



2011

Communication No. 307

The Pleasant Places of Florida



Trial and Error: A Mystery of Selina Jones

Softcover book, Jacquelyn Applegaten Publisher, 2010

By Jacquelyn Applegate

This book introduces a remarkable, not-so-young Lady Selina Jones who has a penchant for solving mysteries and a gift for planning events and understanding the Society around her. In many ways, she is another Sherlock Holmes, but there are also a number of differences. Holmes notices and even seeks out details. Selina notices detail, but attempts to create a framework of understanding around events. Sherlock reasons from point to point but Selina attempts to place events within a landscape of observed and reasoned structure.

The remarkable characters and events included here are overshadowed by the very poor editing performed on the manuscript. It reads as if it were dictated to a robot with an extensive vocabulary but no understanding of English prose. All of the words are spelled properly but, in many cases, the words are homonyms of those intended. A character may be 'rite' but is described as 'rite' or 'write' and never as 'correct.' Upon occasion, the author's prose gets the transcriber so rattled that the resulting combination of properly spelled words is meaningless.

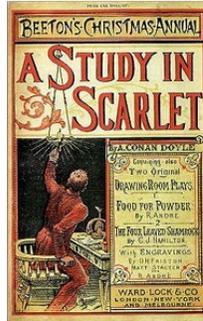
These sorts of errors distract the reader with some regularity. Fortunately, the total number of such lacunae is only a dozen or two so that the story generally flows well. The characterizations are well done and the presentation of Holmes is truly enjoyable. Lady Selina ('Miss Selina' by preference) is also well presented and interesting. Many of her details are left in doubt, as for example, the source of her 'Lady' title. It can only come from her father having been an Earl, Marquis or Duke, but no such title is mentioned. Instead, the history given concentrates on her mother's family. The story is set in 1901, when 'Miss Jones' is thirty one years of age. A number of earlier events are mentioned, but not enlarged upon.

If readers can ignore the editing problems, which are not numerous but are definitely distracting, what emerges is a story of the meeting and recognition of two remarkable 'kindred spirits.' Inspector Lestrade, Mycroft and Mrs. Hudson all make appearances and play familiar, comfortable roles. Suitable villains are at hand and their actions are almost explained. I felt that com-

plete explanations would be the subject of future writing rather than being completely lacking. The pace is slow, but it does not drag. It seems more as if the author is trying to get her facts straight and to present them in reasonable sequence. This is not an action adventure, although both action and adventure are present. Rather, it is a narrative of the meeting of two intellects who are cautious and defensive.

I cannot stress enough that this is primarily a tale of personality and adaptation, not a tale of adventure and action. The marvels are the events that occur within and the characters of the 'stars' are the most important things revealed. If the author can find a useful editor, I look forward to more revelations.

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, July 2011



SHERLOCK HOLMES NOVEL VANISHES FROM VIRGINIA READING LIST

American Libraries Magazine
<http://americanlibrariesmagazine.org>

Submitted by Gordon Flagg 8/16/11

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes novel, *A Study in Scarlet*, was removed from 6th-grade reading lists in Albemarle County, Virginia, August 11 after a parent complained about its anti-Mormon content.

More than 20 former students from the Albemarle County Public Schools' Henley Middle School turned out at the school board meeting to protest the action, the *Charlottesville Daily Progress* reported August 11. Ninth-grader Quinn Legallo-Malone spoke during public comment to oppose removal of the book, calling it "the best book I have read so far."

The school board followed the recommendation of a committee commissioned to study the novel, which concluded it was not age-appropriate for 6th-graders. "Sometimes we have declared books age inappropriate, sometimes we have decided that they should stay where they are," board member Diantha McKiel told the *Daily Progress*.

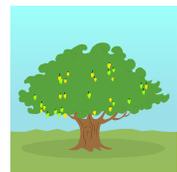
"*A Study in Scarlet* has been used to introduce students to the mystery genre and the character of Sherlock Holmes," Brette Stevenson, the parent who objected to the book in May, told the board, (cont. on page 2)



Greetings, fellow Sherlockian, For many years, I had been searching in vain for a plaster bust of the great detective, so I decided to try my hand at sculpting and casting one myself. The attached photo is the result, and, although I am not a professional, I am quite pleased with it. The bust is 7-1/2 inches tall, and weighs about 3 pounds. The mold I made will permit me to make a few more, and so I am offering copies to devotees for \$95 plus \$15 for shipping and insurance. If you are interested, I can accept checks made out to me, Stan Buchholtz at 79 Clubhouse Dr., Palm Coast, FL 32137

(cont. from page 1) adding that it was also “our young students’ first inaccurate introduction to an American religion.” She suggested replacing the book with Conan Doyle’s third Holmes novel, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which she said is a better introduction to the genre. *A Study in Scarlet* includes a lengthy flashback to 19th-century Utah, where a man and a little girl who he later adopts are rescued by Mormons on the condition they convert to the Mormon faith. Conan Doyle describes the father’s attitude toward their new religion: “Nothing would ever induce him to allow his daughter to wed a Mormon. Such a marriage he regarded as no marriage at all, but as a shame and a disgrace.” The novel also calls Mormons “persecutors of the most terrible description.”

We love a reader’s comment: “Right, because it would be far too much work to teach the kids the facts about Mormonism and why Doyle was opposed to it (if that’s known).”



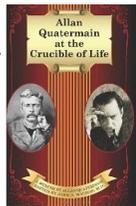
Concert for Trees

USHER HALL, Edinburgh Nov. 26, 2011

Featuring Ani Batikian on the Sherlock violin, St Patrick’s Baroque Ensemble on the Conan Doyle String Quartet, (all instruments are made from the Conan Doyle sycamore tree that stood until recently in the garden of his Edinburgh childhood home, this being the first public performance with the quartet) and Hungarian gypsy fiddler Jani Lang and Band. Guest speaker Owen Dudley Edwards.

Allan Quatermain at the Crucible of Life

Softcover, Wildside Press, 2010. By Thomas Kent Miller



This book is a combined edition of two earlier short novels by the author. I have both and spent a bit of time comparing the earlier editions with this new publication. The new edition contains several additions along with revised versions of the tales. In general, it provides a more complex and compelling view of the events included than do the earlier, fragmentary publications.

The narratives presented are difficult to understand. The action includes events far separated in both time and space. The single tale of *The Rose of Fire* in-

cludes at least four separate narratives, each at different times involving different protagonists. On the other hand, the separate narratives provide explanatory details for one another and serve to knit the greater narrative together. Please remember that Doctor Watson, at the time of the first narrative, had not yet met Sherlock Holmes. This may avoid some Canonical confusion. *Sherlock Holmes on the Roof of the World* presents similar features. By itself, it is an interesting narrative, presenting an account of some of Sigerson’s adventures in Tibet during The Great Hiatus. When combined with *The Rose of Fire*, it explains certain aspects of the earlier narrative and leaves the door open to events expected in the final part of the saga, *The Adventure of the Star of Wonder*.

There is a major problem for many Sherlockians in this volume. It is based, largely, on the tales published by H. Ryder Haggard and Rudyard Kipling, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries about the adventures of Leo Vincey, Allan Quatermain and other characters along with their respective companions. I read some of these books many years ago, but all are now dim in my memory so that I cannot recall the details of any of them. Fortunately, the current volume includes generous explanations of earlier publications, but the process of absorbing and integrating all of the material is difficult. Readers should pay detailed attention to the footnotes and take a break from the action to study each one.

Fortunately, Mr. Miller has the services of an excellent editor (or two!), so there are few spelling, usage and continuity errors other than those breaks occasioned by digressions in the action to explain earlier events. Given all this jumping around, the narrative does not flow gently but rather proceeds in irregular fashion from scene to scene. This can be disconcerting, but it also holds a certain charm of novelty. We are not presented with a polished narrative, but instead, we face a confusing world that occurs in fits and starts with little rhyme or reason. Rather a bit like life, don’t you know?

Finally, the two narratives and enclosures will contradict numerous historical and religious views. There is a meld of science, fantasy, spiritualism and orthodox religions involved that is difficult to summarize. In fact, the author carefully avoids committing to a single viewpoint in any of the narratives. Instead, he offers alternative explanations and possibilities. It is clear that certain events and persons are key to the story but it is not clear where the tale is leading the reader. I expect whatever explanations may be available will only appear in the third tale in the series, *The Adventure of the Star of Wonder*. Probably questions will (cont. on page 3)



(cont. from page 2) remain even then, maybe even more than remain now.

All in all, this is an interesting and complex book. It ties up a few loose ends for devotees of Haggard, but it leaves even more to be resolved. It's fun.

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, August 2011



Murder in the Library

Softcover, MX Publishing, 2011. By Felicia Carparelli

This book is a Sherlockian mystery only by courtesy. The characters are knowledgeable about the Canon and there are Sherlockian echoes in the clues and events. Otherwise, this is an interesting mystery with well-drawn and fascinating characters set in contemporary Chicago. I was a bit disappointed as it started, due to the book cover, which indicated a period mystery. However, I soon became involved in the story and characters, which are rich and imaginative. The mystery is complex and baffling with lots of distractions and false leads.

This story is set in an un-named University library, near Lake Michigan and downtown Chicago. The heroine is a widowed daughter of a Greek restaurant owner and a retired Italian opera singer who gives singing lessons. Both parents cook, a lot! Our librarian manages the Reference Department with a staff of five junior librarians and a number of student pages. The other library staff are varied, interesting and quirky. Murder definitely upsets the smooth routine of the library and sets the gossip machine into high gear.

The disputes, jealousies, grudges and other interrelations are more than enough to provide motives for several murders. It seems that college libraries harbor as many ill feelings as most business enterprises. Mix in a divorced, green-eyed police detective who pushes all of the librarian's buttons and the situation becomes explosive. As the body count rises, the toll on nerves and relations mounts and stirs the pot. Meanwhile, the Greek chef and the Italian opera singer feed friends, acquaintances and suspects and provide a safe harbor in the storm.

The editing is quite good. I only saw two or three errors in language and no errors at all in matters Sherlockian. The characters are interesting and the story is written to be continued. Another book is planned and if it is as good as the first, I'm sure it will lead to a popular series.

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, September 2011

CALENDAR SHERLOCKIANA 2011

October 13-16 - A Study in Scandal, Toronto Reference Library, Toronto by *The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection*, *The Toronto Public Library* and *The Bootmakers of Toronto*. See <http://www.acdfriends.org/sins-rego.htm>

Nov. 3 - *Gasfitters' Ball*, The Diamond Jubilee Celebration of Queen Victoria. South Pasadena Women's Club. Contact Chrys & Jerry Kegley ccobsla@social.rr.com or cfkovacic@aol.com

Nov. 5 - PPOF 35th Annual Fall Gathering. *Showcase Arts Foundation Inc.* headquarters, 2664 Enterprise Rd Suite B1, Clearwater, FL (Turn south off of 580, behind Kmart). Case: *The Yellow Face*

Nov. 11-13 - *From Gillette to Brett* conference, Indianapolis, IN. See <http://www.wessexpress.com/html/g2b3.html>

December 16 - *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* release date (sequel to *Sherlock Holmes* Downey/Law)

2012

January 11-15 - Sherlock Holmes Birthday Weekend (extended) NY,NY

April 27-29 - MALICE DOMESTIC XXIV

August 31-Sept. 3 - *Sherlock Holmes: Behind the Canonical Screen* Los Angeles, CA.

September 9-16 - *The Sherlock Holmes Society of London Swiss Pilgrimage*, Interlaken & Meiringen, Switzerland.

October 4-7 - *Bouchercon XLIII*, Cleveland, OH .

HE'S EVERYWHERE... You can find a nice video on Sherlock and the Reichenbach falls at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uotnru-n5zo&NR=1Carl> ... Check out a good website at <http://www.sherlockholmes.com/> ... To see an interview done at Gillette to Brett with Michael Hoey, son of Dennis Hoey, go to you tube and enter From Gillette to Brett: Michael Hoey... Download the comedy *Sherlock Holmes Strikes Back* by The Wireless Theatre Company. It's free at www.wirelesstheatrecompany.co.uk/index.php/our-plays ... *The Carleton Hobbs Sherlock Holmes Further Collection* is now available from www.audiogo.co.uk. Carleton Hobbs and Norman Shelley are well know as the voices of Holmes and Watson in the UK (1952-1969) and worth a listen...

No Place Like Holmes

Softcover, Thomas Nelson Pub. 2011. Jason Lethcoe

This is the first book in a detective series designed for an audience of young persons. It consists of a short novel that introduces the characters and covers the retirement of Sherlock Holmes to beekeeping in Sussex. It also includes two short puzzle narratives and their solutions as well as a recipe for lemon-iced scones.

As is generally typical of books for a teen audience, the tale is heavy on action and narrative and a little light on fact and practical knowledge. The characters are interesting, with a couple (cont. on page 4)





(cont. from page 3) of quite nasty villains and a sprinkling of more prosaic characters. Mrs. Hudson appears, as do Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. The hero, Griffin Sharpe, is an American boy from Boston who is sent to visit his maternal uncle in London for the summer. The uncle resides at 221 Baker Street and is a professional detective.

Our hero is a very observant young man who counts things when he is nervous or insecure, which occurs frequently. He also has the habit of observing and remembering the things he sees. His uncle has an inventive streak and has produced a number of machines and devices of many types.

Upon debarkation at Limehouse Docks, young Griffin is inadvertently involved in a monstrous plot, involving people he meets in the course of making his way to his uncle's apartment. Once he arrives at 221 Baker Street, his uncle is hired by a lady with a missing husband. According to an eyewitness report, her husband was snatched off the bank of the Thames River by the Loch Ness Monster.

Once the action is over, the wounded begin recovery, rewards are handed out all around and the evildoers disappear. Griffin and his uncle work a half-dozen or so cases over the rest of the Summer, at the end of which Holmes announces his eminent retirement. Griffin prepares to return home and is about to leave for the Docks when a telegram arrives. The story will be continued in the next volume in the series, *The Future Door*.



For all this is a book for young adults, it is well written and it moves right along. The characters are clearly drawn and all manage to change a bit over the course of the story. The writer is obviously a religiously inclined person and the book just avoids being preachy. The inconsistencies are generally such as will not be noticed by their intended audience but will probably disconcert an adult with the various leaps from theory to action. It is enjoyable, moral and self-consistent without seeming condescending. It is the kind of story responsible parents will be pleased to give to their children and that the children will probably read and enjoy.

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, September 2011

The Case of the Russian Chessboard
Softcover, MX Publishing, 2011. By Charlie Roxburgh



This is a short novel set in the late 19th Century in London. Holmes and Watson are drawn into an investigation of Russian revolutionaries plotting and recruiting among London's

Liberals. It brings them into the world of plot and counterplot, agent and counteragent that set the standards for 20th Century Social Commentary. The Emigrés and the Okhrana define the moves and relations followed by all the various Patriots vs. Secret Police from the October Revolution through the careers of Pol Pot and Idi Amin. This dance began during the Reign of Peter the Great and, in 200 years, the participants learned their roles well. Their examples through the Russian Revolution trained another hundred years of artists of abominations.

This is Sherlock Holmes working on a world stage, with despair and misery playing the tune and ambition calling the moves. It is a dark and unpleasant tale, with few triumphs and little to cheer about. Holmes makes no brilliant deductions and no knighthood is awaiting him in the service of the crown. The lessons are all bloody and terrible and the victims are pitiful and miserable. How sadly and typically Russian! The truly sad thing about this story is that it could well have been true.

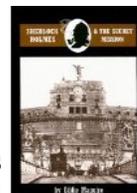
Holmes accepts a plea from a gentlewoman to help her sister who has become enmeshed in a nihilist organization's plot. As part of the investigation, Holmes visits an old acquaintance living on a pacifist commune in rural Essex. He and Watson are also offered work in St. Petersburg by the London head of the Okhrana and witness the murder of a revolutionary hero in Regent's Park. Untangling the ins and outs of the matter is a commentary on the methods used by both sides and the struggles to be faced in the dawning century.

The editing is quite good with only one or two errors apparent. The writing is dark and the mystery is, unfortunately, fairly easy to penetrate. The most depressing thing about the book is how true it is to life and the times.

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, September 2011

Sherlock Holmes & the Secret Mission

Softcover, Breese Books, 2005.
By Eddie Maguire



This is a short novel that is really the first half of a lengthy novel published in two parts. The second part has also been released by Breese Books as *Sherlock Holmes and the Bolshevik Plot*. This first book offers the advantages that are (cont. on page 5)



(cont. from page 4) usual to Mr. Maguire's Sherlockian tales, interesting plots, good characterizations and proper English. His other, earlier Sherlockian efforts have been collected by Breese books into a single anthology, *Sherlock Holmes and the Tandrige Hall Murders*. A later novella has also been published by Breese as "Sherlock Holmes and the Highcliffe Invitation" as part of their anthology, *Sherlock Holmes & the 3 Poisoned Pawns*.

This tale takes place in 1912 as Doctor Watson is visiting Sherlock in his retirement cottage in Sussex. Eminent government figures show up in the middle of the night with the news that Sherlock's brother, Mycroft, has been injured and has gone missing while on a government-sponsored mission in Italy. This is followed quickly by the news that Mycroft has died of a burst appendix at a private clinic near Rome. At the same time, Doctor Watson gets word that a woman has called for him at his surgery asking his help to find her husband who has been kidnapped

Sherlock becomes hysterical at the news about Mycroft, laughing and carrying on. Watson asks Holmes to stay at their old rooms in Baker Street until the situation is resolved, so they head off to London. The government is frantic to urge Sherlock to take his brother's place in the negotiations that Mycroft was trusted with in Italy but Sherlock is reluctant. In the middle of the night a stranger arrives at their front door after being stabbed by kidnappers bringing a victim aboard his ship, which is set to sail on the morning tide. Sherlock sees the events as an opportunity to avoid the government requests and to pursue inquiries about Mycroft, whose appendix had been removed years earlier. He and Watson contrive a plot that will use Chief In-

spector Lestrade to discourage the government efforts to recruit Sherlock.

From this point on, things become even more confused as separate happenings seem to intertwine and the fate of Europe hangs in the balance. Offstage, Russian affairs seem to be manipulated by a mysterious VIU which turns out to be Vladimir Illych Ulyanov, later known as Lenin. Sherlock and Watson encounter an unsavory pair of French nobility on the train to Rome and indulge in a bit of sleuthing that impresses a Captain Cattini of the Carabinieri who is also traveling to Rome on the train. News of Holmes' breakdown reaches the British Press and reports of his confinement in a sanitarium lead to questions about the missing Holmes brothers and the causes of their disappearances.

Careful efforts by Sherlock and Watson lead to the discovery of Mycroft as a prisoner in a medical clinic. They manage to free Mycroft but their attempt to free the kidnapped man and to take his captors come to naught through the efforts of the kidnappers and the ineptitude of the Italian police. It has become clear that the entire sequence of events was part of a plot against the Czar but the nature of the plot and the participants are still murky.

The book is interesting, well-written and well-edited. Unfortunately, no resolutions are possible without the second book in the series, *Sherlock Holmes and the Bolshevik Plot*. The two really should have been issued as single volume, which would have produced a solid novel, perhaps larger than usual, but not nearing the size of many modern action tales.

Reviewed by: Philip K. Jones, September 2011

Join us
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5
from
11:30AM - 3:00PM
for the
35th Annual Fall Gathering
of
The Pleasant Places of Florida.



Location: Showcase Arts Foundation Headquarters, 2664 Enterprise Rd Suite B1, Clearwater, FL (about 100 yards south of Hwy 580 on Enterprise behind the KMart - Look for the Corsa Moto Works sign and the two big trees that line our driveway)

Our case for the meeting is: **The Yellow Face.**

BYOL. (Bring Your Own Lunch) Soda & Water available for \$1 each. A minimum \$3 donation is requested to cover costs.

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)

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

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

Mike Bryan, *The Unopened Newspaper*, (Film Festivals and The Marshall Wood Fund)

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