

BSI Weekend 2019

by Mary Alcaro

I've been attending Birthweek events since 2012, and always look forward to them, but this year was especially exciting. By now I am lucky enough to have some Sherlockian friends from various generations; and, predictably, those years between us mean as little as the years between ourselves and Dr. Watson. You always come to the weekend and discover that you have more friends than you thought you did, and leave with even more than you started—no matter how long you have been attending.

As is tradition, the weekend kicked off on Thursday evening with a reception for contributors to the *Baker Street Journal* (see report below). Following the reception was the Distinguished Speaker Lecture, this year given by Ken Ludwig (published in the Spring 2019 BSJ). It was a joy to listen to his anecdotes about the various ways he has brought Holmes to stage over the years (and how he plans to keep doing so in the future!). Of particular note is Ludwig's own devotion and homage to William Gillette, whom he has written as a character in two of his stage plays. I was reminded at this lecture just how exciting it is to discover that someone you respected for unrelated Holmes achievements—I knew Ludwig's name from his award-winning comedy *Lend Me a Tenor*—is also a Sherlockian. Art in the blood is, indeed, liable to take the strangest forms. . . .

Friday evening brought the invitation-only Baker Street Irregulars Dinner at the Yale Club. In the days leading up to this year's Dinner, it was amazing to see the response when I revealed that this would be my first BSI Dinner. To a person, everyone's eyes lit up and a smile spread over their faces. "Your first dinner!" many said, "How wonderful! Enjoy!" Each encounter brought even more anticipation of the event. A few dear friends fretted that I might be bored, that I might find things stuffily formal or even dull. I smiled at this sympathetic consideration, but myself held no such concerns. Because I, too, am a Sherlockian—which means I, too, was born nostalgic.

I first came to Holmes at twelve years old, an age I've discovered at which many first read the Canon. I started at the very beginning, with *A Study in Scarlet*, and devoured it, American section and all. Like so many before me, I found Holmes's world totally engrossing, a London so near I felt I could reach out and touch it. I was intrigued by Christopher Morley's ("The Sign of the Four") prologue to the volume. Morley wrote about Sherlock Holmes as if he knew him, as if they were old friends. And so because I was obsessed, and because I was a shy brainy kid (and because it was 2002), I took to the Internet to find all I could about Sherlock Holmes. And it was there I first discovered the Irregulars, and the Birthday Weekend celebration that sometimes overlapped with my own birthday weekend, which I saw as a kind of fate. In short, I discovered the Irregulars very soon after I first discovered Sherlock Holmes, and so for me, the two always went hand in hand. I dreamed of the day I might somehow become part of that world.

Friday night found me positively beaming with excitement. I had the pleasure of getting ready with a friend at the Roosevelt Hotel, and then heading over to an event I had dreamed of attending for more than half my life. The evening began with Evelyn Herzog ("The Daintiest Thing under a Bonnet") giving the traditional first toast to The Woman, who this year was Nelda Richards. At the cocktail hour, I was thrilled to see so many familiar faces, and relieved to strike up conversation with so many people I hadn't seen for some time. Sherlockians, I am reminded again and again, are wonderful people: generous, witty, marvelous conversationalists. Friends are soon made and long kept. This could not be better evidenced than in an announcement of the

dedication of a *Festschrift* for Peter Blau (“Black Peter”) on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his investiture. Peter is someone I have always admired from afar, a kind of Sherlockian celebrity in my mind, but also a person who has been nothing but wonderfully kind to me on every occasion we’ve spoken. His friends, it seems, feel much the same. What a delight to be in the room to see the unveiling of such a fitting tribute to the man—and what a joy, I am sure, for him to be able to receive it.

As we were gently herded downstairs to dinner, I found myself seated with a lovely group of gentlemen, one a dear friend of my own, and another, someone I had met only the day before and who had promised to keep a close eye on me. He hardly needed to worry. From the moment the dinner began, the magic had begun for me. And what a dinner it was. It began as expected, as Wiggins, Michael Whelan (“Vincent Spaulding”), ascended the podium to greet us with the traditional introductory remarks. As Robert Katz (“Dr. Ainstree”) read the Constitution and Buy-Laws, I found myself mouthing the familiar words along with him, until soon I was joining in a rousing chorus of “there shall be no monthly meeting!” with the rest of the room. Reader, it felt like coming home.

Sherlockians choose some truly remarkable furniture for our “little brain attics,” a fact of which I was reminded as Bob Katz and John Bergquist (“The King of Scandinavia”) presented the “Eddies” to honor BSI publications that covered topics as diverse as criminal and civil law, manuscript studies, sailing practices, and Sherlockian history itself. Awarded Eddies this year were Will Walsh (“Godfrey Norton”) and Donny Zaldin (“John Hector McFarlane”) for editing *Canon Law*; Glen Miranker (“The Origin of Tree Worship”) for *Deadly Harpoon*; and Leslie S. Klinger (“The Abbey Grange”) for *Peter E. Blau: A Festschrift*.

The program soon moved jauntily through the traditional toasts, given to those patron saints of Sherlockiana: the landlady, the brother, the detective, the chronicler’s second wife. Charles Prepolec (“The Man with the Twisted Lip”) gave the toast to Mrs. Hudson; Bonnie MacBird (“Art in the Blood”) toasted Mycroft; Candace Lewis (“A Little Art Jargon”) toasted the second Mrs. Watson; Bill Mason (“White Mason”) toasted Sherlock Holmes; and Susan Rice (“Beeswing”) toasted Old Irregulars Clifton R. Andrew (“Shoscombe Old Place”) and Lisa McGaw (“Mrs. Hudson”). Finally, Dayna Nuhn (“Lady Clara St. Simon”) led the recitation of the Musgrave Ritual (which this aspiring Copper-Beech-Smith was most grateful for the opportunity to practice).

No Sherlockian dinner is truly complete without a little themed music, which on this occasion was further accompanied with themed military helmets. Over dinner, I discovered that two of my tablemates had been sitting together at BSI dinners for more than 25 years. It’s easy to see how, at BSI Weekend, friends you might only see once a year become valued relationships; this revelation, in turn, made all the more poignant that moment of Standing upon the Terrace to honor all who have died during the past year. At my table, each name Francine Kitts (“Lady Hilda Trelawney Hope”) read and whose biography she shared elicited a sigh from someone seated near me. It’s remarkable how seemingly unlikely pairings grow into deep friendships at the BSI—but then again, we have that most unlikely pair, our Holmes and Watson, as role models.

The evening featured some delightful speakers. Talks celebrated the amateur over the professional, as Andrew Fusco (“Athelney Jones”) detailed the limitations of Scotland Yard, while Emily Miranker (“Lady Hatty St. Simon”) spoke of the original Baker Street irregulars—an appropriate contrast for a group of enthusiasts who gather to celebrate the world’s first “unofficial” consulting detective. There were also guffaws, cheers, and harrumphs in abundance; I was not alone in my delight with Jenn Eaker’s (“Mary Sutherland”) tribute to the good boys of the Can-

on—that is to say, the dogs; and who will soon forget Nick Martorelli’s (“Seventeen Steps”) fist-shaking, genre-crossing comparison of Irene Adler to . . . Boba Fett? (You had to be there.)

Soon it was time for Investitures. This year’s class has nine new members:

Alexander Katz	“Sarasate”
John Knud-Hansen	“This Lascar Scoundrel”
Brigitte Latella	“Holmes’s Alpenstock”
Michele Lopez	“Attenta, Pericolo”
Ira B. Matetsky	“The Final Problem”
Terry McCammon	“Young Stamford”
Mike McSwiggin	“A Seven Percent Solution”
Greg Ruby	“Bulldog Pin with Ruby Eyes”
Monica Schmidt	“Julia Stoner”

A replacement investiture certificate was presented to Ronald S. White (“The Cabinet Photograph”), whose home was destroyed in the Paradise, California wildfire.

2019 also marked a moment of BSI history: Mike Whelan announced that, after 22 years of serving as Wiggins, he will be passing the torch to the very capable hands of Michael Kean (“General Charles Gordon”), who will serve as Commissionaire until he takes over as the BSI’s sixth leader (and third Wiggins) next year.

Ray Betzner (“The Agony Column”) closed out the evening with Vincent Starrett’s (“A Study in Scarlet”) “221B,” which he read from an original typescript copy once owned by Starrett himself, lending even more gravitas and history to an already historic evening; a high-spirited group recited along with him, my own strident tones joining the room’s low rumble. It was a memorable night on all accounts.

Somehow, unbelievably, it was already Saturday. After perusing the Merchant’s Room (a dangerous place for Sherlockians and our collecting/hoarding tendencies), I headed to the BSI Cocktail Reception. I gathered with new friends and old ones, swapping stories from the various dinners we had attended the night before. As usual, Al Rosenblatt (“Inspector Bradstreet”) and Betsy Rosenblatt (“Lucy Ferrier”) gave a witty, timely summary of the year in brief, garnering many laughs and offering more than a few groan-worthy puns. (There are many punmasters, I have noticed, among Sherlockians—though punning seems a polarizing issue. Lest I be punished, I best not reveal where my allegiance lies.)

With Peter Blau in his blue jacket leading the auction for the benefit of the Watson Fund at the front of the room and my trouble-making Sherlockian friends trying to make me laugh in the back of it, all felt right with the world. 2019 marked some Sherlockian firsts for me, but ended as it has in weekends past—back with the people with whom my Sherlockian journey began, in that delicate balance between an old world we try to preserve and the new one always coming to birth.

In so many ways, the Baker Street Irregulars is a group that was born nostalgic: by the 1930s, old-fashioned clubs were not even as old-fashioned as the BSI Constitution and Buy-Laws and rituals would have one believe. (Indeed, the very tongue-in-cheek nature of the Buy-Laws seems to suggest an awareness that such a time had passed.) But Sherlockians ourselves are also born nostalgic: in our rituals, our enshrining of 1895, in our longing for a world none of us, not even Morley himself, had ever really known. Perhaps it is only in our modern and ever-modernizing world that we can romanticize the smoggy, gaslit, hansom-cab-and-top-hat-dominated world of

the Canon. Perhaps we have been trying to recapture, preserve in amber, a world that we long for because we have never existed in it. But I suspect that underneath it all, what we desire goes beyond the trappings of a time gone by, and even goes beyond the thrill of the puzzle of Holmes's cases, beyond the sense of relief that comes from the resolution of those cases and a world returned to order. So much of what I have loved in the Canon is that deep, abiding relationship between Holmes and Watson, a bond between unlikely friends who, over their many decades of friendship, never lost their ability to come together no matter how much time had passed. Sherlockians are like this. If I take anything from this BSI weekend, it's about the beauty of friendships that arise between vastly different people, about how old and new come together each year, united by ritual and fueled by an interest piqued by the unknown. We come together to reminisce about our own old "cases," to solve new puzzles, to show off our intelligence, to indulge our own flair for the dramatic—to embody all that Holmes and Watson have come to mean to us through the years. And in these meetings, the years behind us and between us fall away, as suddenly, once again, the game is afoot.

The Morley–Montgomery Award Reception

Traditionally, the first Baker Street Irregular–sponsored event during each year's BSI Weekend is a cocktail reception for contributors to the previous year's issues of the *Baker Street Journal*, held on Thursday evening prior to the Distinguished Speaker Lecture. The reception is hosted by Steven Rothman ("The Valley of Fear"), editor of the *Journal*. This year's event was held at the Yale Club of New York on 10 January 2019 and was attended by 25 contributors to the *Journal*'s five issues published in 2018.

The Morley–Montgomery Award for the best article appearing in the *Journal* in 2018 was presented to Leslie S. Klinger ("The Abbey Grange"). In accepting the award, Les noted that he has published more than 20 articles in the *Journal* over the past two decades. His prize-winning article, "The Origins of Sherlock Holmes: Crime Fiction before Conan Doyle," appeared in the Winter 2018 issue.

—Ira B. Matetsky ("The Final Problem")

"The Woman" Dinner

Dining on Friday, 11 January, at the Yale Club, seventeen Women stepped up to an easy task: welcoming Nelda Richards to our ranks. She joined tablemates Patricia Izban (2018), Nicole Boote (2017), Nancy Browning (2016), Marilyn Nathan (2014), Elaine Coppola (2013), Constance Kean (2012), Gail Postal (2011), Karen Gurian (2010), Sharon Klinger (2009), Deborah Hall (2005), Janice Fisher (2003), Joyce Saunders (2002), Sharon Novorsky (2001), Debbie Fusco (1999), Barbara Herbert (1996), Beverly Wolov (1997), and Julia Rosenblatt (1979; "Mrs. Turner"). Connie toasted both Irene Adler and Nelda; other toasts were offered to Mrs. Hudson, the Men, and the Queen. Bev read her poem "To The Woman," now celebrating its twentieth anniversary. Francine Kitts ("The Third Pillar from the Left"), accompanied by Wiggins Michael Whelan ("Vincent Spaulding") and Mary Ann Bradley (1993; "Mary Morstan"), joined us to read her BSI tribute to Barbara's husband Paul Herbert ("Mr. Leverton, of Pinkerton's"), who died this year. Later we would recall our late friend Barbara Koelle (1982). In between, in both private and table-wide conversation, we shared stories of "something wonderful," as Connie put

it, and, like those at every weekend event, labored happily at the hard work of catching up. Barbara closed by reading Starrett's "221B."

—Janice Fisher

ASH Wednesday

It was a cold and windy night when Sherlockians from many nations and at least three separate continents flocked to Annie Moore's in midtown Manhattan to kick off the Birthday Weekend shenanigans of 2019 with dinner, drinks, and, most importantly, many hugs. Organized by the wonderful Evelyn Herzog ("The Daintiest Thing under a Bonnet") and Susan Rice ("Beeswing"), ASH Wednesday serves both as an Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes meeting and as a first warm collective embrace of all those who are about to spend the following four days in New York to celebrate Holmes's birthday. The dinner's official start was to be 6:30 p.m., but, having come an hour early to discuss a project with Dana Cameron ("The Giant Rat of Sumatra"), I found a small group already present. By the time the event officially started, the noise level had already reached its zenith. It was wonderful to see so many familiar faces again, and it was even more wonderful to see how quickly everyone settled into conversations as if those months, even sometimes years, between seeing each other were nonexistent.

Sitting right in the center of the far end of the room, I found everyone excited to share news, both professional and personal, and to inquire about the weekend plans. With so many events to choose from, it is always difficult to even attempt to do everything, so finding out who will be where when is an essential part of ASH Wednesday. Evy Herzog welcomed all of us warmly and gave the usual clear instructions as to the food orders and other technicalities before moving back to the slightly less noisy part of the room. It was a joy to see people reconnect, introduce newcomers and, in the case of Scott Monty ("Corporal Henry Wood") and Don Hobbs ("Inspector Lestrade"), make sure that the bowtie is tied just right.

Having ordered fish and chips, I was quite amused by the "newspaper" in which the dish was presented. An article, "The Berlin Wall Falls," gave a short report on the reunification of the two Germanys. How strange to find such a historical reference to my own history in a pub in the middle of Manhattan. But in a way, this was rather fitting concerning the environment. Sherlock Holmes lovers from all over the world were present, and many reunions were celebrated. Without the razing of that wall in 1989, I wouldn't have been able to sit there, in the midst of my friends and acquaintances, in a pub in New York, drinking manhattans, eating fish and chips (and nachos and guacamole), feeling entirely at home.

Overall, it was the perfect start to a weekend full of love, laughter, good food, drinks, scholarship, and discourse.

—Maria Fleischhack ("Rache")

The Daintiest Filly on the Turf Charity Ball

For the past seven years, it has been my honor and privilege to spearhead the Daintiest Thing under a Bonnet Ball (under this and many more festive alternative names) with the Baker Street Babes. 2019 was once again a joy and a triumph, filled to capacity with delightful humans. It was the last time that we will be putting on the Ball in quite this manner. While assuring all and sundry that the Ball will not be vanishing during our sacred Birthday Weekend, we will be revamping it—so allow us to take a moment to reflect on what seven years has brought us, and to thank the Sherlockian community for everything they've done. I'm profoundly grateful to say that our

decision to take another look at the programming is not based on frustration or failure. It's because the event has flourished in such an amazing way, and because our supporters have opened their hearts and their storage units and their wallets for the auction with such enthusiasm, that we've grown too big to manage the endeavor. For this, our endless gratitude—and we cannot wait to relaunch the Ball in 2020!

Seven years ago when the Babes decided we wanted to host an event during the BSI Weekend, we did so for a number of reasons. We had newly arrived on the Sherlock Holmes scene and were too enthusiastic to contain ourselves; we wanted to create an event that would appeal to introverts and young devotees; we wanted to reward silliness and inclusivity; and it was paramount to us that the event be not just for the good of our own community, but for the good of the world at large. When I discussed this initially with Kristina Manente (“Grace Dunbar”), we didn't have far to look to find the perfect beneficiaries: All our proceeds go for the care and rehabilitation of soldiers wounded in places like Afghanistan, where our heroic Dr. John Watson was felled by a Jezail bullet at the Battle of Maiwand. During this fundraising venture, we've also infused our celebration with the motto of the Baker Street Babes: All Holmes is good Holmes, and no matter how you wandered into the fold, you are most cordially welcome in our company.

The theme for this year was the Daintiest Filly on the Turf Charity Ball, and it was an absolute delight. We convened at the 3 West Club for the third time, a beautifully appointed private ballroom near Rockefeller Center, and commenced laying out over 50 items for our yearly silent and live auctions. It's this component that we will be adjusting in future—the storage and transport of so many generously donated Sherlockian treasures has become highly daunting—but as ever, we are so thankful for the items we sold. When I asked Kareem Abdul-Jabbar for a signed basketball and set of his Mycroft Holmes pastiches, he didn't hesitate to contribute them to the cause. Tiffany Knight—who also hosted—constructed an incredible Sherlockian hat, which was partly composed of materials from Broadway shows and was truly a work of art. Speaking of art, artwork by the lovely Chuck Kovacic and Charles Prepolec (“The Man with the Twisted Lip”) also generated a great deal of excitement, as did original works by fabulous fan-artists Marilyn Paugus and Khorazir. In the printed realm, we auctioned four special-edition signed Mary Russell pastiches by Laurie R. King (“The Red Circle”); a very rare 1988 program for *The Secret of Sherlock Holmes* stage play starring Jeremy Brett and Edward Hardwicke; and a first edition hardcover of the anthology *In the Company of Sherlock Holmes*, signed by editors Laurie R. King and Leslie S. Klinger (“The Abbey Grange”), as well as each and every short story author including entries by the likes of Sara Paretsky and Jeffrey Deaver. These and other precious commodities were sold by auctioneer Scott Monty (“Corporal Henry Wood”), in a performance that was both properly irreverent and devoted to the cause.

After an evening of toasts to the war heroes of the Canon, dining and drinking at tables covered in horse-shaped glitter, our famously difficult quiz penned by Nick Martorelli (“Seventeen Steps”), and the crowd-favorite costume competition, we tidied up after ourselves and thought about just how much we've achieved with the assistance of our community. We've met so many new and phenomenal Sherlockians, gained so many treasures and memories, and starred on Cake Boss with a dessert shaped like a bust of the Great Detective (though it aired in Britain, the America season is still forthcoming). But most importantly, we've raised over \$41,000 for wounded soldiers, and \$4,700 of that was from 2019. We cannot wait to unveil our new plans for 2020: till then, our heartfelt gratitude to every good heart and generous spirit who has participated in this truly amazing venture.

—Lyndsay Faye (“Kitty Winter”)

The Gaslight Gala

The Baker Street Irregulars Weekend has many wonderful events, but for those of us not attending the Irregulars dinner, the Gaslight Gala is the highlight. It is a chance to bring out our finery and rub elbows with others with an interest in the Sherlockian world, an experience that most of us have been looking forward to since we left last year. This year's Gala was held in a room at the back of the Smith Midtown restaurant, and was a truly excellent venue for the event. The room was comfortable and beautifully decorated, the staff was attentive, and the food was excellent. The appetizers and main course were served family-style at each table, allowing everyone to share and interact with each other throughout the evening, while working on the clever Mad Libs provided by Nick Martorelli ("Seventeen Steps").

Our host and MC for the evening was David Harnois, ably assisted by the excellent Karen Wilson. Ann and Dan Andriacco ran the raffle, while Debbie Clark and I checked in our guests and sold drinks tickets (the most important job). Prior to dinner service, our master of ceremonies made some opening remarks, readying the attendees for an evening packed with entertainment. A very patriotic toast to Her Majesty was given by Emily Whitten, followed Stu Nelan's rousing toast to brandy (Dr. Watson's cure-all).

After a break to sample the very tasty offerings provided by the Smith, the evening's festivities were kicked off with a Sherlockian roll call, which is always an eye-opener. It is wonderful to see how many people with common interests have gathered from all over the globe, and the variety of societies they support in their home areas. Next were cheeky toasts to "The Woman" by Brian Belanger and to the founder of the feast, Arthur Conan Doyle, by Dan Andriacco. We were regaled by the considerable musical talents of Karen Wilson, with the original song "The Ghost of Sherlock Holmes." We were all happy to sing along, and the lyrics were kindly supplied on the program to keep the rest of us from impinging on the quality of Karen's performance.

We were then treated to "The Adventure of the Three Spirits" by David Harnois and company. This Sherlockian take on *A Christmas Carol* took us all on a dizzying ride as Holmes was visited by the ghost of Moriarty and the three spirits. A quick trip to the Diogenes Club was particularly amusing. Next up were the results of everyone's hard work on the Mad Libs during dessert. Michael Miller, assisted by Karen Wilson, led the annual "Groaner" Cryptic Quiz, getting us all thinking (and groaning). That was followed by the awarding of the generously donated raffle prizes. Rounding out the evening, a toast was given to Holmes and Watson by Derrick Belanger, finished off by the ubiquitous "Sherlockian Twelve Days of Christmas," requiring extensive audience participation (and long arms).

Too soon, it seemed, the evening ended, with many congratulations to our wonderful hosts and the able volunteers. The general consensus was that the evening was a true success, enjoyed by all who came. I would like to express everyone's gratitude to those who worked so hard to organize the evening but were not able to attend: Chris Zordan ("Bunsen Burner"), Nick Martorelli, Carla Coupe, and Mary Alcaro. It was easily the best Gala I have attended yet. Here's to next year!

—Kristen Prepolec

ASH Brunch

Sunday marks the day when people usually start to feel the BSI Weekend hangover—from drink, from lack of sleep, from jet lag, and from socializing more in a handful of days than usually during a whole month. It's the day when any rational person would have a lie-in, enjoy the memories of the weekend, and slowly consider a return to normalcy. The reality for many of us, though, is that we haven't yet had enough. The final event of the weekend, for those who stayed until Sunday and who are up to face another crowded bar full of Sherlockians, is the ASH brunch, organized by Tiffany Knight and Tamar Zeffren ("The London Library"). If any one picture sums up what that Sunday feels like, it is this one of Tiffany just before the first guests arrive.

Throughout the morning, Sherlockians find their way (more or less awake) to The Long Room to enjoy some yummy breakfast, an assortment of beverages, and the chance to catch up with those friends that have been elusive throughout the weekend because of scheduling conflicts. There truly are so many different events, and even when people are in the same room for several hours there is no guarantee that conversation is possible, because there will always be dozens of others to whom you also want to talk. One notion that is repeatedly bemoaned on those Sunday brunches is that the weekend is, indeed, too short to talk to everyone. This is exactly what makes this brunch so special. It sees people sharing a few final anecdotes, making plans, getting just one more cup of coffee before they need to leave in order to drag things out for as long as possible. This time was no different. Tiffany and Tamar were absolutely wonderful hostesses, occupying a central place at the bar to greet everyone and to direct them towards the food and the Sherlockians who were already present.

The room was packed, even though many others had declared that they would have loved to come if still in town. It was a true privilege to swap stories with Al ("Inspector Bradstreet") and Julie ("Mrs. Turner") Rosenblatt and Betsy Rosenblatt ("Lucy Ferrier"), to share travel tips and experiences with other far-traveling Sherlockians, and to recap the events of the weekend. Half past twelve, people began to leave (while latecomers still arrived), and the next two hours were full of goodbyes. Some, knowing that a farewell would be too emotional, left without much ado, while others kept pushing back the time when they should absolutely leave to the very latest and a not a moment sooner. While some had the good fortune to be able to linger, others put on coats and deerstalkers and ventured out into the cold to gather their luggage from their hotels and scatter to the four winds, only, hopefully, to return in January 2020, for another wonderful Birthday Weekend.

Those few who remained, like Susan Rice ("Beeswing") and Mickey Fromkin ("The Missing Three-Quarter"), ordered oysters and settled down on the comfortable leather couch below the (unlit) fireplace. Others, like Chris Zordan ("Bunsen Burner"), perched on a bar stool and promptly shape-shifted.

After being surrounded by so many friends all weekend, this small group, talking quietly, finishing their food, and ordering another round, had a certain calmness. Aided by the setting, it almost felt like Holmes and Watson had just returned from a case to sit in front of the fireplace, sipping on brandy and reflecting on the previous few days. I'm sure, if we had squinted, we would have seen them sitting there among us on one of those leather sofas, marveling at the fact that such a motley band of people would come together in New York City on a regular basis to celebrate their legacy.

—Maria Fleischhack

BSI Poem 2019

by Albert M. Rosenblatt and Betsy Rosenblatt
("Inspector Bradstreet" and "Lucy Ferrier")

Good afternoon! It's Saturday,
The weekend is alive.
We celebrate the Master:
He's a hundred sixty-five!

He's surely hale and hearty,
But if something made him sick
It might have been Will Ferrell
And that Holmes and Watson flick.

Consider how the world has changed
Since Holmes's final case.
He used to ride a hansom;
Now they're flying into space.

They once sent monkeys into orbit;
Now they're sending cars—
And SpaceX says it's making plans
For human trips to Mars;

We nominate the Master
And we think he fits the bill,
Although we hear his knowledge of
Astronomy is—nil.

He doesn't give a deuce for it—
His manner's pretty brusque.
But someone needs to keep a
Watchful eye on Elon Musk.

A nationwide emergency
Hurt salads everywhere.
The Caesar asks "et tu, Brute?"
E. coli was the scare.

The villains of the Canon range
From deadly to insane.
But was there one as fearsome as
The Lettuce of Romaine?

We cheered for the Olympics,
Breaking from the politic,
As North and South Korea bravely
Shared a single stick.

The "V.R." shot in Sherlock's wall
Reflected royal sparkle.
The royals gained a star when Harry
Married Megan Markle.

But Britain has its issues now.
Its Brexit path is fraught.
Will someone find a compromise?
Theresa May . . . be not.

Elections at the midterm showed
What voters really crave,
As polling brought a Congress with
A blue and female wave.

The Senate confirmation hearings
Really raised a stir.
Judge Kavanaugh is passionate
About his calendar.

We may not know what happened
And we wish that Holmes were near,
But no one can dispute, that fellow
Really likes his beer.

Of course, we'd be remiss if we
Omit our president.
The White House is the home of an
Impatient resident.

He really wants to build a wall,
But Mexico won't fund it.
And some insist he's acting like
A television pundit.

We want to see if his approach
Would work at this event.
So humor us as we conduct
A small experiment.

We ask you: Where was Watson's wound?
His shoulder, or his thigh?
We see there's no consensus.
So: Shut down the BSI!

The Mueller team's indicting;
Michael Cohen pled his sin;
And Manafort has jackets that are
Made of ostrich skin—

Oh tell us, master sleuth, which
Individual is "One"?
Through all the dark redactions,
Holmes can find a smocking gun.

We've heard about a caravan.
The critics want to rile 'em.
Some say it's full of villains;
Others say they want asylum.

A caravan is mentioned in
The Canon only twice,
But let us now hypothesize
Our Cavalcade of vice.

Professor Moriarty is
The leader of this pack,
With Windibank and Milverton
And Gruner in the back.

The Count Negretto Sylvius
Is marching with a plan.
And who is marching next to him?
Sebastian Moran.

We even hear the kids are armed!
So Rucastle, attack!
Your slipper is a deadly weapon:
Smack, smack, smack, smack, smack.

Their infestations overwhelm
You see them at a glance.
Some even have the vapors or
Worse yet, St. Vitus dance.

We surely must rebuff them, so
Get Gregson, get Lestrade!
But most of all, get Sherlock Holmes
To cut off this parade.

That Holmes was born in England,
Many take from Conan Doyle.
But FDR established he
Was born on U.S. soil.

No matter what the president
Decrees or might request.
The Canon says an "iron constitution"
Is the best.

If Holmes was born American,
We count him as our kin.
Let's raise a glass to Sherlock Holmes—
A birthright citizen!

Sherlockians are good with words,
So here's a little quiz:
Can anybody tell us what
A stormy petrel is?

We might consult the dictionaries
And the manuals.
But recently, we only hear of
Stormy Daniels.

The BSI convened last night
To honor and to hail.
The toasts were great, we drank, we ate;
Again the club was Yale.

Though Nelda Richards is The Woman,
Please don't label her.
She never thought she'd be a
Baker Street enabler.

A festschrift praising Peter Blau
Was publicized to cheers.
The best gift one can give a man
Who's been here sixty years.

The festschrift is a special way
To celebrate with Blau.
It gave us all a lift because
It isn't his last bow.

For thirty years the menu artist
Never wavered. Whoah!
Scott Bond, the genius, passed the torch
To superstar Frank Cho.

With Katz, we read the Buy-Laws
And we opened up our fest.
And Prepolec hailed Mrs. Hudson,
Versed in anapest.

We thought we'd get a toast to Mycroft
From Abdul-Jabbar.
MacBird read sonnets, wonderful,
But not as tall by far.

We raised a glass with Candace Lewis,
Now we won't forget:
The Second Mrs. Watson was
A feisty suffragette!

In toasting Sherlock Holmes with Mason,
All of us accord
That—even through Will Ferrell—
Our detective has endured.

A toast to Old Irregulars
Was read by Susan Rice.
We often hear of one, you know,
But two is twice as nice.

The pen of Clifton Andrew
Cast a wide Holmesian net,
And then he was the founder of
The luncheon for Gillette.

McGaw went on to host it,
And The Woman dinner, sure.
But what we'll all recall her for
Is her investiture.

We walked along the Musgrave steps
As led by Dana Nuhn.
Then Kitts remembered those who passed.
We'll miss them, every one.

Then after dinner, time for speakers.
Fusco said that it'll
Be time to hear of those who we
Appreciate too little.

Athelney Jones expounded on
The faults of Scotland Yahd
But left an open question:
Is it LEStade or LeSTRAHD?

Jenn Eaker then proposed that canines
Made the tales complete.
They're such good boys. We need to give
Those puppers all a treat.

Here's Toby, as an illustration—
Let us all take note,
And recognize the road to truth
Is paved with creosote.

Miranker said: we shan't forget
The ones whose name is ours:
The urchins and the mudlarks
Whom we call Irregulars.

We turned to Martorelli, who
Proposed a re-aligner:
A character we think is big
Is really very minor.

Although he tried, the Master simply
Couldn't rattle her
The woman whom he spoke of was
Irene Adler.

She really was a plot device.
Just meet us here halfway, gent:
The character we need to praise?
The literary agent.

With Monty and with Saunders,
Henry Boote played Christmas songs.
The audience comprised the chorus,
Doing sing-alongs.

Investitures brought happy cheers
As Wiggins passed them out.
He then fell silent. We all wondered:
What's this all about?

He made a proclamation as
Excitement filled the air.
He drew a breath and then he named
A new Commissionaire.

The time had come to step aside,
Yet keep the mem'ry green.
The sobriquet of Wiggins would
Be passed to Michael Kean.

[sung to the tune of “Just You Wait” from My Fair Lady]

What a night for our Wiggins, what a night!
We appreciate you think the time is right.
You’re our leader, no one’s greater,
Our beloved benign dictator.
What a night for our Wiggins, what a night.
What a well-chosen Wiggins we will get.
Michael Kean will be fantastic, don’t you fret!
He will lead us all serenely
And accompany us keenly.
What a choice for our Wiggins, you can bet.

From Vincent Starrett’s copy, Betzner
Read the fabled ode,
We made our last embraces and
Prepared to hit the road.

We end this here with warmth and cheer
And merriment a-plenty.
We’ll see you here again next year—
Our vision’s 20/20.

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