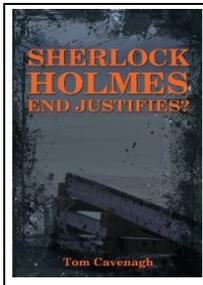




2010

# Communication No. 301

The Pleasant Places of Florida



## Sherlock Holmes: End Justifies?

Type of material: Trade Paperback Publisher: IUniverse, Bloomington, IN Year: 04/2010 Author: Tom Cavenagh

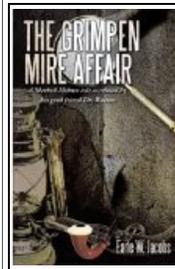
This is a short novel and is the third in a series of Sherlockian titles released by the author. I have been aware of the other books for some time but have not been able to find copies. I shall now pursue those earlier novels with some diligence. This book starts off with a visit to Holmes and Watson by a Welsh police officer who charms them both and brings an odd request. From that point on, the plot rapidly runs as clear as a peat bog.

Holmes becomes obsessed with an apparent suicide in a small village in Wales. He and Watson travel there and he manages to deduce that it was murder, to identify the murderer and to describe the details of the crime. In addition, he becomes increasingly aware that there is no evidence acceptable to a jury that can be produced for the prosecutor. The plot becomes enmeshed in the details of British jurisprudence and Holmes and Watson argue the philosophy of Law, Justice and the limits placed on all these by Society's norms.

The problem with the book is that it is a fascinating exercise in levels of fakery. By the time the murder occurs, the reader knows the murderer's identity, but cannot describe the method used. Once the method is explained by Holmes, the lack of jury proof becomes paramount. When the planning and execution of the act are exposed, the possibility of a conviction becomes almost nonexistent.

The solution arrived at by Holmes is exquisite, unexpected and most effective. The author, in an epilog, invites comment, discussion, disagreement, approbation or out-guessing. It is a neat problem as presented in the book and Holmes' solution is very difficult to argue with. I have only read 6,000 or so Sherlockian mysteries, so I cannot attest to familiarity with ALL that have been written, but this is the most baffling I can recall. It is further helped by good editing and some familiarity with British Law, slang and history, some things often missing in Sherlockian books by American authors.

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



## The Grimpen Mire Affair

Type of material: Trade Paperback Publisher: Author House. Year: July, 2010 Author: Earle W. Jacobs

This is a first-effort short novel by this author. It offers an interesting plot with a generous sprinkling of items from the author's past to 'leaven' the dough. It includes a reasonable amount of action, detection and personalities as well as a bit of romance. Most unfortunately, it needs a thorough 'cleaning' by a competent editor. The author shares my love of involved prose and long words, which have prevented me from writing all but the most basic Sherlockian narratives. The Canon almost universally displays tight, sharp, action-oriented prose with a plethora of action words and vivid images. Neither this author nor I have that skill, which is a learned one.

In addition to curbing the author's enthusiasm for purple prose, a good editor would catch details of usage, spelling and tense that plague this story, no matter how interesting it may be. I found the book interesting but distracting in details that were in error. The characters were also attractive, but needed a bit more differentiation and revealing narrative. In short, the book could have been longer with shorter sentences.

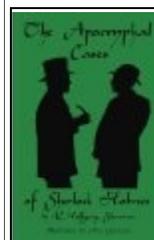
I do not wish to discourage further efforts by this author, but rather to encourage him to find a better editor who will restrain his ebullience and correct his English.

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

## The Apocryphal Cases of Sherlock Holmes

Type of material: Trade Paperback book. Publisher: Xlibris Corporation Year: 2010 Author: R. Wolfgang Schramm

This book is an anthology, consisting of two short novellas and one short story. The author is a retired professor of Physics and lecturer on photography and is, thus, well-qualified to discuss the details of the processes offered as explanations for the events covered in this book. It is a real pleasure to read Sherlockian tales based on scientific fact rather than mere conjecture. Of course due to Dr. Watson's scientific limits, there are a number of less than satisfactory explanations advanced for events and results within the Canon as well as in more recent Sherlockian efforts.



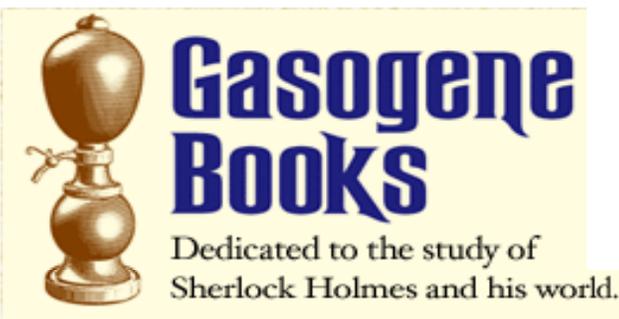
The first tale, a short novella, covers a Sherlockian examina- (cont. on page 2)



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(cont. from page 1) tion of the Shroud of Turin at the request of Her Majesty, expressed through The Archbishop of Canterbury. The explanation advanced for the characteristics of the Shroud is absolutely the best I have seen, anywhere. The mechanics of the matter, along with the inferred steps in the discovery process are masterful and most characteristic of the situation in which the Shroud was created. I hesitate to say any more, lest I spoil the surprise readers will surely enjoy in the tale.

The second tale, a short story, covers a vacation trip by Watson that results in photographs by him of weird events on Loch Ness. The explanation offered is reasonable, if improbable, and the tale is not well-crafted. It lacks polish when compared to the first tale and I expect that the author spent most of his effort creating local dialect rather than concentrating on events and structure.

The final novella is an investigation of the so-called 'Tunguska Event,' an explosion that occurred in a remote area of Siberia in June, 1908. The tale is well written and the explanation is nominally reasonable. I have serious problems with resolving the magnitude differences between the Event and the proposed explanation, but then, I am a mathematician by trade and numbers are an obsession for me.

Taken as a group, these are a fine first effort by an academic dipping into the world of detective fiction. The writing is mostly well-done and the characterizations are believable. The scientific explanations are rock-solid in theory, with only a few problems in detail. This contrasts sharply with other writings in the genre. Unlike many recent Sherlockian publications, this one also seems to have met with a competent editor, so that slang, personages and references all appear relatively appropriate My main reservation is the abbreviated nature of the book and a wish that the author had polished

**CALENDAR SHERLOCKIANA**

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

**14-17 October** *Buchercon XLI*, San Francisco, CA. [www.bcon2010.com](http://www.bcon2010.com)

**17 November** *The 35h Annual Fall Gathering* The Pleasant Places of Florida. Lunch 11:30 TBA. After lunch, prepare to be entertained by the St Petersburg Little Theater's *Hound of the Baskervilles*. Play tickets at the door are \$22. Purchase ahead of time from Wanda Dow for our \$17 group rate. I have a limited number reserved together. As the date draws near, we may not be able to sit together or even get tickets! Send your order to Wanda Dow,



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