



Special "How We Spent Our Year" Issue, 2007

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From the Papers on the Sundial

It's the end of the year. Time for resolutions, retributions and contributions. And it's time for those letters from friends and relatives who are so delighted to tell you everything they have done during the previous 12 months.

So, we wondered what some of the canonical characters might write about as they were putting pen to paper and selecting what to tell their friends and families about the happenings during the previous year.

So, we wish one and all a delightful, prosperous and safe new year. Hopefully a lot safer than some of the characters here.

December 15, 1895

Dear Mum and Pa and Sadie and Norbert and Peter,

It's been a good year, I suppose. Well, maybe not a good year, but an adequate year. Well, maybe not adequate, but at least not a bad one.

Scotland Yard is treating me well. I've solved a number of cases—some of them quite baffling I don't mind telling you. There was one that involved a hairbrush, three toothpicks and a pair of dice. I had to think really hard about those clues before I came to some quite good deductions. Well, I didn't really make the deductions myself. I mentioned it to a detective friend of mine and he had some ideas. Well, they weren't really ideas, they were more like suggestions. Well, not so much suggestions as solutions.

Then there was the murder of that flower shop girl over near the docks. The only clue was the handle of the knife and it had been wiped clean. But I managed to track the killer down anyway. Well, I myself didn't track him down, but I put the cuffs on him. Well, I didn't really put the cuffs on him, I just lead him out to the police cab.

Do you remember that theft of ten thousand pounds in August? Bloody hot month that was—sorry, Mum. It's the characters I've been round. None of them have any class. Anyway, it was my work that cracked the case wide open. Well, maybe not wide open, but at least kind of partly open. Well, it kind of set us back a little. But I'm still working on some leads. But they're good leads. Well, adequate leads. Well, they don't seem too bad.

I bumped into that detective friend of mine the other day and he called me a "bull dog." Not sure what he meant by that, but he shook my hand when he said it, so he must have meant it in a good way.

Got to go. My love to you all. Perhaps I can make it home for Christmas next year. But with all these cases and reports and such, I just couldn't make it this year. Have a plum pudding in my honor, will you?

G. Lestrade



December 20, 1897

Dear Friends and Family,

I must admit from the start that this has been quite a stellar year. I had set my sights on some very significant acquisitions and I more than exceeded my expectations.

I expected only the letter from Lady Tillendale, but when a photograph accompanied it, I was absolutely ecstatic. That alone allowed me to travel to Portugal and Spain. But that was hardly as exciting as my next foray. A nearly complete set of letters from the Duke of Tewksbury to some harlot in the East End paid for a new set of suits—one for every day of the month. And none of that wool nonsense—silk never goes out of fashion. And face it—it just feels so good.

A rather small recent investment has brought me some letters from Lady Eva Brackenwell. I haven't quite decided what to do with them. Perhaps next year when I need a vacation in Italy. I hear Rome is wonderful in the fall.

I have heard of a photograph of the King of Bohemia with a woman named Adson or Admer or something of the sort. Not only is she a commoner, she is American-born. Wouldn't that be quite the lucrative acquisition? If anyone has information on it I would be most appreciative.

Anyway, I hope next year is just as eventful. Sometimes I so pity you, the working class that has to make a living. Well, here's to more suits and vacations.

Your esteemed gentleman,
Chuck Milverton

December 12, 1888

Dear Everyone,

This has been quite a year, and I wish that I could spend the holidays with you, but circumstances have gotten the better of me.

First of all, I was able to sell a record number of hansom cabs this year. It seems that no one in London wishes to walk anymore—they all must ride. But who am I to complain? If their lack of exercise leads to my excess riches then so be it. A far cry from the poor brush salesman I was just a few years ago.

Wilson and I took several trips this year—in fact, we are travelling through Europe together right now as I write. We have not decided whether to head eastward or southward.

But most importantly, I have met a girl. She is vibrant and exciting and full of life. Sophy can be hot-tempered—she is Greek, you know—but I think I can tame her. She is travelling with us—do not worry, our compartment is very respectful, except that Wilson and I have to keep a close eye on her.

We were forced to leave London quickly, and I am sure that you will excuse my absence from this year's festivities. It could not be avoided—simply business.

I am losing my light here on the train, so I best end this missive. I hope to return soon, and perhaps Sophy and I will be married. I have heard that her family is quite wealthy, but that hardly interests me.

See you soon.

Harold



December 14, 1892

Dear Family,

Well, it has been quite a year indeed. My spirits have been lifted over the last few months, due in large part to father's indulgences. It has taken me this long to realize that while I lost a sister last year, he lost a stepdaughter. I know we have been estranged, but perhaps he just has difficulty in communicating his feelings. The poor dear was quite distraught—I see it now as I had never seen it before. But earlier this year, I suggested that he take up some hobbies, that perhaps that might help him. Inasmuch as I was delighted that he took my advice, I was somewhat chagrined to witness some of the pursuits to which he attached himself: fireplace poker bending (he says it is all the rage in South America); playing the recorder (he says he loves things with high notes); wild animal collecting (the baboon is understandable, I suppose, but the cheetah—not so much); and leasing the south lawn to a group of gypsies (he says it reminds him of his childhood—and I'm not about to ask).

I have tried my hand at sprucing up the place—some new rugs, a few slipcovers, some drapes and pillows. Anything to brighten up the rooms. I miss Julia terribly, but I have decided that I must get on with my life. She was such a dear, and I shan't ever forget her. But I can't mourn forever.

I must bring these reflections to a close as I must prepare myself for a soiree in honor of New Year's being given by a neighbor. I understand that there will be many eligible bachelors there, and perhaps I can catch someone's eye. Julia used to tell me that she thought me prettier than her. We shall see, I suppose.

Our best to everyone.

Helen

December 5, 1889

Dear Family and Friends,

It has been an unusual year, I will grant you that. I have tried to be positive about things, but I can tell you that it is downright difficult to do so at times.

The year started off quite well, business being more than brisk. I don't mind telling you that while I may have difficulties, finances are not among them. When you're involved in sales the way I am, you have to be positive and stay positive. I give the customer what he needs—whether it's a pencil, a good quote or a compliment that will make him feel good all the way to his evening supper. I like to think of myself as someone who does well by doing well.

Well, then there was a little altercation with the police. It was not my fault, mind you. I was just conducting my business as usual. But then the missus interfered with my salesmanship—much to my consternation. The constabulary was hardly needed, but there was not much I could do about it.

So I spent a few days in jail and when it was all over everyone realized it was all just a tremendous misunderstanding. The missus and I had a long talk—and I do mean a long talk—but I think she realizes that if she is to continue to live in the manner in which she has become accustomed, she needs to allow me to conduct my business as I see fit.

I am wondering, though, if I should bring the children into the business. But that, my friends, will have to await for another year.

I wish you joy and happiness as we enter the last year of the decade. May we get what we always want, and may we want for nothing.

Adieu, adieu, it is all adieu,

Neville



December 19, 1895

Dear One and All,

What a year it has been. So much has happened, I hardly know where to begin. So, let me start at the first of the year.

In January, F&M—no sense writing that out all the time, eh?—acquired some new accounts on the continent. Those Luxemburgers—how they love their Earl Gray. We think that Green Tea is soon going to be all the rage, and we've obtained exclusive rights to distribute said from the finest Chinese companies.

Jacky turned 15 this summer—and he doesn't like to be called Jacky. Jack, he insists, or sometimes Jackson—I'm not sure why. He continues to display remarkable mental abilities: I have him add columns of numbers from the F&M ledgers and he does so with unerring accuracy. He still has trouble getting around, but we encourage his intellectual development as a way to make up for it. That's where the money is, I tell him all the time. Could you imagine a common athlete making the sums of money that a banker or a solicitor could make? Even though I played more than my share of rugby tournaments, such a thought is quite preposterous.

Sadly our dog Carlo has suffered terribly, going lame in the late fall. He used to so enjoy playing fetch, but now he must console himself with sitting by my feet in the evening. I give him plenty of attention and he seems to like that.

The missus continues to be both a blessing and—well, sometimes a challenge. As I write this, she is heavy with child, and we expect the baby any day now. I was hoping for a boy to carry on the family name, but now I just wish the creature to be healthy. Sometimes I think the missus will pop she has become so large. Jack is as excited about the event as the rest of us, and I am very glad about that as we have been concerned about his reaction to his new step-mother. His trepidation is certainly understandable, and we have had numerous discussions with him. He's a good lad, and I think the baby will turn him around tremendously.

Well, here's to a wonderful upcoming new year. If 1896 is as eventful as this year has been, then it will be quite a year indeed.

Our love to all of you.

“Big Bob”

December 28, 1902

Dear All,

I am sure that this communiqué surprises you—well, it surprises me as well. I am overcome with energy—a surplus of vibrancy that I did not know existed. I am taking some supplements and they have worked wonders—apart from some posture problems, I feel as if I have regressed in age. I am able to teach classes, stay up half the night reading—and still have time for the ladies, if you catch my cologne. I hope I am not presuming on anyone's sensibilities, but this has been the most remarkable experience of my life.

I know Edith has expressed some reservations, but I have sat her down and explained that her father is entitled to certain things. She seems to have come to an understanding, and while she is still concerned, I have assured her—and my other friends—that there is no harm in a little fun.

And speaking of which, I must cut this short as I have promised attendance at a party this evening. Alice will be there—never has there been a creature as lovely as tender young Alice. I must away. If you experience next year only half of what I have this year, then it will be a great year indeed.

Your friend in modern chemistry,

Press



December 12, 1890

Dear Minions,

I am delighted to report that our fourth quarter earnings are up 23%—and it's all due to your efforts. You are the ones who make this entire enterprise worthwhile. Why, I daresay that the networks nearly hum due to your efforts.

We have made great inroads in Blackmail and Forgeries. The Robbery Division needs some tweaking, however, and I expect every man to pull his weight. If you cannot handle what is expected, then you might as well find another nefarious organization to join as I'll have no slackers here.

I do not mean to prattle so, but it is important that everyone understands the necessity of our undertakings.

I feel that we stand on the verge of greatness. As we enter a new decade—the last decade of this century, mind you—we are destined for such pre-eminence that it is simply mind-boggling. With my vision and your fortitude we will craft an empire second only to what Napoleon had scarcely begun. There are one or two minor problems to overcome, but they can be easily taken care of. And when London is safely in our grip, the rest of Europe cannot be far behind.

So, here's to a great new year and great new opportunities. Drink with me the draught of such power that the world has rarely seen. Who is there to stop us?

Yours in Infamy,

Professor M

December 30, 1901

Dear Herr Father,

I wish that I could write you to say that this has been a stellar year, but it has not. My beloved wife has passed away. We were vacationing near Prague when it happened. I was heartbroken—I was sick for months. She was so young, so beautiful. And then I was put on trial—they actually thought I had something to do with her death. It was an accident—they thought I had pushed her, said that witnesses saw it happen. Well, the jury thought otherwise and I was freed.

Alone, I escaped Europe. I came to England, bought a beautiful house near Kingston. It is very spacious, but I find myself wanting companionship. The women here in England are very beautiful, but the cold climate tends to make them somewhat aloof. Still, I have attended more than my share of soirees. And, yet, I find something missing.

You will be happy to know that I have added to my collection of Chinese pottery. Several vases and some unusual saucers have been my most recent acquisitions. It is the only thing that brings me joy these days.

I have been giving considerable thought recently to traveling again. Someplace warm perhaps. I have always fancied a sea voyage of some type—perhaps that is what I need. That is a splendid idea.

I close here, my dear father. I hope you are well. I understand you better, now being a widower as you have been these many years. I hope you are not as lonely as I have been.

Your son,

Ad

The Pleasant Places of Florida

founded in 1972

by Leslie Marshall, B.S.I. (dec.)

For the Record:

THE LAST COURT OF APPEALS

David McCallister, Master of the House,

(Master of Ceremonies at most gatherings, host of the annual Wessex Cup)

Wanda & Jeff Dow, The Papers on the Sundial,

(Communications and Bookkeeping)

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