



Sherlock Holmes

C O L L E C T I O N S



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"Your merits should be publicly recognized" (STUD)

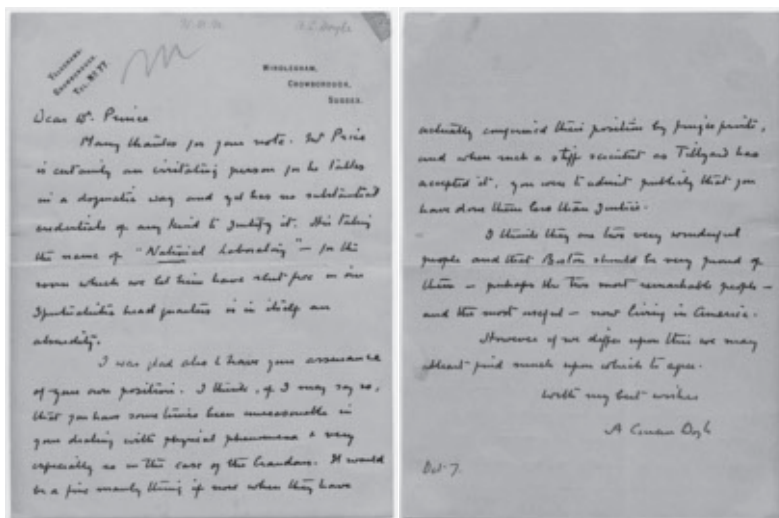
TURNING THE TABLES Letters Acquired by the Minnesota Collections Shed New Light on Margery the Medium

by Daniel Stashower

“I think they are two very wonderful people,” Conan Doyle wrote emphatically to Dr. Walter Franklin Prince of the American Society for Psychical Research, “and that Boston should be very proud of them – perhaps the two most remarkable people – and the most useful – now living in America. However if we differ upon this we may at least find much upon which we agree.”

These extraordinary remarks reflect Conan Doyle's concern over growing criticism of a pair of rising stars in the world of psychic research: Dr. Le Roi Crandon, a former instructor of surgery at the Harvard Medical School, and his vivacious young wife, Mina. At the time, Mrs. Crandon was becoming better known to the world at large as “Margery the medium,” the celebrated “witch of Lime Street,” whose colorful displays of what appeared to be psychic phenomena were thought to offer proof of the validity of spiritualism, the belief that it is possible for the dead to communicate with the living.

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Conan Doyle letter to Dr. Prince

Photo courtesy of The Sherlock Holmes Collections

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YEARS AGO

*So much for shop talk, here is the data.
You know His methods, use them.*

**Concluding words of the
Forward [sic] to the *Sherlockian*
Who's Who & What's What
by W. T. Rabe,
The Old Soldiers of Baker
Street: 1961.**

In 1961, Wilmer T. Rabe produced the first edition of *Who's Who & What's What* for a Sherlockian world prepared for and in need of it. This was a decade into a remarkable, roughly five-decade career as a Sherlockian and Baker Street Irregular that encompassed ten times the activity of the average Irregular. For “average” Bill Rabe was not: he was unconventional, made the most of it, and to those of us who knew him, is unforgettable.

Rabe was born in 1921, and hove into Sherlockian view in 1951 while serving in the U.S. Army's psychological operations service in Germany, work for which his future affairs would show he was eminently suited. After returning to civilian life, he made a career at the University of Detroit as an “academic publicist.” Eventually he retired to Sault Ste. Marie on Michigan's Upper Peninsula, at the Canadian border, and soon had a new life there as the official island historian of nearby Mackinac Island, dubbed by him “the Miami Beach of the North,” and as press agent for its historic and majestic Grand Hotel.

Rabe was imaginative, and had a talent for making madness respectable,

like serving as chief telephone book critic for the Detroit newspapers, and Detroit Hatchetman of The Friends of Lizzie Borden. At Lake Superior State University later on, he was a founder of The Unicorn Hunters: preferring Unicorn Questors because, he claimed, you shouldn't hunt what you can't find—but that did not stop him from issuing tens of thousands of unicorn hunting licenses. Up on Mackinac Island he invented and also saw gleefully to the publicizing of an International Stone-Skipping Tournament, a World Sauntering Day, and other annual events of like madcap nature, including the custom of ceremonially burning a snowman on the first day of Spring.

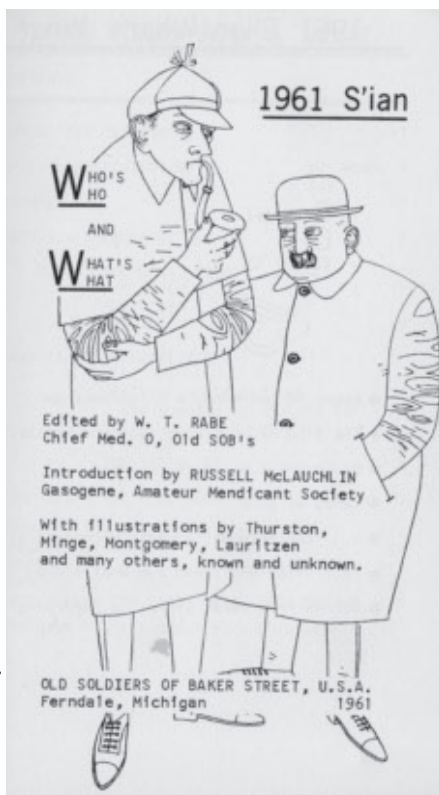


Photo courtesy of The Sherlock Holmes Collections

Who's Who and What's What

Caring about culture's struggle with noise, he created Hush Records whose big hit was an original cast recording

of “An Evening with Marcel Marceau.” Caring about language, he launched an annual List of Words Banished from the Queen's English for Mis-Use, Over-Use, and General Uselessness, still issued on New Year's Day by Lake Superior State U. (This year's banished words: viral and *Facebook/Google* used as verbs.) He scorned bureaucracy, claiming to have once filed an income tax return filled out entirely in Roman numerals. He liked laughter, and was an enthusiastic member of The Sons of the Desert, the Laurel & Hardy fan club. And he loved Sherlock Holmes, so he became a Baker Street Irregular.

Not surprisingly, he began by creating his own society while in the Army, The Old Soldiers of Baker Street, or Old SOBs. He was in fact still young at the time; the photo below was taken when he visited the brand-new Sherlock Holmes Klubben in Copenhagen, entering Klubben legend by showing up with the first bottle of Scotch the thirsty Danes had seen since before the war. When he returned home from the Army to Detroit, he joined The Amateur Mendicant Society there, founded by Russell McLauchlin a few years before. Edgar W. Smith, a good judge of character, invested Rabe in the BSI in 1955 as “Colonel Warburton's Madness.”

Over the years, Rabe's contributions to Sherlockiana were legion. Among other things, he installed the first Sherlockian plaque at the Englischer Hof in Meiringen. He put out *The Common-place Book*, a periodic compilation of newspaper and magazine articles about Sherlock Holmes and his followers. He tape-recorded memorable moments at BSI dinners and other events, issuing them on a set of records called *Voices from Baker Street*, now available on compact disc from Wessex Press. He became interested in James Montgomery's extracanonial song “Aunt Clara,”

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Photo courtesy of Jon Lellenberg

Bill Rabe with The Sherlock Holmes Klubben's A.D. Henriksen (l) and Verner Seeman in Copenhagen on January 5, 1952. On the table is the bottle of Vat 69 Rabe brought with to the Klubben dinner.

tracked its multiple versions and long-lost origins to a songwriter's alcoholic Christmas haze in 1936, and set forth its history and folklore in a splendid and profusely illustrated volume entitled *We Always Mention Aunt Clara*.

This last, the fruit of pensive nights and laborious days, is generally taken as Bill Rabe's *magnum opus*, but rivaling it for that honor is something else he created fifty years ago which Sherlockian scholars and the Irregular historian continue to turn to and find useful: his ambitious *Sherlockian Who's Who & What's What*, a reference work published by The Old Soldiers of Baker Street in 1961 and sub-titled *For the First Time Anywhere, Everything About Everybody Who is Anybody S'ian and Anything That Is Even Remotely H'ian, However Far Removed*. In its 122 softbound pages, Part I listed and described Sherlockian sites, plaques, periodicals, and other topics; Part II covered the Sherlockian societies; and Part III "The Followers," with half a

dozen appendices of additional data about Sherlockians and societies. The usefulness to the curious then and the historian today can be suggested by the mid-sized entry for E.W. McDiarmid, the University of Minnesota professor who was later a guiding light for its Sherlock Holmes Collections:

McDiarmid, Errett W. (1909-)—— 2077 Commonwealth, St. Paul 8, Minn.; college dean, U. of Minn.; NE (founding member, Sigerson, 1948-); BSI (Bruce-Partridge Plans). Speciality: the great hiatus; "Reichenbach and Beyond," BSJ Christmas Annual, 1957; S.H.: Master Detective, The Sumac Press, 1952; Exploring S.H., The Sumac Press, 1957.

NE standing for Norwegian Explorers, described in the book's societies section in terms of its founding, officers, milestones (including a plaque at the Reichenbach, with its own entry and photograph elsewhere in the book),

publications, "habitat," and, to use the term in the questionnaire Rabe sent out to Sherlockian societies, its singularity—which in the case of The Norwegian Explorers read as follows:

SINGULARITY: Coed and "etc."
(ED. NOTE: ?)

Less "just-the-facts-ma'am" examples include some puckish entries like Doyle, Adrian Malcolm Conan (1910-) —*Founder of A.C.D. Protective Assn.*, or the confused and confusing ones for Helene Yuhasova and Lenore Glen Offord, the first of said ladies erroneously described as a one-time pen-name for the late Edgar W. Smith, the second as having been "struck from the rolls," so alleged on the authority of S. Tupper Bigelow of Toronto ("The Five Orange Pips," BSI). This hideous libel led, in the next edition, to an appendix containing an irate letter from well-known science-fiction writer and Scowrer Poul Anderson, "The Dreadful Abernethy Business," BSI, who had witnessed Ms. Offord's investiture at the hands of Edgar W. Smith himself, plus an exchange of letters between Anderson and Bigelow with the latter blaming the error on slipshod BSI record-keeping and promising to be careful in the future.

For the historically minded, one of the book's particular usefulnesses lies in the many "small 'i' irregulars" included by Rabe, men and women not invested by the BSI but keeping the Memory green in their own ways: people who otherwise could scarcely be identified at this late stage whenever their names pop up in some old *BSJ* or scion publication. What Rabe called W4 has solved many a nagging mystery, and its usefulness is far from exhausted.

But as intended, *Who's Who & What's What* was extremely helpful fifty years ago to those who wanted to know about the Sherlockian world in an era

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when there were only two journals with any significant circulation, and no Internet. To cite but one example, Rabe was the first to try to compile a comprehensive list of Investitured Irregulars, as well as an informative survey of Sherlockian societies, something (Blau speaking here) no one since him has seriously attempted, let alone accomplished: my lists are fairly comprehensive, but hardly informative. And Rabe's *Commonplace Book* was the first attempt to give wider circulation to what was appearing in the general press.

The Internet makes this all too easy today, but in those days just about the only other information came from squibs by the editors in the *BSJ* and *SHJ*. The Sherlockian world of the 1960s was quite different from today's—in many ways quite parochial, as it wasn't easy to participate in meetings of far-flung societies, and quite difficult to know much if anything about Sherlockians one hadn't met other than in the *BSJ*'s Whodunit section. It was grand in 1961 to be able to learn about the people in the *Who's Who*, and about the societies in an era when very few not members of local societies received the newsletters published by some of them.

People did not talk about the importance of *Who's Who & What's What*. That was pretty much taken for granted by those who acquired and valued it, with rather little attention paid to it in the Sherlockian press—not that there was much Sherlockian press in 1961. Julian Wolff barely mentioned it in the *BSJ*, essentially just announcing that it was available, and it is unknown how many copies were sold. Let alone survived; and it's difficult to find copies in pristine condition, because *Who's*

Who & What's What wasn't something to be carefully shelved, but consulted frequently instead.

Yet it's hard to overstate about how different the early 1960s were from today. Those who've grown up in the eras of Xerox, inexpensive long-distance telephone service, computer word processing, email, and Google can scarcely imagine what it took to research and bring out a work like this in 1961. It wasn't easy to obtain information of all sorts in those distant days, and *Who's Who & What's What*, for many, was a

project. Edgar W. Smith, who had been so much for so long not only to the BSI, but Sherlockians broadly, had died in 1960, and *Who's Who & What's What* was undertaken because of that. When it appeared the following year it was dedicated to Smith, with a touching dedicatory essay by Russell McLauchin saying in part:

What shall a lonesome friend say about a man who, with a matchless pen in his hand and an unquenchable joy in his bosom, did more to make sound and perpetual our Sherlockian fellowship than all the members of that fellowship, gathered and combined? He would have loved this book and hailed its author. And those two verbs might be interchanged, with unaltered accuracy. . . . There was much fear, when Edgar died, that our communion's single, indispensable factor had departed; that all Sherlockian fellowship, with the animating spirit now grown still, might swiftly falter and soon expire. Probably the best word to be said about this volume is that it quite extinguishes such fear.

Not that Rabe was now content. In the first place, he believed in an expanding Sherlockian universe, and was conscious of the book's incompleteness: "The majority of the entries have been either written by, or drawn directly from Forms 221B.2 completed by the S'ians concerned," he explained in his Forward [sic], and "I have a feeling that I

have overlooked many distinguished deceased S'ians, as well as their more lively colleagues; that I have asterisked scions into inactivity which are very active; and that there are probably itchy-fingered artists who were just

One of Rabe's questionnaires, filled out by himself for Professor James Moriarty.

new and wonderful way to get information about the Sherlockian world.

It was in fact to foster a sense of community, more than anything else, that prompted Bill Rabe to undertake this

Photo courtesy of Jon Lellenberg

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An Update from the Collections

Summer has gone by much too quickly. This week the State Fair opens, running until Labor Day and the traditional end of the season. I guess the saying is true, “time flies when you’re having fun.” And we’ve been having fun this summer.

One of the highlights for me was a trip to the west coast and a visit with Jerry Margolin and his lovely wife Judy. The purpose of my visit was to look at Jerry’s immense art collection. Jerry’s been after me for a number of years to come west for a visit and the stars finally aligned to make it possible. So in mid-June I headed to Portland for a weekend visit.

I think it’s fair to say that my jaw dropped a number of times during the weekend. Jerry’s collection is quite amazing. We started on Friday afternoon, after my arrival, with our survey of the art. Many, if not all, of the walls of the Margolin home are covered with pieces depicting the great detective by a number of different artists.

Some of the work fits into the comic book genre, some from the world of animation, and others by cartoonists or more “classical” works. Here I saw pen and ink, there watercolor, over there oils and pastels. Many of the pieces were personalized with inscriptions to Jerry from the artist. But this was just the beginning.

Over the next two days we sat together at the dining room table or in Jerry’s special library room poring over more drawings, prints, and portfolios. It truly took my breath away. By the time Sunday came and my departure to the Midwest my head was fairly exploding with all the images I’d seen. Jerry guessed that I’d probably looked at two thousand or so pieces of art from Friday afternoon until Sunday morning. Throughout our time Jerry offered a running commentary on the different pieces and artists; he is quite a fount of information and a collector in the true sense of the word. Collecting is in his genes. Of course we didn’t spend the entire time looking at Jerry’s collection.



Jerry and Judy Margolin

We had to come up for breath now and then for a little refreshment. Judy and Jerry were the perfect hosts and I will always remember my very pleasant visit to see a most eye-opening collection. My thanks, again, to the Margolins for a delightful weekend.

Summer also brings a number of visitors to Minneapolis and it has been my joy to show folks items from the Collections, tour them through the caverns, and bring them to the Mackler replica of the 221B sitting room. Everyone comes away impressed. We’ve also had a number of researchers taking advantage of summer travel and coming to use the Collections, including an editor from *Wired* magazine who is working on aspects of Doyle and medicine. He promised to return this fall to continue research and perhaps we’ll be able to provide an update in a later newsletter.

It was a real pleasure to meet our new “first lady,” Karen Kaler, wife of new U of M President Eric Kaler and new Board of Regents chair Linda Cohen. Mrs. Kaler and Mrs. Cohen were guests at Andersen Library in August for a special tour and luncheon arranged by Friends of the Library board member Susan Hill Gross. And, of course, the world’s greatest detective was mentioned during our time together! University Librarian Wendy Lougee was very kind in pointing out the establishment of the E.W. McDiarmid curatorship and the wonderful support of our Friends with the Collections.

Three volunteers, Yale Stenzler, Anjanette Schussler, and the ever-faithful Lucy Brusica along with our new centralized processing staff helped get more material processed and ready for research use. A number of new finding aids from this work are in preparation and should appear shortly for your use.

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Using the Collections

Janice Weiner and Karen Kozlow, both from Chicago toured the Collections as well as Allen Mackler's 221B room.

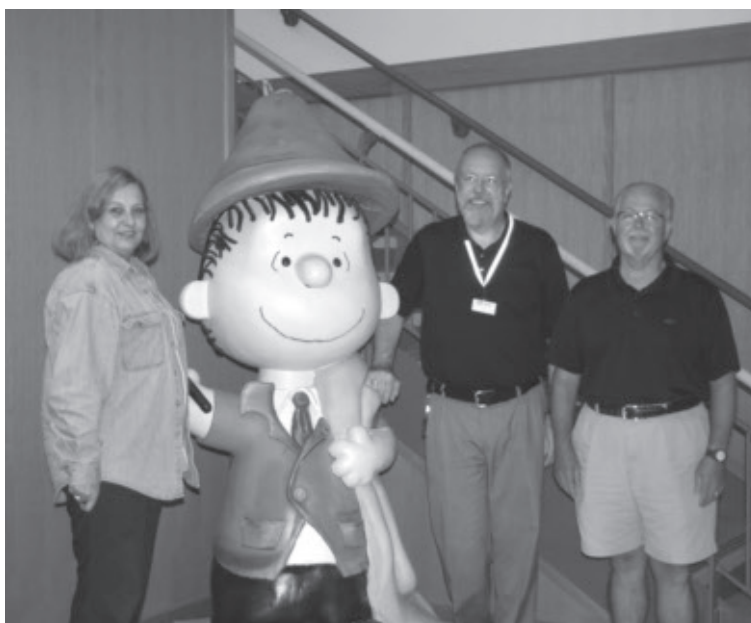


Max McKuras

Photo by Julie McKuras



Janice Weiner and Karen Kozlow



Marina Stajic, Tim Johnson and Mike McKuras

Photo by Julie McKuras

Musings

As Tim Johnson noted in his update, summer has come and (will be) gone much too quickly. It's been a busy few months at the Collections with visitors and volunteers.

Many of our readers will be tempted to don "a flimsy dressing gown, bedroom slippers and silk stockings" to read Daniel Stashower's lead article on the newly acquired Tom Tietze collection which includes the letters that Dan discusses. Nearly 100 years later, Margery the medium's ability to "lie with charm, threaten with innocence, cajole with felicity, and scheme with charity" would serve her well in any number of fields, and she would probably continue to have publicity and controversy follow her. Mr. Tietze, according to Andrew Malec, was an authority on the history of parapsychology in the U.S. and Britain as well as on Jack London, serving as the

president of the Jack London Society at one time. He was a presenter at the Norwegian Explorers 2004 conference and contributed the essay "Rationalism and Imagination in Conan Doyle's 'The Horror of the Heights'" to the facsimile edition of "The Horror of the Heights." (Calabash Press, 2004)

Jon Lellenberg and Peter Blau have covered Bill Rabe's 1961 *Who's Who* and *What's What* in our 50 Years Ago column. It's an award winning book; Rabe noted on the cover, in good humor, that the book received "The '61 Acme Platinum Good Book Medal. Awarded each year to the publishers of the book that is least apt to fall apart in one's bath." It hasn't fallen apart 50 years and who knows how many baths later, and Jon and Peter have turned an appreciative and fond eye toward their friend Bill Rabe. In Vol. 1, Number 4 of this newsletter we had an article about

Rabe, but he is deserving of another remembrance at least every 14 years.

We've skipped our normal 100 Years Ago column so that we can include these two lengthy articles as well as a number of photographs accompanying those articles and of some recent visitors. It's been an enthusiastic group of visitors from far and near, from the University President's wife to Max McKuras, who happily accompanied his grandmother to the library with promises that he would be quiet (he was) and would later go toy shopping (we did).

We hope that you will continue to support the Sherlock Holmes Collections with your financial and material donations. Our annual letter and remittance envelope are enclosed. 🐣

Julie McKuras, ASH, BSI

Acquisitions

Among the newly received publications are the latest issues of *Foolscap Docu-*

ment, the newsletter of The Three Garridebs; The Sound of the Baskervilles newsletter; *Prescott's Press*; *The Camden*

House Journal; The Pleasant Places of Florida's newsletter; and Peter Blau's *Notes from the Spermacetti Press*. 🐣

From the President

The Adventure of the Endowed Curatorship



“Mrs. Hudson may be the Holmes caretaker at 221B Baker Street, but it’s Tim Johnson in that role at 222 21st Avenue South in Minneapolis. Johnson, who has served as curator of special collections and rare books for the Libraries since 1998, was recently named the first E.W. McDiarmid Curator of the Sherlock Holmes Collections. From his office in Andersen Library, Johnson tends to the world’s largest collection of material related to Sherlock Holmes and its creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The Collections contain over 60,000 items and has been consulted by scholars and screenwriters alike. The curatorship was created by the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections and the McDiarmid family in honor of E.W. ‘Mac’ McDiarmid, former University Librarian and a Holmes enthusiast since boyhood.”

I was very happy to see this article and photo in the latest issue of *Continuum*, the magazine of the University of Minnesota Libraries. The entire issue is available online at www.lib.umn.edu/continuum. University Librarian Wendy Pradt Lougee had a column titled “Seeds of Change” where she explains the knowledge lifecycle, from discovery and use of information through creation and dissemination of new knowledge. I am always happy to see researchers using the Sherlock Holmes Collections to discover and create new insights.

We are thankful for all our collection researchers and the Friends that make it possible. Please consider making a donation of money or material. With your help we will make The Sherlock Holmes Collections a World Center for research and study of all things Sherlockian. 🍷

Richard J. Sveum, M.D., B.S.I.

An Update from the Collections Continued from Page 5

including the Vincent Starrett papers, Norwegian Explorers records, and additional material from the collection of John Bennett Shaw. We’ve also continued to load more material into the U Media Archive; there are now over 700

items from the Holmes Collections in this online database.

I hope that your summer was both restful and productive and that you sense the excitement of the autumn season.

Thank you for your continued support of the Sherlock Holmes Collections! 🍷

Timothy Johnson

TURNING THE TABLES Continued from Page 1

Conan Doyle, who believed “beyond all question” that Mrs. Crandon’s powers were genuine, was writing to take Dr. Prince to task for recent criticisms of the medium. “I think, if I may say so, that you have sometimes been unreasonable in your dealing with physical phenomena and very especially so in the case of the Crandons,” he insisted. Referring to a recent demonstration in which Mrs. Crandon appeared to produce a dead man’s fingerprint from across the psychic void, Conan Doyle suggested that an apology was due: “It would be a fine manly thing if now when they have actually confirmed their position by fingerprints, and when such a stiff scientist as Tillyard has accepted it, you were to admit publicly that you have done them less than justice.”

The comments appear in a group of four remarkable documents purchased for the Minnesota Collections from the estate of Thomas R. Tietze, whose 1973 book *Margery* remains the definitive work on the subject. “Perhaps no other life has been such a perfect union of the human, the angelic, and the diabolical than the life of Mina Stinson Crandon, known as Margery the medium,” Tietze wrote in the book’s introduction.

“She could lie with charm, threaten with innocence, cajole with felicity, and scheme with charity. Her life was a jumble of paradoxes.”

The letters acquired from Mr. Tietze’s collection include three in Conan Doyle’s hand and one written by Margery herself. They reflect every aspect of the Margery paradox, from the early

excitement over her apparent promise to the high drama and controversy that erupted over her appearance before an investigative committee appointed by *Scientific American* magazine.

As Mr. Tietze details in his book, the séances Margery conducted in her elegant Beacon Hill home during the early years of the 1920s were exceptional affairs. It was her habit on occasion to greet her visitors in a flimsy dressing gown, bedroom slippers and silk stockings, a wardrobe that left little to the imagination and was intended to rule out the possibility of concealment or trickery. Her attire also had a certain destabilizing effect on her male callers. Margery’s girlish figure, fashionably

bumps and raps rang out. Strange flashes of light pierced the darkness. Sometimes a wind-up Victrola would stop and start of its own accord, or disembodied voices would call out from the shadows. Even the table itself became an active participant in the proceedings, rearing up on two legs or rising slowly toward the ceiling. At one especially lively sitting, it pursued a visitor from the room and knocked him off his feet.

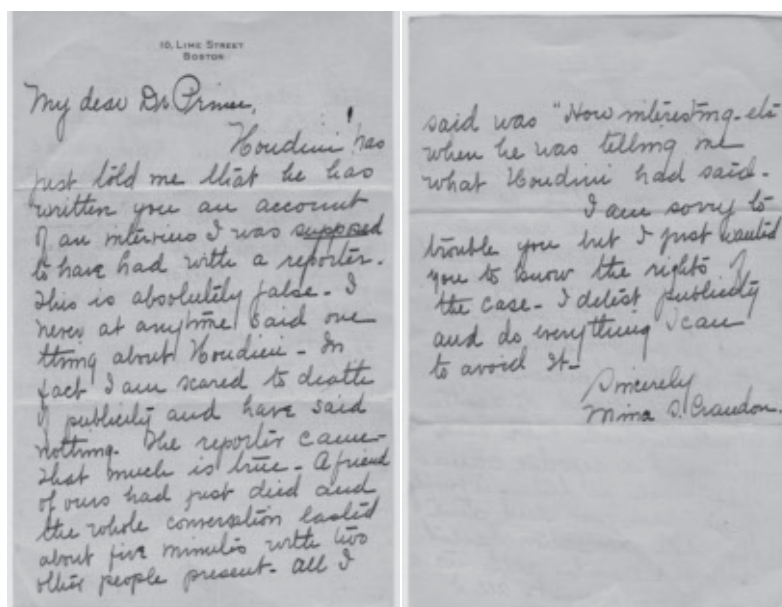
Soon, Margery’s flamboyant demonstrations and personal charm propelled her to international fame, resulting in a European tour to build up a consensus of favorable opinion from far-flung experts. One of these, inevitably, was

Conan Doyle. “I sat with her here,” he wrote in one of the letters acquired from the Tietze collection. “She is wonderful.”

Not everyone agreed. In December of 1922, *Scientific American* magazine launched an investigation into the paranormal, with a cash prize totaling \$5,000 — “\$2,500 to the first person who produces a psychic photograph under its test conditions” and “\$2,500 to the first person who produces a visible psychic manifestation of other character . . . to the full satisfaction of these judges.” One of the

judges mentioned was none other than Harry Houdini, the celebrated magician and escape artist — and self-described “scourge of the spirit mediums.”

The fragile alliance between Conan Doyle and Houdini, already strained in the wake of their famously contentious Atlantic City séance, would suffer



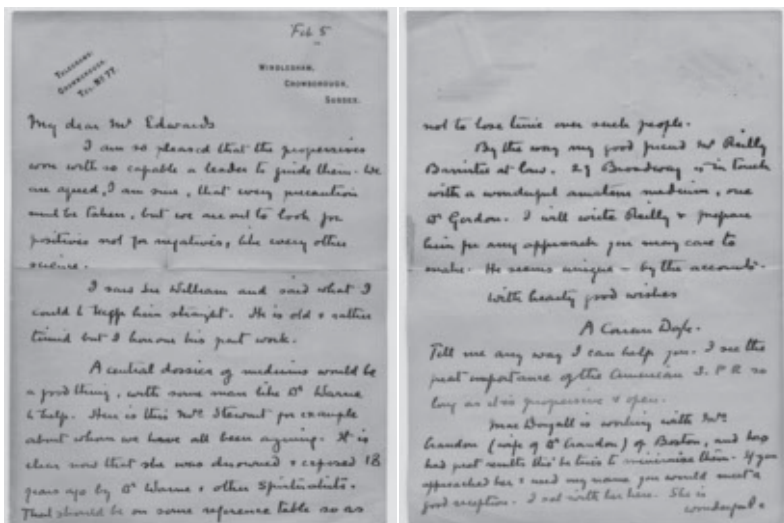
Courtesy of the Sherlock Holmes Collections

bobbed light-brown hair and sparkling blue eyes combined to make her, in the eyes of one bedazzled admirer, “too attractive for her own good.”

Seated around a wooden table in a darkened room on the top floor, Margery’s “sitters” experienced a wide range of unearthly happenings. Mysterious

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TURNING THE TABLES Continued from Page 9



Courtesy of the Sherlock Holmes Collections

further damage as the *Scientific American* investigation progressed. Conan Doyle expressed outrage at the “capital error” of bringing an avowed enemy of spiritualism into the proceedings. “The Commission is, in my opinion, a farce,” he declared. Houdini, for his part, claimed to be open-minded. “I am willing to be convinced,” he said of his work as a psychic investigator, “but the proof must be such as to leave no vestige of doubt that what is claimed to be done is accomplished only through or by supernatural power.” In his view, Margery fell short of this standard. Houdini saw no evidence of genuine psychic phenomena on Lime Street, but admitted to being greatly impressed with Margery’s skill and cunning – so much so that he devised fresh methods of detecting and preventing deception. For one sitting, he prepared by rendering his leg “swollen and painfully tender” with a rubber bandage, so as to be able to detect subtle movements of Margery’s feet beneath the table. For another, he prepared a special “fraud-preventer” cabinet, a slant-topped crate with openings for the medium’s head and arms. Once inside, Margery’s movements – and the opportunities for deception – would be severely limited. These precautions did not en-

tirely silence the goings-on at Margery’s séances, but Houdini was left with no doubt as to his verdict in the matter: “All fraud,” he insisted.

Margery’s supporters remained steadfast, however, and the resulting controversy contributed to a split within the American Society for Psychical Research. Conan Doyle took a close interest in the drama. In the letters acquired from the Tietze collection he offers several comments on the Margery case and gives candid assessments of other psychic researchers – many of whom, in his view, demonstrated an unhealthy skepticism. In his letter to Dr. Prince, Conan Doyle furnishes an especially blunt assessment of Harry Price, founder of Britain’s “National Laboratory of Psychical Research.” Price had made his name with an exposure of the spirit photographer William Hope of the so-called “Crewe Circle,” drawing an energetic rebuttal from Conan Doyle in *The Case for Spirit Photography*. “Price is certainly an irritating person,” Conan Doyle remarks in his letter to Dr. Prince, “for he talks in a dogmatic way and yet has no substantial credentials of any kind to justify it. His taking the name of ‘National Laboratory’ – for the room which we let him have rent free

in our Spiritualistic headquarters is in itself an absurdity.”

Even some of the movement’s leading lights come in for harsh treatment in the Tietze material. “I saw Sir William and said what I could to keep him straight,” Conan Doyle reports in another of the letters. This is almost certainly Sir William Barrett, one of the founders of Britain’s Society for Psychical Research. Though Barrett is mentioned in Conan Doyle’s *The History of Spiritualism* as one of the Society’s “great men,” the author is dismissive in the Tietze letter: “He is old and rather timid but I honor his past work.”

Conan Doyle was delighted when Frederick Edwards, a Margery supporter, was elected president of the American Society for Psychical Research, holding the line against other, more skeptical officers of the organization. One of the Tietze letters is a note of congratulation to Edwards: “I am so pleased that the progressives won with so capable a leader to guide them. We are agreed, I am sure, that every precaution must be taken, but we are out to look for positives and not for negatives, like every other science.” One can only imagine what Sherlock Holmes would have made of this plea for investigative partiality. “It is a capital mistake to theorize before you have all the evidence,” as he famously observed. “It biases the judgment.”

Holmes might also have had a word of useful advice for Margery herself. In time, the fingerprint evidence that Conan Doyle mentioned so favorably to Dr. Prince would contribute to her undoing; it was discovered to be a thumbprint belonging to her dentist, who had supplied wax for the experiment. One recalls that Jonas Oldacre came to a similarly unhappy end over an initially-promising thumbprint in “The Adventure of the Norwood Builder.” Where Margery was concerned,

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waiting to be asked to draw caricatures of their distinguished associates.” But in the second place, he was already looking ahead as he sent the volume to press, adding: “It is hoped that all these matters will be set right in the 1962 WW&WW, known in abbreviated military terminology as ‘62W4.’”

That did come out the following year, and after a while he planned for a third edition come 1968. But it was not realized. He had acknowledged his reliance upon the technical resources of his university employer: “Text typed by a charming, patient and understanding young lady, Miss Nancy Kelly, on a Royal Electric Executive Typewriter which adds considerable status to the correspondence of the University of Detroit Public Information Dept., as does Miss Kelly. Display type and assorted illustrations stolen from wherever we could find them. Printed on a University of Detroit imported (a good, though not a great year) offset press under the personal supervision of Dick Masserang,” and so on. When Rabe retired in 1967 he lost those resources, the PC-based era of self-publishing was not yet at hand, and four crammed jumbo three-ring binders in which he

had been collecting data for the ‘68 edition went into a cardboard box stored in the attic of his new home in remote Sault Ste. Marie.

There they gathered dust some twenty years. But it is an old maxim of mine (Lellenberg speaking here) that no research ever goes unutilized. When the BSI Archival History got started, Bill swooped upon its first two volumes eagerly, reviewing the second enthusiastically for the Summer 1991 *BSJ*. Then he went up to his attic, found the old carton with those four jumbo binders containing the raw material for the 1968 *Who’s Who & What’s*, and shipped them to me. The data they contain facilitated the Archival History volumes that followed, and those shabby and precious binders continue to sit on a bookshelf in my study where I consult them frequently today. Bill Rabe’s Sherlockian *Who’s Who & What’s What* was and remains a great accomplishment of permanent value. 🐾

Jon Lellenberg & Peter Blau



The *Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections* is a quarterly newsletter published by the Friends of the Sherlock Holmes Collections which seek to promote the activities, interests and needs of the Special Collections and Rare Books Department, University of Minnesota Libraries.

Mail editorial correspondence c/o:

Editor

Julie McKuras
13512 Granada Ave.
Apple Valley, MN 55124
952-431-1934
mike9750@aol.com

Editorial Board

John Bergquist, Timothy Johnson,
Jon Lellenberg, Richard J. Sveum, M.D.



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however, Conan Doyle never wavered. To the end of his life he insisted that Margery had been the victim of a “very deadly plot” to discredit her. Annoyed over Houdini’s role in the drama, he sounded off on the subject of “Houdinitis,” a syndrome based on twin fallacies. “The first is that Spiritualism depends upon physical phenomena for its proofs,” he wrote, while the “second is that manual dexterity bears some

relation to brain capacity.”

Nearly 100 years later, Margery’s many paradoxes remain unresolved. It is uniquely fitting, in the circumstances, that the most intriguing of the Tietze documents is a note sent to Dr. Prince from Margery herself. Written in a fine, clear hand on Lime Street letterhead, it shows Margery to have been a woman of rare character—and, one might add,

audacity – as she complains of having been misquoted by Houdini in a recent newspaper account. “I detest publicity,” she insists, “and do everything I can to avoid it.”

Mediums, it would seem, are never to be entirely trusted — not the best of them. 🐉

Remembrances

In supporting the Sherlock Holmes Collections, many donors have made contributions either in honor or in memory of special persons.

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For any inquiries contact:
Timothy J. Johnson, Curator
612-624-3552 or
johns976@tc.umn.edu

Sherlock Holmes Collections
Suite 111, Elmer L. Andersen Library
University of Minnesota
222 21st Ave. S.
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Telephone: 612-626-9166
FAX: 612-625-5525

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Timothy J. Johnson, Curator