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Communication No. 299

The Pleasant Places of Florida



The Siam Question

Hard Cover **Publisher:** Camden House Publishing
Year: 1999 **Author:** Timothy Francis Shiel

This is a long, complex and well-written book that tells part of the story of 'The Great Hiatus,' the three years Holmes spent out of England following the death of Professor Moriarty at the Reichenbach Falls. It is written in two parts. The first part covers Holmes' travels from Europe to Tibet and then into Central Asia. The second tells of his later travels into Siam, at Mycroft's behest. Woven among these tales is a detailed accounting of what happened after the arrest of Colonel Moran as told in *The Empty House*.

This is surely an adventure story, but the author somehow manages to convince the reader that this is really what happened to Holmes during these years. The tale is long (600+ pages) and it seems to go on forever, however the action and events occur in plausible fashion. Many old friends/enemies are encountered and a number of mysteries are solved, but this is NOT an anthology of Sherlockian mysteries. This is an epic tale, played out on a world stage with countries, interests, heroes and villains competing with all available weapons.

Along the way, the author offers several sets of scholarly insights that are new, at least to this reader. The feelings and actions of Sherlock with regard to the Moriarty gang have always been somewhat open to question. Whether Holmes was obsessed or merely thorough has been discussed many times. This book provides some answers about that matter. The character and viewpoint of Mycroft have been examined many times, but this book includes new insights into the working of his mind. The events that led to the escape of Moriarty's henchmen also come under examination and some reasonable suggestions are offered here.

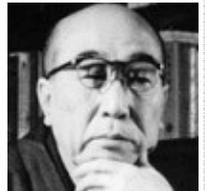
There is a year-long gap in the middle of this narrative that includes Holmes's activities in Egypt and the Sudan. A recounting of these events is promised later (in *The Egypt Question*). The second part of this book begins with Holmes' arrival in Siam. The narrative switches time and viewpoint quite frequently. The main narrative is by Dr. Watson and covers the time from the end of *The Empty House* until the whole series of events is resolved a few days later. In between we have journal extracts that cover the events cited as Holmes's travels.

This book is full of interesting characters, events and insights and it is the fruit of a great deal of thought and research. It is hard to fault the narrative on Canonical grounds, as it agrees carefully with Holmes's account as given in *The Empty House*. The viewpoint given throughout the 'journals' disagrees with that usual to Dr. Watson, but those Journals were kept by a different individual, a neat solution to a common pastiche problem.

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, April, 2010.

YOU SAY SHERLOCK, I SAY AKECHI

Okay, I admit it. I'm rapidly becoming an anime junkie. And the Japanese are Sherlockian junkies. So it all fits in. Having seen several obvious references to the Master, I decided to try to track back just where it all started and I got as far back as Kogoro Akechi (明智小五郎 *Akechi Kogorō*). Akechi is a fictional character and the creation of Japanese mystery writer Edogawa Rampo. He first appeared in the story *The D Slope Murder Case* in 1925 and continued to appear in stories for a quarter of a century. He is the first recurring detective in Japanese fiction and is clearly inspired by Holmes. This is because Edogawa Rampo (real name: Tarō Hirai), the father of the Japanese detective story, was a great admirer of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Say Edogawa Rampo with a Japanese accent and you come close to Edgar Allan Poe, in honor of whom he selected his pseudonym. Okay, so is it on Lupin or Holmes that Akechi is modeled? Good question.



Like Holmes, Akechi is a brilliant but eccentric detective who consults with the police on especially difficult cases. He is a master of disguise, an expert at judo and a genius who solves seemingly impossible cases. Also like Holmes, Akechi makes use of a group of young boys, known as the Boy Detective Club, to gather information. (Cont. on page 2) (Cont. from page 1) Rather than a pipe, he smokes Egyptian cigarettes when he is thinking about a case. He is described as a tall, handsome man with heavy eyebrows, a man who dresses well. Married (wife: Fumiyo), he has an adopted son, Yoshio Kobayashi, who (cont. on page 2)



(cont. from page 1) is the leader of the Boy Detectives Club. Kobayashi, an expert in disguise like his old man, often plays an important part in solving cases. He is especially adept at posing as a young woman. Aside from these relationships little is known of the detective's personal life, which always takes a back seat to the mystery in his adventures.

Detective Akechi's Moriarty is the infamous Kaijin Nijū Mensō (*Fiend with Twenty Faces*), who has an infallible gift for disguise himself. The Fiend is a non-violent criminal who steals to demonstrate his brilliance rather than out of need for money. As such, he and Akechi have a mutual respect.

Although some of the stories take place in the countryside, most are based mainly in the detective's home city of Tokyo. Unlike Holmes, the stories often feature supernatural and erotic overtones, a common thread in all of Rampo's fiction.

Akechi has become such a fixture in Japanese pop-culture that there have been a number of movies made based on his adventures, some of which pit him against other fictional characters such as Arsène Lupin. References to him are common in Japanese fiction. He is probably best known in the west through the 1994 movie, *The Mystery of Rampo*.

Getting back to Lupin, Akechi has been featured as a character in the anime series Lupin III. Another notable movie featuring Akechi is the 1968 film *Black Lizard* (aka *Kurotokage*), adapted from Rampo's novel by noted author Yukio Mishima. The story pits the detective against a female mastermind, known as the Black Lizard, who is played by transvestite actor Akihiro Maruyama. The film is considered high camp with its bizarre conventions and over-the-top performances but has a loyal following among fans and critics alike.

Modern references to him can also be found in Japan's popular and extremely long running television anime series, *Detective Conan*, known in the U.S. as *Case Closed*. One of the characters, Detective Richard Moore (Kogoro Mouri in the Japanese version) is a persistent, courageous, highly flawed and lecherous private detective - almost a parody of Kogoro Akechi. He has his cases



solved for him by the youthful main character, Conan Edogawa.

Further Akechi references can be seen in the TV series' inclusion of a non-violent antagonist, the Phantom Thief (Kaitou Kid), a brilliant disguise-master thief who steals high profile items for recognition. The name of young Conan's elementary school detective club is the "Junior Detective League" ("Detective Boys" in the Japanese version).

There are also references to both Akechi and the Black Lizard in the *Sakura Taisen* series of video games and anime, a musical, *Benitokage* (*Crimson Lizard*) featuring a criminal femme fatale and a handsome young detective named Akechi Kojiro, and the manga and anime *Nijū Mensō no Musume* (*Daughter of Twenty Faces*), which focuses heavily on Akechi's arch-rival. Akechi himself is featured as well, but as a much more minor character. In another popular detective manga series, *Kindaichi Case Files*, Akechi is the name of Police Superintendent Kengo.

There are probably many more references; it's interesting to note that what we may perceive as a Sherlockian reference from Japan is actually an Akechi reference. But then, since he was based on Holmes, perhaps we are correct in our assumptions all along.

Wanda Dow

SHERLOCK HOLMES, MASTER OF ESPIONAGE

By Carl Heifetz (Edited by W. Dow)

Why was Sherlock Holmes so reticent to reveal his complete lineage, even to his long term confidential comrade John H. Watson, M.D? Was he protecting relatives from some anticipated danger? Why did Mr. Holmes never allow records of his participation in the successful pursuit of justice to ever appear in the newspapers? Why did he not permit Dr. Watson to reveal the real location of his practice, rather than giving one which had never existed? Why did he make sure that he was never photographed, and why are there so many different illustrations of his visage, so that we may never know what he really looked like? Why, indeed, did he refuse to accept the offer of knighthood? Is this the way of a Private Consulting Detective who has nothing to hide and who is seeking commercial success? It is true that a Victorian gentleman and professional man would never countenance advertising in newspapers or handing out leaflets, as is the accepted practice among some professionals of today, but to hide his true identity and place of business is surely beyond the pale. He could, at least, have eventually installed a telephone and been listed in the directory, but no such record exists.

And what about his mysterious brother Mycroft? He audited the books in some of the government departments, but in actuality, in Sherlock's words, Mycroft occasionally was the British government.

(cont. on page 3)



(cont. from page 2) It seemed logical to me that Mr. Holmes' main business was that of a super secret agent for the British government, and that Mycroft, his older brother, was the first and original director of the very first and very, very underground British secret service. Their machinations in this regard were so well covered-up that only Her Majesty the Queen, her Prime Minister, and the Foreign Office were privy to these activities. His detective practice was an excellent cover for his more underground activities. As a detective he could perform most of the functions of a spy without revealing the true nature of his quarry. He could go anywhere day or night, follow people and keep track of their comings and goings, delve into classified official documents, and pursue many other practices which are common to both of these careers. Let us first explore some of the evidence available in the Canon.

In only four published accounts did Mr. Holmes perform services for the British Government. In three of his earlier cases, Mr. Holmes admitted that he provided services to her majesty's government. Although they required some knowledge of foreign agents and their activities, they were, as far as has been revealed, more in the line of his publicly acknowledged profession and revolved around the retrieval of highly important stolen documents (*The Bruce-Partington Plans*, *The Naval Treaty*, and *The Second Stain*). In only one case, *His Last Bow*, was Mr. Holmes finally able to reveal his true calling, divest himself of the mantle of detective and tell the public how, in this particular instance, he served his government in the capacity of an undercover secret agent.

It is also acknowledged that, during the Great Hiatus, Mr. Holmes traveled vast distances to far off exotic locations, at great risk to life and limb, to provide services to the British government. Acting undercover as the Norwegian explorer Sigerson, he *paid a short but interesting visit to the Khalifa at Khartoum, the results of which I have communicated to the Foreign Office.*

The post-canonical apocrypha is well marked with suggestions which also lead to the same conclusions. For example, in his stirring account, *Sherlock Holmes My Life and Crimes*, Mr. Michael Hardwick proposed an interesting theory of the activities that took place during these famous travels. He suggested that the great detective and his foremost adversary Professor Moriarty jointly penetrated the secret German electromagnetic wave research facility. Although this is a work of fiction, the story does help lend credence to the idea that espionage was Mr. Holmes' main occupation during his career. Huret, the boulevard assassin and French anarchist, fell prey to the activities of Mr. Sherlock Holmes, acting in his capacity as a foreign agent in a book by Derek Hinrich in *France in the Blood*. In *Son of Holmes* the admirable Mr. John T. Lescoart proposed the interesting concept that Mycroft Holmes *ran the British Government single-handedly, especially during World War I*. As head of the Secret Service, among other things, he is known as 'M', a title which I'm sure is familiar to all of you. His initials became the title for the head of British Intelligence. I am not at all convinced that the elder Holmes sibling actually ran the

CALENDAR SHERLOCKIANA

June 24 - 27 *Sherlock Holmes The Man and His Worlds* The Baker Street Breakfast Club and Bennington College, Vermont. www.bakerstreetbreakfastclub.com

13-14 October *The Friends of Arthur Conan Doyle Collection Symposium* in Toronto.

14-17 October *Buchercon XLI*, San Francisco, CA. www.bcon2010.com

13? November *The 35th Annual Fall Gathering The Pleasant Places of Florida*. If we can get a definite 16 people at \$15 each, we could have a caboose car for a 90 minute round trip train ride in Parrish, FL. (25 miles north of Sarasota, 35 miles south of Tampa off I-75). Please contact Wanda Dow IMMEDIATELY if you would be interested. Lunch included. BYOB.

British Government. If he had, the British would have been much better prepared to fight off the German onslaught during that horrendous encounter. However, the supposition that Mycroft Holmes was the head of the original British Intelligence Service is very attractive. No doubt this heavy responsibility dates back before the time of *The Greek Interpreter*. This would place these events as far back as 1888 (*The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*).

Even the popular motion picture series featuring Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce seemed to pursue the right path. Although commencing with a Hollywoodized version of the authentic Doylean drama *Hound of the Baskervilles*, they quickly became a variety of adventures featuring Mr. Holmes, with the assistance of a bumbling Watson, serving as espionage agents against the Nazi cause. Did the authors of these World War II films have secret information which contained a germ of truth about Mr. Holmes' real vocation? Would a search of studio records turn-up authentic information about this, or has this data also been relegated to carbon dioxide, water and ash as have all other traces of our hero?

In Michael Kurlan's *The Spymaster's Handbook*, if one were to design a secret agent, Sherlock Holmes would serve as the foremost example in almost every respect. Mr. Holmes would get high marks for his brilliant intelligence and the fact that he is fluent in many languages. Other outstanding attributes would include: being a leader and not a follower, having a strong but unconventional sense of morality based on his own readings and beliefs, and his ability to keep a secret if required. His Olympic character physical condition and the fact that he enjoys individual sports rather than team sports is an important feature, along with being proficient in martial arts (baritsu), boxing, swordsmanship, and single sticks. There is also evidence that he enjoys horseback riding, golf, swimming, bicycling, and fishing. His physical strength is heroic; he was even able to bend a fireplace poker back to its original shape, a much more difficult task than that of bending it out of shape in the first place (*The Speckled Band*). (Cont. on page 4)



(Cont. from page 3) His interest in practice shooting and skill with the revolver is attested to by his adorning the wall of the Baker Street sitting room with a patriotic V. R. done in bullet-pocks (*The Musgrave Ritual*). Other attributes which mark him as an excellent secret agent? He reads many newspapers every day (but we do not know if he reads any magazines other than his biographer's stories in *Strand*); he likes to regularly go to such entertainments as the opera, plays, and concerts; he has visited many places more than 100 miles from home (*The Empty House*); he has a vast knowledge of history (especially criminal), poisons, weapons (including air rifles), cartology, science, trigonometry, linguistics, exploration, foreign secret agents and their organizations, ciphers and decoding. He is particularly adept at following people undetected. "I followed you." "I saw no one." "That is what you may expect to see when I follow you." (*The Devil's Foot*) Mr. Holmes also had skill as a second story man, master safe cracker, and burglar, he was a master of disguises, acting skills, and had an uncanny ability to mix with all levels of British society on an equal footing.

There is only one characteristic of Holmes that will prevent his scoring a perfect grade in the quiz: He can not possibly be able to claim an average appearance. Any reading of the Canon will support this: tall, thin, penetrating eyes, hawk like nose, dominating presence. This incomplete characterization will help explain his obvious desire to never be photographed or appear as a drawing in the popular press, and why illustrations of his image have been made to vary so considerably over the years. Once viewed, he will never be forgotten.

Of more than 1000 recorded cases, only sixty have been allowed to be brought to the public's attention. His true address never been revealed to the public. He left London to an even more secret location? (*The Second Stain*). He never allowed accounts of his adventures to appear in the newspapers (preferring instead to allow the official police to take credit for his successes), and so many different versions of his appearance have been published, that it prevents his true physiognomy from being recognized. Is this the attitude of someone who is trying to establish a going business enterprise? No. All of these subterfuges were necessary to enable him to follow his true secret profession as the world's first and most pre-eminent master spy. Would it not be exciting to know the true nature of his enterprises during the time of his false retirement, how he worked endlessly and tirelessly on behalf of the Crown, freedom, and the British way?

In my opinion, only a very loyal and patriotic person would take such a great personal risk that this occupation entails. It is sad indeed that he was not even able to accept the richly deserved knighthood offered by his grateful sovereign as a reward for his services to the state. This public announcement would have blown his cover. Another reason for avoiding the spotlight and remaining hidden was the ever increasing effort on behalf of his adversaries to eliminate him from the secret struggle as world conflict became more inevitable. The bravery of

Mr. Holmes has never been in doubt. But, a dead hero is of no value to the cause.

Full article Published in *The Whitechapel Gazette Issue No. 4, Mid-1994; p21-8; The Hounds Collection Vol. 3, 1998, p40-5; Baker Street West 1 Vol. 13, No. 3, Winter 2007, p 12-18; Coppola, Joseph A. Ed.), ...Occasionally the British Government, August 2000, The Mycroft Holmes Society Press, Fayetteville, NY, p109-19. Hand-out at 35th Annual Spring Gathering of the Pleasant Places of Florida, May 15, 2010.*

THE 35TH ANNUAL SPRING GATHERING OF THE PLEASANT PLACES OF FLORIDA

We had a pleasant gathering of people this time at the Rose & Crown, new and old. Attending were David McCallister, Wanda & Jeff Dow, Carl Heifetz, Mike Bryan, David Stoner, Charles & Marilyn Amick, Tom Takach, Susan & George Edwards, Charles & Lynn Wells, Robert Casten, Mark Levitt & two guests.

Winner of the Watson quiz was Dave Stoner. Winners of the Mycroft quiz were Tom Takach (1st), Mark Levitt (2nd) and Charles Amick (3rd).

Toasts were assigned at the meeting and guests had to come up with something off the cuff. Some were spoken, few were written down, so I can only offer the following:

My fiancé a spy? A fact I vehemently refute!

The accusations of Cadogan's character, my heart did rend.

I'm glad that Mr. Holmes was so very astute.

He seems a man on whom you could always depend.

Cad's name is cleared. As to my future? I am mute.

My heart, though broken, is now on the mend.

Hey. That Dr. Watson is kind of cute!

To Violet Westbury

Wanda Dow

There once was a man named Hugo
Who had to make a living.... you know
He suborned Col. Walter
The balance of power to alter
So the navies of Europe said, "Hugo? You go!"
To Hugo Oberstein.

David McCallister

He rarely fails to fail
Chasing down the wrong trail
But put on the spot
He's the best of a poor lot
He'll still get credit for filling the jails.
I give you, best trade

Jeffery Dow

*A toast today to an unfortunate blight
A junior clerk with a future quite bright
He was engaged to a loving girl
But he was pushed off this mortal world.
He trailed the stolen Bruce-Partington Plans
But he was killed by that evil man
The name of the despicable swine
We all know him to be Hugo Oberstein.
Since his patriotism met a really hard test
Here's to the late Arthur Cadogan West.*

Chuck Amick

ARTICLES ON SUBMARINES WILL APPEAR IN THE NEXT ISSUE.



HE'S EVERYWHERE...*Sherlock Holmes 2* is being fast tracked for a June start date. Rather than Michael Robert Johnson, Anthony Peckham and Simon Kinberg being brought back to pen the sequel, Warner Bros. commissioned writers Kieran and Michele Mulroney (*Paper Man*) back in September. Hopefully, new writers will keep the franchise fresh without veering away from what made this *Holmes* great. Speaking of which...Brad Pitt as Moriarty? Really? According to *Popeater.com* (Really. I don't make these things up.) Pitt and Ritchie worked together on 2000's *Snatch*, in which Pitt played a mumbling, can't-understand-a-word-he-says Irish gypsy fighter. He definitely wasn't a 'pretty boy' in it, and hopefully that's exactly what Ritchie can pull out of him again. We shall see ...

Sherlock Holmes Awards

Like it or not, the Downey Holmes film is packing in the awards. Nominated for the 2010 Visual Effects Society Awards for Outstanding Compositing in A Feature Motion Picture and Winner of the Outstanding Visual Effects in a Feature Motion Picture; Nominated for the 2010 Motion Picture Sound Editors, USA Best Sound Editing—Music in a Feature Film; Winner of the 2010 Irish Film & Television Awards for Best International Actor (Robert Downey Jr.); Winner 2010 Golden Globe (USA), Best Performance by an Actor in a Motion Picture Musical or Comedy (Downey); Nominated Empire Awards, (UK) Best Actor (Downey), Winner Best Thriller; Nominated Costumer Designers Guild Awards, Excellence in Costume Design for Film—Period (Jenny Beavan); Nominated Broadcast Critics Association Awards, Critics Choice Award, Best Score (Hans Zimmer); Winner Art Directors Guild, Excellence in Production Design, Period Films; Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy & Horror Films (USA), Nominated for Saturn Award, Best Music, Best Production Design, Best Support Actor (Jude Law), Best Supporting Actress (Rachel McAdams), Best Director, Best Costume, Best Actor, Best Action/Adventure/Thriller Film; Academy Awards (USA) Nominated Best Achievement in Art Direction, Best Achievement in Music written for Motion Pictures Original Score.

BRUCE-PARTINGTON: WATSON LEVEL

1. In what year did this adventure take place?
2. Who sends Holmes a telegram to start the adventure?
3. When did Watson learn about this person?
4. Where did Cadogan West work?
5. According to the newspapers, who saw Cadogan West last?
6. Which Scotland Yard inspector was assigned to the case?
7. How many plans were found on Cadogan West's body?
8. Who killed Cadogan West?
9. How did Holmes pick out Oberstein from Mycroft's list of spies/agents?
10. How much did Oberstein offer for the plans?
11. What was the motive(s) for the theft?
12. What did the agent intend to do with the plans?

13. What was Sir James Walter's job?
14. What was Sidney Johnson's job?
15. Who was Admiral Sinclair?
16. Why couldn't Cadogan West's body not have been dropped on the carriage?
17. What crime did Holesms confess to?
18. Where did Holmes dine Thursday evening? Friday morning?
19. Where were the plans found?
20. What does Watson supposed was Holmes' reward in this adventure?

BRUCE PARTINGTON: MYCROFT LEVEL

1. What 3 news items were in the day's papers, which were of no interest to Holmes?
 2. How many men had good reason to take Holmes' life?
 3. What is Mycroft's job and salary?
 4. What four subjects are given as an example of Mycroft's abilities to synthesize?
 5. Where was Cadogan West's body found?
 6. What subject was occupying Mycroft at the time?
 7. What was the apparent plans of Cadogan West for the evening?
 8. Was it possible to construct a Bruce-Partington sub from the plans found in Cadogan West's pocket? If not, what was needed?
 9. How did Cadogan West die?
 10. How was Cadogan West's identity discovered?
 11. How did Sir James Walter die?
 12. Who were the only three men worth considering as suspects?
 13. Which underground stations did Holmes visit in his investigation?
 14. Who was Holmes expecting when at Overstein's?
 15. Who was Holmes expecting at Charing Cross Hotel?
 16. How much did Oberstein pay for the plans and how much extra was demanded?
 17. A "hobby" of Holmes's is mentioned three times. What is it? What project was he engaged upon?
 18. In what newspaper did Oberstein advertise? What name did he use?
 19. At what Parisian Hotel does Oberstein receive mail?
 20. In what year did Hugo Oberstein get out of prison?
1. 1895. 2. Mycroft. 3. In *The Greek Interpreter*. 4. Woolwich Arsenal. 5. His fiancé, Violet Westbury. 6. Lestrade. 7. Seven. 8. Hugo Oberstein. 9. His residence overlooked the tracks. 10. £5000. 11. To recover losses on the stock exchange. 12. Auction them off. 13. Head of the Submarine Division. 14. Senior Clerk. 15. He verified Walter's alibi. 16. They had rounded tops and it would have rolled off immediately. 17. Burglary. 18. Goldini's & 221B 19. In Oberstein's trunk. 20. An emerald tie pin.
1. Revolution, a possible war & impending change of government. 2. 50. 3. He was the British Government. He made £450 a year as an auditor. 4. The tidest & most orderly brain, the greatest capacity for storing facts, the central exchange, the clearing house, omniscience. 5. Just outside Aldgate Station on the Underground system. 6. Siam. 7. Attending the Woolwich Theater with his fiancé. 8. No. Another page with plans for a valve design. 9. His head was badly crushed. 10. From the check-book from the Woolwich branch of the Capital & Counties Bank found on his body. 11. Unknown. 12. Oberstein, Mayer & LaRoithiere 13. Aldgate, London Bridge, Woolwich, Gloucester Park and possibly Charing Cross. 14. It is unclear. 15. Oberstein. 16. £5000, £500. 17. The music of the Middle Ages. 18. The Daily Telegraph. 19. Hotel du Louvre. 20. 1910, if he had lived.

The Pleasant Places of Florida

(founded in 1972)

Rev. Leslie Marshall, B.S.I. 1972-1977
Dr. Benton Wood, B.S.I. 1977 - 1988
Bill Ward, B.S.I. 1988 - 1999
Dr. Benton Wood, B. S.I. 1999 -1996
The Last Court of Appeals 1997 - present

For the Record:

THE LAST COURT OF APPEALS

David McCallister, Master of the House,
most gatherings, host of the annual Wessex Cup)

Carl Heifetz, Representative (both with the Servants and with the Tradespeople),
(Correspondent)

Wanda & Jeff Dow, The Papers on the Sundial,
(Communications and Bookkeeping)

(Master of Ceremonies at

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