



THE ALTERNATIVE
SHERLOCK HOLMES

PETER RIDGWAY WATT
AND JOSEPH GREEN

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Pastiches, Parodies and Copies

PETER RIDGWAY WATT and JOSEPH GREEN

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Introduction

Introductions are never easy, and an introduction to a new book on Sherlock Holmes is more difficult than most. In 1944, Ellery Queen, doyen of crime fiction and the fount of most wisdom where the world of Sherlock Holmes was concerned, published his classic anthology, *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*.¹ In its Introduction he wrote, ‘We cannot bring you anything new of Sherlock – you’ve read all there is ... more has been written *about* Sherlock Holmes than about any other character in fiction. It is further true that more has been written about Holmes by *others* than by Doyle himself.’ At the beginning of the twenty-first century, one can do no better than repeat his words.

Since 1944, the literature on Holmes has increased enormously and so have collections, anthologies and indexes. Critical studies, biographies, essays, radio and television scripts, films and plays abound. The most recent bibliographical index, *The Universal Sherlock Holmes*,² lists nearly 25 000 publications. This book is concerned with a special part of this vast field: the extraordinary genre of story-telling that emerged around Holmes. The writing of pastiches and parodies began within five years of the first Sherlock Holmes story being published. It blossomed during the whole of the twentieth century and, remarkably, it flourishes even more today. As early as 1933, Vincent Starrett, the celebrated American authority, wrote that he was already bemused by the ‘innumerable parodies [that have] appeared in innumerable journals.’³ In retrospect, one can only comment to his revered shade: ‘you ain’t seen nothing yet.’

Three main trends can be observed. There has, first, been a wave of writing that has rediscovered the cases referred to in the Canon that Watson, for a variety of reasons, chose not to publish, but which he preserved in his old dispatch-box. That box has become a legend, a cornucopia overflowing with Holmes’ unchronicled cases; and it has fascinated many later writers, who have devoted considerable energy and ingenuity to discovering and rewriting them.

Secondly, there are the new stories. Hundreds of writers, since the first in 1893, have written Sherlock Holmes pastiches. They vary vastly in their approach and scope, and range from the brilliant to the execrable. Some are serious attempts to reproduce the style and plotting of the Canon; others are

comic variations; many more distance themselves from the ambience of the Canon and pursue other times, other climes, and even the far realms of space and time.

A third direction has been parody. As early as 1892 the fascination with the unique characteristics of Holmes and the emerging Canon could be observed. It inspired a wholly new domain of literature – the Sherlock Holmes parody. The phenomenon was unlike anything else in literature. Hundreds of parodies were to be written in the new century. Mainly comic in intent, richly variant in structure, and exploiting the countless nuances of the Canon, the genre inspired some of the most endearing and lasting contributions to twentieth-century fiction.

It is true that pastiches and parodies of Sherlock Holmes have not always been applauded. In 1976, Jacques Barzun⁴ regarded most of them as ‘unsuccessful’ and offered ten rules for new writers. Jon L Lellenberg⁵ later commented sadly on the flood of ‘commercially inspired pastiches.’ Most scathing was Abby Mendelson,⁶ who, in 1982, denigrated the worst abuses of the Canon: the bottomless dispatch-box, the fatuous historical guest, nauseating plot machinations in which ‘Holmes is the only man who can save the world from destruction – or from yet another inane pastiche.’

The public, however, has not sided with the purists. Pastiche and parody, short stories and novels, and films and plays have, for more than a century, continued to entertain generation after generation. And yet another strand can be added: the inventions by authors, in Britain and America, of the detectives who tried to copy Holmes or rival him. They owed their very existence to Holmes and must share some small part of his lustre. That most did not last, and that even the best among them are now mainly forgotten, makes Holmes’ place in Elysium even more secure.

All this abundance, emerging over a period far longer than the three decades of the Canon and exceeding by far the bounds of the Canon itself, provides, for devotees, an alternative Holmes. In this book we have gathered together, in chronological order, most of the pastiches and parodies of Sherlock Holmes that have appeared in print, from the first in 1892 to the latest we have found in 2001. The final chapter reviews many of those delightful detectives, male and female, British and American, who appeared in the years up to 1920, about which time detective fiction began to explore new avenues.

With a few exceptions, the fields of theatre, film, radio, and television have been excluded from the present survey. There are already in existence many up-to-date publications dealing extensively with these media.

Chapter 1

The Vaults of Cox & Co: Watson's Unchronicled Cases and Their Pastiches

‘Somewhere in the vaults of the bank of Cox & Co, at Charing Cross,’ says Dr Watson in *The Problem of Thor Bridge*, which was published in February and March 1922, ‘there is a travel-worn and battered tin dispatch box with my name, John H Watson, MD, Late Indian Army, painted upon the lid. It is crammed with papers, nearly all of which are records of cases to illustrate the curious problems which Mr Sherlock Holmes had at various times to examine. Some, and not the least interesting, were complete failures, and as such will hardly bear narrating, since no final explanation is forthcoming.’

In point of fact, in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which was published in 1901, Watson reported that Holmes had already investigated ‘five hundred capital cases’. Clearly Watson participated in only a fraction of those. Nevertheless, in 41 of the 60 Canonical works, he alludes directly to over one hundred cases that Holmes had investigated but which, for one reason or another, he had chosen not to publish or had been prevented from publishing by Holmes himself. The reasons varied: some were on grounds of a private or public nature; many, however, remained unchronicled simply because, as Watson says in *The Five Orange Pips*, ‘I am faced with so many which present strange and interesting features that it is no easy matter to know which to choose and which to leave. Some too have baffled his analytical skill, and would be, as narratives, beginnings without an ending, while others have been but partially cleared up, and have their explanations founded rather upon conjecture and surmise than on that absolute logical proof which was so dear to him.’

Many other authors, all devotees of the Canon, have clearly thought otherwise. Over the years, many pastiches and parodies of the Sherlock Holmes stories have been written. As we shall see in later chapters, although the first known Holmes pastiche was not published until 1893, it was many years before any appeared to have been based on Watson's unchronicled

cases. Indeed, the first did not appear until well after the death of Conan Doyle in 1930.

Vincent Starrett lamented,¹ as late as 1933, ‘Too long has the world awaited the Adventure of the Amateur Mendicants ... and the little problem of the Grosvenor Square Furniture Van. The case of Wilson, the Notorious Canary-Trainer, too, is a whisper full of fascinating suggestion.’ All that was to change in 1936: after that came the deluge!

The distinguished American critic, Edgar W Smith, wrote, ‘There is no Sherlockian worthy of his salt who has not, at least once in his life, taken Dr Watson’s pen in hand and given himself to the production of a veritable adventure.’² The challenge presented by the unchronicled cases is presumably even more tempting and many authors have succumbed. Indeed most of the one hundred-odd mentioned by Watson have been ransacked by later writers who have elaborated on Watson’s often vague but always tantalizing references to earlier Holmes cases. Usually there has been some intent, at least, to imitate Watson’s uniquely descriptive style, though that has often proved difficult to achieve. Although the Charing Cross branch of Watson’s bank was destroyed during World War II, many authors of pastiches based on the unchronicled cases have felt the need to substantiate them by the rediscovery of Dr Watson’s old tin dispatch box. An ingenious example is provided, for example, by June Thomson in the first of her four magnificent collections of stories based on the unchronicled cases, *The Secret Files of Sherlock Holmes*.³

This chapter discusses all the known pastiches of Watson’s unchronicled cases. Most have been written, as were most of the Canonical tales, in the form of short stories. Some, however, are full-length novels, which are indicated where they occur. All those we have found are given below in the chronological order of the Canonical tales themselves. The 19 stories in the Canon that contain no references to unchronicled cases have been omitted.

A Study in Scarlet

The first story in what was to become the great Canon was published in November 1887. Dr Watson, having met Holmes and taken up residence with him at 221B Baker Street in 1881, records the first case that he and Holmes investigated together. It already contains allusions to Holmes’ previous cases, for Watson mentions several persons who came to Baker Street soon after he and Holmes had set up there: ‘One morning a young girl called, fashionably dressed, and stayed for half an hour or more. The

same afternoon brought a grey-headed, seedy visitor, looking like a Jew pedlar, who appeared to me to be much excited, and who was closely followed by a slip-shod elderly woman. On another occasion an old white-haired gentleman had an interview with my companion; and on another, a railway porter in his velveteen uniform.' 'These people,' said Holmes, 'are my clients.' Watson later goes on to make an important observation: 'There was one little sallow, rat-faced, dark-eyed fellow, who was introduced to me as Mr Lestrade, and who came three or four times in a single week.' Holmes commented, 'Lestrade is a well-known detective. He got himself into a fog recently over a forgery case, and that is what brought him here.' Watson was not yet up to recording these cases and none of them has inspired a pastiche.

The Sign of Four

The second tale in the Canon, published in 1890, deals with a case that occurred in 1888. However, at its opening Holmes informs Watson of several of his earlier investigations. 'My practice has extended recently to the Continent. I was consulted last week by François le Villard, who, you probably know, has come rather to the front lately in the French detective service The case was concerned with a will, and possessed some features of interest. I was able to refer him to two parallel cases, the one at Riga in 1857, and the other at St Louis in 1871, which have suggested to him the true solution.' Holmes refers later in the story to a case involving a woman, 'the most winning woman I ever knew,' who was 'hanged for poisoning three little children for their insurance-money.' Later still he refers to 'the Bishopgate Jewel case,' which he calls 'a piece of very simple reasoning.' Watson did not chronicle these cases, nor have any pastiches been found.

'A little domestic complication'

At the beginning of his narrative, Watson alludes to an earlier Holmes investigation. When Mary Morstan calls to tell of the strange events that have befallen her, she refers to a Mrs Cecil Forrester, a lady who, she says, Holmes once helped 'to unravel a little domestic complication.' Holmes modestly (for him) adds, 'I believe that I was of some slight service to her. The case, however, as I remember it, was a very simple one.'

Although the reference is rather bare of detail, June Thomson wrote a pastiche, *The Case of the Camberwell Deception*, for her fourth collection (1997), *The Secret Documents of Sherlock Holmes*.⁴ The story uses

material of interest gathered from several incidents in the Canon, especially that concerning Watson's eventual marriage to Miss Morstan.

Barbara Roden wrote another version of the case, *The Adventure of the Suspect Servant*, for a 1997 anthology, *The Mammoth Book of New Sherlock Holmes Adventures*.⁵ It is indeed 'a very simple one' for Holmes.

It is 1896. Holmes is consulted by Mrs Forrester (of Camberwell, no less!) about the disappearance of several of her husband's valuables. The police suspect her maid, Sarah. From much experience of this sort of thing, however, Holmes knows that all suspected servants are likely to be red herrings. He finds that Mr Forrester himself, who is addicted to gambling, has been pawning his bibelots and is too ashamed to tell his spouse.

A Scandal in Bohemia

The first of the classic short stories that were to make up most of the Canon was also, in 1891, the first to be published in *The Strand Magazine*. Writing up this case, which took place in 1888, Watson mentions five cases that Holmes had previously investigated: 'I had seen little of Holmes lately ... From time to time I heard some vague account of his doings: of his summons to Odessa in the case of the Trepoff murder, of his clearing up of the singular tragedy of the Atkinson brothers at Trincomalee, and finally of the mission which he had accomplished so delicately and successfully for the reigning family of Holland.' [Trincomalee, in Ceylon, was a British naval base, so brother Mycroft may have been involved.⁶] Later, after the battle of wits with Irene Adler has been concluded, Holmes comments on the success of his fire-raising ruse: 'In the case of the Darlington Substitution Scandal it was of use to me, and also in the Arnsworth Castle business.' Four of the five cases mentioned have formed the basis for pastiches. Three, by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr, were published in 1954 in their classic collection of thirteen stories, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes*.⁷

'the Trepoff murder'

The Adventure of the Seven Clocks.⁷ It is 1887. Celia Forsythe, a companion to Lady Mayo, is in love with Charles Hendon but has become fearful of his obsessional behaviour in smashing any clock he sees. Holmes must travel to Odessa to solve the problem. He discovers that Charles is the Grand Duke Alexei and that his fear of clocks is based on the knowledge that they can conceal ticking bombs, the favourite assassination devices of Russian Nihilists.

His fear is well based, for Holmes discovers that the assassin is the Duke's own manservant, Trepoff. He is too late to prevent the attack, which comes when Charles has returned to England. The Duke is injured but owes his life to the sturdiness of English building methods.

'the singular tragedy of the Atkinson brothers'

Eric Brown wrote *The Vanishing of the Atkinsons* for a 1997 anthology.⁵

Holmes tells Watson of what really happened at Trincomalee in 1888, when he was invited to Ceylon by his old friend, Victor Trevor. [In *The 'Gloria Scott'*, Holmes comments, 'The good fellow was heartbroken ... and went out to the Terai tea plantation.'] Arriving in Ceylon, Holmes hears of the disappearance of the two Atkinson brothers, managers of a nearby estate. He soon recognizes the signs of a failing business, gambling debts, and a plantation being ruined. When he hears of a pregnant Indian serving girl, all becomes clear. The brothers, it seems, had planned their disappearance, intending to fake a ransom demand. Holmes finds the brothers dead, their plans having misfired.

'the Darlington Substitution Scandal'

A pastiche by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr, *The Adventure of the Wax Gamblers*, used Watson's allusion to this case most strangely.⁷

Sir Gervase Darlington, a fanatical gambler, has a scheme to obtain information about horse racing, which involves a code based on the setting of cards in the hands of wax effigies in Madame Taupin's exhibition in the Marylebone Road. The plot strains credulity to the maximum: there must be a simpler way to hornswoggle the bookies!

Henry Slesar contributed another version, *The Darlington Substitution Scandal*, to an anthology, *The Confidential Casebook of Sherlock Holmes*, which was published in 1988.⁸

Inspector Lestrade tells Holmes that he has a strange problem. A Mrs Paige, it seems, has recently been found guilty of murdering her husband and is now incarcerated in the Institute for the Criminally Insane. However, she maintains that she is actually Lady Darlington. The noble Lord, it appears, has recently married a woman who does indeed resemble Mrs Paige. Holmes discovers that an elaborate plot exists (a strange birthmark is the defining clue). Lord Darlington, who was Mrs Paige's lover and has, in fact, shot Mr Paige, is about to substitute his new bride for the lady in the asylum.

David Stuart Davies published another version, also entitled *The Darlington Substitution Scandal*, in a 1997 anthology.⁵

Lord Darlington consults Holmes over the matter of a painting that has been stolen from his private gallery; but, before Holmes can investigate, the picture is returned. Holmes knows all about the cunning ways of art forgers, of course, and soon discovers there is a plot to substitute a fake for the genuine painting. Worse still, his lordship's own son, heavily in debt, is behind the robbery!

'The Arnsworth Castle business'

The pastiche on this case by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr refers to Watson's allusion by little more than a location. Originally entitled *The Adventure of the Red Widow*,⁷ it was later included in Sebastian Wolfe's anthology, *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*,⁹ where it was retitled *The Adventure of Arnsworth Castle*.

The head of a distinguished family has been found mysteriously guillotined in Arnsworth Castle, in Derbyshire. His cousin seems clearly to be the culprit. However, Holmes visits the scene and, by an amazing series of deductions, which include a study of cigarette ash (Turkish, of course) on the carpet, a glance at footprints in the snow, and a knowledge of Catholic history, he shows that the roles of murderer and victim have actually been reversed. Holmes employs a fake fire to lure the so-called victim from his hiding-place in a priest's hole. Justice is served when the murderer ends his own life.

The Red-Headed League

In the fourth Canonical tale, published in August 1891, Watson records a case from 1890. At its successful conclusion, Holmes discloses that Vincent Spaulding, the miscreant who plans to rob the City and Suburban Bank, is none other than 'John Clay, murderer, thief, smasher and forger.' 'I've been on his track for years,' he says, 'and have never set eyes on him yet.' Neither, it seems, has any later writer, for no pastiches have been found.

A Case of Identity

The fifth Canonical tale, published in September 1891, also deals with a case from 1890. At its opening, Watson amuses himself by testing Holmes'

powers of deduction. He selects an item in the morning's newspaper. 'Let us put it to a practical test. Here is the first heading upon which I come. A husband's cruelty to his wife ... I know without reading it that it is all perfectly familiar to me. There is, of course, the other woman, the drink, the push, the blow, the bruise, the sympathetic sister or landlady. The crudest of writers could invent nothing more crude.' However, Holmes will have none of it and ripostes, 'Indeed your example is an unfortunate one for your argument ... This is the Dundas separation case, and, as it happens, I was engaged in clearing up some small points in connection with it. The husband was a teetotaller, there was no other woman, and the conduct complained of was that he had drifted into the habit of winding up every meal by taking out his false teeth and hurling them at his wife.'

After losing that exchange, Watson draws Holmes' attention to 'a remarkable brilliant which sparkled upon his finger.' Holmes says, 'It was from the reigning family of Holland, though the matter in which I served them was of such delicacy that I cannot confide it even to you.' [Since the investigation described in *A Case of Identity* probably occurred in 1890,¹⁰ this Dutch case was probably not the one mentioned in *A Scandal in Bohemia*.] Watson continues: 'And have you any on hand just now?' he asks. 'Some ten or twelve,' replies Holmes, 'but none which presents any feature of interest.'

One further unchronicled case is mentioned in this story. When Mary Sutherland, around whom the story revolves, calls on Holmes, she says, 'I came to you, sir, because I heard of you from Mrs Etherege, whose husband you found so easy when the police and everyone had given him up for dead.' Alas, none of the three cases mentioned in this story has inspired pastiches.

The Five Orange Pips

Published in November 1891, the seventh tale records a case from 1887. Watson says it was 'a busy year.' Indeed, at various points in the narrative he informs us of six cases that Holmes had previously investigated, of which 'he had notes.' All six have proved of profound interest to pastiche writers.

'the adventure of the Paradol Chamber'

The first case Watson mentions he called 'the adventure of the Paradol Chamber'. What on earth did he mean? Since the word 'paradol' does not appear in any dictionary, pastiche writers have had limitless licence as to its

use. The first known example, *The Adventure of the Paradol Chamber*, was a playlet by John Dickson Carr, which was first performed at the annual meeting of the Mystery Writers of America in 1949. It was included in Ellery Queen's 1944 anthology, *The Misadventures of Sherlock Holmes*.¹¹

Holmes unmasks a plan to steal a copy of a secret treaty between England and France, which has been brought to England by the French Ambassador, M le Marquis de Paradol, concealed in a copper chamber beneath his trousers. Events follow fast: trousers are being stolen all over London in a plot to capture the document; Lady Imogene Ferrers asks Holmes to intervene; the stage Watson turns out to be an impersonation by Colonel Moran; and the real Watson lies gagged and bound 'in some den of iniquity.' Finally, Holmes unmasks the false Watson by pulling off his moustache. The Marquis exclaims that it is 'the Adventure of le Paradol Chamber'; 'but no,' says the false Watson, 'it is the Adventure of the Copper Britches.' *Voilà* and Curtain!

Another version of the case, *The Adventure of the Paradol Chamber*, was published by Alan Wilson in 1961.¹²

It is 1887. Señor Paradol, the South American illusionist, is performing his famous disappearance act at Harper's Music Hall. Holmes disdains to go when Watson invites him to see the show, saying he cannot believe in magic. However, he later hears that on the previous night Paradol had entered his magic cabinet but, instead of disappearing, had been found dead inside. When Holmes investigates, he discovers that Paradol's chamber had a secret compartment and that the magician's stage assistant was none other than Vigor, the Hammersmith Wonder, doing a part-time job. Was Vigor the killer? Certainly not! In fact, an unknown derivative of strychnine was delivered by a fiendish device that plunged a needle into Paradol's neck when the chamber was closed. The culprit? Well, President Cordoba of Paranagua was in the Royal Box and his secretary, Hernandez, once had a circus that was appropriated by Paradol. After all, when you have eliminated the impossible ...

In 1965 Russell McLauchlin published a delightfully comic version, also entitled *The Adventure of the Paradol Chamber*.¹³

Mr Bullfinch, Curator of Ceramics at the British Museum, visits Baker Street with a problem. He tells Holmes that an exquisite example of the potter's art, made by Jean François Paradol, master of the blue body, white slip coating, and yellow glaze, has been stolen from the Museum's collection. Holmes ponders. He hears that the pot – it might properly be called a chamber – has a wreath of blue roses on its front and a large handle opposite. He advises the

distraught Curator to search the homes of all the Museum's charwomen. A week later he receives a note to say that the Paradol chamber has been recovered from the home of a Mrs Stebbins of Theobald's Road, which had not yet been furnished with the advantages of modern plumbing.

June Thomson included another version, *The Case of the Paradol Chamber*, in her second (1992) collection, *The Secret Chronicles of Sherlock Holmes*.¹⁴

Holmes is visited by a young lady who says that her friend Robert has disappeared. She has been told that he was drowned at sea. Nevertheless, she tells Holmes, she has seen Robert one night walking across the lawn of his manor house, supported by two men. How can that be? Holmes suspects an abduction (such events occur several times in the Canon); but, on investigation, he finds that Robert is being secured for his own good, for he is slowly succumbing to an inherited madness and is being kept in a secret room in the old house. The room is called the Paradol Chamber, named after the Italian architect, a Signor Paradolini, who built it. Very reasonable!

'the Amateur Mendicant Society'

The second unchronicled case of 1887 was a curious one. According to Watson, it concerned 'the Amateur Mendicant Society, who held a luxurious club in the lower vault of a furniture warehouse.' Ken Greenwald published the first known pastiche, *The Case of the Amateur Mendicants*, in his 1989 collection, *The Lost Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.¹⁵

Watson is called on by a lady dressed as a beggar (but she is clearly a much grander person) to attend a gravely injured man in the basement of a furniture warehouse. The man proves to be dead; and Watson then involves Holmes who, after committing a little breaking-and-entering (he was not averse to that in the Canon), discovers that the 'mendicants' are, in fact, members of a gang of rich people who pose as beggars in order to pursue their criminal activities.

Another version, by Clive Brooks, entitled *The Adventure of the Amateur Mendicants*, appears in his second pastiche collection, *Sherlock Holmes Revisited (Vol 2)*.¹⁶

Lestrade consults Holmes about Munro Johnson, the millionaire, who has been found dead in a street, crushed by the wheels of a mail van. When Mrs Mulberry also visits him to say that her husband, Donald, editor of a City newspaper, has disappeared, Holmes is led into a case of blackmail and

murder. Holmes notices a suspicious-looking beggar and follows him to the basement of a furniture warehouse, which is filled with stolen furniture from Maples (Holmes is certain of this; for, in an extraordinary flash of brilliance, he reads the label attached to a chair leg!). Several ‘beggars’ are arrested and it transpires that they have been blackmailed into joining a gang organized by Moriarty. They are then made to murder certain of their friends. Why? The author does not deign to tell us.

June Thomson included *The Case of the Amateur Mendicants* in her 1990 collection.³

Watson meets Major Venables, an officer from his old regiment now living on half-pay while still having to maintain his dissolute son, Teddy. The latter, drummed out of St Bartholomew’s Hospital, where he has been a student, apparently has resources that enable him to live in luxury. Watson arouses Holmes’ interest in the matter. That leads to the discovery of a gigantic fraud operation, run by well-to-do young men who have set up their headquarters in the basement of a furniture factory in Wapping. The miscreants are brought to justice, but Watson refrains from publishing the details out of respect for his old friend.

In 1996 Marvin Kaye published *The Resurrected Holmes*,¹⁷ an anthology that contained contributions from fifteen authors, each of whom had been invited to write an original Sherlock Holmes pastiche in the style of another well-known writer. Each new story was to be a version of one of Watson’s unchronicled cases. John Gregory Betancourt wrote *The Adventure of the Amateur Mendicant Society* (in the style of H G Wells), and a short summary of it is given below. The other stories all appear later in this chapter in their appropriate contexts.

A Colonel Pendleton-Smith makes an appointment to visit Holmes at Baker Street about some undisclosed problem. In the event, however, he fails to appear and Holmes, intrigued, decides to pursue the matter. He discovers the Colonel hiding in a room near the river, in fear for his life. He tells Holmes that, as a young man, he and several other rich young men had joined the ‘Amateur Mendicant Society’ as a prank, little realizing that the Society was being used by its leader for criminal purposes. Eventually, he says, he broke away and joined the Army, serving 20 years overseas. Now returned, he has found that two of his old colleagues have been killed. Holmes, to his dismay, finds that the Foreign Office is running its own Secret Mendicants Society to undertake real espionage and is ruthless in dealing with any who trespass on its territory. [H G Wells? Did he actually *have* a style? Hardly recognizable!]

'the British barque Sophy Anderson'

Watson alludes to three other cases from 1887 'of which,' he says, 'I retain the records.' The first concerned 'the loss of the British barque *Sophy Anderson*.' Two pastiches of this intriguing but unexplained episode exist. P Smith published a novel, *The Loss of the British Bark, Sophy Anderson*.¹⁸

In 1996 Peter Cannon wrote *Holmes and the Loss of the British Barque, Sophy Anderson* (in the style of C S Forester).¹⁷

When Sir Joseph Porter KCB (fresh from *HMS Pinafore*, no doubt) consults Holmes about the loss of the *Sophy Anderson* after an explosion aboard, he confides in him that it was an experimental ship testing a new 'hydrocarbon fuel' of importance in maintaining Britain's sea supremacy. A German ship was nearby to pick up survivors. Was it involved in the sinking? Not at all. The cause is nearer to hand; for was not Lieutenant Patrick McCool, a known Fenian, a member of the crew? Yes, he was. And did he not envy the command of the young Captain Hornblower? Yes, he did. [Forester? Indeed!]

'the singular adventures of the Grice Patersons'

Watson next refers to a case involving 'the singular adventures of the Grice Patersons in the island of Uffa.' Who the Grice Patersons were was not divulged by Watson and their identity remains unknown, but it has been suggested¹⁹ that Uffa is located near the Solomon Islands. Another commentator²⁰ has identified the island as the great mound on which now stands Norwich Castle, built by Uffa, King of East Anglia, around 580 AD, while another²¹ holds that Uffa was a Watsonian combination of Ulva and Staffa, two tiny islands off the west coast of Scotland.

In 1996 Darrell Schweitzer wrote a pastiche of the case, *Sherlock Holmes, Dragon-Slayer (The Singular Adventures of the Grice Patersons in the Island of Uffa)* (in the style of Lord Dunsany).¹⁷

There are fantastic events occurring on a great mound that was once the Isle of Uffa in the Fen country. Henry Grice Paterson and his wife, Beatrice, are attempting to probe the mystery of a Saxon dragon, said to live beneath the mound. Beatrice is kidnapped; but Holmes, called in to investigate, dismisses the supernatural in his usual way and finds that she is the victim of a man called Ponderby, a vengeful business rival of Henry. Later, Ponderby is – quite properly – found dead and it is clear that Beatrice must have been hallucinating. [Steeped in Dunsay-ish Middle English lore, the plot may seem complicated. It is indeed.]

Denis O Smith published another version, *The Adventure of the Silver Buckle*, in a 1997 anthology.⁵

In 1887, Watson, enthused by reading Boswell's account of Dr Johnson's journey to the Western Isles, prevails on an ailing Holmes to take a vacation at a hotel in the Highlands. Nearby, in the loch, is the island of Uffa. There the MacGlevin has a castle and acts as the custodian of the clan museum, wherein is held the precious Silver Buckle. No sooner does Holmes arrive than the trophy is stolen. The hotel guests are all suspects and chief among them are the Grice Patersons, father and son, whose boat has been seen plying off the island. They are, it transpires, as pure as the driven snow. Two other guests are unmasked by Holmes, who can make remarkable deductions from fishing lines. Hardly 'singular adventures' for the Grice Patersons!

'the Camberwell poisoning'

The 'busy year of 1887' included a remarkable case that Watson referred to as 'the Camberwell poisoning'. [In its 1910 edition, Black's *London Guide* dismissed Camberwell as 'an extremely prosaic suburb'. However, Conan Doyle clearly had a particular regard for this once fashionable but now rather run-down district lying just south of the Thames, for it appears in several Canonical stories.]

Watson, referring to this case, hinted that he might sketch it out 'at some future date.' He never did; but, unusually for him, he elaborated on some of its details, saying that 'Sherlock Holmes was able, by winding up the dead man's watch, to prove that it had been wound up two hours ago, and that therefore the deceased had gone to bed within that time – a deduction which was of the greatest importance in clearing up the case.' In doing so, of course, he placed considerable constraints on the ability of future pastiche writers to produce variant plots, and later pastiches tend to be repetitious. [The proposition is, in any case, tendentious. It is doubtful whether, by winding up a watch, it is possible to know how long ago it was last wound.⁶ This has not deterred others from taking Watson's word as gospel.]

In the earliest known pastiche of the case, *The Adventure of the Gold Hunter*, written by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr,⁷ the connection with the London district of Camberwell is, in fact, removed, for Holmes and Watson have to hurry to a small village in Somerset, there to stay at the local hostelry, The Camberwell Arms.

The vicar of the parish, who consults Holmes, tells him of the unexplained death of Squire Trelawney. Medical opinion says he has died from natural

causes, but the vicar is not satisfied. Nor is Holmes when he arrives on the scene. It doesn't take long for him to deduce that the good squire has in fact been chloroformed by his prospective nephew-in-law, who aspires to marry the squire's niece for the fortune she will inherit. The time of death must be delayed to provide an alibi; but Holmes, by winding up the old man's gold watch, is able to deduce the hour when death actually occurred, so destroying the alibi.

Ken Greenwald published a short story, *The Case of the Camberwell Poisoners*, in his 1989 collection.¹⁵

Rather conventionally, it appears that an elderly man is being poisoned by one of his relatives. Holmes is eventually consulted by one of them and soon discovers that the wrong man is being accused by the police. He is able to solve the case – as, of course, he must – by winding up the victim's gold watch and so calculating the number of elapsed hours since death occurred. The true perpetrator is brought to book.

June Thomson's version, *The Case of the Camberwell Poisoning*, was published in 1992.¹⁴

Holmes is consulted, as a matter of grave urgency, by a young man from Camberwell who, on the run from the police, is being accused of murdering his uncle from whom he will inherit a fortune. Holmes, on visiting the scene of the crime, proves that the time of the death by arsenical poisoning has been cleverly disguised. He deduces this by way of the (obligatory) experiment of winding up the old man's gold watch. The culprit proves to be the resident nurse, who has cleverly rendered herself immune to arsenic poisoning by taking small doses for some time previously, so providing herself with an alibi for the actual time of death.

'the Tankerville Club Scandal'

When Holmes' new client, John Openshaw, arrives at Baker Street, Holmes greets him with the remark, 'You have come from the south-west, I see.' Openshaw replies, 'I have heard of you, Mr Holmes. I heard from Major Prendergast how you saved him in the Tankerville Club Scandal.' 'Ah, of course,' Holmes replies, 'he was wrongfully accused of cheating at cards.' [The Tankerville Club had a bad reputation and, as is disclosed in *The Adventure of the Empty House*, its members included the notorious Colonel Sebastian Moran.] It is surprising that this promising Tankerville Club case and the plight of Major Prendergast have failed to inspire pastiche writers.

The Adventure of the Speckled Band

Not until the tenth work, published in February 1892 and chronicling a case from 1883, does Watson again refer to one of Holmes' earlier cases. When Helen Stoner arrives at Baker Street she says, 'I have heard of you, Mr Holmes; I have heard of you from Mrs Farintosh, whom you helped in the hour of her sore need. It was from her I had your address. Oh, sir, do you not think you could help me too?' Holmes, unable to resist her blandishments,¹⁰ replies, 'Farintosh. Ah, yes, I recall the case; it was concerned with an opal tiara. I think it was before your time, Watson.' [How, then, did Helen Stoner know the address, for Mrs Farintosh could not have given it to her? It seems to be one of Watson's little lapses.]

Jackie Geyer published a version, *The Case of Mrs Farintosh*, in 1991.²² In 1999 Ian Charnock published a collection of seven pastiches, *The Elementary Cases of Sherlock Holmes*.²³ The stories are unusual and ingenious, for they purport to be told by Stamford, who had been Watson's dresser at St Bartholomew's Hospital and had introduced him to Holmes in 1881. Stamford maintains that Holmes, who carried out chemical experiments at Bart's, had related to him some of his early cases, to which, as we know, Watson later referred. All the stories are cited below as appropriate. One such story is *Mrs Farintosh and an Opal Tiara*.

Mrs Farintosh, a companion to Lady Isabel Fleckingham, has had her employment terminated after ten years service. Lady Isabel, because of straitened family fortunes, is having to marry an Italian noble. The marriage was to have been sealed with the gift of a magnificent Italian opal tiara, but the precious jewels have disappeared and Mrs Farintosh is being threatened with arrest. She appeals to Sherlock Holmes. He, disguised as an ornithologist, visits the home of the Fleckinghams, where he discovers that the painter of Lady Isabel's wedding portrait is a jewel thief known to the police. But there is more to it than that. The theft was, in reality, an attempt at fraud by members of the Fleckingham family, who wish to claim on the insurance of the tiara and so free Isabel from an undesirable marriage.

The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb

The 11th Canonical tale was published in 1892. Watson, at the beginning of this case, which probably occurred in 1889, says that it is one of only two cases that he himself introduced to Holmes. The other, which he did not chronicle, he said concerned 'Colonel Warburton's madness.'

'Colonel Warburton's madness'

The first known pastiche, *The Adventure of the Sealed Room*, was written by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr for their 1954 collection.⁷

Holmes is visited in Baker Street by Miss Cora Murray, who tells him that her friend Colonel Warburton has been found shot dead, and his wife gravely injured, in a sealed room at their house in Cambridge Terrace. It has been assumed by the police that the Colonel, in a fit of madness, had shot both himself and his wife, for the gun was found lying beside them. The case is a nice locked-room mystery created by a master of the genre; but Holmes, observing minor clues such as the smell of cigar smoke and a broken pane of glass, discovers that Warburton was murdered by Captain Lasher, a guest at the house, who fears he will lose an inheritance.

Norman W Ward published a story called *Colonel Warburton's Madness* in 1955.²⁴ Rolfe Boswell published another version of this case, also entitled *Colonel Warburton's Madness*, in 1962.²⁵

Watson, meeting Colonel Warburton at the Anglo-Indian Club, recalls that they had met before in Afghanistan. Warburton seems ill and Watson offers help. However, Warburton says that for years he has been thought mad by his colleagues. Watson asks him to consult Holmes. He does so and relates a strange tale. In 1882, on a hunting expedition in the Hindoo Koosh, he found himself in an isolated valley. There he saw descend from the sky a saucer-like craft, from which emerged a strange blue creature. The craft rapidly disappeared and no-one believed the Colonel's story when he returned. Holmes investigates and discovers that on 2 December 1882 the planet Venus made a transit of the solar disc and was then closer to Earth than usual. He convinces Warburton that he did see a craft from Venus on that day. [What did Watson say of Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet*? 'Knowledge of Astronomy – Nil.' Well now!]

Daniel Masloski published *The Adventure of Colonel Warburton's Madness* in 1975.²⁶ William E Dudley wrote a version, *Colonel Warburton's Madness*, which he included in his collection of pastiches, *The Untold Sherlock Holmes*, published in 1983.²⁷

Colonel Warburton, an ex-soldier, has for fifty years concealed his passionate anger against Major Turnbull, with whom he served in India. When he finds that his wife has a lover, he decides to kill himself, making it appear that he has been murdered. He predicts that Holmes will investigate the case and he plants

clues that will put Turnbull on the scaffold. Holmes does investigate, but the false evidence does not lead him astray.

Another version, by June Thomson, was *The Case of the Colonel's Madness*, which appeared in her third collection of pastiches, *The Secret Journals of Sherlock Holmes*.²⁸

A woman calls on Watson at his surgery. Distressed, she tells him that her husband, Colonel Warburton, was an old Army colleague of his. However, she tells Watson that, after receiving a letter some weeks before, her husband seems to have become progressively deranged and has now admitted himself into a nursing home, whose whereabouts are unknown to her. Watson, most troubled, says he will ask Sherlock Holmes to investigate the matter. Holmes, of course, soon discovers the nursing home. Then, posing as a potential inmate himself, he uncovers a plot of blackmail and extortion, instigated by the lady owner of the home and a servile doctor. Warburton, it seems, was induced to believe he had married the lady many years ago and was being blackmailed by her. In fact, she is a bigamist. Warburton is a free man.

In 1996 Carole Buggé wrote *The Madness of Colonel Warburton* (in the style of Dashiell Hammett).¹⁷

Holmes and Watson are on board ship, bound for America. They meet the beautiful Mrs Warburton, her Chinese companion, and the oddly-behaving Colonel Warburton. Holmes finds that Warburton is the victim of a highly involved plot by his wife and her companion (who turns out to be a man!) to drive him mad and steal his lucrative business. Although purporting to be a Holmes case, the tale degenerates into a farrago of a Fu Manchu story that is difficult to follow or believe. [Hardly, we think, like the great Hammett! The story ends nicely though, with its nod towards *The Maltese Falcon*.]

The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor

This case, published in April 1892, probably dated from 1886. It contains two references to earlier cases. Holmes has received a letter from Lord Robert St Simon, giving an address in Grosvenor Mansions, London, which opens thus: 'Lord Backwater tells me I may place implicit reliance upon your judgment and discretion.' If this is the Lord Backwater who appears in the Canonical tale, *Silver Blaze*, Holmes may well have done some service for him between 1881 and 1886. However, when Holmes says, 'There is nothing very instructive in all this. I think I must turn to you, Watson, for

something more solid.' Watson replies, '... the facts are quite recent ... I feared to refer them to you, however, as I knew that you had an enquiry on hand, and that you disliked the intrusion of other matters.' Holmes replies, 'Oh, you mean the little problem of the Grosvenor Square furniture van. That is quite cleared up now – though, indeed, it was obvious from the first.'

No pastiche of a putative Backwater case has been found, but three versions of the Grosvenor Square case exist. Clifton R Andrews wrote a short pastiche, *The Little Problem of the Grosvenor Square Furniture Van* in 1945.²⁹ In 1979 George R Skornickel Jr published another version, also called *The Little Problem of the Grosvenor Square Furniture Van*.³⁰ Patrick LoBrutto contributed a version, *The Little Problem of the Grosvenor Square Furniture Van*, to a 1988 anthology.⁸

The story is delivered in the form of a package to Sherlock Holmes from Inspector Lestrade. Highly comic in style, it purports to tell how a (stolen?) furniture van delivers a piano to Baker Street – with hilarious consequences and not at all to the credit of the great detective.

The Cardboard Box

The 15th Canonical work, published in January 1893, contains an unusual reference. Inspector Lestrade – finishing off the case on hand that Holmes has already solved for him – has written to Holmes: 'He is a big, powerful chap, clean-shaven, and very swarthy – something like Aldridge, who helped us in the bogus laundry affair.' Aldridge? Laundry? What is all this? If only we knew more! Surely there is enough here for a pastiche! None exists.

The Musgrave Ritual

It was not until the 20th Canonical work, published in 1893, that we again hear of some of Holmes' earlier cases. Sitting by the fire one winter's night, Watson asks Holmes whether 'he might employ the next two hours in making our room a little more inhabitable.' Watson continues: 'He could not deny the justice of my request, so ... he went off to his bedroom, from which he returned presently pulling a large tin box behind him ... I could see that it was already a third full of bundles of paper tied up with red tape into separate packages.' Returning in ebullient mood, Holmes says, 'There are cases enough here ... They are not all successes, Watson, but there are

some pretty little problems among them. Here's the record of the Tarleton murders, and the case of Vamberry, the wine merchant, and the adventure of the old Russian woman, and the singular affair of the aluminium crutch, as well as a full account of Ricoletti of the club foot and his abominable wife.' [If the Musgrave Ritual case took place in 1879,¹⁰ and if, as Holmes says, it was his third case ever, then these five unchronicled cases probably occurred between 1879 and 1881, the presumed date of *A Study in Scarlet*.] These are riches indeed and all have evoked pastiches.

'the Tarleton murders'

William E Dudley included *The Tarleton Murders* in his 1983 collection.²⁷

When Holmes is consulted by Scotland Yard over the apparently motiveless murders of Sir Banastre Tarleton and his son, he soon unearths several possible motives. Did the good knight have feet of clay? Did a business rival seek revenge? Did a maniac wish to wipe out the Tarleton lineage? Did a rival seek to prevent the marriage of the younger Tarleton? Were there unhappy tenants or sacked employees? Not a bit of any of all this. The murders have their roots in the distant past, and, of course, in India.

Ian Charnock wrote *The Record of the Tarleton Murders* for his 1999 collection of stories that purport to be narrated by Stamford.²³

Holmes and Stamford are, at the outset, studying two dead men at St Batholomew's Hospital, each one with a strange smile on his face. There follows a farrago about a secret society, an expedition to Mexico, poisonous toads, coca leaves, murders, accidents, and several outlandish characters. The only connection with a Tarleton, dead or alive, is a reference to Queen Elizabeth I's jester of that name.

'and the case of Vamberry, the wine merchant'

In 1959 A Lloyd-Taylor published a short pastiche, *The Wine Merchant*.³¹

Holmes, in retirement, tells Watson about Vamberry, a wine merchant, who had consulted Holmes about the sudden death of his son, Henry, in the Vamberry wine cellars. No agent or blow had been discovered. Yet, when Holmes investigated, some disturbing facts emerged. There was the bottle chosen at random by Henry and then smashed; there had been those strange movements of objects from Vamberry's desk; there was a French partner,

Adolphe Paray, who stood to inherit the business; and there was the French girl who had gone to France on holiday and not returned. Holmes pursued the case in France, where he unearthed the proof of murder, which, needless to say, had been carried out by Paray, using an ingenious corkscrew to inject a snake venom of unbelievable toxicity into poor Henry. Holmes, of course, knows all about snake venoms and ingenious devices. *Sacrebleu!*

William E Dudley included *Vamberry the Wine Merchant* in his 1983 collection.²⁷

Thomas Vamberry consults Holmes about his alleged persecution by a solicitor, Herbert Oxley, with whom he has had an altercation in his wine shop. Holmes discovers no such thing and concludes that this is a case of reverse revenge; for Vamberry, who has risen from the lower classes, is obsessed with Oxley's superior position in Victorian society.

In 1996 Mike Resnick wrote *Mrs Vamberry Takes a Trip* (in the style of Thorne Smith).¹⁷

A Mrs Vamberry visits Holmes at Baker Street and tells a rather confused story involving a case of champagne and her husband. Since Holmes and Watson have been drinking too much and the lady is not only drunk but naked under her raincoat, this version of the Vamberry case is comic but has little to do with the Canon. [It is, however, very like the tales told by the creator of 'Topper'.]

Ian Charnock continued his excellent series of stories that purport to be narrated by Stamford. He included *The Case of Vamberry, the Wine Merchant* in his 1999 collection.²³

Stamford, who is still at St Bartholomew's, is intrigued by Holmes' brilliance and invites him to the house of his father, a wealthy brewer. At dinner they meet Louis Pasteur, the celebrated French scientist, and Josiah Vamberry, an importer of French wines. Holmes is soon able to expose Vamberry's lack of knowledge and can clearly teach Pasteur a thing or two about bacteriology and diseases of the vine. Two months later, Vamberry is found murdered in his own cellar and Stamford senior is accused. Holmes proves that the murder was carried out by two thugs called Brooks and Woodhouse. [These two seem to have wandered in from *The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington Plans*.] There is more. There was a master-mind behind the crime, intent on destroying the French wine industry, for reasons that are far from clear. Probably, Holmes, thinks, a certain Professor M!

'the singular affair of the aluminium crutch'

Since mention of this curious case is made by Holmes itself, it cannot be dismissed as one of Watson's little jokes. Nevertheless, there is something odd about it. After all, a crutch is usually made of wood, and aluminium was then a very expensive metal. It has been suggested¹⁰ that the item was a 'crotch', a surgical support for a hernia or for a boxer's protection, which might have been made of aluminium. Whatever it was, it has certainly inspired pastiche writers.

H Bedford-Jones' story, *The Affair of the Aluminium Crutch*,³² appeared in 1936 and is of especial interest as it is the earliest pastiche known to be based on one of Watson's unchronicled cases.

When Lucy Wigmore visits Baker Street to consult Holmes about the sudden death of her uncle, Sir Oswald Wigmore, and the murder of his gardener, she tells him that the gardener's aluminium crutch was found broken in two by the latter's side. Holmes and Watson journey to Kelmecote Manor, where the only clue seems to be a wax vesta found by Dr Findlay. That is enough for Holmes. With only a pocket microscope to aid him, he can at once say, 'Now, Findlay, I must ask you to have the police institute strict search for a man of Italian origin, about five foot six in height, but very powerfully built. He is clean shaven except for a short moustache. He has very recently arrived here from America, where he spent some years in prison. He worked his way here as a stoker aboard an Italian cargo steamer.' Holmes is able to connect the crimes with an earlier one. The crutch hid a secret letter that would lead to the hiding place of high-quality engraving plates of five-pound notes. The murderer turns out to be a Signor Ghiberti and he is, of course, exactly as Holmes had deduced he would be.

Another short pastiche, *The Adventure of the Aluminium Crutch*, written by Susan Elizabeth Dahlinger, was published in 1969.³³

Holmes, it seems, is engaged on some mysterious case and he has disappeared from sight. Watson engages the Baker Street Irregulars to conduct a search for him. They are not successful, but, meanwhile, a rock is thrown through the window of the Baker Street sitting room. It has a message attached saying, 'If you want to see Sherlock Holmes alive again, bring the crutch to Charing Cross Station at 11 o'clock tonight.' Watson does so, not understanding a thing (nor do we!), then goes home to find Holmes in bed. What did the crutch have to do with it all? Oh, it was a receptacle for a map, which had to do with a necklace belonging to Marie Antoinette. Really? Why this unfortunate lady? Why a crutch? And why aluminium, one might ask? Answers there are none!

Arthur Porges' story, *The Singular Affair of the Aluminium Crutch*, appeared in his 1988 collection, *Three Porges Parodies and a Pastiche*.³⁴ Clive Brooks wrote *The Adventure of the Aluminium Crutch* for his first collection of pastiches, *Sherlock Holmes Revisited* (Vol 1).³⁵

A rogue of a politician is killed by an old colleague, recently returned from India (of course!) and bent on some sort of revenge. The plot involves the use of an aluminium crutch that conceals certain state papers.

In 1996 William L Deandrea wrote *The Adventure of the Cripple Parade* (in the style of Mickey Spillane).¹⁷ This is a truly novel version, being based on the fact, ignored by other writers, that aluminium was an horrendously expensive metal in the 1880s. The style is quite reminiscent of Spillane's.

Watson is near death, having been attacked when, at the instigation of Mycroft, he has ventured on an investigation himself. Holmes, furious at his friend's injury, takes on the case and discovers a criminal gang whose members are smuggling, not drugs, not brandies, but the then highly expensive aluminium itself, in the shape of invalids' crutches.

Ian Charnock included *The Singular Affair of the Aluminium Crutch* in his 1999 collection.²³

Holmes, early in his career, was consulted by a Miss Ogilvy about the disappearance of her fiancé, Algernon Berry, a crippled amateur scientist. It seems that one day he had stepped into his laboratory, whilst she waited outside, and was never seen again. Holmes investigates and finds that Berry's crutch was found propped against the fire-place. Although it appeared to be teak, its interior proved to be made of aluminium. Furthermore, there were some strange ashes in the grate, which Holmes knew could not have come from any cigar. After discarding five theories, Holmes concludes that Berry's death was a rare case of human spontaneous combustion!

'the old Russian woman'

June Thomson published *The Case of the Old Russian Woman* in 1992.¹⁴

Holmes once had a friend at college who was a Russian Count. This friend has now asked the mature Holmes to investigate the death of an elderly Russian woman, a housekeeper looking after various dissident immigrants who reside in a house in the East End of London. Holmes, in order to infiltrate the group, disguises himself as a deaf-mute Russian. He discovers much about the group

before he is able to name the murderer, but he says the case cannot be published while the Count is alive.

H Paul Jeffers published *The Adventure of the Old Russian Woman* in 1988.⁸

In 1893 Holmes and Watson attend a public lecture by Oscar Wilde. They meet James McNeill Whistler, the celebrated painter, who regales them with a 'trifling story' of how a small painting, which he had recently bought at an auction, had been stolen from his residence, although many more valuable paintings had not been touched. Holmes suspects that there is more than a trifle to it. And so it transpires; for, when Holmes investigates, he finds that the motive for the strange theft was to affect the very basis of European politics.

Ian Charnock included *The Adventure of the Old Russian Woman* in his 1999 collection.²³

Holmes, working in the Reading Room of the British Museum, observes the strange behaviour of the cleaner, a Russian woman called Olga Pleshkarova. He observes that she leaves notes at the table of a bearded German reader, who seems very distressed by them. He discovers that Olga (actually a man in disguise) is assisting the work of a secret Czarist society, which is hounding the uncomfortably-seated German, a refugee by the name of Marx. Holmes tracks down and exposes the Czarists, who certainly cannot be allowed to behave like that in Britain. He tells Stamford later that, in his opinion, poor Herr Marx was unlikely to be heard of again.

'Ricoletti of the club foot and his abominable wife'

The last unchronicled case that Holmes mentions in *The Musgrave Ritual* must have been a strange one. In 1933 Vincent Starrett wrote of it: 'the truth may be ... that Holmes' acid humour was responsible for many of the tantalizing cases still unrecorded by his Boswell.'¹

Several intriguing pastiches have been written. William E Dudley included *Ricoletti and his Abominable Wife* in his 1983 collection.²⁷

This ingenious and bizarre tale first probes into the Italian origins of Ricoletti, arguing that physical handicaps often lead people into a life of crime. It is then suggested that the 'abominable wife' must have been of Tibetan origin. The story takes off into the realms of fantasy, involving Ivan Serov, of the Russian

Secret Police, who, while not yet born at the time, also had a club-foot and, it seems, some mastery over time travel!

In 1996 Roberta Rogow wrote *The Adventure of Ricoletti of the Club Foot* (in the style of P G Wodehouse).¹⁷

Holmes, while still an undergraduate, is invited by Lord Duxberry to his country house to help solve the mystery of some stolen jewels. He observes that Ricoletti, art advisor to the noble Lord, has a club foot and deduces, amazingly, that his large boot might be useful for concealing a sparkler or two. Ricoletti's wife is hardly abominable, except in leading her husband astray. Indeed, she seems rather likable. [The story forgets to be comic even after the first page. Wodehouse would not have been amused!]

Ian Charnock included *A Full Account of Ricoletti of the Club Foot and his Abominable Wife* in his 1999 collection.²³

Ricoletti is an Italian boy in London who, although club-footed and penniless, achieves some fame as a boxer. He is attended by Stamford, who attempts, unsuccessfully, to correct the club-foot. Ricoletti goes to Italy and returns with a wife who turns out to be an inveterate thief. Together they put on a stage show, exhibiting a 'missing link', which Holmes is able to prove is constructed from a rare Himalayan animal skin. The unconnected events that follow include murder and various other foul deeds.

The Reigate Squires

The 21st Canonical tale, published in June 1893, is set in 1891. At its opening Watson writes, 'It was some time before the health of my friend, Mr Sherlock Holmes, recovered from the strain caused by his immense exertions in the spring of '87. The whole question of the Netherland-Sumatra Company and of the colossal schemes of Baron Maupertuis is too recent in the minds of the public, and too intimately concerned with politics and finance, to be a fitting subject for this series of sketches.'

'Baron Maupertuis'

June Thomson has written what appears, surprisingly perhaps, to be the only pastiche on what must have been an exciting investigation. *The Case of the Maupertuis Scandal* was included in her third collection.²⁸

The arch-swindler, Maupertuis, has devised a plan to inveigle rich industrialists into investing in a process that, he says, can manufacture synthetic diamonds. The scheme, although fraudulent, seems to be infallible, for it appears to have already succeeded all over Europe. However, the Baron has never come up against Sherlock Holmes!

The Greek Interpreter

It is in the 24th Canonical tale, published in September 1893, that Holmes informs Watson that he has a brother, Mycroft, who is even superior to himself in intellect. Holmes takes Watson to meet Mycroft at the Diogenes club. ‘I am glad to meet you, sir,’ Mycroft says, ‘I hear of Sherlock everywhere since you became his chronicler. By the way, I expected to see you round last week to consult me over that Manor House case. I thought you might be a little out of your depth.’ ‘No, I solved it,’ says Holmes, smiling. ‘It was Adams, of course,’ Mycroft replies. Holmes agrees, ‘Yes, it was Adams.’ [Who on earth was this Adams? He must have been important to have engaged the two most powerful minds in England. Watson never did tell us, alas.]

Edward D Hoch, however, tries to reveal all in his pastiche, *The Manor House Case*, written in 1996 (in the style of Ellery Queen).¹⁷

When Sir Edward White, the African explorer, invites Holmes and Watson to stay at his house near Reading, it is simply because one of the guests at his week-end party has, rather irritatingly, been beaten to death with a poker. Holmes shrewdly wants to know why the dead man was clutching a playing-card, the ten of spades, in his hand. He is even more intrigued when other murders follow and the victims are all found clutching playing-cards. The guests, of course, do not do the obvious thing and just go home. They wait to be murdered in turn. To add to the excitement of the plot, James Adams, an escaped convict from Reading Gaol, is on the loose. Is he the murderer.? Of course not. Holmes soon solves not only the murders but also the mystery of the playing-cards. [Hm! One might ask then, did Holmes mislead Mycroft in *The Greek Interpreter*, by saying, ‘Yes, it was Adams?’]

The Naval Treaty

In the 25th Canonical work, published in October and November 1893, Watson writes, ‘The July which immediately succeeded my marriage

[probably in May 1889] was made memorable by three cases in which I had the privilege of being associated with Sherlock Holmes, and of studying his methods. I find them recorded in my notes under the headings of "The Adventure of the Second Stain," "The Adventure of the Naval Treaty," and "The Adventure of the Tired Captain." The first of these ... implicates so many of the first families in the kingdom, that for many years it will be impossible to make it public ... The new century will have come, however, before the story can be safely told.'

There is something decidedly odd about this 'Second Stain' business. In *The Adventure of the Yellow Face*, which appeared in February 1903, Watson says that he had 'notes of some half-dozen cases ... of which the affair of the second stain, and that which I am now about to recount are the two which present the strongest features of interest.' Richard Lancelyn Green relates, in the introduction to his anthology, *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*,³⁶ that, when the public learned in *The Adventure of the Empty House*, which appeared in September 1903, that Holmes was not dead and had returned to England, the editors of the *New York Bookman* were particularly anxious to see the story of the second stain published. Doyle eventually obliged, in 1904, with *The Adventure of the Second Stain*.

Much argument about the 'second stain' story still exists, however. There is an apparent discrepancy between the reference to the story in *The Naval Treaty* and the story itself.³⁷

'the affair of the second stain'

Whatever the truth of the matter, pastiches of what might have been the other 'second stain' case to which Watson referred have been written. François Paulus P Cillie wrote a short story, *The Adventure of the Second Stain*, which, retitled *The Adventure of the Green Empress*, was included in *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.³⁶

A famous emerald, belonging to the wife of the Secretary for War, has apparently been stolen under impossible circumstances. Holmes readily solves the problem, of course, but the story is enlivened by some fine examples of Holmes' deductive powers.

Marvin Kaye wrote *Too Many Stains (The Adventure of the Second Stain)* for his 1996 anthology.¹⁷ It attempts to deal with Watson's suggestion that there was another 'Second Stain' case before the one he eventually published.

Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope is, alas, once again the victim of blackmail, for the letter that the villainous Eduardo Lucas once held over her – and was to die for – was, it seems, only a copy. The real one is now in the hands of another extortionist, one Adolphus Zecchino. The case takes Holmes to Paris, where he encounters Dr von Waldbaum and Inspector Dubuque, as well as the now demented Madame Fournaye (the murderess of Lucas in Watson’s published version of the ‘Second Stain’ case). The story this time round is complicated and not, perhaps, as Watson might have told it. [Nor, we think, as Rex Stout would have told it!]

‘the tired Captain’

Watson’s allusion, bare on detail, inspired *The Adventure of the Tired Captain*, by Alan Wilson.³⁸ It appeared in 1958 and has been republished.³⁶

Holmes is visited by a young woman who says that, during the past few weeks, her father, a retired sea captain, has been behaving strangely, picking fights, smashing furniture, and sealing up a wing in their large house. Holmes finds, rather Canonically, that the cause lies in a letter the Captain has received, related to a crime committed long ago and to an old colleague, whom the Captain had caused to be imprisoned. The ends of justice are eventually served, for the Captain is killed when his house is burned to the ground.

William E Dudley included a version, *The Adventure of the Tired Captain*, in his 1983 collection.²⁷

An aging sea-going man, Captain Albert Jones, climbs the stairs at Baker Street with some difficulty. It would seem, moreover, that he is suffering from delusions, for he tells Holmes that for years he has been aware of persecution and threats to his life. He suspects another officer, Captain Percival. But Percival, by all accounts, is dead. Even so, Jones claims to have seen him. Holmes’ investigation discloses a real basis for the captain’s anxiety: he is indeed being pursued by a mad seaman, one Hall Mycroft, who, by impersonating the dead Percival, hopes to drive the tired captain to suicide.

‘A very commonplace little murder’

Holmes, it must be remembered, was actually working on another case when the case described in *The Naval Treaty* commenced. Watson relates: ‘Holmes was seated at his side-table clad in his dressing-gown and working hard over a chemical investigation In his right hand he had a slip of litmus-paper. “You have come at a crisis, Watson,” said he. “If this paper

remains blue, all is well. If it turns red, it means a man's life." He dipped it into the test-tube, and it flushed at once into a dull, dirty crimson ... Then he threw himself down in the chair opposite ... "A very commonplace little murder," said he.' [Fascinating, but Watson elaborates no further. Who was murdered and by whom? Posterity, alas, has little to go on.]

The Final Problem

It was in December 1893 that Watson commenced his story with the now-famous words: 'It is with heavy heart that I take up my pen to write these the last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend Mr Sherlock Holmes was distinguished.' He went on to reminisce about past events: 'The very intimate relations which had existed between Holmes and myself became to some extent modified ... I find that in the year 1890 there were only three cases of which I retain any record. During the winter of that year and the early spring of 1891, I saw in the papers that he had been engaged by the French Government upon a matter of supreme importance.' He discloses, however, that when Holmes had visited him in his consulting-room on 24 April 1891 (a rare enough event this), he had offered additional information as to his work: 'Between ourselves, the recent cases in which I have been of assistance to the Royal Family of Scandinavia, and to the French Republic, have left me in such a position that I could continue to live in the quiet fashion which is most congenial to me.' Despite the promise offered by Watson's ruminations, no pastiches of these cases have been discovered.

The Hound of the Baskervilles

The 27th work in the Canon, perhaps the best-known, was published in August 1901 and April 1902. Watson, at that time, still believed Holmes to be dead and he is reminiscing. For the purposes of the story he recalls how, in 1889, when Dr Mortimer visited Baker Street to consult Holmes about the death of Sir Charles Baskerville (this fateful meeting precipitated the terrible events on Dartmoor), Holmes had said, 'I must thank you for calling my attention to a case which certainly presents some features of interest. I had observed some newspaper comment at the time, but I was exceedingly preoccupied with that little affair of the Vatican cameos, and in my anxiety to oblige the Pope I lost touch with several interesting English cases.'

'that little affair of the Vatican cameos'

A pastiche of the case, *The Little Affair of the Vatican Cameos*, was published by Pat Rosenkjar in 1965.³⁹ David L Hammer included *The Matter of the Vatican Cameos* in his 1995 collection, *My Dear Watson*.⁴⁰

Priceless cameos have disappeared, taken from the Vatican safe by Cardinal Crespi, who has since died. Holmes deduces that an earlier Pope, one of the infamous Borgias, had stolen them in the past from a noble Spanish family. The good Cardinal, discovering this crime, has simply returned the cameos to their rightful owners.

June Thomson wrote *The Case of the Vatican Cameos* for her fourth collection, published in 1997.⁴

Signor Graziani has been asked by His Holiness the Pope to bring certain rare Medici cameos to an exhibition at the British Museum. Unfortunately, it seems he had put his precious bag down on leaving his cab and, in an instant, it had been stolen. Distraught, he consults Holmes. Although the evidence is slender, Holmes follows a trail that leads him to Monty Gimble, a dealer in stolen jewelry. Holmes' knowledge of the thieves' peculiar *modus operandi* enables him to instruct Inspector Lestrade as to their apprehension. The story is one of this author's finest Holmes pastiches, rich in information and with an ingenious plot.

'one of the most revered names in England'

Later in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Watson alludes to yet another case Holmes was working on at the time. Thus, when Sir Henry Baskerville visits Baker Street with Dr Mortimer and asks Holmes if he would accompany him to Devonshire, Holmes demurs, saying, 'You can understand that, with my extensive consulting practice and with the constant appeals which reach me from many quarters, it is impossible for me to be absent from London for an indefinite time. At the present instant one of the most revered names in England is being besmirched by a blackmailer and only I can stop a disastrous scandal.'

Although the identity of the 'revered name' was never disclosed, it has been suggested¹⁰ that it belonged to the then Prince of Wales, whose amorous escapades were legion. A pastiche based on Watson's allusion seems to have been *The Adventure of the Two Women*, written by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr.⁷