

A Sherlock Holmes Gala



Sherlock Holmes and the Law *An Exhibition*



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Sherlock Holmes & the Law



Sherlock Holmes, the first consulting detective, emerged into the world of literature in 1887. Victorian readers followed his adventures through four novellas and fifty-six short stories. Escorting them on their journey was the sturdy, reliable figure of John H. Watson, M.D., the narrator of all but three of those stories.

In time, Sherlock Holmes became more real than most historical figures, more tangible than the yellow London fog through which he pursued evildoers. Enthusiasts formed societies devoted to the Sacred Writings—the sixty stories also called the Canon. Within the Baker Street Irregulars, the largest of these societies, members risked expulsion if they referred to Arthur Conan Doyle as the author of the Canon. (Grudgingly, they later accepted him as co-author, with Watson.) In recent testimony to Holmes's passage from literature to reality, the British Royal Society of Chemistry awarded Holmes an honorary membership this fall.

Happily suspending disbelief, his admirers argue over his birthplace, age, history, and education. Lawyers and legal scholars, for their part, have debated whether Holmes received formal legal training. Albert Blaustein presented the case for Holmes's legal training in the June 1948 *American Bar Association Journal*. Blaustein cited Holmes's frequent use of legal terms, his reverence for evidence and proof, and Watson's observation that Holmes had "a good practical knowledge of British law."

Other writers objected that Holmes showed ignorance of legal principles, misused legal terms, and even broke the law—things they imply no real lawyer would do. Holmes certainly committed such crimes as burglary and robbery. Without rendering a final verdict on the question of Holmes's education, we can note some ways in which Holmes resembles a lawyer: some of his clients lie to him, and some complain about his fees; he solves problems for a living, and he has a passion for justice.

Perhaps, instead of legal education, Holmes received training as a librarian. Watson notes that "[Holmes] had adopted a system of docketing all paragraphs concerning men and things, so that it was difficult to name a subject or a person on which he could not at once furnish information."

His reference collection included almanacs, encyclopedias, directories, and clipping files, which he pasted into scrapbooks and painstakingly cross-indexed. (Since he practiced in a pre-electronic age, he substituted a superb memory for keyword-searchable databases.) To find patterns that helped him identify criminals, Holmes relied heavily on published accounts of crimes and trials. Sherlockian scholars have also written of his rare book collection, and we occasionally glimpse Holmes poring over ancient charters and old manuscripts.

Although these less-than-dramatic activities occurred largely offstage, Holmes's vast knowledge of "sensational literature" often helped him solve a crime that baffled Scotland Yard. When, moreover, we learn that Holmes had "a horror of destroying documents," and that he made the librarian's favorite distinction between knowing something, and knowing where to find it out, we are tempted to conclude that Holmes was a born librarian. As Holmes tells Watson, "a man should keep his little brain-attic stocked with all the furniture that he is likely to use, and the rest he can put away in the lumber-room of his library, where he can get it if he wants it."

"Sherlock Holmes and the Law" displays works on law and crime that Holmes might have read and owned. In addition, the University of Minnesota Library has lent several fascinating pieces from the Sherlock Holmes Collections, the world's largest gathering of material related to Holmes and Sir Arthur. We invite you to wander among these works and imagine yourself in 221B Baker Street, with "the wind... howling outside," and warmth and good cheer within. If we must admit that Sherlock Holmes never lived, we can, at least, console ourselves that he will never die.

Mary Rumsey

Foreign, Comparative and International Law Librarian
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ARTHUR C. PULLING RARE BOOKS COLLECTION
RIESENFELD RARE BOOKS RESEARCH CENTER

The foundation for the Rare Books Collection was laid during the tenure of Arthur C. Pulling, Library Director from 1912 to 1942. To quote one of his colleagues law librarian Caroline Brede, the creation of this great research collection was the result of Professor Pulling's "vast knowledge of books, prices, dealers, and his well-known ability to 'horse-trade.'" Over the past six decades the collection has continued to increase both in size and quality and is recognized as one of the finest legal rare book collections in the United States.

The cornerstone of the Rare Books Collection is early English and American law. The collection of early English law, from 1490 to 1599, is one of the best in the country. Of equal importance is the collection of American law, composed of early session laws and statutes of the colonies and states, important documents of the American Revolution, and early editions of such scholars as James Kent and Joseph Story. In addition, American Indian law and canon law are well represented in the Rare Books Collection.

The oldest volume in the collection is *An Abridgement of Cases to the End of Henry VI*, attributed to Nicholas Statham and published in 1490. Other notable volumes include a 1514 printing of *Magna Carta*, a first edition of Blackstone's *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, *Laws of the Cherokee Nation*, printed in the Cherokee language in 1852, and *The Syllabi*, an eight-page weekly news-sheet that was the forerunner of the *Northwestern Reporter*.

Katherine I. Hedin

Curator of Rare Books and Special Collections

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Cover illustration: Frederic Dorr Steele, 1913



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SELECTIVE CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION



Ex Libris Sherlock Holmes

A Recreation of Holmes's Law Library, 221B Baker Street

Richard Zouche. *Juris et Judicii Feccialis, sive Juris inter Gentes*. Oxford, 1650.

Remarked Holmes to Watson: "This is the queer old book I picked up at a stall yesterday—*De Jure inter Gentes*—published in Latin at Liège in the Lowlands, in 1642." —*A Study in Scarlet*
Note: Prior to Holmes's discovery of the 1642 edition, it was thought that the Oxford 1650 edition was the first printing of this classic in international law.

Sir Thomas Littleton. *Lytlyton Tenures Newly and Most Truly Correctyd & Amendyd*. London, 1528.

Littleton's Tenures, the first printed treatise on the English law of property, described by Sir Edward Coke as "the ornament of the Common Law, and the most perfect and absolute work that ever was written in any human science," surely occupied a place of honor in Holmes's library.

Magna Carta. London, 1514.

One of the earliest printings of *Magna Carta*, perhaps found not only at 221B Baker, but also in Holmes's library in Sussex Downs, which Holmes described as "a great garret in my little house which is stuffed with books." —*The Adventures of the Lion's Mane*

Sir Anthony Fitzherbert. *La Graunde Abbregeement de le Ley*. London, 1516.

One expert on Holmes's reading habits was certain that Holmes owned Fitzherbert's *Great Abridgement of the Law*. (Madeline B. Stern, "Sherlock Holmes: Rare-Book Collector," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, Spring 1953.)

Sir William Stanford. *Les Plees del Coron*. London, 1557.

The earliest treatise on criminal law, undoubtedly treasured at 221B Baker. Treatises like this one gave Holmes his encyclopedic knowledge of law, as shown in comments such as "[t]he only drawback is that there is no law, I fear, that can touch the scoundrel." —*A Case of Identity*

The Statutes of the Realm. London, 1810-1822.

Contains a verbatim copy of all the statutes in force or repealed, 1225-1713. An important source from which Holmes may have received "a good practical knowledge of British law," which Watson lists as one of his strengths.

Sir William Blackstone. *Commentaries on the Laws of England*. Oxford, 1765-1769.

A readable account of the English legal system. The combination of graceful style and profound learning made it a bestseller among law books.

Old Bailey Sessions Papers. London, 1731-1913.

Old Bailey, London's criminal court, rivals Scotland Yard as one of the most famous locales in the history of English crime. Old Bailey's reports of crimes date back to 1670; the Law Library's collection begins with 1731. Annexed to Old Bailey was the notorious Newgate Prison, probably where Abe Slaney, the villain of *The Adventure of the Dancing Men*, was sentenced to penal servitude.

Jackson, William. *The New and Complete Newgate Calendar... Containing New and Authentic Accounts of all the Lives... Executions and Last Dying Speeches... of the Most Notorious Malefactors...* London, [1795]

Watson informs us that Holmes's knowledge of sensational literature is "immense. He appears to know every detail of every horror perpetrated in the century." It is safe to assume that Holmes owned several editions of the famous Newgate Calendar, a lively account of the lives and crimes of the most notorious criminals brought to trial in 18th century England.

The Criminal Recorder; or Biographical Sketches of Notorious Public Characters. London, 1804.

Holmes's arch-enemy, Professor Moriarty, does not appear in this volume, because Moriarty kept his criminal activities from the public (and police) eye. As Inspector MacDonald of Scotland Yard tells Holmes in *The Valley of Fear*, "we think in the C.I.D. that you have a wee bit of a bee in your bonnet over this professor. I made some inquiries myself about the matter. He seems to be a very respectable, learned, and talented sort of man."

George Henry Borrow, ed. *Celebrated Trials, and Remarkable Cases of Criminal Jurisprudence, From the Earliest Records to the Year 1825.* London, 1825.

Includes criminal trials from England, Europe and America. One of Holmes's most useful tools was his memories of other crimes: "As a rule, when I have heard some slight indication of the course of events, I am able to guide myself by the thousands of other similar cases which occur to my memory." –*The Red-Headed League*

The Fatal Effects of Gambling Exemplified in the Murder of Wm. Weare and the Trial and Fate of John Thurtell, the Murderer. London, 1829.

One of the most sensational trials in pre-Victorian England, memorialized in newspapers, pamphlets and broadsides, and, in particular, by the lines of a ballad:

"His throat they cut from ear to ear,
His brains then punched in;
His name was Mr. William Weare,
Wot lived in Lyon's Inn."

The Trial of William Corder... for the Murder of Maria Marten. London, 1828.

The "Red Barn Murder" of Maria Marten captured the imagination of 19th century England. Corder was executed for murdering the mother of his child and hiding her remains in what became the infamous "Red Barn."

West Port murders; or an Authentic Account of the Atrocious Murders Committed by Burke and His Associates. Edinburgh, 1829.

The Victorian fascination with crime was stimulated by the ill-famed William Burke and William Hare, brought to trial for supplying a professor of anatomy with murder victims.

The Most Extraordinary Trial of William Palmer, for the Rugeley Poisonings, Which Lasted Twelve Days. (May 14-27, 1856). London, [1856]

Dr. Palmer's trial was described by Lord Chief Justice Campbell, the presiding judge, as "the most memorable judicial proceedings in the last fifty years, engaging the attention not only of this country but of all Europe." Palmer was executed on June 14, 1856 for poisoning his partner at the race tracks; he was believed to have poisoned several people. Holmes comments in *The Speckled Band*, "[w]hen a doctor does go wrong he is the first of criminals. He has nerve and he has knowledge. Palmer and Pritchard were among the heads of their profession."