

10

most certainly have shouted, and vague as this sound was, which had wakened me, it was certainly very distinct from the human voice. I sat palpitating and hardly daring to breathe. There it was again, and again. Now it had become continuous. It was a tread — beyond all doubt it was the heavy tread of some living creature. But what a tread it was! It gave me the impression of enormous weight carried upon sponge-like feet which gave forth a muffled but ear-filling sound. The darkness was as complete as ever but the tread was regular and decisive. And it was coming beyond all question in my direction.

My skin grew cold and my hair stood on end as I listened to that steady and stealthy foot-fall. There was some creature there, and surely it was one who could see in the dark. I crouched low on my rock and tried to blend myself into it. The steps grew nearer still, then stopped, and presently I was aware of a loud lapping and gurgling. The creature was drinking at the stream. Then again there was silence broken by a succession of long sniffs and snorts, of tremendous volume and energy. Had it caught the scent of me. My own nostrils were filled by a low febrile odour, mephitic and abominable. Then I heard the steps again. They were on my side of the stream now, but they did not long remain so. I heard the splash as he returned, and then ^{the sound} they died away into the distance in the direction from which it had come.

For a long time I lay upon my rock too much horrified to move. I thought of the sound which I had heard coming from the depth of the cave, of Armitage's fears, of the strange impression in the mud, and now came this final and absolute proof that there was indeed some unconceivable monster, something utterly un-English and dreadful, which lurked in the hollow of the mountain. Its nature or form I could form no conception, save that it was both light-footed and

THE TERRIFIC AMID THE TERROR

Page 10 finds us halfway through "The Terror of Blue John Gap" manuscript, and as we settle into our third year of Mining the Gap, we thought we might find ourselves in a lull. We are delighted to report how wrong we were. Not only are we not in a lull, we find ourselves with an abundance of new commentators to enlighten us about this page of Doyle's manuscript and, indeed, about a great deal more.

Therefore, we invite you to our website, <https://acdsociety.com/bjg/1/bjg10>, to enjoy terrific writing by Kim Newman, Karen Murdock, Sheldon Goldfarb, and Peggy MacFarlane. Our matches are out of our armpits, there is light out of the darkness, and we, like our hero, Dr. Hardcastle, are ready to face whatever is next in the Blue John Gap.

— Margie Deck and Nancy Holder

A COMMON NEWSLETTER

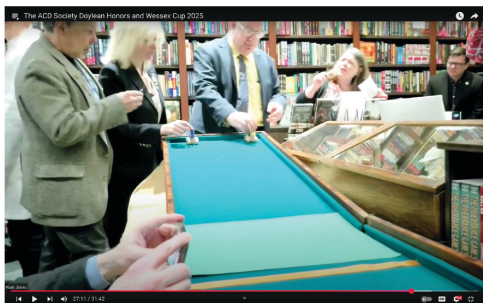
— with a nod to Micah Clarke —

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 5, NUMBER 1, APRIL 2025



Scandal at the 3rd running of the Wessex Cup? From left: Curtis Armstrong, Ashley Polasek, Ira Brad Matetsky, Peggy MacFarlane, and Matt Hall. The Doings of Doyle camera caught Armstrong (owner with Polasek of the horse “Unfortunate Pony”) holding a cataract knife (lent by Hall) and moving menacingly toward Matetsky’s horse (“Ticket to Ryde”), while MacFarlane objects. Moments later, “Unfortunate Pony” (who had lost every previous Wessex Cup race) defeated “Ticket to Ryde” by a nose.

EDITOR’S NOTES

On January 16, at Otto Penzler’s The Mysterious Bookshop, we presented nine Doylean Honors for outstanding recent work — to Anne Chapman, Margie Deck, Daniel and Eugene Friedman, Mark Gatiss, Hal Glatzer, Nicholas Meyer, Meagan Oldhuges, Mollie Knox Ostertag, and Ollie Randall — and one for a lifetime of it — to Catherine Cooke. Congratulations to all! We will

be back at Otto’s shop on Jan. 8, 2026 at 11:15 a.m. For the latest news, visit acdsociety.com.

“THE HUGE MIRROR OF LIFE”

Lee Simpson, Honorary Treasurer of The Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club, writes, “Whilst working through all the Presidential Address and Subsidiary Toasts from 1894 ... I have just discovered that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave the reply to the Toast to Literature in 1901.” Read it, and about it, here: www.walterscottclub.com/blog/reply-to-the-toast-to-literature.

SHERLOCK WALK IN TORONTO

Last November saw the ribbon-cutting for the Sherlock Holmes Walk Mural Project. The Friends of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection report on their website: “The walkway next to the Toronto Reference Library has been transformed into a vibrant collection of [ACD and Sherlock]-related street art thanks to ... StreetARToronto in partnership with the Toronto Public Library, [the Friends], and the Toronto Transit Commission.” www.acdfriends.org/SHWalk-index.html.



Leading the ribbon-cutting (5th, 6th, and 7th from right): Cliff Goldfarb (Chairman of the Friends), Ann-Marie Power (StreetARToronto), and Dianne Saxe (Toronto City Councillor for Ward 11, which includes the Library). Photo by Toronto Transit Commission Photographer and courtesy of the Commission.

NO MD AWARD FOR ACD

Mark Jones (of *Doings of Doyle* fame) recently unearthed evidence of an early disappointment suffered by ACD, and sent us this note about it:

In April 1882, ACD was considering his future in the medical profession. Having returned from West Africa in January, he had joined Dr Reginald Ratcliff Hoare in Birmingham as a medical assistant. With his three-month placement soon to expire, Arthur approached his wealthy aunt and uncle in London for assistance but found their requirement that he return to the Catholic faith too much to bear. What was he to do?

A letter in the archives of the Royal College of Physicians, dated 5 April 1882, reveals ACD applied for the Murchison Scholarship, an award issued in alternate years by the Royal College and the University of Edinburgh.¹ A remarkable figure, Charles Murchison (1830-79) studied at Edinburgh, served in the Bengal Army, taught at St Thomas’s hospital and became a noted authority on fevers and diseases of the liver.²

ACD was asked to provide evidence of his medical studies, which were duly confirmed by the Edinburgh registrar,³ but he was ultimately unsuccessful. The winner was Charles Fillingham Coxwell,⁴ another MD who transitioned to a literary career, becoming a noted translator of Russian and German folk tales in the 1920s.

The Murchison Scholarship was formally announced on 30 May, at which point ACD was in practice with the iconoclastic George Budd in Plymouth. Had ACD been successful, how different his path might have been.

¹ Letter from Arthur Conan Doyle of The Elms, Gravelly Hill, Birmingham (5 Apr 1882), and a second letter (n.d.); MS1004/2-3, Royal College of Physicians (London).

² history.rcp.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians/charles-murchison.

³ Letter from Thomas Gilbert, clerk to the University of Edinburgh (17 May 1882), certifying that ACD commenced study of medicine 1 Nov 1877 and graduated with M.B. on 1 Aug 1881; ALS/G49, Royal College of Physicians (London).

⁴ British Medical Journal, Vol. 1, No. 1120 (17 Jun 1882), p. 921.

