



## Dancing to Death

A Facsimile of the Original Manuscript of  
"The Dancing Men" by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle  
with Annotations and Commentary on the Story

Edited & introduced by  
Ray Betzner, BSI and David F. Morrill, BSI

Order it at: [www.bakerstreetjournal.com](http://www.bakerstreetjournal.com)

224 pages, 10" x 7" hardcover, December 2016  
With the manuscript reproduction plus 40 b&w illustrations

*Few people come into contact with the manuscript of a Sherlock Holmes story. Don Hobbs, whose collection of Holmes stories in foreign languages is unequalled, has been roaming bookshops for decades. Here's an excerpt of his tale of an encounter with the manuscript of "The Adventure of the Dancing Men."*

### My Manuscript Adventure

by Don Hobbs

To a budding Sherlockian collector in the early 1980s, the Dallas–Fort Worth Metroplex offered a variety of used bookshops where one could spend money. In those days, I had the persona of a vacuum cleaner, literally sucking up any and all things Sherlockian. This is the reason I still own about a bazillion books worth about a nickel apiece.

Dallas had places like Aldridge Books, where the smell of musty books and smoldering cigarette smoke (along with a fluffy black cat) greeted all that entered. The owner, Dick Bosse, knew his stuff and never let a bargain out the door. He was old school and never seemed to cater to some young, upstart Sherlockian collector. Same was true with Larry McMurtry at his Dallas incarnation of Booked-Up. When he was present, he was always serious and never much for chit-chat. There were Wilson's Books and Sheldon Books and early on, Dallas-based Half Price Books. All could deliver a treasure now and then. None, however, could compare with Barber's Books 30 miles west in downtown Fort Worth.

Barber's opened around 1925, making it one of the oldest bookstores in Texas. In 1961, it was bought by Brian Perkins. When my circuitous bookstore travels brought me to Fort Worth, I always found Mr. Perkins friendly and truly interested in me as a budding book collector. He never made me feel that collecting Sherlockiana was second rate. Over time, I would receive phone calls from him. He would find a *Strand Magazine* or a first or interesting edition and hold them until the next time I was in the shop. I was made to feel special when I visited Barber's Books. I was allowed to

## Dancing to Death Book Excerpt

roam freely in the rooms at the top of the store that were off limits to the general public. This was also the place of my biggest collecting faux pas. Brian had a 1930 Crowborough Edition for which he asked \$1,200, and I was ready to buy. That is when I said the wrong thing to a shrewd bookman. "I have never seen it with the glassine wrappers before," said I. "Well, maybe it's not for sale any longer," he replied. The set later sold for \$6,600 (but not to me).

One afternoon, after nearly ten years of regular visits to the shop, I walked in and Brian asked me if I had some extra time to kill. I did, so I followed him out the door and on a zigzag path through downtown Fort Worth where we ended up at the Bank One building. Before we arrived at this destination, Brian had sworn me to secrecy about what he was about to show me. Intrigued, I agreed. We entered the lobby and headed to the basement where the safety deposit boxes were located. He got a key to one of the boxes, opened it and handed me the withdrawn contents. I looked down at a custom-made dark blue binder with gold, embossed letters. The title leapt out and it was like being slapped in the face. I was holding the original, handwritten manuscript of "The Adventure of the Dancing Men." For once in my life, I was left speechless.

After I regained my senses, I thumbed through the pages of Doyle's neat handwriting, making mental notes as I went along. I noticed right away that Cubitt Smith had been changed to Hilton Cubitt. There were other subtle changes and small corrections, but I was still in a state of mild shock. The other thing that amazed me was the drawing of the dancing men characters. This is one of the few manuscripts that features original artwork by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. A routine trip to the bookstore had not prepared me to handle such a treasure. I, of course, immediately asked Brian how it came into his possession. ...

(Continued)

To read the rest of this essay, you can order *Dancing to Death* at our website:

<http://www.bakerstreetjournal.com>

### About the BSI Manuscript Series

The Baker Street Irregulars, the literary society focused on Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in cooperation with leading libraries and private collectors, publishes The Manuscript Series to bring to the public facsimile editions of manuscripts and other documents relating to Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, with insightful commentary by talented Sherlockian and Doylean writers. *Dancing to Death* is the eleventh volume in this series.

### Other BSI Publications

The BSI also publishes the International Series, the History Series, *The Baker Street Journal*, and select non-series works. All of these can be ordered at our website.