (*ibid.*, 113); thus the experiment must have occurred in June, although his account of it was not printed in the *British Medical Journal* until September. Description of effects derive from ACD, “Gelseminum.”

an alkaloid pain depressant called gelseminum: Ringer and Murrell, various articles from 1875 through 1878, q.v.

toxic alkaloids of the strychnine family: Hare et al., 739–741, 1618. (Note that Hare uses the spelling “gelsemium,” established as standard soon after ACD was writing; for rationale for name change, see *Druggists Circular and Chemical Gazette*, 1879, 179.)

“Though much used in America”: Billings, 41; Ringer and Murrell, December 25, 1875.

influenza, ague, and menstrual cramps: Ringer and Murrell, December 25, 1875.

less accepted throughout Europe: James, *Guide*, 72–73; Billings, 41.

The Lancet had been publishing a series of well-researched articles: Ringer and Murrell, 1875–1878.

“In all these experiments”: Ringer and Murrell, March 18, 1876.

“in doses sufficient to produce decided toxic effects”: Ringer and Murrell, May 6, 1876.

Standards there were so lax: Ringer and Murrell, June 15, 1878.

a woman who died after receiving it as a painkiller following an abortion: Ringer and Murrell, June 15, 1878.

The minim had been introduced in 1809: Powell, 6–7.

CHAPTER 9: INTEMPERANCE

“Would you care to start next week”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 34. Most details of the whaling voyage, including ACD’s observations and thoughts not otherwise cited, derive from this source, chap. 4. As apparent below, the other main sources were the journal and Sutherland.

Students at Edinburgh University were much freer: *Ibid.*, chap. 3.

compiling a list of hosiery: ACD, “*Dangerous Work*,” 222, n. 11 (March 2).

dispensing tobacco: Ibid., 223 (March 4).

black eye raised the crew’s estimation of their college-educated medico: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 123.

“an addle-headed womanly fool”: Ibid., 138 (letter to Amy Hoare, July 1881).

other girls he longed, at least in passing, to marry: Ibid., 140 (letter to Mary Doyle, July 1881).

off to the Isle of May to photograph birds: ACD, “After Cormorants.”

Friends had long urged Mary Doyle: Beveridge, 265.

“INTEMPERANCE—Home for Gentlemen”: Norman, 126. Kincardineshire is now part of Aberdeenshire.

comprehensive annual *Medical Directory*: http://search.wellcomelibrary.org/iii/encore/record/C__Rb1349810__SThe+Medical+Directory__Orightresult__X5?lang=eng&suite=cobalt.

In early 1881 . . . Blairerno House gained a new inmate: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 23–24, says it was 1879, when ACD was “aged twenty”; Beveridge cites details from the 1881 census records.

the Habitual Drunkards Act of 1879: R. W. Lee, 243–246.

In the foothills of the Grampian Mountains, Blairerno: descriptive details from Georgina Doyle, 41–42.

he daydreamed about rescuing his mother: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 7.

the storm that sank the SS *Clan Macduff*: ACD, “Slave Coast,” mentions the ship; for wreck information, see www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?71808.

barely able to stand but feeling that he had won another battle: ACD, “Slave Coast.”

He realized that he often acted out of bravado: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 5. The shark anecdote is from this chapter also.

“This negro gentleman did me good”: Ibid.

he could make more money . . . with his pen: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 147 (ACD letter to his mother, January 1882).

CHAPTER 10: DR. CONAN DOYLE, SURGEON

“nearly frightened the immortal soul”: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 153 (ACD letter to Lottie Doyle).

Arthur liked to brag to his family: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, throughout, esp. letters to his mother and his sisters.

Capricious and volatile Dr. George Budd: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 155ff.; ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 6.

He arrived in June: In ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 7, Conan Doyle says “June or July 1882”; Stavert, 19–22, argues convincingly for late June, even postulating Saturday, June 24.

he liked the holiday atmosphere . . . of Southsea: ACD, “Southsea.”

bustled with yachts and men-of-war: Ibid.

Arthur bought a map: Stavert, 17.

He carried only his ulster: ACD, *A Life in Letters*.

probably a tin box: Stavert, 9, makes this reasonable assumption.

photographic equipment: Stavert, 9.

a large brass sign: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 157.

Filthy urchins scuttled by: Sadden, entry for January 18.

Frequently Arthur stepped over tracks: See photo, Stavert, 11; Portsmouth city history at www.welcometoportsmouth.co.uk/portsmouth%20trams.html.

Bath chairs: Stavert, 10–11, and Portsmouth City Museum, www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1987460.

“At present the soldiers’ wives”: Quoted in Portsmouth City Council, “A History of Council Housing in Portsmouth,” www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/documents-external/hou-100years-history-of-housing.pdf.

Arthur spent his first week locating: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 63.

number 1, Bush Villas: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 160, tells when he moved and where; 161 reproduces ACD’s labeled sketch of the street; Stavert, 16, shows 1880s advertisement for the hotel, with view of house, church, and hotel; an 1879 architectural plan of the church’s renovations, plus a description of the neighborhood, appeared in the November 21, 1879, issue of the *Building News*, available at http://archiseek.com/2012/1879-elm-grove-baptist-church-southsea-hampshire/#.VG5TXN5_a2w.

The rent was £40: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 63.

Arthur bought a tired old bed: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 161; ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 63.

Arthur slept several nights wrapped in his ulster: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 162, 184.

The portmanteau, in the back room with nothing but a stool beside it: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 65.

white curtains . . . knickknacks: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 199.

downstairs the consulting room was fitted for gas: Ibid., 182–183.

“to get,” he told his mother: Ibid., 166.

few patients dropped in during free hours: Ibid., 175–176.

William Royston Pike: Ibid.

Kirton, a young dentist whose office was across the street: Stavert, 34–35; “young” determined from details in the *Dentists Register*, 132 (London: General Medical Council/Spottiswoode, 1904).

One Southsea dentist paid every week: Stavert, 34.

Realizing the irony in this transaction, he confided: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 167.

“emerged from the fray without much damage”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 62–63.

Arthur counted upon this tradition: Ibid., 65.

“A man had the good taste”: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 180.

Fond of colorful characters: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 68–69.

Once he kept a pottery jug for his troubles: Ibid. he says of the jug, “I have got it yet.”

Once a poor woman begged him to tend her daughter: Ibid., 69–70.

turn him away from the traditional religion of his upbringing: Ibid., 69.

CHAPTER 11: A WEALTH OF YOUTH AND PLUCK

I found that I could live quite easily: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 6.

Arthur’s brother, Innes, arrived in mid-July: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 168–169.

“far healthier town”: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 165.

a physician lost face with patients: Ibid., 164.

he had grown a mustache: Ibid., 184–185.

volunteering to help fishermen on their boats: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 167–168.

In the summer of 1877: Ibid., 97–100.

he had spent his spare time entertaining: Ibid., 120.

mailed home toy French foot soldiers: Ibid., 21.

“I am very happy to know that I have a little brother”: Ibid., 52.

Founded in the twelfth century: Portsmouth City Council, “A History of Council Housing in Portsmouth,” www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/documents-external/hou-100years-history-of-housing.pdf.

“a terrible little dayschool”: Kipling, chap. 1; Green, 44–45.

From the beach he brought home crabs: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 172.

“We have vaxenated a baby”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 67. The following dialogue derives from Innes’s letter; wording is precisely as quoted, but punctuation has been altered to conform to contemporary dialogue format.

in letters to his mother he often itemized his parsimonious budgeting: Among countless examples in ACD, *A Life in Letters*, for example, see 162, 165, 170.

“Lord knows I am as poor as Job”: Ibid., 161–162.

“There is nothing I put my mind to do”: Ibid., 160.

his annual income would rise to £1,000: Ibid., 159.

To his mother he confessed that his indignation: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 199.

he saw a “taxgatherer” coming: Ibid., 198 (letter to Charlotte Drummond, n.d.)

Most unsatisfactory: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, 70.

chained tomes of Renaissance Oxford: Streeter, xiv.

“We have become a novel-reading people”: Trollope, 108. Griest quotes this line, 3, amid further context on this topic.

Charles Dickens and his primary rival, William Makepeace Thackeray: Griest, 4.

Mudie’s Lending Library: Griest’s is the most comprehensive book about Mudie and the hugely influential circulating libraries.

The library trade was dominated: Griest, 40ff.

“The work has been distended”: Henry James.

Arthur’s favorite novel, *The Cloister and the Hearth*: ACD, “My Favorite Novelist”; ACD, *Magic Door*, chap. 6.

“childish egotism”: Quoted in Griest, 116, citing a Reade letter in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library.

Friends who visited included Claud Currie: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 172–173.

One friend pronounced number 1, Bush Villas: Ibid., 173.

rolled them up, inserted them into mailing cylinders: ACD, “Juvenilia.”

popular Welsh writer Rhoda Broughton: ACD himself makes this comparison; ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 151 (letter to Mary Doyle, March 1882).

“That Veteran” to *All the Year Round*: Ibid., 171, 174, 182; see *All the Year Round*, September 2, 1882.

CHAPTER 12: THE CIRCULAR TOUR

to whose pages Arthur had long aspired: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 8.

Like Arthur, he had written many stories before venturing to tackle a novel: Payn, 15ff.

“*The Cornhill* this month has a story in it”: ACD, “Juvenilia.”

a two-year-old issue of *The Cornhill*: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 170–171. “The Pavilion on the Links” was published in September–October 1880.

Arthur decided that only with publication of a novel: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 8.

The book was more a series of sketches and miniature essays: ACD *Narrative of John Smith*. His partial rewrite, c. 1884–1893, was published in 2011.

plot somewhat resembled that of *A Lost Name*: Crawford makes this point, as do other scholars.

“I would need a private graveyard”: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 242.

“We know very well what that means”: ACD, *Firm of Girdlestone*.

“fairly good as light literature goes nowadays”: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 270.

“the circular tour”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 8.

CHAPTER 13: THE UNSEEN WORLD

earliest memory was the sight of his dead maternal grandmother: Georgina Doyle, 35.

feeble patient, who was twenty-five, only a month older: Ibid., 54.

“Both ladies thanked me a very great deal”: ACD, *Stark Munro*, chap. 15. Actually a phrase precedes this quotation in the sentence.

he died on the twenty-fifth of March: Georgina Doyle, 54.

40 percent of the burials at Highland Road were of children:
www.friendsofhighlandroadcemetery.org.uk/history.htm.

God was ordering him to escape: Beveridge, 266. Descriptions of Montrose not otherwise cited, including quotations, derive from this essential article by Beveridge.

Founded in 1781 as the Montrose Lunatic Asylum: Poole, esp. 1–21.

the entire institution came to be called Sunnyside: See www.historic-hospitals.com/gazetteer/angus/.

authorities took action even before notifying Mary or Arthur: See letter from Mary Doyle, dated December 3, 1892, reproduced in full in Norman, 128–130.

“Has been weak minded & nervous”: Beveridge, 266.

Mary began to worry that if Charles were free: See letter from Mary Doyle, dated December 3, 1892, reproduced in full in Norman, 128–130.

“We must not . . . lose sight of the great principle”: Beveridge, 265.

“of an overpowering presentiment”: Ibid, 267.

“This morning took an epileptic attack”: Ibid.

Petite, with childishly small hands and feet: See Touie’s daughter Mary’s memories, quoted in Georgina Doyle, 101.

A. Conan Doyle, MD, wrote Arthur: Georgina Doyle, 55.

she received a larger share of her father’s estate: Ibid., 62–63.

no hearse to convey his coffin: Ibid., 61.

£100 per year: Stashower, 70.

CHAPTER 14: THE METHOD OF ZADIG

“Why do you not worship Bel?”: Quotations from Daniel stories derive from the 2011 Revised Edition of the New American Bible; I consulted the edition on the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. I slightly changed some punctuation to match the rest of the chapter.

“You mean her bitch”: Quotations from *Zadig* derive from Voltaire, chap. 3, in a nineteenth-century anonymous translation. I modernized some punctuation and changed capitalized nouns to lowercase to conform to usage in the rest of this chapter.

“This single track therefore”: Coleman, 102.

CHAPTER 15: THE FOOTMARKS OF POE

“Edgar Allan Poe, who, in his carelessly prodigal fashion”: ACD, “Preface,” vi.

“It is not improbable”: Poe, “Rue Morgue.”

“The mental features discoursed of as the analytical”: Ibid.

“The reader is disposed to believe”: Reprinted in Walker, 132–133.

“Mr. Poe is a man of genius”: Reprinted in *ibid.*, 135.

Poe brought Dupin back: For bibliographical material, see the detailed pages on the website of the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore at www.eapoe.org/index.htm, esp. www.eapoe.org/works/editions/agft001c.htm.

Poe was taking to its limit his notion: Silverman makes this point, 172, and other critics do elsewhere.

“These tales of ratiocination”: Poe, letter to Phillip P. Cook, August 9, 1846, LTR240/RCL654, on www.eapoe.org/works/letters/p4608090.htm.

Naturally Poe was himself drawing upon: Silverman, 149–150, re: “William Wilson.”

“drew razor swift as he could pull it”: Humphreys, 75.

“a strange chuckling hoarse voice” . . . “a deep wailing and melancholy cry”: Scott, chap. 16.

Eventually the ape kills a man: Scott, chap. 25.

CHAPTER 16: HOW DO YOU KNOW THAT?

“As to work which is unconsciously imitative”: ACD, “Preface,” vi.

“Un meurtre sans exemple dans les fastes de la justice”: For details on French piracy of Poe’s “Rue Morgue,” see Wigmore, esp. 231–235, and Cutler, chap. 1.

Baudelaire began translating stories: See exhibition catalogue, “Baudelaire, Translator of Edgar Allan Poe,” Brown University, www.library.brown.edu/cds/ baudelaire/translations1.html.

“You will, therefore, go there”: Dumas, 20:226

CHAPTER 17: GAMES OF CHESS, PLAYED WITH LIVE PIECES

“king’s peace”: For general background on the evolution of official police forces in Britain, from Norman days through the end of nineteenth century, see W. L. Melville Lee; for a more recent and detailed analysis of Victorian detectives, see Shpayer-Makov.

Efficient policing required: W. L. Melville Lee discusses the issue of trust and cooperation, 329ff.

“clean-shaven, farmer-like”: Sala, 1:95.

“We are not by any means devout believers”: *Household Words*, July 27, 1850. See Philip Collins, chap. 9, esp. 198ff.

“What he liked to talk about”: Sala, 1:76.

“Dickens had a curious and almost morbid partiality”: Ibid., 1:95.

“Any of the Detective men will do anything for me”: Dickens, *Letters*, 6:380 (letter to Bulwer Lytton, May 9, 1851). For more on Dickens’s attitude toward police officers and detectives, see Philip Collins, esp. chap. 9.

Inspector Jonathan “Jack” Whicher: Summerscale, 51ff.

“On the mat at the stair-foot”: Wills, 104ff.

“Gaboriau had rather attracted me”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 7.

PART 3: MR. HOLMES AND DR. WATSON

“No writer is ever absolutely original”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 12.

CHAPTER 18: DR. SACKER AND MR. HOPE

“A tangled skein” . . . red marbled notebooks: Bergem.

“The difficulty is to seize at the beginning”: Gaboriau, 45.

“There’s the scarlet thread of murder”: ACD, 1887, chap. 4.

He remembered his aquiline face: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 8.

Faulds presented his idea to London’s police department: Godfrey, 136–138; see also Donald Reid. I discuss the growth of fingerprint studies in Sims, *Adam’s Navel*, 166–173.

Ormond Sacker [or Secker]—from Sudan: See illustration, ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 245.

Sacker or Secker . . . Stamford Street: Harrison, *Study in Surmise*, 33–37. Harrison postulates numerous possible roots for names that ACD used; I cite only those that seem reasonable, not far-fetched, and relevant to my story.

Belmont Street . . . William Rance: Donald A. Redmond, 33.

Charpentier . . . Cowper: Ibid., 32–33.

remembering Joseph Alexandre Lestrade: Ibid., 35.

Reverend J. Gelsen Gregson: Ibid., 33; Porter, 276.

not “Mr. Sharps or Mr. Ferrets”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 7.

surnames, including Sherrington Hope: Stoker, 8.

Chief Inspector William Sherlock: *Home Chronicler*, March 2, 1878, 137, and February 25, 1878, 122; *Times*, November 3, 1877. Mrs. Meredith, “Juvenile Delinquency,” *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science*, 1881, 375. Quail, 158 quotes Stavert.

The 1881 census listed Inspector Sherlock: www.archiver.rootsweb.ancestry.com/th/read/LONDON/2000-10/0970943447.

In February 1881, *The Portsmouth Evening News* reported: *Portsmouth Evening News*, February 16, 1881, available at www.kenthistoryforum.co.uk/index.php?topic=6163.0.

Inspector Sherlock was in court at Westminster: Booth, 107.

***The Times* reported another of Sherlock’s exploits:** *Times*, January 6, 1883.

The 1881 post office directory: Harrison, *Study in Surmise*, 38–39.

under the jurisdiction of Chief Inspector William Sherlock: *Ibid.*, 39.

fame of Sir Thomas Watson: *Ibid.*, 177–178.

the famed physician had also studied in Edinburgh: See the Royal College of Physicians site, www.munksroll.rcplondon.ac.uk/Biography/Details/4657.

The first Afghan War . . . again invaded Afghanistan: For general background information on the British view prevalent in ACD’s time, see Hanna.

“Arthur borrowed a memorable image: ACD used the gouty knuckle image in the 1904 Sherlock Holmes story “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter.” For original source see Thomas Watson, vol. 2, 1067. For background see Klinger 1999, 28–29. Klinger alerted me to this borrowing.

a gigantic iron statue of a lion was erected in Reading: web.archive.org/web/20070928000734/http://www.readingmuseum.org.uk/collections/album/pdfs/maiwand-25.pdf.

Watson would have been an acting surgeon: Klinger 2006, 3:8 n. 3.

Chopin composed no pieces for solo violin: Baring-Gould 1:178, n. 111.

“neither kith nor kin” . . . “naturally gravitated”: ACD 1887, Chapter 1.

CHAPTER 19: BOHEMIANS IN BAKER STREET

“Sherlock Holmes [is] a bastard”: ACD, letter to Robert Louis Stevenson, 1893.

number 33, Rue Dunot: The street address is given in the third Dupin story, “The Purloined Letter.”

Baker Street was not more than a quarter of a mile long: Baring-Gould, 1:86.

Upper Baker Street . . . dense with London history: Examples in this paragraph derive from Wheatley, 1:90–91.

The *B* in the street number: Baring-Gould, 1:85, 86.

“Underneath the table”: Reade, 2:125–126.

“She became a perfect Bohemian ere long”: Thackeray, chap. 44.

“As the phrase ‘Egyptian’ was once generally used”: Anonymous, “Literature of Bohemia,” 17–18.

CHAPTER 20: A LITTLE TOO SCIENTIFIC

“The fatal mistake which the ordinary policeman makes”: Saxby, 23–24.

“Monsieur G——, the Prefect”: Poe, “Rue Morgue.” Although the Holmes story “The Adventure of the Second Stain” was published after the period my book concerns, it is Conan Doyle’s most Poe-like story in its construction; it involves an indiscreet letter that has gone missing, the threat of blackmail, and a hiding place that isn’t hidden—but then it was a reboot of “A Scandal in Bohemia.” Note: All quotations and descriptions involving Dupin not otherwise cited derive from Poe’s three Dupin stories.

“the same very rare and very remarkable volume”: Poe, “Rue Morgue.”

Robert Louis Stevenson and the American Bret Harte: ACD explicitly invokes Stevenson and Harte in numerous places; e.g., see Stoker and ACD, *Magic Door*, chap. 6.

attributed Arthur’s own “J. Habakuk Jephson’s Statement” to Stevenson: Lycett, 107–108.

Arthur saw himself as brave and indomitable: ACD demonstrates this view of himself in many letters to his mother in ACD, *A Life in Letters*, and later in a variety of autobiographical contexts, including his own account of the 1880 whaling voyage and his later comments about his volunteer work with the military.

“They ascended to the room in question”: Lecoq, *Mystery of Orcival*, chap. 7.

When reading detective stories, he found it annoying: See filmed interview with ACD, (1927), available at www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWjgt9PzYEM.

CHAPTER 21: THE BOOK OF LIFE

“I began to think of turning scientific methods”: ACD, in filmed interview (1927), at www.youtube.com/watch?v=XWjgt9PzYEM.

Holmes uses the term *deduction* instead of *induction*: Snyder makes this point, 105. A good introduction to Holmes’s method is Konnikova, 155–208.

Bacon explicitly defined “inductive history”: Bacon, “Advancement of Learning.”

“I ate minced pies on Monday and Wednesday”: Macaulay, 428.

“The patient, too, is likely to be impressed”: How, 188.

CHAPTER 22: A BASILISK IN THE DESERT

“I had written in *A Study in Scarlet*”: ACD, *Second American Adventure*, chap. 5.

convicted confidence artist Joseph Smith: See court record reprinted in Anonymous, “Original Prophet,” 229–230 (see full article for context); Fawn Brodie, 121.

Joseph Smith became embroiled: for general background on Smith, see Fawn Brodie.

baptized forty-three thousand English converts: Tracy, 41–42.

Although polygamy had been forbidden in England: Wall and Ames, 2.

in part through accounts of virtuous women described: Arrington and Haupt, 244ff. General information about fictional responses to Mormonism not otherwise cited derives largely from Arrington and Haupt. Arrington was affiliated with the Mormon Church and apparently skeptical about criticism thereof, but this article serves as a guide into primary sources.

“His presence was that of the basilisk”: Ward, 66.

“A Terrible Tale of the Danites of Mormon Land”: Arrington and Haupt, 257. The novel was *Gold Dan*, by Albert W. Aiken.

“Latter-day Saints who are set apart”: Twain, chap. 12.

The Washoe were a tribe: Tracy, 62, led me to the Washoe clue; it is his assertion, following his own extensive review of nineteenth-century representations of Mormons, that the word *Washoe* appears in no others.

“Washoe is a pet nickname for Nevada”: Twain, 160.

CHAPTER 23: A BORN NOVELIST

“If the secret history of literature”: ACD, *Narrative of John Smith*, p. 27.

Optimistically, he sent the manuscript to James Payn: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 8.

Arthur sent the manuscript to J. W. Arrowsmith: Ibid.; details about Arrowsmith derive from www.discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/rd/387891c4-3179-43e8-8d76-4cdbcbbceb70a. See also *The Bookseller*, January 24, 1908, 40.

Finally he thought to send it to Ward and Lock: In ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, ACD stated that he sent the book to Ward, Lock & Co. That was indeed the name of the publisher by the time

ACD wrote his autobiography, but in 1886 it was still officially Ward and Lock. See www.wardlockredguides.org.uk.

He first self-published *The Mystery of the Hansom Cab*: Pierce, 114, 274.

“Being a detective, and of an extremely reticent disposition”: Fergus Hume, chap. 4.

George Thomas Bettany: For background on Bettany, see Anonymous, “George Thomas Bettany”; for anecdote about Jeanie Gwynne Bettany “discovering” *A Study in Scarlet*, see Kernahan, from which derive most details in this scene.

She read through the pages written in Arthur’s neat round hand: Kernahan.

Arthur replied immediately, on the first of November: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 7.

“We regret to say”: Ibid., chap. 7. Following details about ACD’s thoughts derive from this source.

The son of a Cheapside publican: Bergem, 1.

Following a banking collapse in May: For general background on the financial crisis, see Collins 1992 and Elliott.

The company had been known as Ward and Lock: See Liveing.

Beeton turned in a new direction and included political satire: Bergem, 2.

“An Exciting Christmas Eve; or, My Lecture on Dynamite”: www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php?title=The_Boy%27s_Own_Paper.

“an old institution”: Solberg.

Bell retired from the Edinburgh Infirmary: Liebow, 150–151.

“Lord,” he wrote in his diary: Ibid., 151.

in January 1887, a group called upon him: Liebow, 151.

textbook for nurses . . . Royal Hospital for Sick Children: Liebow, 152–153.

“Mr. Bell’s whole career”: *Edinburgh Medical Journal*, June 1887, 1145.

diseased, handicapped, and wounded children . . . Birth defect: Bell, “Five Years’ Surgery.”

CHAPTER 24: THE PRETERNATURAL SAGACITY OF A SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE

“After weighing the evidence”: ACD, “A Test Message,” *Light*, July 2, 1887.

The issue went on sale in November for one shilling: Bergem, 3; also www.bestofsherlock.com/beetons-christmas-annual.htm.

was listed as R. André: Young, 199; and guide to the Richard André Papers at the University of Southern Mississippi, at www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/degrum/public_html/html/research/findaids/DG0028f.html.

Hamilton had published three of her five novels: www.victorianresearch.org/atcl/show_author.php?aid=2178.

David Henry Friston: Most information about Friston derives from Bergem, 4–6.

“JUST READY, IN PICTURE COVERS”: From original advertisement in *The Graphic*, November 26, 1887, reprinted in Solberg.

An illustrated weekly, *The Graphic*: Bills; Korda, esp. 76–84.

“It is not at all a bad imitation”: Quoted in Solberg.

CHAPTER 25: TRUTH AS DEATH

“His brush was concerned not only with fairies”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 1.

The young woman blushed and asked for a copy of the drawing: Baker, 12. All descriptions of Charles Doyle’s artwork in this passage derive from images reprinted in Baker.

told a physician that he had encountered his wife: Norman, 147, from a Sunnyside record dated October 6, 1887.

At this time Charles was worrying often about death: Beveridge.

“Has no memory for anything recent”: Norman, 147, from a Sunnyside record dated March 23, 1888.

Charles produced six drawings for Ward, Lock: For images, see www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php/A_Study_in_Scarlet#Illustrations.

“somewhat unfinished” . . . “contented with his lot:” ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 270.

“for Papa’s drawings for the Study”: Ibid., 251 (n.d.).

Henry Ball . . . create wood engravings: Ibid., 250–252.

“Ward & Lock are perfect Jews”: Ibid., 251.

they owed him nothing beyond the amount they had already sent: Ibid., 255, 256.

Ward, Lock had bought the rights to publish *Smith’s Select Library of Fiction*: Cox and Mowat, 20.

Conway sold outright to Arrowsmith . . . *Called Back*: Law, n.p. Most information on the publication of *Called Back* derives from this article.

Arrowsmith's Christmas Annual: More info on this annual at www.victorianresearch.org/atcl/show_journal.php?jid=130.

her gravestone read **"Called Back, May 15, 1886"**: Habegger. Dickinson's bedroom in Amherst displays a copy of *Called Back*.

Conway had died suddenly of typhoid: Anonymous, *Truth*, May 21, 1885.

Young Folks' Paper: The weekly appeared under a variety of different titles between 1871 and 1897. Some sources list *Young Folks* as the title during publication of *Kidnapped*, but that title had been enlarged to *Young Folks' Paper* in December 1884.

"A chemist on each side will approach the frontier with a bottle": ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 7. ACD's response to Wilde appears here as well.

"it is no part of the publishers' plan": Mott, 396–401.

CHAPTER 26: WATSON'S BROTHER'S WATCH

an error that he would write to J. M. Stoddart to correct: Klinger, 3:234, n. 50.

"It is a fullgrown book": Boström and Laffey, 27.

"Dr. A. Conan Doyle has gone at one stride": Ibid., 28.

The Scotsman said that it was a fine book: Ibid., 30.

"Very interesting and very readable": Ibid., 32.

"There is an Irish lilt in this shamrock": Baker, 28.

"I am certain if my many Vols": Baker, 56, and transcription 87; undated but from Charles Doyle diary entry surrounded by drawings dated June and July 1889.

At about the same time as these private complaints: Beveridge, 267.

CHAPTER 27: DREAD OF MADHOUSES

"I was now once more at a crossroads": ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 10.

"Is there anything being done with this?": Kernahan.

Arthur's contract with Lippincott's gave the magazine three months of exclusivity: Donald A. Redmond 14.

the *Bristol Observer* . . . deerstalker hat: Ibid., 1993, 87. You can see the illustrations reprinted at www.arthur-conan-doyle.com/index.php?title=The_Sign_of_Four#Illustrations.

Deer stalking: See MacRae; Scrope.

Charles was transferred to the Royal Edinburgh Asylum: Beveridge, 267.

“He has an intense dread of madhouses”: ACD, “Surgeon of Gaster Fell.”

“Dr. Conan Doyle appears to be equally at home”: Boström and Laffey, 65–66.

A single recurring character of proven popularity: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 10.

CHAPTER 28: ADVENTURES IN THE STRAND

“I should at last be my own master”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 10.

George Newnes: Background information on Newnes derives from Jackson and Welch.

considered naming it *The Burleigh Street Magazine*: Newnes, 363.

“I stood in the Strand and beheld it and blessed God!”: Quoted in Tames, xxiii.

“because,” wrote Newnes later, “they were smarter”: Newnes, 364.

Herbert Greenhough Smith, a Cambridge man: McDonald, 152.

To Newnes’s dream of an eye-catching innovation: Ibid.

The first issues sold two hundred thousand copies: Ibid., 156.

When, in early 1891, an envelope containing: Herbert Greenhough Smith, 171–173.

Watt seems to have been the first to establish himself as a respected professional: In making this point I rely upon the extensive discussion of it in Gillies, “Watt.” For background on Watt, see Gillies, *Professional Literary Agent*.

“I really do not know how a busy man like myself”: Quoted within the Watt interview in *Bookman*, October 1892.

Watt claimed that he did not advertise: Gillies, “Watt,” nn. 35, 36.

they could farm out to Watt the task of selling serial rights: Interview with A. P. Watt, *Bookman*, October 1892, 21.

“Mr. A. Conan Doyle, a popular American writer”: Boström and Laffey, 102.

The author’s handwriting across these neat pages: Herbert Greenhough Smith, 171–173. All details about Smith’s early response to ACD’s writing derive from this source.

CHAPTER 29: DEERSTALKER

All the drawings are very unlike”: ACD, *Memories and Adventures*, chap. 11.

But it was the middle brother, Sidney: Anonymous, “Artists,” 786.

he often wore a deerstalker himself: See Paget.

Arthur found time to write six Sherlock Holmes stories in quick succession: Composition and mailing details in this paragraph derive from Baring-Gould, 1;14.

“And do you suppose he wouldn’t discover this surveillance?”: Gaboriau, anonymous translation of *Monsieur Lecoq*, chap. 19.

“I have been a detective fifteen years”: Gaboriau, *The Mystery of Orcival*, chap. 11.

“The many friends in Portsmouth”: Boström and Laffey, 112.

McClure read them and judged them: McClure, 203–205.

CHAPTER 30: TO MY OLD TEACHER

Still resenting the exploitative contract: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 312.

“Facile and childish”: Details of Charles Doyle’s death derive from extensive quotations from Crichton medical records, reproduced in Norman, 159–161.

evolved out of his “own inner consciousness”: Blathwayt. I have slightly changed some of the punctuation within dialogue.

“It is most certainly to you that I owe Sherlock Holmes”: Baring-Gould, 1:8.

Arthur was astonished when he saw a listing for it: ACD, *A Life in Letters*, 315 (letter to Mary Doyle dated November 1892).

“I should just like to say this about my friend Doyle’s stories”: Anonymous, “Original of ‘Sherlock Holmes.’”

illustrated with more than one hundred of Sidney Paget’s pictures: Baring-Gould, 1:14 n. 26.

“Dear Sir, — You have taken many occasions”: Stevenson, *Letters*, 4:186–187 (letter to ACD, dated April 5, 1893).

“To my old Teacher”: ACD, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

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A Note on the Author

Michael Sims is the author of *The Story of Charlotte's Web*, which the *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, and other venues chose as a Best Book of the year; *Adam's Navel*, which was a *New York Times* Notable Book and a *Library Journal* Best Science Book; *The Adventures of Henry Thoreau*; and other books.

He edits The Connoisseur's Collection series of Victorian anthologies, including *The Dead Witness* (detective stories), and also edited *The Penguin Book of Victorian Women in Crime* and *The Penguin Book of Gaslight Crime*. His Sherlockian pastiche "The Memoirs of Silver Blaze" appears in the Anthony Award-winning anthology *In the Company of Sherlock Holmes*.

His writing has appeared in the *New York Times*, *New Republic*, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the *Washington Post*, the *Baker Street Journal*, and many other periodicals.

He lives in western Pennsylvania with his wife and son.

Plate Section



Born in 1859 in Edinburgh, Scotland, young Arthur Doyle returned here after boarding school and attended medical school, where he met Joseph Bell—who would, a decade later, serve as Arthur's real-life inspiration for Sherlock Holmes. Here the twelfth-century Castle towers above the Grassmarket, which had been a public trading site for centuries. UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN



Arthur revered and idolized his mother, Irish-born Mary Foley Doyle, who read to the family often and introduced Arthur to French literature. Her husband's intemperance (and later his incarceration) left Mary in charge of the family during Arthur's childhood and early adulthood. This portrait is by her husband's brother, Richard "Dickie" Doyle, an illustrator who achieved greater success than his brother Charles.



Arthur with his father, Charles Doyle. Charles's chaotic drinking lost him his career with Scotland's public Office of Works, his career as an artist, and his role in the Doyle family. Many of Arthur's later stories and novels would feature uncontrollable drunks and men suffering from similar demons.
GETTY IMAGES



In 1876, upon completing boarding school in England and Austria, Arthur Doyle returned to his hometown and enrolled in medical school at the University of Edinburgh. Some of the classes were held in other venues, such as the Royal Infirmary, where Arthur studied with Joseph Bell. CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL – EDINBURGH LIBRARIES



Joseph Bell, M.D., turned forty in 1877, the year that young Arthur Doyle met him and became his devoted acolyte. Later Bell recalled that Arthur paid close attention to his professor's demonstrations of deduction from small clues, often staying afterward to ask for details and writing them in his notebook.



Arthur Conan Doyle as a young doctor, turning from medical school at the University of Edinburgh toward his own medical practice in England. With his father in institutions for the intemperate and later for the mentally unstable, Arthur keenly felt the family's expectations about his financial prospects. CONAN DOYLE ESTATE LTD.

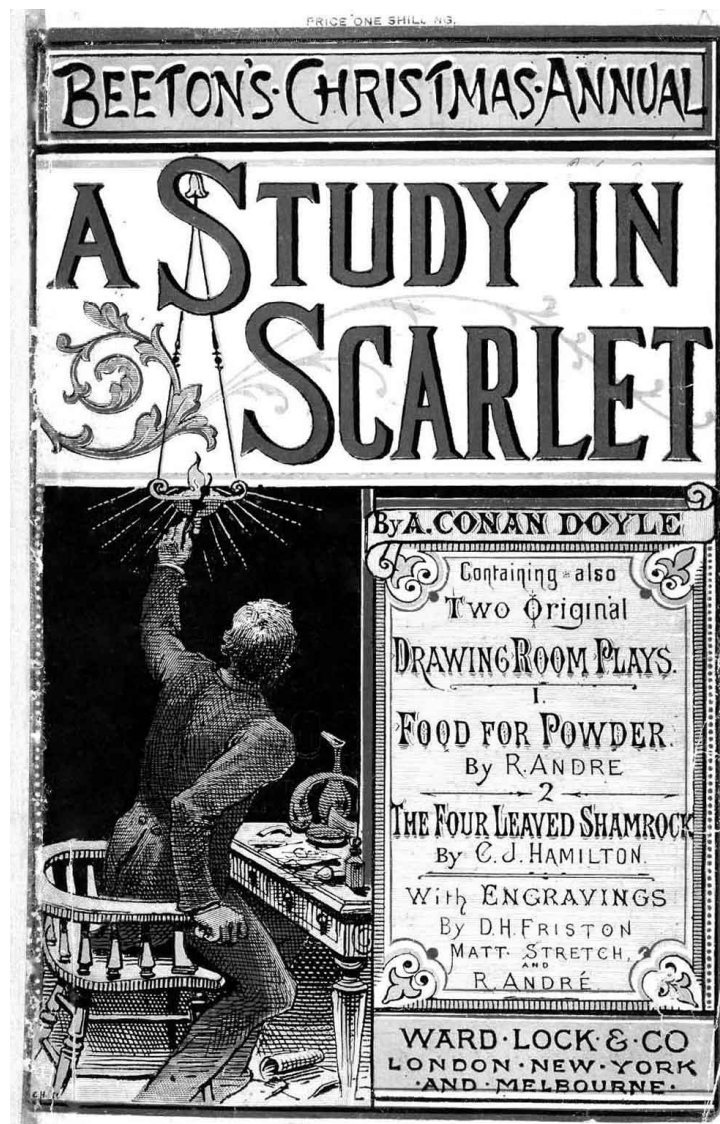


Arthur standing before his flat at number 1, Bush Villas in Southsea, a residential suburb of Portsmouth, England, on the Channel coast. Here he began his medical practice in 1882 and here he began his serious career as a writer, culminating in his writing of *A Study in Scarlet* in early 1886.

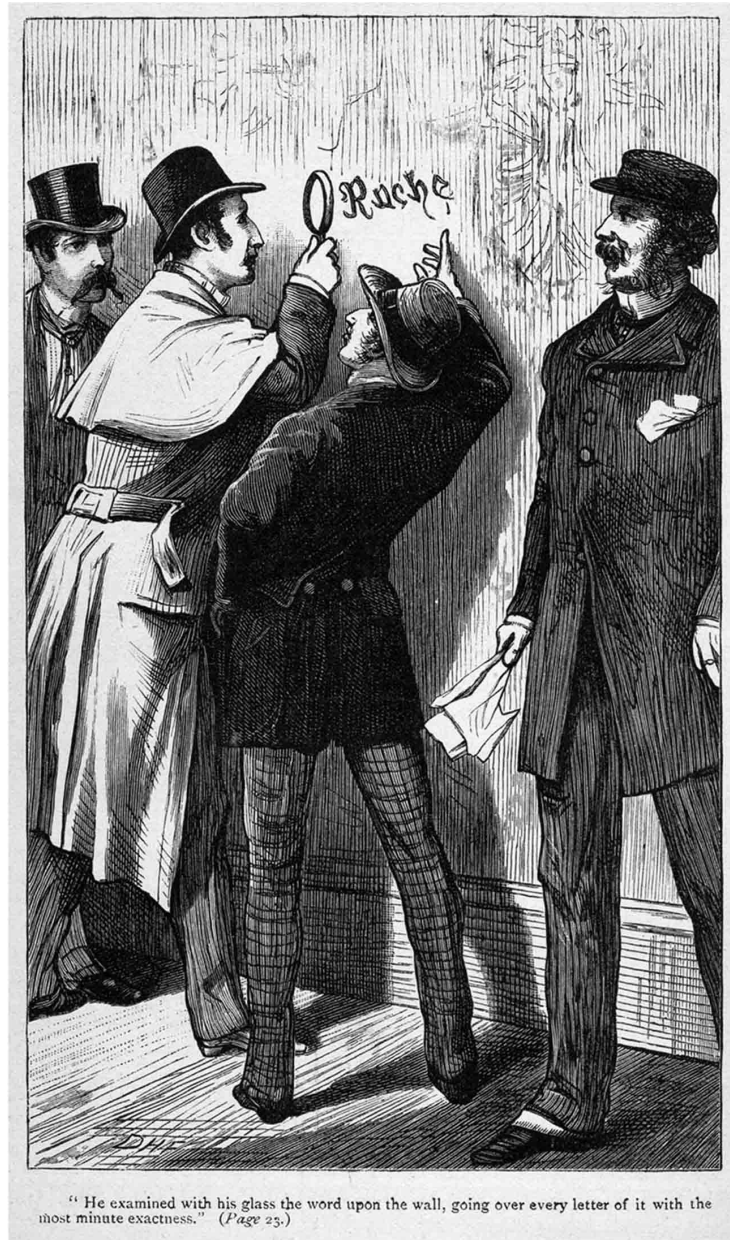
● Study in Scarlet

Ormond Sacker - ~~from Sacker~~ from Afghanistan
Lived at 221 B Upper Baker Street
with
I Sherrinford Holmes -
The Laws of Evidence
Revered -
Sleepy eyed young man - philosopher - Collector of rare Violins.
An Anati - Chemical Laboratory
I have four hundred a year -
I am a Consulting detective -
What not this is " I cried - throwing the volume
: prebably aside " I must say that I have no
patience with people who build up fine theories in their
own arm chairs which can never be reduced to
practice -
Lecog was a bungler -
Dupin was better. Dupin was decidedly smart -
His trick of following a train of thought was more
sensational than clever but still he had analytical genius.

A surviving page of Doyle's early notes, in the planning stage of *A Study in Scarlet*. At this point, he had not yet hit upon the names Sherlock Holmes and John Watson. His characters were Sherrinford Holmes and Ormond Sacker. GETTY IMAGES



D. H. Friston's dramatic illustration for the cover of the December 1887 issue of *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, which included the debut of Sherlock Holmes, who strode confidently through *A Study in Scarlet*. *BEETON'S CHRISTMAS ANNUAL*, MAGAZINE (DECEMBER 1887)



"He examined with his glass the word upon the wall, going over every letter of it with the most minute exactness." (Page 25.)

From this first published image of Sherlock Holmes, by D. H. Friston, the "unofficial consulting detective" appears with magnifying glass in hand, scientifically evaluating clues invisible even to police detectives. Four years later, Sidney Paget made Holmes's figure familiar in households across England—and soon throughout the rest of the world—often featuring the now iconic deerstalker.

BEETON'S CHRISTMAS ANNUAL, MAGAZINE (DECEMBER 1887)



One of Charles Doyle's awkward, even amateurish, drawings for the first independent book publication of his son's novel *A Study in Scarlet*. Arthur failed in his attempt to secure respectable payment for his father's contribution, which probably he himself requested.

that you have been getting yourself very wet lately, and that you have a most clumsy and careless servant girl?"

"My dear Holmes," said I, "this is too much. You would certainly have been burned, had you lived a few centuries ago. It is true that I had a country walk on Thursday and came home in a dreadful mess; but, as I have changed my clothes, I can't imagine how you deduce it. As to Mary Jane, she is incorrigible, and my wife has given her notice; but there again I fail to see how you work it out."

He chuckled to himself and rubbed his long nervous hands together.

"It is simplicity itself," said he; "my eyes tell me that on the inside of your left shoe, just where the fire-light strikes it, the leather is scored by six almost parallel cuts. Obviously they have been caused by someone who has very carelessly scraped round the edges of the sole in order to remove crusted mud from it. Hence, you see, my double deduction that you had been out in vile weather, and that you had a particularly malignant boot-slitting specimen of the London slavey. As to your practice, if a gentleman walks into my rooms smelling of iodoform, with a black mark of nitrate of silver upon his right fore-finger, and a bulge on the side of his top-hat to show where he has secreted his stethoscope, I must be dull indeed, if I do not pronounce him to be an active member of the medical profession."

I could not help laughing at the ease with which he explained his process of deduction. "When I hear you give your reasons," I remarked, "the thing always appears to me to be so ridiculously simple that I could easily do it myself, though at



"THEN HE STOOD BEFORE THE FIRE."

each successive instance of your reasoning I am baffled, until you explain your process. And yet I believe that my eyes are as good as yours."

"Quite so," he answered, lighting a cigarette, and throwing himself down into an armchair. "You see, but you do not observe. The distinction is clear. For example, you have frequently seen the steps which lead up from the hall to this room."

"Frequently."

"How often?"

"Well, some hundreds of times."

"Then how many are there?"

"How many! I don't know."

"Quite so! You have not observed."

The Strand paid professional illustrators well, and in doing so produced an immediately recognizable—and soon hugely influential—magazine. This is Sidney Paget's first published portrayal of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, at 221B Baker Street, in "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first in *The Strand's* series of Sherlock Holmes stories, published in the July 1891 issue. STRAND MAGAZINE, VOL. II (AUGUST 1891)



Capitalizing upon the extraordinary popularity of their suddenly famous author, *The Strand* ran a profile of Arthur Conan Doyle in the August 1892 issue, showing him in the first flush of fame. STRAND MAGAZINE, VOL. IV. (AUGUST 1892)



The same issue of *The Strand* featured a photo of Arthur and Touie enjoying the hot new trend of tandem tricycles. Throughout his life, Arthur was restless and energetic, indulging in vigorous outdoor sports, including cross-country biking and skiing. STRAND MAGAZINE, VOL. IV. (AUGUST 1892)



"HOLMES WAS WORKING HARD OVER A CHEMICAL INVESTIGATION."

The legacy of Arthur Conan Doyle's study with Dr. Joseph Bell influenced his creation of Sherlock Holmes in many ways. Some of them are reflected in Sidney Paget's now iconic illustrations for *The Strand*, as in this scene from "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first story and the beginning of global fame for the character and his creator. GETTY IMAGES

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