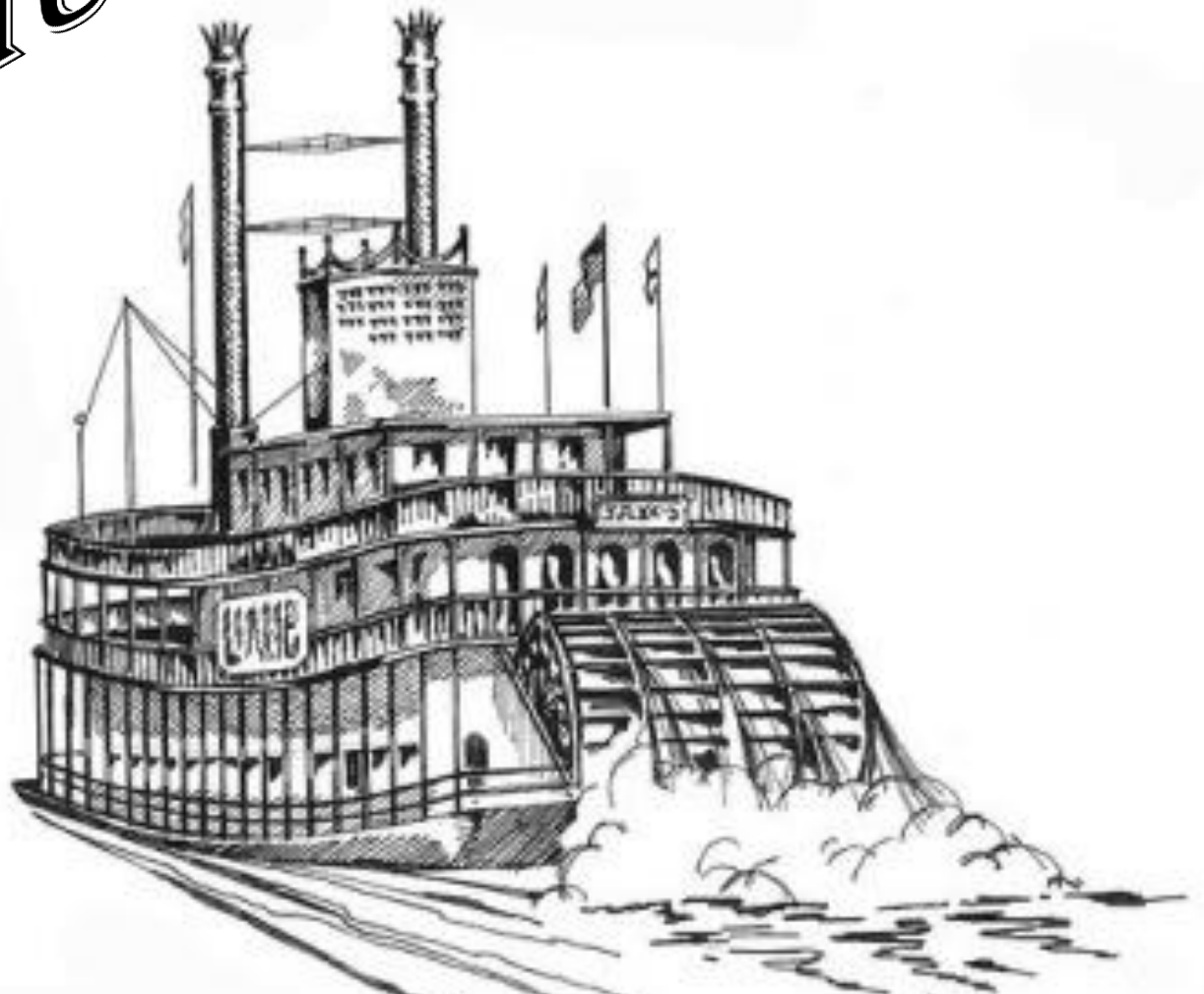


# HOLMES ON THE HUDSON

Issue Three  
March 2017



A publication of the Hudson Valley Scientists,  
a section society of the Baker Street Irregulars.

# THANK YOU!

Thanks to all those helpful people who sent me articles, answered questions, and made suggestions, we've progressed to Issue Three of *Holmes on the Hudson* (and to all those who didn't: nudge, nudge).

At the very end of this issue, you'll find an experiment. When the most recent season of BBC's *Sherlock* concluded, many people had strong opinions on it and on the entire series. Some of the online comments that came my way are included for your amusement. If you yourself have an opinion, feel free to send it along. Maybe it will become a regular feature, who knows?

(The Commissionaire reminds me that our next dinner will be held in the usual time and place, May 21st. We will discuss *The Adventure of the Crooked Man*.)

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# TOAST TO QUEEN VICTORIA

*Delivered by Marc Suffern  
at the October 2016 meeting of the Hudson Valley Scientists*

To the citizens of the United States of America from Her Sovereign Majesty, Victoria, Queen Of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland and Empress of India:

In light of your failure to nominate competent candidates for President of the USA and thus to govern yourselves, we hereby give notice of the revocation of your independence, effective immediately.

Her Sovereign Majesty Queen Victoria will resume monarchical duties over all states, commonwealths, and territories (except North Dakota, which she does not fancy).

Your new Prime Minister, the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone, will appoint a Governor for America without the need for further elections.

Congress and the Senate will be disbanded.

To aid in the transition to a British Crown dependency, the following rules are introduced with immediate effect:

1. The letter 'U' will be reinstated in words such as 'colour,' 'favour,' 'labour' and 'neighbour' and the suffix '-ize' will be replaced by the suffix '-ise.'

Generally, you will be expected to raise your vocabulary to acceptable levels.

2. Using the same twenty-seven words interspersed with filler noises such as "like" and "you know", 'pshaw' and 'darn' is an unacceptable and inefficient form of communication. There is no such thing as U.S. English.

3. July 4th will no longer be celebrated as a holiday.

4. You will learn to resolve personal issues without using guns, lawyers, or therapists. The fact that you need so many lawyers and therapists shows that you're not quite ready to be independent.

Guns should only be used for shooting grouse.

If you can't sort things out without suing someone or speaking to a therapist, then you're not ready to shoot grouse.

5. Therefore, you will no longer be allowed to own or carry anything more dangerous than a vegetable peeler. Although a permit will be required if you wish to carry a vegetable peeler in public.

6. You will start driving on the left side with immediate effect. At the same time, you will abandon the decimal system of currency with immediate effect and revert to pennies, shillings, pounds and guineas — without the benefit of conversion tables. Both of these reforms will help you understand the British sense of humor.

7. The cold, tasteless stuff you insist on calling beer is not actually beer at all. Henceforth, only proper British Bitter will be referred to as beer, and European brews of known and accepted provenance will be referred to as Lager. South African and Australian beer are also acceptable, as they are pound for pound the greatest sporting nations on earth and it can only be due to the beer. American brands will be referred to as Near-Frozen Gnat's Urine, so that all can be sold without risk of further confusion. (one of my cockney subjects rightly said that American beer is like making love in a canoe: fucking near water.

8. You will cease playing baseball. It has come to our attention that proposals have been made to convene something called a "World Series". It is not reasonable to host an event called the World Series for a game which is not played outside of America. Since only 2.1% of you are aware there is a world beyond your borders, your error is understandable but We are not amused.

14. Inland revenue agents (i.e. tax collector) from My Government will be with you shortly to ensure the acquisition of all monies due US (backdated 112 years to 1776).

15. Daily Tea Time shall begin promptly at 4 p.m. with proper cups, with saucers, and never mugs, with high quality biscuits scones and cakes; plus strawberries (with cream) when in season.

*God Save the Queen*



*With apologies to the actual reputed author, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.*

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## A STUDY IN SCARLET WOMEN

BY SHERRY THOMAS

**A review by Jo Anne Fatherly**

I'm a pushover for "Holmes was a woman" scenarios; there's no way I could pass this one up.

Intended as the first in a series, this is more subtle than some. What we have here is a group made up of brilliant, observant, Asperger-spectrum Charlotte Holmes; her shy younger sister Olivia; ex-actress and army surgeon's widow Mrs. Watson; Charlotte's life-long friend and sometime suitor Lord Ashcroft; and, not least, Scotland Yard Inspector Treadles. (If that final name strikes you as unlikely, play anagrams with it).

Three similar mysterious deaths may or may not be suicides, and may or may not be linked. Since Olivia is implicated in one of them, Charlotte sets out to untangle the mess. Then it develops that their father quarrelled with another of the victims just before the woman's death.

Along the way to a solution, the five of them create the myth of Sherlock Holmes. To quote Mrs. Watson: "What FUN we'll have!"

# *NERVE AND KNOWLEDGE: DOCTORS, MEDICINE AND THE SHERLOCKIAN CANON*

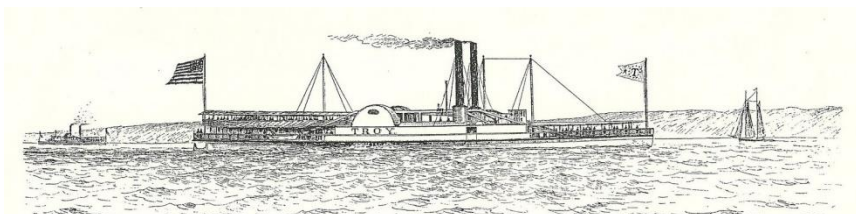
*Edited, With an Introduction, by Robert S Katz and Andrew L Solberg.  
New York: Baker Street Irregulars Press, 2015.*

## **A Review by Harrison Hunt, ASH, BSI**

*Nerve and Knowledge*, which was released by the Baker Street Irregulars Press last year, deals with medical aspects of the Canon. The book's chapters, each written by a different author, address many aspects of the medical arts in Dr. Watson's day, including forensic toxicology, pharmacology, psychology, cardiology, public health and medical ethics. Other sections deal with more Sherlockian subjects such as Holmes's training at Bart's, the nature of brain fever, Holmes and Watson as patients, malpractice in the Canon, and the Literary Agent's medical background ... as well as his over-fondness for the dramatic use of instant rigor. (Unfamiliar with the term? Read the book!) A short pastiche dealing with nonlethal trauma in the Canon adds variety to the anthology.

Most of the chapters are first-rate, well researched and well written. Probably the most significant is Catherine Cooke's essay on Dr Watson's medical training, which corrects a generally accepted statement made by Helen Simpson in 1934: that Watson had to have submitted a thesis to earn his degree of MD. While this was true at the University of Edinburgh, it was not a practice at the University of London, where Watson received his MD. Other particularly noteworthy chapters include Marilynne McKay's ruminations on doctors in the Canon and Marina Stajić's detailed look at toxicology.

This overall fine volume does have a few shortcomings. As often occurs in such joint efforts, not all the submissions read as well as the others. The chapter about Dr Watson's medical practice, for instance, was not as carefully documented as most in the book, and the study's illustrations selected from the evidence boxes of Watson's Tin Box are a weak point. These quibbles notwithstanding, *Nerve and Knowledge* is an excellent study of doctors and medicines in the Canon. It leaves its readers wanting more, and, as Jenn Eaker's informative final essay points out, there is still much to mull over. *Nerve and Knowledge* certainly will live up to its editors' prediction "that many of [its] papers will be cited in our literature for decades to come." It is a volume that belongs in the library of every serious student of the Sacred Writings.





# YOUR FRONTAL DEVELOPMENT IS SHOWING

By Liese Sherwood Fabre

Two very different characters commented on Sherlock Holmes's skull and provided quite diverse interpretations of its shape. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Dr. Mortimer describes Holmes' skull as "dolichocephalic" with "well-marked supra-orbital development." On the other hand, Dr. Moriarty in "The Final Problem" found his frontal development "lacking." Both men referred to the indication of intellectual capacity offered by the pseudo-science of phrenology. [1] While the variation in Sherlock's aptitude might be explained by the person making the observation, the scientific tenets of phrenology suggest another possibility as well.

Franz Joseph Gall, the founder of phrenology, delineated four basic principles of his work:

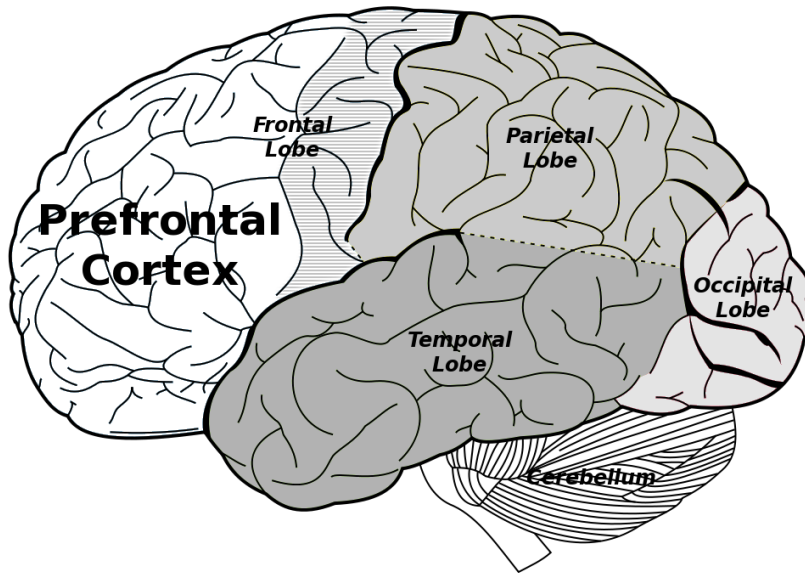
- 1) Moral and intellectual dispositions are innate
- 2) The brain is exclusively the organ of the mind and
- 3) Is composed of as many particular and independent organs as there are fundamental powers of the mind [2]
- 4) Because the skull ossifies over the brain during infant development, an external examination of the size and shape of the bumps on the skull will reveal the size of the underlying brain organs [3]

In other words, various areas in the brain govern different intellectual and personality characteristics and by mapping these areas on the skull, certain tendencies—from aggression to perception to intelligence—can be identified.

Johann Kaspar Spruzheim, a disciple of Gall, introduced these concepts into Britain, and by the 1840s, August Comte had incorporated them into his positive psychology, greatly influencing educational and penal reform in the US and Britain. [4] Comte's approach involved the use of phrenology and craniology (the study of skull shapes) in order to identify and adjust deviant behaviors. [5] Detecting certain physical characteristics associated with different behaviors (either appropriate or inappropriate) provided a means to select out specific individuals in need specialized instruction.

By the late 1800s, most scientists rejected the concept of the shape of the skull reflecting psychological characteristics, but Gall's precepts did have two lasting legacies: the idea of a hierarchy of brain development (the most simple organisms having the most basic nervous systems and humans having the most complex) and the relationship between the shape of the skull and intellectual ability. [6]





Anders Retzius, a Swedish anatomist, used these concepts and his own archeological and linguistic research to develop a European racial hierarchy from the short-skulled brachycephalics (primarily Mediterraneans) to the long-skulled dolichocephalics (primarily Germans). This classification became the basis for the concept of the Aryan race and was not completely rejected by the scientific community

until a hundred years later. [7]

For the knowledgeable Victorian, Dr. Mortimer’s observation of Holmes’s dolichocephaly and the supra-orbital development would have been recognized as representing both superior intellectual development as well as advanced perceptive skills — certainly well-known attributes of the great detective — and calls into question Dr. Moriarty’s assessment occurring prior to Sherlock’s self-imposed disappearance. For the phrenologist, it would suggest an increase in his already-advanced mental powers and points to the result of at least some of his activities following his “death.”

- 1) <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/phrenology.aspx>
- 2) Sally Mitchell, *Victorian Britain: an Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), page 600
- 3) <http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/phrenology.aspx>
- 4) Sally Mitchell, *Victorian Britain: an Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1988), page 601
- 5) Clarence Ray Jeffery, The Historical Development of Criminology, 50 *J. Crim. L. & Criminology* 3 (1959-1960), page 7.
- 6) Kyllingstad, Jon Røyne. *Measuring the Master Race: Physical Anthropology in Norway, 1890-1945*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2014. <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0051>
- 7) Ibid

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# SILVER BLAZE –

## THE DICK FRANCIS CONNECTION

**By Lou Lewis**

*The following is an adaptation of a presentation made by the author on August 3, 2003 in Saratoga, New York for the running of the BSI's "Silver Blaze" as part of the program, "A Brief Symposium Enlivened by Brunch and Good Company" hosted by Susan Rice, ASH, BSI*

Dick Francis is the author of 39 works of fiction within the mystery/thriller genre - almost all of them about horse racing. Although somewhat formulaic, they are well-written in a very spare, understated, no-nonsense style. Francis's technique is to focus on some aspect of what once was known as the Sport of Kings and to expand that into a gripping, page turning story. In a recent re-reading of *Silver Blaze* I was struck by how many aspects of that adventure re-appear in the Francis oeuvre. The similarities are more than situational, they are structural and, I suspect, not altogether unintentional.

Richard Stanley Francis was born in 1920 in the village of Lawrenny, Pembrokeshire, South Wales. After residing for many years in Florida, he lived in the Cayman Islands. His wife and literary helpmate Mary died in 2000. He died of natural causes on 14 February 2010 at his Caribbean home in Grand Cayman survived by both sons. His last published book, entitled *Shattered* came out in 2001. It was a distinguished literary career, which included three Edgar Awards from the Mystery Writers of America (*Forfeit* in 1970, *Whip Hand* in 1981, and *Come to Grief* in 1996). He is the only author to win more than one of this prestigious award. In addition, he has received Silver, Gold and Diamond Dagger awards from the Crime Writers Association. In 1996 he was created Grand Master by the Mystery Writers of America. In recognition of his achievements, both on the race-course and in the written word, he was made a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) by Queen Elizabeth. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1998.

Dick Francis was a jockey, and the son of a jockey, so his profound knowledge of the sport has deep roots. He served in the Royal Air Force during WWII as a Lancaster bomber pilot, having originally trained on Spitfires. Afterwards, he had an enormously successful career as a jockey on the dangerous English steeplechase circuit. He won more than 350 races. He actually rode for the Queen Mother and in 1956 was 25 yards from winning the Grand National when his horse, Devon Loch, collapsed and had to be destroyed. He had a number of nasty falls and had suffered innumerable broken bones when he decided to retire from racing in 1957 and become a racing correspondent for the *London Sunday Express*. His reaction to his serious injuries was typically understated, "I wasn't bouncing as well...so I had to give up race riding." He was England's Champion Jockey at the time of his retirement and, at the urging of a literary agent, wrote an autobiography *The Sport of Queens*, which is an account of his racing years and particularly his experiences as a jockey with the royal stables. Having recounted this considerable and wonderful career I would be remiss in not mentioning an unauthorized biography of Francis that was published in 1999. In "*Dick Francis: A Racing Life*", the biographer Graham Lord, who had known Dick and his wife Mary for



thirty years, claimed that Mary Francis had written most of the novels. In support of this contention he noted that Dick Francis had quit school at age fifteen whereas Mary had degrees in both French and English and had worked in a publishing house. This allegation has been denied by the couple who have always acknowledged that the work was collaborative. Dick Francis had always wanted to name Mary as a co-author but she consistently declined to be so identified. I do think it significant however that after the death of Mary, Dick Francis announced that there would be no more books - and for a while there weren't any, but then Francis established a new collaboration with his son and produced more books before his death.

The protagonists in the Francis novels are remarkable in that they are often unremarkable at first look. They are ordinary men who, when challenged, prove capable of doing extraordinary things. Only one is a professional jockey, Sid Halley, who appears in three of the books, others are various: a horse-breeder, a pilot, an artist, an architect, a jeweler, a vintner, a writer, a photographer, a journalist, a glass blower, and even a toy maker. However, despite the variety, they all are somehow occupations deeply involved in the sport of horse-racing: The artist is a painter of horses, the architect a designer of racetracks, the pilot transports horses, etc. They have other characteristics in common as well: they are fully formed, supremely self-possessed and confident, self-reliant and assured of their ability to do the right thing. They are outsiders with special skills which are called upon to unravel the mystery. They are frequently personally remote and austere figures who are assisted in their efforts to achieve justice by a close friend - often a woman - who is someone who really doesn't understand what is going on until the revelation at the end. A structure all very familiar to every Sherlockian.

Further, Francis succeeds in building a complete and self-contained world for each of his heroes. This is accomplished, not only by meticulous research into each of the occupations, but also by the establishment of quirks and eccentricities that make the character more complex and interesting. Some of the characters, like the jockey Sid Halley, have a disability, often physical, such as an injured hand, or in another case, a prosthetic arm. The disability can also be psychological, like claustrophobia or loss of memory. Thus, the character must overcome not only the forces of evil that are arrayed against him, but also an inner or physical handicap. This becomes critical since they are often captured by the antagonists and subjected to torture and beatings that are perhaps more graphic than the reader may be entirely comfortable with. The Queen Mother once remarked to Francis that she thought he was getting a bit blood-thirsty. My own view is that, as a jockey, he lived with pain on a daily basis and it became a familiar, even intimate, companion.

But let us return to *Silver Blaze*. We know that Francis was very familiar with the story. I was gratified to receive the following email from Peter Blau, BSI:

"A friend who avidly collects Dick Francis has the *Dick Francis Treasury of Great Racing Stories* published in England in 1969 and in the United States in 1990, a compilation co-edited by Dick Francis and John Welcome. In their introduction there is a discussion of "Silver Blaze" with a mention of a real substitution perpetrated by Peter Christian Barrie in the 1880's and a suggestion that Conan Doyle knew about it. My friend is sending you a photocopy of the introduction."

I thereafter did receive a copy of the Introduction and learned more about the rogue Peter Christian Barrie who had been sentenced to three years hard labor as a result of running "ringers" (for those of you who have led more sheltered lives, a "ringer" is a horse running under a false name.) Francis and Welcome tell us that "Barrie's

specialty was painting the look-alike so as to resemble more closely the switched horse, but on one occasion the paint came off at an inconvenient moment and alerted the authorities.” Francis and Welcome also claim that Conan Doyle heard of the case and used it as part of the plot of *Silver Blaze*. They go on to note:

“However, not all aspects of this famous story will commend themselves to purists in racing. It is unlikely, for instance, that Colonel Ross, who had been in racing and concerned with horses all his life, would have failed to recognize *Silver Blaze*, however camouflaged ... But this story is redeemed for all time by what is probably the most famous of all Holmesian pronouncement when he expounds to Watson the significance of the curious incident of the dog in the night time.”

A quotation from Barrie's subsequent trial is redolent of a similar quip by Wiggins: “When asked by the Judge ... what he considered to be a good thing in racing, Barrie replied “A useful three year old in a moderate two year old race, my Lord.”

I think we can accept the fact of this compilation and the inclusion of *Silver Blaze* as proof positive that Francis was very familiar with the story. Aside from the dog who didn't bark in the night - there are three aspects of the story that were perhaps unique at the time it was written. They are:

1. The concealment of the horse by staining and changing its color;
2. The dastardly attempt to cripple the animal by use of a surgeon's scalpel; and
3. The death of the miscreant at the hooves of his victim.

I suspect that the reader has already surmised that all of these elements appear in various Dick Francis stories - some of them more than once.

For example, he writes about the use of a ringer - not painted but a near look-alike that has been shaved to create a tiny bald patch - in *High Stakes*; in the same story he mentions the use of a tiny pea-shaped injector used by the trainer Jody Leeds to disable horses with drugs and, again in the same story, lesser horses are substituted for the great horse *Energise* and of course run out of the money; and in *Come to Grief* there is a criminal who removes pony's hooves with a tree lopping tool - not quite as subtle as a surgical scalpel. A horse nearly kicks the protagonist, Tim Ekaterin, to death in *Banker* when the villain forces him into the stall with just that intent. The well-named Hedley Humber is another horse trainer who proves more than faithless in *For Kicks*.

Perhaps equally telling, “*Silver Boy*” was the name of one of the ponies that got its hoof removed by the vandal in *Come to Grief* and “*Blaze*” was the name of a dreadful newspaper in *Break In*, another Francis story published in 1985.

In his autobiography Francis writes: “People often ask me where I get ideas from, and the true answer is that I don't really know. Books write authors as much as authors write books.” Nevertheless, it is comforting to know that part of the Canon became etched in his sub-conscious and that, in consequence, millions of readers can also be reminded of *Silver Blaze*.

I must credit and thank the members of The Dick Francis Reading Group for their assistance in locating relevant data. There is also a massive body of work about Francis including four biographies and innumerable scholarly articles bearing such forbidding titles as “The Theme of Parental Rejection in the Novels of Dick Francis, Finding the True Self; Rites of Passage in Dick Francis's *Flying Finish* and *Longshot*; Crime Fiction as Postmodernism and, perhaps more palatable “*Dead Funny: The Lighter Side of Dick Francis*.”

Most of the biographical information recited here was obtained from Francis' autobiography: *The Sport of Queens*, Harper & Row, 1969.

# THE LYING DETECTIVE

## Reviews (and Rants) by John Linsenmeyer and Others

“I absolutely HATED “The Final Problem,” and in fact persevered to the end only through a sense of duty as a long-time commissioned Irregular. The plot was utterly idiotic, with a villain whose schemes made some James Bond movie or comic book deviltry look like stark reality. It proceeded from one silly “Perils of Pauline” danger to another; it even included a few film clips of the long-deceased but still vastly annoying Moriarty nonsense; and of course it strained even minimal credibility from the get-go by permitting the crazy sister to embark on schemes, involving preparations, accessories, even armament which were beyond preposterous in the case of a madwoman incarcerated in an island Bastille which made the Colorado SuperMax of the Federal Bureau of Prisons seem almost casual. In addition to those factors, it was noisy, shrill and incoherent.

Never has “Elementary,” at least in my view, come within a light year of being that disappointing. In fact, out of the ten Beeb episodes to date, I either positively disliked the third episode of seasons 1 and 2, “The Great Game” and “The Reichenbach Fall,” thought the third episode of 3, “His Last Vow,” was unnecessarily silly, from 4 disliked “The Lying Detective” and positively hated “The Abominable Bride” with its idiotic plot and unnecessary popping to and from 1895 to 2015, and felt about “The Final Problem” as noted above.”

*“The third and last Beeb episode amply confirmed my [heretical?] preference for Miller/Lucy Liu, much as I like Cumberbatch and especially Freeman both generally and as Holmes / Watson when they are given decent scripts.”*

“Not to seem a total grump, I did positively enjoy from season 1 “A Study in Pink” and thought “The Blind Banker” was OK, just OK; from seasons 2 and 3, I also had a good time with “A Scandal in Belgravia,” “The Hounds of Baskerville,” “The Empty Hearse” and “The Sign of Three” [even though in the last, the actual criminal plot seemed quite silly - the notion that a lethal stab to the abdomen could be contained and not even noticed so long as a military sword or other belt was tight--but the wedding stuff and badinage were fun.] Now tonight I'm going to crank up the TiVo and watch Sunday night's new “Elementary.””

“Is anyone as disappointed with this 2017 mini-season of Sherlock from the Beeb as I've been? The first was OK, just OK, except for the sad murder of Mary Morstan Watson. But I thought #2 was a turkey: posturing villain [though in fairness less unbearable than the dreadful Moriarty fare, whose scenery-chewing and antics I found to verge on the unwatchable - like interludes of running fingernails down a blackboard], turgid plot, shuffling characters. It was only Mrs Hudson who was enjoyable at all. My verdict: an overly self-aware, self-awed fizzle. I like “Elementary” better, even though they have to crank out -what? - 26 or so episodes a year. (And to compare this piffle to Jeremy Brett ..... sigh!”

*“I agree about the Moriarty character. He's my main objection to the series. Also, I often find it hard to distinguish between him and Mycroft.”*

**Please Announce To Your Local Scion Members,  
Teachers, Children Museum Personnel, And Librarians**

The Beacon Society proudly announces that, once again, grants to U.S. and Canadian teachers, librarians, Sherlockian literary societies are available. The grants, in honor of a wonderful Sherlockian, Jan Stauber, will provide up to \$500 to fund the development of a project that will introduce young people to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories about his famous fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes.

Interested individuals and organizations are invited to apply for the Beacon Society's major funding project. The grant period will be from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.

The Beacon Society is a not-for-profit affiliate of the Baker Street Irregulars, the New York City-based group of Sherlock Holmes enthusiasts founded in 1934.

More information on the grant, as well as the grant application may be found at the Society's website: <http://www.beaconsociety.com/the-jan-stauber-grant.html>

With Regards,

Steve Mason

Communications Committee

The Beacon Society

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## THE USUAL SUSPECTS

JO ANNE FATHERLY is a retired librarian who had a career in publishing before settling down with the books. She first heard of the BSI in junior high but it took a long time to find a suitable Scion.

HARRISON "TERRY" HUNT, ASH [A Coffee and Curacao], BSI [The Something Hunt] is an active member of several Sherlockian societies. He has been a member of the Hudson Valley Scientists since moving to Catskill, New York.

LOU LEWIS [William Whyte] BSI is the chief factotum of the Hudson Valley Scientists and occasionally practices law.

JOHN LINSENMEYER is a retired commercial barrister, a member of the Baker Street Irregulars [Tobias Gregson], the Five Orange Pips, the Bootmakers of Toronto, the Hudson Valley Scientists and the Cornish Horrors of Providence, RI. He lives in Riverside, Connecticut.

LIESE SHERWOOD-FABRE of Dallas, Texas, is a writer whose works include a YA novel about young Holmes. Information about her publications and a link to sign up for her newsletter can be found at [www.liesesherwoodfabre.com](http://www.liesesherwoodfabre.com).

MARC SUFFERN is an attorney, gentlemen farmer, world traveler and professional bachelor. He is an avid rider to hounds as well as a Sherlockian and member of the Hudson Valley Scientists.