

## SOME OBSERVATIONS UPON THE SEGREGATION OF THE BEA (*sic*)

by S. E. DAHLINGER

When Gaetano Donizetti composed the music for the opera *Lucia di Lammermoor* (1835), the enthusiasm for the novels of Sir Walter Scott was well-nigh universal. Donizetti's workaday librettist Salvatore Cammerano seized upon the hot market for historical romance and loosely based his plot upon Scott's novel *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). More than fifty years after the opera's premiere, Arthur Conan Doyle penned his own fourteenth-century novels, *The White Company* (1891) and *Sir Nigel* (1905), in homage to Scott. In 1927, when Sir Arthur wrote "Shoscombe Abbey"<sup>1</sup> for *The Strand Magazine*, perhaps he still had in his mind Scott's fascinating introduction to *The Bride of Lammermoor*, in which a brother's fortunes hang upon a sister's marriage.

In Act One of the opera, Lucia warbles the mellifluous cavatina "*Regnava nel silenzio*" about the ghost that rises from the haunted fountain and beckons her as the water turns to blood, a device presaging the Fall of the House of Ashton (*sic*).<sup>2</sup> Lucia subsequently goes mad when her brother compels her marriage to a man she does not love. She stabs her unfortunate bridegroom off-stage and then runs wildly on-stage in a bloodstained shift, bursts into full coloratura flight, waves a knife about, and dies.<sup>3</sup> One would be tempted to call this "Death on the High C's" (even more *sic*) were it not that her last note is usually an interpolated high E flat. Cammerano and Conan Doyle both make use of an occult note in their work: For Conan Doyle, it is a haunted crypt; for Cammerano, it is a haunted fountain.<sup>4</sup> At best, it is diluted Scott.

For Sir Arthur, particularly after World War I, the dissolution of the aristocracy and the breaking up of the old order were recurring themes. In "The Black Spaniel,"<sup>5</sup> Conan Doyle set his tale in gothic twilight. As in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, where the howling of the hound presages the death of a Baskerville, the howling of the black spaniel heralds the death of Lady Beatrice Falder. Although the name was later changed to "Shoscombe Old Place," obviously Conan Doyle once more had dogs and hauntings on the brain. While some scholars also find herein echoes of the immortal dog-in-the-night-time of "Silver Blaze," our Shoscombe spaniel seems more akin to Roy, the faithful wolf-hound in "The Creeping Man" (1923). Roy, it will be remembered, bit Professor Presbury savagely in the throat when that old boy made a monkey of himself.

### ALMOST A GHOST STORY

“Shoscombe Old Place” became the last of the cases of Sherlock Holmes that Watson ever recorded. While it is far from the best of his stories, it is rich in folkloric borrowings that harken back beyond the Canon to the seventeenth-century West Country legend of Lady Howell. Indeed, what with the haunted crypt and howling spaniel, had Sir Arthur chosen to make Sherlock Holmes his spokesperson, we might have had a Sherlockian ghost story from the pen of the president of the London Spiritualist Alliance.

The reader will find Lady Howell, her coach of bones, and the demon hound that runs silent beside it in an eminently readable and well-researched essay by McNabb and Redmond.<sup>6</sup> Certainly, there is a coach, a lady, a dog, and bones aplenty in Shoscombe Park, and also a violent male, a shortage of money, and a devoted maid, paralleling the legend of Lady Howell. McNabb and Redmond made a compelling case for Conan Doyle’s having appropriated and re-worked the old legend to suit himself.

### A GOTHIC LINK TO SCOTT

The spectral hound is a favorite theme in British legend, starting with the hound of Odin, which came over with the Vikings, through the barghasts, pookahs, and whist hounds of medieval Britain, to the more familiar hound of the Baskervilles. Our Shoscombe spaniel, however, is no hound of the Baskervilles. It is a family pet. As with the whist hounds of legend, its howling marks the death of the Lady of the Place.<sup>7</sup>

Although the spaniel and the haunted crypt are interestingly creepy, the fascinating gothic element in Conan Doyle’s story is Lady Beatrice’s leaden coffin. It stands on end, a mini monolith, before the entrance to the Falder family vault. Near the end of “Shoscombe Old Place,” we come upon this passage:

It was an hour or more before Holmes came to *a leaden coffin standing on end* before the entrance to the vault. . . . In the glare of the lantern I saw a body swathed in a sheet from head to foot, with *dreadful, witch-like features*, all nose and chin, projecting at one end, the dim, glazed eyes staring from a discoloured and crumbling face [emphasis added].

Not astoundingly, this is the stuff of Scots history. The story comes down to us in the genealogy of the Dalrymples of Stair. In the finding of the standing coffin containing Lady Beatrice Falder, we connect with Sir Walter Scott and *The Bride of Lammermoor*.

In the introduction to the novel, Scott tells briefly of James Dalrymple (1619-1695) and his wife, Dame Margaret (d. 1692). Dalrymple was one of the

most well-known Scots lawyers and statesmen of his time. At the Restoration, Charles II (1630–1680) knighted him and made him one of the Lords of Session. Rather than take the Test Oath, Sir James resigned his posts (1681) and moved to the Netherlands. He returned with William of Orange (1650–1702) and was reappointed Lord President. In due course, Dalrymple became the first Viscount Stair. Although he made important contributions to Scots law, the memory of James Dalrymple, Master of Stair, is tainted by his order to extirpate the Macdonalds at the Massacre of Glencoe (1692).<sup>8</sup> In 1643, Dalrymple married Dame Margaret, the daughter of Ross of Balneel, by whom he had ten children. Janet, their eldest daughter, was the model for the bride of Lammermoor. On her wedding night in 1669, she became unhinged and stabbed her bridegroom David Dunbar, in their bridal chamber.<sup>9</sup>

However, it is not Lady Dunbar, but rather her mother, Dame Margaret, who is of interest here. It was said of Dame Margaret that she was an able, politic, and high-minded woman, who nonetheless purchased the temporal prosperity of her house through traffic with the Evil One. Witch or no, Scott tells us:

[Dame Margaret] lived to a great age, and at her death desired that *she might not be put under ground but that her coffin should stand upright on one end of it, promising that while she remained in that situation the Dalrymples should continue to flourish*. What was the old lady's motive for the request, or whether she really made such a promise . . . it's certain her coffin stands upright in the isle [sic] of the church of Kirklistown, the burial-place belonging to the family [emphasis added].

By contrast with Lady Janet, Conan Doyle's Lady Beatrice Falder seems to have married of her own accord and to have been perfectly willing to bankroll her profligate brother's gambling excesses out of the proceeds of her late husband's estate. In any event, she was dead before anyone could inquire whether her marriage to his late Lordship was a happy one. It is certain, however, that like Dame Margaret, if Lady Beatrice remained undisturbed in her upright coffin (at least until Shoscombe Prince won the Derby), her brother's fortunes would flourish. Thus, we have detected a literary link between the Houses of Ross and Falder.<sup>10</sup> Let us pass on now to consider Sir Robert's predicament.

#### HOW TO STASH A STIFF

Three weeks before Derby Day, Sir Robert Norberton found himself up to his neck in debt. The only thing staving off his creditors was his ailing sister's healthy bank balance. If Sir Robert's horse Shoscombe Prince won on Derby Day, he could pay off all his creditors, keep his kneecaps, and be in a fair posi-

tion to support himself for life—or at least until the next time he found himself in “deep and rather dirty waters,” swimming with the loan sharks. If his beloved elderly sister managed to stay alive until after his horse won, all would be well. If she died, the horse would be scratched and Sir Robert would be in the hands of the moneylenders. Unfortunately, Lady Beatrice *did* die, leaving Sir Robert with two choices: Run for cover or stash the stiff.

I’ve never been able to read “Shoscombe Old Place” without humming the song “Pore Jud Is Daid,” from Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Oklahoma!* In this mock lament, Curley the Cowboy tries to impress Jud Fry with what a swell funeral Jud’ll have and how sorry people will be if only Jud’ll hurry up and hang hisself. The burthen runs in part:

Pore Jud is daid,  
A candle lights his haid!  
He’s lookin’ oh, so purty and so nice.  
He looks like he’s asleep,  
It’s a shame that he won’t keep,  
But it’s summer and we’re runnin’ out of ice.

Lady Beatrice Falder is “daid” in Shoscombe Old Place, and her brother Robert Norberton, “the bold, bad baronet of fiction” as Watson styles him, needs a place to stash her corpse. For three weeks. He places her first in the old well-house. This makes particularly good nineteenth-century sense. Old well-houses are cool inside; thus, they are ideal for “Bea-keeping” (*sic*).

A well-house is a construct raised over the family well to keep things such as leaves, debris, rodents, oppressed governesses, or small children from falling into the water supply. Sometimes the construct is as simple as a lid over the well. At other times, it is a small out-building over the well (or over a spring, in which case it is a spring house) where people kept perishables in the days before refrigeration. The perishable that Sir Robert wished to keep was his sister’s corpse. As cold and damp retard putrefaction, a well-house was well-nigh perfect.<sup>11</sup>

In the Canon, we are told nothing about where Lady Beatrice was when she died (i.e., lying in bed, perhaps, or seated). We don’t know how long it was until someone found her body, or what she was wearing at the time. Further, Watson just glosses over how the body was removed from the house, thence into the well-house, and finally into the haunted crypt. Ideally, either her confidential maid or Sir Robert found her fully clothed, decorously composed corpse before the onset of *rigor mortis*.

If rigor were established before the body was discovered, her late Ladyship would have been what is classically known to the criminal fraternity as a “stiff.” We can but hope that she put in a presentable last appearance. The onset of rigor occurs four to ten hours after death, and it can take three or four days to wear off. The body freezes into position. If one applies force to bend an elbow or leg into a more seemly pose or in order to dress the body, one is liable to snap off a limb, with a sound not unlike a gunshot.<sup>12</sup>

Sir Robert had to think fairly fast once he learned his sister was gone. He didn’t want anyone else to know she was dead. Leaving Lady Beatrice decently laid out in her own bedroom with the candles burning and all due reverence was out of the question. Her corpse would start to putrefy once the rigor passed. The warmth of the candles would hasten decomposition. Insects would lay their eggs, which would hatch in the remains, and any vermin within the house would invariably start to feed. That wouldn’t do at all. If Lady Beatrice had been left *in situ*, some inquisitive servant would have discovered the body and called the authorities.<sup>13</sup> The papers would have gotten hold of the story, Shoscombe Prince would have been scratched, and the moneylenders would have descended upon Sir Robert’s, erm, assets. That wouldn’t do, either. Then would come the inquest. At least, Norberton would have been declared innocent of his sister’s blood. That, at least, would be acceptable.

#### WATSON’S MÉTIER

The investigation of the cause of death is a matter in which Watson’s medical skills were extremely useful to Holmes. Although Watson passed right over such matters with characteristic modesty, it is worth noting the value of his professional presence in cases of suspicious or wrongful death, such as “The Devil’s Foot,” *The Sign of the Four*, and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.

It might be useful to mention here a frequently overlooked prototype for Dr. Watson, Patrick Heron Watson, MD (1832–1908), who was first pointed out to scholars by Jay Finley Christ in a privately distributed essay, “John H. Watson Never Went to China” (1949). Christ disposed of John Dickson Carr’s suggestion that the character of John H. Watson, MD, had been based upon Dr. James Watson, whom Conan Doyle knew in Portsmouth days, because ACD had not met James Watson prior to writing *A Study in Scarlet*. Jon L. Lellenberg and W. O. G. Lofts went on to make a stronger case for Dr. Patrick Heron Watson,<sup>14</sup> who was an Assistant Surgeon in the Royal Artillery and served at the front during the Crimean War. A more distinguished physician than John Watson, he, too, liked the ladies. He was one of the first surgeons to teach surgical procedures to women medical students in Edinburgh. His surgical assistant was

Dr. Joseph Bell. It will be remembered that Conan Doyle subsequently served as Joe Bell's outpatient clerk.

Dr. Patrick Watson was interested in the medical aspects of crime and was something of an authority on ballistics and gunshot wounds. A doctor with such forensic interests would of course be an ideal partner for a consulting detective. He and Joseph Bell were professionally linked throughout their careers. Both "Holmes and Watson" were called as expert witnesses in 1893 for the Monson murder trial in Edinburgh. Watson testified that the gunshot wound to the head was not self-inflicted. Then Bell, causing a sensation, as even then he was held to be the model for Sherlock Holmes, testified that he had reached the same conclusion.<sup>15</sup> More than one hundred witnesses were called, but the jury brought in a verdict of "not proven" in what would have resulted in conviction, were it not the judge's first case.<sup>16</sup>

Sherlock Holmes's Dr. Watson was also something of a specialist in crime. If he were called in to assist Holmes, he would have evaluated the surrounding scene to determine the time of day death occurred and the probable cause. Some of the questions he might have asked himself are:

1. Is it morning? Are the lights still burning?
2. If there is no electricity, how far have the candles burned down?
3. Are the shades up or down? Is this consistent with the time of day?
4. If a meal is set out, which meal is it? Is the food fresh? Hot? Cold? Full of maggots or insect larvae?
5. What is the medical history of the deceased?
6. What is the temperature and approximate humidity of the room?
7. Is the window open? Is cold air blowing on the body?
8. Is rigor present?
9. Was the body interrupted in a task?
10. Was it exposed to water?
11. Are there signs of a struggle?
12. Is the blood on the scene (if any) wet or dry?
13. The classic: Is there an odor of almonds in a drinking-glass or teacup?
14. What is the probable cause of death? Is this consistent with the findings of the autopsy?

The answers to some of those would establish the approximate time and manner of death. Watson, however, did not examine Lady Beatrice's body in her bedroom. Sir Robert had removed it before Holmes and Watson arrived.

## WELL, WHY NOT?

Breaking the body down *in situ* and carrying it out of the house piecemeal would have been the practical approach, but Norberton and Norlett didn't have power saws or plastic lawn bags at their disposal. If they had used a saw, blood would have been everywhere. Besides, Sir Robert didn't want to dismantle his sister's body. He simply wanted to hide it.

Walling her up would not work because Norberton would want to dig her out again for eventual proper burial; thus, he would not encase her deeply enough. While the body, deprived of air, might have mummified over time, Lady Beatrice was a dropsy victim. Odors and liquids would ooze out of the plaster and create unpleasant attention for a long, *long* time. Here, one is reminded of Hamlet's advice to Claudius after the accidental stabbing of Polonius (Act IV, sc. iv): "But, indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby."

The baronet's first job was to get the body out of the house. Sir Robert had never seen a Marx Brothers movie or Liz Taylor's *Cleopatra*, so he probably didn't roll up Lady Beatrice in a rug and try to sneak her past the servants. One suspects that Norberton and Norlett simply picked her up, sheet and all,<sup>17</sup> and made a beeline for the old well-house, as soon as they heard snores from the servants' wing.

There were other options: Burn the body; dig a grave; dump her in the woods; or throw the lady in the lake. Let us consider these methods in turn.

*Plan A: Burn the body.* The boy who swept the furnace found a bone that Watson identified as the upper condyle of a human femur<sup>18</sup>; yet, the heat of a country house furnace is not sufficient to all-but-destroy a corpse. A body that is cremated is burned at a heat of more than 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit for more than three hours. Charred pieces of skull, teeth, and other bones usually remain, from which experts have detected evidence of stabbings, shootings, and blunt injuries. The kind of heat an old-fashioned furnace generated would not have destroyed the body.

*Plan B: Dig a grave.* Although we learn in the wonderful mystery play *Sleuth* that we are nearer a murderer's heart in his back garden than anywhere else on earth, burying a corpse near the house is *not* a good plan. A new garden patch, water lily pond, or cesspool would be instantly suspect, as would the sudden appearance of a new outbuilding floor or sewer drain. If the body was buried in a shallow grave, animals would get at it, or rain would uncover the corpse. Digging a proper 8' x 6' x 4' grave is hard work. Neither Norberton nor Norlett would fancy it.

*Plan C: Dump her in the woods.* Shoscombe Old Place is in Shoscombe Park, a country estate. Let us assume for the sake of discussion that there is forest

cover—a wilderness area, a shooting preserve, or some such. When a body is placed on the ground outdoors, the plants under the body begin to die. They dry out, rather than putrefy. As plants go through fairly rigid cycles of growth and decay, the condition of the plants surrounding and under the body (if it were not moved) would help Holmes and Watson estimate the time and season the body was placed there, but not the time of death.

If Norberton and Norlett had carried the body outdoors and left it in such a wooded area, unless Sir Robert smashed in his sister's face with a shovel, dismembered her body, and buried the head and hands elsewhere, identification of the corpse would eventually follow, once a groundskeeper or a spaniel found it. Show dogs were not kept penned and pampered in the good old days—they were allowed to roam around like normal dogs. (See, for example, the writings of Albert Payson Terhune, whose famous show collies were always off for some mad frolic in the woods or rolling in carrion for the pure joy of it.)

Sooner or later, the corpse, or a part of it, would be discovered. One can almost hear the gnarled old game warden stiffly bending down to chat up a Shoscombe spaniel: “Ere! Nice doggie. Wot’s that you’ve got? A lovely bit o’ sausage? Oh, me Gawd, it’s ’er Ladyship’s finger! It’s a-wearin’ ’er ring.”

While her Ladyship’s pet spaniel was tied up on a lead at the Green Dragon, it is well to remember that there were other spaniels of the Shoscombe strain. Also, any other small, carnivorous animal might have gnawed off a “charming” souvenir for a groundskeeper to find.

*Plan D: Throw the lady in the lake.* Any Englishman raised on Malory might naturally think of tossing the lady into the lake, but the eventual funeral would be very much a closed casket affair. In a lake, the body would start to putrefy, although the onset of rigor would be delayed by the coldness of the lake water. If the abdomen and intestines were gutted, the body wouldn’t float. Sir Robert wouldn’t have gutted Lady Beatrice, but he would have wanted to weigh down the corpse, which otherwise would have risen, typically in eight to ten days. If he were lucky, she might have remained submerged for two to three weeks, depending on the coldness of the lake water.

The corpse would, of course, eventually be stripped down to bones. Although fish and freshwater turtles might strip flesh away from the corpse, they could leave marks resembling gunshots, stabbings, or ripped skin. Here, an experienced physician like Watson would have been of great service. If there was little current, and no fisherman accidentally hooked the skull, the body might have remained undetected until after the race. However, a spaniel might smell the rotting flesh (even under the water) and paddle on out to investigate.

We can easily see why none of these scenarios would work especially well. Had Holmes and Watson come upon the corpse in any of those settings, the



basic questions, *in situ*, would have been similar to those Watson asked indoors, with a few Holmesian observations about weather conditions, plant growth, and animal molestation of the corpse.

#### BACK TO THE CASE AT HAND

Thus, Sir Robert chose wisely in moving his sister's body to the well-house, which was cool and unfrequented. Then, he made two moves that make very little sense. First, he gave away his sister's dog, which caused a negative commentary among the family retainers and the staff of the training stable. Next, he moved the body down to the family crypt even though he had given the dog away. One would ask why he bothered moving the corpse at all, unless he feared that the smell would be noticeable that close to the house. Note that the dog had already picked this up. When the spaniel howled to be near its mistress, it was operating on scent alone. Sir Robert's odd behavior had been noticed by his chief trainer, John Mason, a man who already had a great deal on his mind with the upcoming race and a promising colt to train. Mason's statement to Holmes caused the detective to suspect foul play.

When Holmes suggests to Watson, "Let us suppose, Watson . . . that Sir Robert has done away with his sister," Watson, knowing Sir Robert's class, replied, "My dear Holmes, it is out of the question." Exactly why Watson should have jumped to this conclusion is difficult to understand. Watson knew about Count Negretto Sylvius ("The Mazarin Stone") and had met Baron Gruner ("The Illustrious Client"). Although, as Dakin mentioned in *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary*,<sup>19</sup> even if Watson's simple soul felt that persons in *Almanach de Gotha* were capable of deeds unknown to persons in Debrett, what about Sir George Burnwell, old Baron Dowson, Rodger Baskerville, or John Clay?

The late W. W. Robson, in *The Oxford Sherlock Holmes*, remarked that Watson's disclaimer cannot have been snobbery, since his notes abound in aristocratic miscreants.<sup>20</sup> Here, Watson is depicting himself as a Derby plunger, hoping against hope that the horse won't be scratched, as would happen if Norberton were arrested and his creditors foreclosed. Hence, Watson's rather wooden response, "I can make nothing of it" in response to Holmes's "vaguely sinister flavour."

Holmes has obviously immediately thought about the lake as a possible repository for a corpse. Note that Holmes and Watson packed their fishing-gear to bring along to the Green Dragon. There, the host told Holmes and Watson not to go fishing for pike in the lake because of Sir Robert's treatment of touts. Yet, it was the "lack of spoon-bait for jack" (young pike) that absolved Holmes and Watson from the next day's fishing<sup>21</sup> and led to their taking the Shoscombe spaniel out for walkies to the gates of Shoscombe Old Park.

### WALKIES WITH THE SPANIEL

As Norlett drove out, disguised *cap-à-pie* as Lady Beatrice in her rugs and shawls, Watson stopped the carriage. Holmes let the spaniel off its lead, and the dog eagerly sprang up the step to greet its mistress; yet, when it was close enough to detect the smell of the disguised Norlett, it became enraged at the substitution. Here, the spaniel resembles Roy, Presbury's wolfhound, who attacked because his master didn't smell right. Obviously the Shoscombe spaniel did not like begin fooled by Norlett: It barked and tried to bite him.

As the carriage drove off, something singular happened. The dog did not chase after it, nor did it high-tail it back to Shoscombe Old Place. Instead, the spaniel allowed Sherlock Holmes, a stranger, to fasten on its lead<sup>22</sup> and take it quietly back to the Green Dragon, where the owner said that he had to keep it tied up, because "it would be off to the Hall in a jiffy" if given its head. Not this time. Remarkably, the dog stood stock-still for Sherlock Holmes.

### NO GHOSTS NEED APPLY

On the same evening, "pitch-dark and without a moon," Holmes and Watson met a tall dark figure at the park gates: their London acquaintance, Mr. Mason. They'd walked, or been driven over, from the Green Dragon, and now followed Mason about a quarter-mile over the grasslands until the ancient chapel loomed up before them in complete darkness. They entered through a broken gap, stumbled among heaps of loose masonry, picked their way to a steep staircase going down to the "haunted" crypt, and only when they descended the stairs did Mason think to strike a *match* to illuminate the melancholy scene! While Sherlock Holmes "had powers, carefully cultivated, of seeing in the dark," what about Mason or poor Watson, with his game leg? They could have pitched headlong and broken their necks.<sup>23</sup>

Once in the crypt, Holmes lit his own lantern and began a systematic examination of the coffins. This led to the discovery of Lady Beatrice in her standing coffin. Once Holmes and Watson had discovered her whereabouts, they were interrupted by Sir Robert. Leaving her late Ladyship as they found her, they attended upon the baronet at Shoscombe Hall. It was decided that the horse, Shoscombe Prince, would be allowed to run, and Watson was happy. He stood to win a little something on that race.

Watson tells us in "Shoscombe Old Place," "I pay for [racing] with about half my wound pension." Robson reminds us in a footnote<sup>24</sup> that this is a typical exaggeration in the style of the period; Dakin concurs.<sup>25</sup> But there are other arguments, too. Dr. William Palmer, a murderer executed in 1855, was addicted to gambling.<sup>26</sup> This might be taken as a sly Holmesian admonition to Watson (in "The Speckled Band") to curb that particular vice. H. W. Bell suggested that

Holmes's locking up of Watson's cheque-book in "The Dancing Men" was to keep all of Watson's money from falling into the hands of the bookies.<sup>27</sup> Brend took a similarly dim view when he suggested that Watson's decampments from Baker Street were linked to his gambling excesses.<sup>28</sup> Susan Rice went a step further when she ascribed Flitcraft syndrome to Watson in a fascinating article. Flitcraft, it may be remembered, was the man on whom a beam almost fell in *The Maltese Falcon*. The trauma of almost being killed caused him to become a different person, although one with many of his former habits. Rice postulated that the traumatic effect of losing both his best friend and his wife caused Watson to become a gambler, as a response to his realization of the horrifying caprice of existence.<sup>29</sup> When Holmes returned in 1894, Watson became himself once more, yet still struggled with the urge to gamble. As with Holmes's drug use, the fiend was not dead, but sleeping.

One might well agree with Robson and Dakin that the exaggeration "half my wound pension" is satiric. By the time Watson published "Shoscombe Old Place," he was well established as Holmes's chronicler, and his tiny wound pension probably represented a very small percentage of his bank balance.

#### WE GOT THE HORSE RIGHT HERE

The most convincing chronological argument put forth to date for "Shoscombe Old Place" was advanced by Wayne and Francine Swift.<sup>30</sup> The Swifts make an eminently arguable case for 1887, the only year in which a previously un-raced colt ran the Derby and won it. The colt was Merry Hampton, owned by a breakneck, daredevil gentleman rider known as Mr. Abington. His horse had been in training in Berkshire, just like Shoscombe Prince, before being shipped to Newmarket. Like Norberton, Abington had been bankrolled by his family to buy his first horses. The Derby win was a sensation, although the horse performed in a lackluster fashion thereafter. He was not much better at stud, but passed his genes down through several generations to the great champion Man O' War.

Despite Norberton's irregularities about registering his sister's death, he made out very well from the race, thus bringing us back full circle to Sir Walter Scott and Dame Margaret Dalrymple. Like Dame Margaret, whose family prospered when they left her undisturbed in her standing coffin, Lady Beatrice watched over her brother as well.

#### NOTES

1. "The Adventure of Shoscombe Abbey" was the original title of the manuscript.

2. At least, today she does. In the original ending she is led off by the chorus and, in the concluding *scena*, her lover Edgardo gets the bad news that his Lucy is no more, stabs himself, and joins her. Many sopranos and conductors love this opera, because not one, but two, tenors die in it.
3. While a case might be made for a borrowing from Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," nobody is buried alive at Shoscombe Old Place, unless it is Norberton, up to his neck in debts to the loan sharks.
4. Ghosts in the first act of a *bel canto* opera generally mean curtains for the soprano. An opera button of twenty years ago read: "Lucia—another senseless tragedy," which just about sums up the dippy plot. Of all the Scott novels set to music, *Lucia* is the one that holds the stage today. We no longer hear such as Sullivan's *Ivanhoe*, Bizet's *Jolie Fille de Perth*, Maerchner's *Templer und Juden* (a German version of *Ivanhoe*), or Balfe's *Il Talismmo*, except in the rare concert excerpt or festival exhumation.
5. The second of its three titles. It was felt that "Shoscombe Abbey" was a shade too close to the "Abbey Grange."
6. Janice McNabb and Chris Redmond, "Death Comes as the End: Bones and Spirits in the Last Sherlock Holmes Story," *A Singular Set of People*, Marlene Aig and David Galerstein, eds., New York: Magico Magazine, 1990, pp. 93-103.
7. This little spaniel couldn't *possibly* be the issue of the hound and Dr. Mortimer's spaniel—whoever heard of a warm, lovable harbinger of doom?
8. Thirty-eight members of the clan were killed. Their Chief was murdered rising from his bed, and his wife, who had her fingers bitten off for her rings, was driven naked out of her house to die in the snow.
9. He lived, but she died a month later.
10. There are also a Gilchrist and a Dunbar connected with the Dalrymples. A Gilchrist figures prominently in "The Three Students," as a Dunbar does in "Thor Bridge." Colonel Ross, of course, is a character in "Silver Blaze."
11. In the mid-nineteenth century there were sanitary improvements in England, triggered by the Prince Consort's renovations to Windsor. A country house as grand as Shoscombe would have had running water, brought by steam-pump from the well or the lake, with the "old well-house" itself as a back-up for fresh water supply. If Shoscombe had had an unfrequented "old ice-house," Lady Bea would have "kept" slightly better.
12. Usually, it is the corpse's limb, rather than one's own.
13. As Joseph W. Moran wrote, it is peculiar that the doctor never paid a house-call on a patient suffering from dropsy and a heart condition. See "The Curious Incident of the 'Doc' in the Daytime," in *A Singular Set of People*, pp. 116-117.

14. Jon Lellenberg and W. O. G. Lofts, "John H(eron) Watson, M.D.," *BAKER STREET JOURNAL*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (June 1980), pp. 83-85.
15. *The Morning Leader* (London), December 1893, p. 5.
16. Irving Wallace, "Sherlock Holmes," *The Fabulous Originals*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955, pp. 39-40.
17. The body was found in a sheet within the coffin.
18. The good doctor probably meant to write "the upper part of the condyle of a human femur," meaning that that section of the femur had survived the fire. We know he passed his courses in anatomy.
19. D. Martin Dakin, *A Sherlock Holmes Commentary*, New York: Drake Publishers, Inc., 1972, pp. 79, 86-87, 171-172, 180, 259, 282-284, as further discussed.
20. W. W. Robson, ed., *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 287.
21. Al Silverstein, "The Most Singular Feature of Shoscombe Old Place," *BAKER STREET JOURNAL*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (March 1981), p. 37. He observes: "Holmes . . . himself quotes early on. 'These are deep waters, Mr Mason: deep and rather dirty.' How good could the fishing be?"
22. Holmes fastens the lead not to the dog's collar, but to its neck, according to Watson. Did he slip a noose of some kind about the creature's throat to subdue it and drag it back home? We may never know.
23. Were this case actually going to devolve into a gothic "tale from the crypt," one of these people should have been carrying a flaming torch, a stable lantern, a dark lantern, a pocket lantern—something! But no, they just marched along in the dark, following Mason into the crypt.
24. Robson, p. 285.
25. Dakin, p. 284.
26. Dakin, p. 79.
27. H. W. Bell, *Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson, the Chronology of their Adventures*, London: Constable, 1932, p. 21. It might simply be, however, that Watson's own desk did not lock, or that he had misplaced the key.
28. Gavin C. Brend, *My Dear Holmes*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1951, pp. 149-150.
29. Susan Rice, "Watson's Hidden Addiction," *BAKER STREET JOURNAL*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (June 1997), pp. 30-36.
30. Wayne and Francine Swift, "Shoscombe Prince," *BAKER STREET JOURNAL*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Sept. 1995), pp. 147-156.