

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

ESSAYS ON VICTORIAN ENGLAND



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WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT
THE LIFE AND TIMES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES:

*The range of subjects...brings to life a society which we have only
dreamed of being a resident."*

Steve Mason, The Crew of Barque Lone Star

DEDICATION

*To my family and Sherlockian friends for whom
it is always 1895.*

THE LIFE OF A COUNTRY SQUIRE



*I*n the short story “The Adventure of the Greek Interpreter,” Sherlock Holmes tells Dr. Watson that his ancestors were “country squires.” And other than that bit of information, along with the note that his grandmother was the sister of the French portraitist Vernet, Doyle provided little with respect to his most famous character’s origins.

Knowing his father might have been country squire as well, however, provides insights into Holmes’ social level and certain expectations common to those of his rank. A country squire would have owned enough land to rent to tenants and have lived in a manor house. While the squire’s position was below a

nobleman or large landowner, (1) he still ranked high in the local social structure.

In addition to running his estate and ensuring the welfare of those under his tenancy, the country squire also held the position of Justice of the Peace. In this capacity, the squire had both civil and legal duties. Within the local government, the justices supervised parish (or county) officials, in particular those in charge of the maintenance of roads and bridges and the enforcement of the Poor Laws. (2) As a legal position, Justices of the Peace served as magistrates during the Quarter Sessions, where they and a jury heard and decided on serious crimes such as theft, highway robbery, assault, burglary, rioting, drunkenness, profane swearing, and a variety of crimes against property (poaching, cutting estate timber and the like. Between these sessions, the justices would hold petty sessions where the least serious crimes were reviewed and decisions made without a jury. (3)

Because the English system did not include a prosecutor for almost all crimes, the preparation of a case rested with the constable, from collecting evidence to presenting it at trial. Justices of the peace supervised and worked closely with the village constable, issued warrants, and determined whether to move a case to trial and to which court. (4)

As a member of the gentry, Sherlock Holmes would have been in a position of privilege. If his father was a Justice of the Peace, he would have developed a familiarity with the criminal justice system and the law. For the consulting detective, the foundation for investigating and solving crimes would have come naturally to a descendant of country squires.

(1) Daniel Pool, *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1993), 46.

- (2) Sally Mitchell, *Daily Life in Victorian England* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 90.
- (3) "Victorian Crime and Punishment," accessed February 16, 2015. <http://vcp.e2bn.org/>
- (4) J.J. Tobias, *Crime and Police in England: 1700-1900* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1979), 125.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



It is no joke that it takes a village to create a book. This particular book represents more than two years of research and writing on the various topics presented here. One of my greatest joys has been to share them with more than fifteen scions, organizations dedicated to the Sherlock Holmes and the writings of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. These essays have traveled the world. From the U.S. to Canada, to Australia, to New Zealand, and to India. More than once I have been corrected by those more knowledgeable than I, and I truly appreciate their guidance. Any errors or omissions, however, are mine.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Liese Sherwood-Fabre grew up in Dallas, Texas and knew she was destined to write when she got an A+ in the second grade for her story about Dick, Jane, and Sally's ruined picnic. After obtaining her PhD from Indiana University, she joined the federal government and had the opportunity to work and live internationally for more than fifteen years. After returning to the states, she seriously pursued her writing career and has had numerous pieces appear in both print and electronically. She is currently a member of The Crew of the Barque Lone Star, the Napoleons of Crime, and the Studios Scarlets Society scions and contributes regularly to Sherlockian newsletters across the world.

You can follow her upcoming releases and other events by joining her newsletter at www.liesesherwoodfabre.com.

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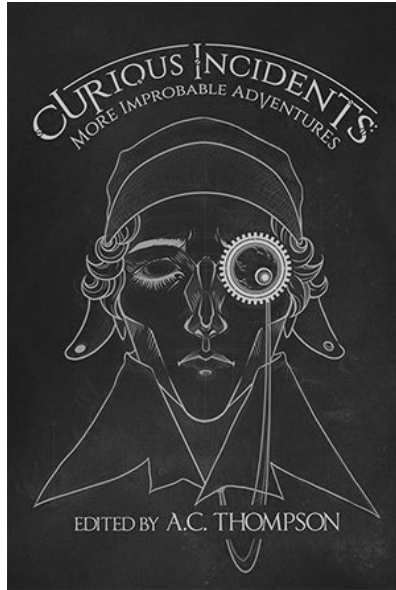
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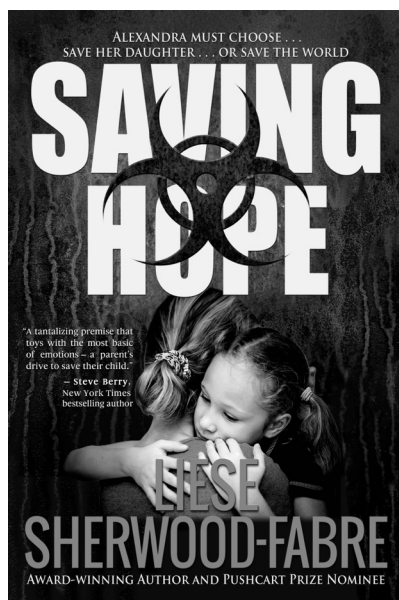
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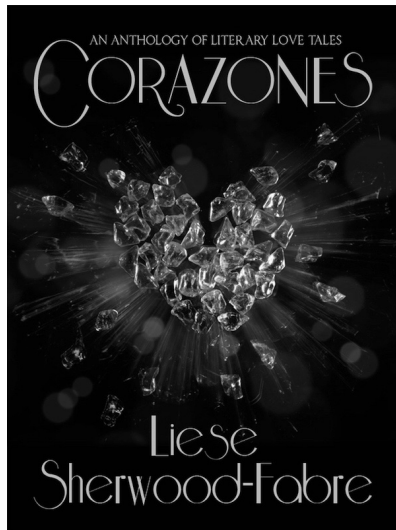
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