



Special He's Everywhere Issue, 2006

# Communication No. 268

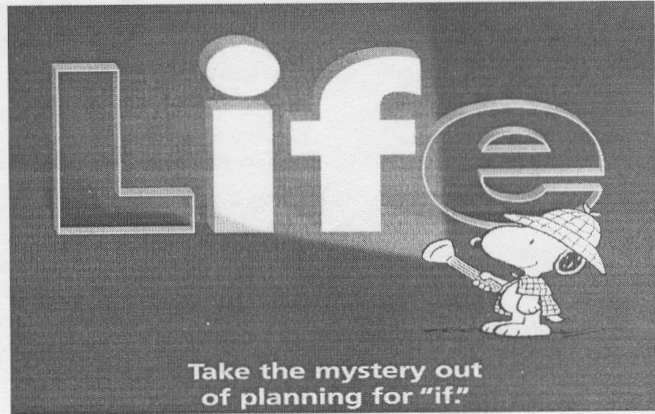
The Pleasant Places of Florida

Vol. 10 No. 10

## From the Papers on the Sundial:

We finish off the year with an issue about *him*. Well, we know that every issue is about *him*. But instead of sophomore humor (is there such a thing as freshman humor) by editors who have read too much Woody Allen and H.P. Lovecraft than they should ever admit to, we are going straight to the source for our material this time. We hope you enjoy the references, subtle and otherwise.

We wish one and all happy holidays and a joyous and peaceful New Year.



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## Book Reviews by Philip K. Jones

### The Empress of India

**Type of material:** Hardcover book, with dust jacket

**Publisher:** St. Martin's Minotaur, New York **Year:** 2006

**Author:** Michael Kurland **Price:** \$24.95

**Review:** This is the fourth novel in the Professor Moriarty series by Michael Kurland and, to my mind, it is the best yet. I hesitate to suggest that Mr. Kurland's writing style is maturing, as he has been writing excellent prose for many years. On the other hand, this novel displays a level of comfort in handling his characters and themes that is at least a step above his previous entries in this series. Several incidents and events were especially well drawn and his supporting characters were vivid and charming. Furthermore, his treatment of Sherlock Holmes was much more sympathetic and much less likely to outrage Sherlockians.

This tale begins with Holmes being asked by the Managing Director of the Bank of England to assist the official efforts of Her Majesty's Government in ensuring proper reception of a large shipment of boullion from India for storage in the Bank's vaults. Naturally, what seems to be a simple and straight-forward task quickly becomes quite complicated. When Holmes disappears down a sewer, Mycroft, Dr. Watson and Inspectors Lestrade and Gregson appear on Professor Moriarty's doorstep demanding his immediate return.

The action then develops on several fronts, with Moriarty and Moran dashing across Europe, followed by the minions of a mysterious oriental figure from London's underworld and sinister events in India seem to indicate another rising of Thuggee. Meanwhile, Holmes remains missing, Watson frets, Moriarty and Moran plan their own caper and Mycroft schemes as new paper money is shipped to India on "The Empress of India."

A love interest develops, the Viceroy plans his own protection for the gold and the Indian intelligence service devises its plans for protecting the gold, and, presumably, Sherlock Holmes makes his plans to protect the gold. It becomes difficult to discern who is plotting what against whom, and who is defending against what, but it is a sure thing that the gold will turn up (or not) as missing. The ragtag crews of plotters, on both sides, all have agendas of their own and one gets the impression of one of those movie cartoon corridors where various parties chasing one another appear and disappear into and out of a series of rooms on each side of the corridor in random fashion.

The resolution is multi-layered, as befits the plot, and the reader isn't quite sure that he has not been "had" by some one or another of the plotters. It is amusing and aggravating and all good fun and done in a dry, tongue-in-cheek style that keeps the reader on the author's side all the way through the exotic plot and counterplot action. I sincerely hope the author can keep up this level of artistry in the next volume in the series. Of course, Kurland plants his usual salute to other fictional characters (like his statue of Lord Hornblower in another book in the series). See if you can spot this one.

### Holmes of the Raj

**Type of material:** Hardback limited edition, 300cc (Flexiback available. 200cc) **Publisher:** Writers Workshop, Kolkata India (www.writersworkshopkolkata.com) **Year:** 2006 **Author:** Vithal Rajan **Price:** varies (Limited copies available in USA or anywhere by direct mail from publisher)

**Review:** This book was produced in a limited edition by hand processes. It is gorgeous, with a cloth binding edged in brocade and its covers printed in gold. Inside, a variety of scripts and inks are used and it is extensively footnoted. Careful examination reveals small flaws that reflect the handwork origin of the book. Like the book, the author is also extensively decorated. He has worked actively for peace and the well-being of the poor and neglected all around the world and has been honored for that work by governments and organizations. His curriculum vitae are enviable, varied and rich, as is his writing.

Although this book has Holmes in the title, it is really a saga of Dr. Watson and India. It chronicles two trips made by Holmes and Watson to India at the request of the British Government, but, as it is narrated by Watson, it reflects the Doctor's view of these trips. Holmes figures in the six stories included in the narrative, but the true star is India itself and Watson relates its wonders with all of the awe he normally uses to describe Holmes' exploits. The reader is brought to see that India is not a country, but rather a true sub-continent similar to Europe, with widely varying peoples, cultures, languages and climates, as well as all of the same kinds of sectional hatreds and religious conflicts.

The book is unbelievably rich and sumptuous. It assaults the senses and overwhelms the reader with the flavors, sights sounds and, most of all, the peoples of India. In some ways, it is an overdose. I was unable to read the stories in one or even in two sittings. I had to space out my reading, to "clear my palate" as it were, between courses. The "fare" is rich and spiced with exotic elements. The people are novel, eccentric, brilliant, obtuse, opinionated and extremely human, from the Viceroy to the punkh wallah. The sense of History is inescapable; one is surrounded by 5,000 years of cruelty, customs, courage, and religious conflict.

For Sherlockians, this is not a book to be read with Canon in hand. I stressed out my copy of "The Times Between the Cases" so frequently that I had to give it a long rest. The conflicts between this book and the Canon are several and severe. The familiar Holmes of Baker Street has been replaced by a more humane and less judgmental person who is interesting and amusing, but who is not the familiar Great Detective. The Good Doctor remains himself, the very best of Victorian gentlemanly virtues, but he is faced with problems and situations that try him as he never was tried in the Canonical tales.

As a set of Sherlockian pastiches, this book is better than most, but not really satisfying. As a guide to India during The Raj and to the effects of the Indian Policies of The British Government, it is superb. It is much more interesting than a history text and more fascinating than any work on Sociology. Indeed, the author is such a name-dropper that the reader is always on the look-out for the next important person to be met. The extensive footnotes spoil some of the fun by explaining many of the more arcane references. The reader can, however, cheat by refusing to read them and keep trying to guess just who each historical personage is and why they are famous.



## More Book Reviews by Philip K. Jones

### The Secret Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

**Type of material:** Trade Paperback **Publisher:** Lifestyl Publishing, Centennial CO 80122  
**Year:** 2006 **Author:** Paul E. Heusinger **Price:** \$12.95

**Review:** This is an anthology containing ten, separate adventures involving Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. They are, quite rightly, entitled "Adventures" rather than "Cases." These tales do not follow the format of Canonical "Cases", but rather, seem to be narratives of events in which Holmes and Watson were participants. The Author's introduction includes a rationale for the source and "secrecy" restrictions of the publication of these tales which I can find difficult to accept, let alone to repeat.

As an ardent collector of Sherlockian pastiches, it has always been my opinion that a good pastiche involves placing Holmes or some other Canonical character in a plausible situation and developing a tale that illustrates the character's reasonable responses to that situation. My definition of "plausible" has always been quite liberal and has allowed me to accept many pastiches denounced by more literal Sherlockians. In addition to pastiches, I have always enjoyed encountering new words, especially slang and cant terms. The author has done his best to introduce me to a wide variety of all sorts and I had rather not have met most of them.

The ten stories in this volume introduce a relatively familiar Dr. Watson, and several different Holmeses, none of whom are familiar to me. I found the banter and conversation to be jerky, disconnected and unconvincing. I gave up counting discrepancies with the Canon after the first five I met and I question several of the historical events cited. Several of the stories had interesting premises and developments, but I could not accept them as tales of Sherlock Holmes. Some of the prose was well done, especially the author's discussions of "The Irish Problem," however, the dialog was usually distracting and artificial and I found the effect unpleasant on the whole.

In summary, I cannot recommend this book or any of the stories included.

### The Dogs of Sherlock Holmes

**Type of material:** Trade paperback, with no dust jacket **Publisher:** Pencil Productions, Ltd., Denver, CO **Year:** 2005 **Author:** William S. Dorn, with illustrations by Ian Malcolm Earls **Price:** \$14.95

**Review:** This book is a collection of short narratives by dogs mentioned in the Canon. In general, each is a narrative of events in a case as seen through the eyes of the dog in question. The twenty narratives included here do not always agree with the events as recorded by Dr. Watson. In fact, the general impression of these tales is that Watson and Holmes didn't always get to the heart of the matter.

The included statements are short and quite straightforward, as befits the viewpoints of the narrators. They are also difficult to fault, as the dogs seem to be without artifice or guile. If these tales are true, students of the Canon have a lot to learn.

Both Curly, Dr. Mortimer's Spaniel, and The Hound have statements to make about the events in "The Hound of the Baskervilles." As The Hound (Schmiergeld) belonged to Charles Augustus Milverton before being bought by Stapleton, he also has comments to make about "The Adventure of Charles Augustus Milverton."

Two dogs, the one at King's Pyland and the one at Mapleton have comments on the events recorded in "Silver Blaze." The observations of Lady Beatrice Falder's spaniel put an entirely new face on "The Adventure at Shoscombe Old Place" and a different spaniel, Carlo, adds some light to events and personalities in "The Adventure of the Sussex Vampire." A second Carlo, this one a Great Dane, clarifies some details in "The Adventure of the Copper Beeches."

And so it goes. Trevor's bull-terrier expands on "The Gloria Scott," a welsh terrier describes the real events of "The Adventure of the Lion's Mane" and Professor Presbury's dog, Roy, reveals a number of lies involved in "The Adventure of the Creeping Man." The Cunningham's dog supplies some interesting details about "The Reigate Squires" and Breckinridge's Jack Russell Terrier adds color to "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle."

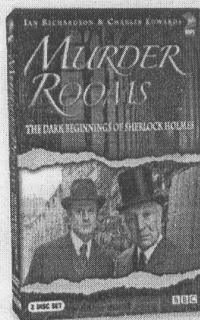
Watson's bull pup, mentioned in "A Study in Scarlet," relates his own sad tale and Mrs. Hudson's rescued stray from the same story gives his history. Toby, from "The Sign of Four," clarifies the events involved in tracking down Small and his companion and the dog of Armstrong's coachman, from "The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter," tells how Holmes dealt with threats. Pompey, from the same story, tells about the search for Godfrey Staunton and Lady Eva Brackenstall's dog lets us see the real brains behind events in "The Adventure of the Abbey Grange." Finally, Josiah Amberley's dog provides the complete explanation of "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman."

These tales are interesting and thought-provoking. The alternatives they present certainly cast doubts on events recorded in the Canon and bring Holmes' skills and credulity into question. A thoughtful book, for all its apparent simplicity.



8

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### A MURDER ROOMS: THE DARK BEGINNINGS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

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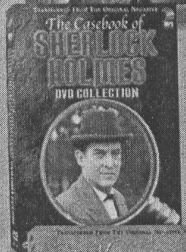
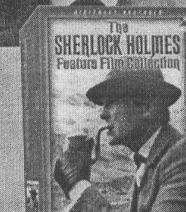
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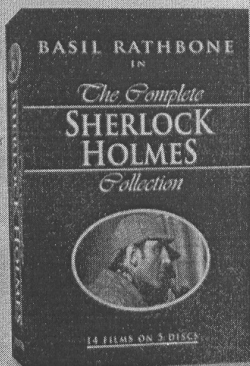
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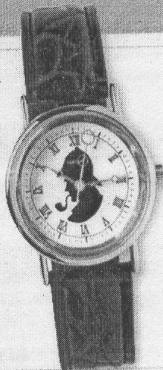


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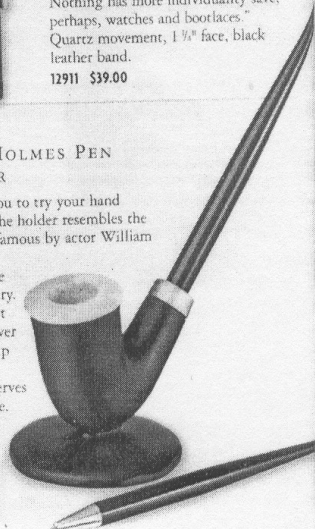


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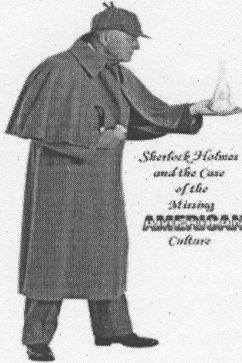
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Kenneth Frawley

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Mike Luckovich | Atlanta Journal-Constitution



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