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of finding my way back in absolute darkness through that  
limestone labyrinth was clearly an impossible one.

I sat down upon a boulder and reflected upon my  
unfortunate plight. I had not told any one that I proposed to  
come to the Blue John mine, and it was unlikely that <sup>any</sup> search  
party would come after me. Therefore I must <sup>use my own resources</sup> ~~trust~~ <sup>try</sup> to get  
myself <sup>clear</sup> out of the danger. There was only one hope and that was  
that the matches might dry. When I fell into the river only half  
of me had got ~~thoroughly~~ <sup>thoroughly</sup> wet. My left shoulder was  
perfectly dry. I took <sup>for</sup> ~~the~~ matches therefore and I put <sup>it</sup> ~~them~~ into  
my left armpit. The moist air of the cavern might possibly be  
counteracted by the heat of my body, <sup>even so</sup> but I could not hope to get a  
light for many hours. Meanwhile there was nothing for it but to  
wait.

By good luck I had slipped several biscuits into my  
pocket before I left the farmhouse. These I now devoured and  
washed them down with a draught from that wretched stream  
which had been the cause of all my misfortunes. Then I felt  
about for a comfortable seat among the rocks, and having  
discovered a place where I could get a support for my back I  
stretched out my legs, and settled myself down to wait. I  
was wretchedly damp and cold but I tried to cheer myself  
with the reflection that modern science prescribed open  
windows and walks in all weather, for my disease.  
gradually, lulled by the monotonous gurgle of the stream, and  
by the absolute darkness, I sank into an uneasy slumber.

How long this lasted I cannot say. It may have  
been for one hour; it may have been for several. Suddenly I  
sat up on my rock couch with every nerve thrilling and  
every sense acutely on the alert. Beyond all doubt I had  
heard a sound, some sound very distinct from the  
gurgling of the waters. It had passed, but the reverberation of  
it still lingered in my ear. Was it a search party? They would

### IS DR. HARDCASTLE "THE LAST MAN"?

Although in his letters Arthur Conan Doyle does  
not mention Mary Shelley's *The Last Man* (1826), the  
urtext of this kind of story, the trope is nonetheless  
evident in this page, since Dr. Hardcastle's initial  
relation to the caverns is that of the last man,  
although there are other equally valid interpretations  
— for example, the protagonist is 35 years old and

and descending into a hellish underground cavern,  
which invites comparison with Dante's *Inferno*.

Hardcastle's weak bicycle lamp, his candles, and his  
matches together represent humanity's discovery and  
subsequent harnessing of fire. As well, his daring and  
solitary nature herald him as a future lone geologist  
judging the ancient caves, ... (continued on other side)



# A COMMON NEWSLETTER

— with a nod to Micah Clarke —

BRINGING TIDINGS FROM THE ACD SOCIETY

— a community dedicated to studying and enjoying the works of Arthur Conan Doyle —

via Ross Davies (editor pro tem, and publisher)

VOLUME 4, NUMBER 3, NOVEMBER 2024



January 11, 2024: Joe Eckrich (left) cradles his 2024 Wessex Cup trophy, which Peggy MacFarlane (right) has just presented to him. Image courtesy of Matt Hall.

## EDITOR'S NOTES

If you attend our annual Doylean Honors awards ceremony and running of the Wessex Cup on Thursday, January 16, 2025, at 11:15 a.m. at Otto Penzler's The Mysterious Bookshop, you might bring this issue of *A Common Newsletter* with you. The first few ACD Society members who present their copy to the editor then and there will get a toy with a bit of Doylean content. (We are not sure just how “few” because we’re not sure how many — not many — toys we’ll have.)

Finalists for the 2025 Doylean Honors will be announced shortly. Watch our social media accounts and website ([acdsociety.com](http://acdsociety.com)) for news.

The 2025 Wessex Cup will feature a new breed of courser, which will run on a suitably modified track. Look for more news about these fleet and cute creatures in the next issue of the *New Pink 'Un*.



## THE PAST

“Selecting a Ghost” (1883), a funny short story by ACD, has been getting some attention recently. *Doings of Doyle* ([doingsofdoyle.com](http://doingsofdoyle.com)) dealt with it last December. And earlier this month it was staged at Stanley Arts in London to generally positive reviews, including this one from *Everything Theatre* ([everything-theatre.co.uk](http://everything-theatre.co.uk)):

The notion of blending an overlooked [ACD] satirical ghost story with hip-hop in an immersive promenade format might raise a few eyebrows, but in Two Lines Productions’ *Selecting a Ghost* the unlikely combination delivers more hits than misses.

One aspect of the story remains a mystery to us: Why is the “well-known analyst” who tests a chemical sample named “T.E. Stube, M.D.”?

In March, we mentioned ACD’s gift of a tiny book to the library in the Queen’s Dolls’ House at Windsor Castle. The tiny book is featured in a fine new full-size book about that tiny library by Elizabeth Ashby, Senior Curator of Decorative Arts at the Royal Collection Trust ([rct.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/the-miniature-library-of-queen-marys-dolls-house-by-elizabeth](http://rct.uk/about/press-office/press-releases/the-miniature-library-of-queen-marys-dolls-house-by-elizabeth)).

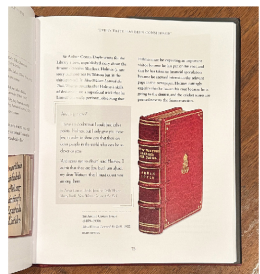


Illustration by Georges Dutriac for “Le Marchand de fantômes” (aka “Selecting a Ghost”) in *Dimanche Illustré* (November 18, 1928). Image courtesy of Alexis Barquin.

(continued from other side)

... the very figure of the last man of Thomas Babington Macaulay’s conceit of the “New Zealander,” later vividly reconceptualised in a painting by Gustave Doré ...

— Gareth Reeves

Please see page 9 of our website ([acdsociety.com/bjg/9/bjg9](http://acdsociety.com/bjg/9/bjg9)), where Gareth’s essay continues, accompanied by our thoughts about Hardcastle’s role as a gentleman of the British Empire. While there, don’t miss additions to page b (Rudy Altergott visits the Rauner library), and page d (Kris Hambrick explores film adaptations of the BJG).

— Margie Deck and Nancy Holder

