

THE DISTRICT MESSENGER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES SOCIETY OF LONDON

ROGER JOHNSON, 210 RAINSFORD ROAD, CHELMSFORD CM1 2PD

no. 104 17th December 1990

Two new books of great importance from Fordham University Press (University Box L, Bronx, NY 1045S-5172, USA). IRREGULAR MEMORIES OF THE 'THIRTIES, edited by Jon L. Lellenberg, is the 2nd volume in the BSI Archival Series. This is where history really begins, with the founding and unexpected flourishing of the Baker Street Irregulars. Unexpected, at least, to that remarkable bookman Christopher Morley to whom it was just another of the ephemeral clubs he delighted in forming. Some of the book is devoted to Morley's own accounts, contemporary and retrospective, but there are contributions from Robert K. Leavitt, George S. Fletcher, Vincent Starrett, Frederic Dorr Steele... Now at last we know, as far as we can, what actually happened at that memorable first BSI dinner that gave rise to such varying reports at the time. We learn how Anthony Boucher, discovered the BSI before they discovered him. History or anecdote, it's fascinating stuff. (\$18.95). THE STANDARD DOYLE COMPANY: CHRISTOPHER MORLEY ON SHERLOCK HOLMES, edited by Steven Rothman (\$19.95) inevitably overlaps with IRREGULAR MEMORIES to an extent, but in each case the inclusion of the relevant essay (letter or whatever) in its proper place is vital. Here are Morley's introductions to various Sherlockian works, his more than competent poems, the appropriate observations from his newspaper columns, and - perhaps most important - "Clinical Notes by a Resident Patient". This last was Morley's long-running column of personal observations and scholarly ramblings from the BAKER STREET JOURNAL; there's much gold and hardly any dross in this, the first and best column of its kind. Purely as Sherlockian scholarship the book is valuable; perhaps more important, it's a chance to meet an astonishingly versatile, scholarly, whimsical and gregarious friend.

SHERLOCK HOLMES IN GIBRALTAR by Sam Benady (Gibraltar Books Ltd, 38 Main Road, Grendon, Northamptonshire NN7 1JW; £2.95) is something quite unexpected. Mr Benady gives us two of Holmes' adventures from the pre-Watson days. "The Abandoned Brigantine" tells the "true" story of the Mary Celeste, a complicated tale that is at least no more unlikely than other explanations, and rather less so than ACD's own fantasy. We learn that in his youth Holmes worked for Pinkerton's in New York - more, that he was actually on board the Mary Celeste! There's little detection in either tale, but they're neatly written, and the author clearly knows his Gibraltar and his Sherlock Holmes.

Out now in the video stores are the following Rathbone/Bruce films, all at a reasonable £9.99: THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES, THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE SCARLET CLAW, SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE SECRET WEAPON, SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE VOICE OF TERROR. Something of an improvement on the release earlier this year at a price ranging from £17.95 to £24.95! CBS/Fox have ensured high quality prints, and the packaging is attractive. What more could you want?

Andrew McLean recommends what seems to be a fascinating new book, YOUNG & MARTEN'S VICTORIAN HOUSE CATALOGUE (Sidgwick & Jackson, £19.99). Carol Whitlam reports finding "Sherlock Holmes & The Case of The Missing Body", a one-act play in which Holmes & Watson discuss the resurrection of Christ. It's in a book called POTTERS CLAY DRAMA: ACT FIVE, published by Potters Clay Drama of Lutterworth in 1988 (probably available from Christian bookshops). Carol also recently found a rather handsome porcelain, group entitled "A Most Mysterious Case", showing Holmes standing & Watson sitting before the fireplace. The thing stands about 7" high and costs, about £22. Unfortunately the shop wasn't able to say who made it! Desmond Tyler provides more information on the IBM PC discs containing THE HOUND and THE CASEBOOK (Patterson & Co., Bramble Cottage, Briar Way, Berkhamstead, Herts. HP4 2JJ; £8 each disc including VAT & postage). Each disc comes with a Lightning Word Search programme and is available in either 3½ or 5¼ IBM format for running on either a twin disc computer with at least 512K or a computer with a hard disc. More information can be had from Patterson & Co.

From Jon Lellenberg: Harold Orel has two books of interest out next year. SIR ARTHUR CONAN. DOYLE, INTERVIEWS & RECOLLECTIONS appears in Britain



in March/April from Macmillan, while CRITICAL ESSAYS ON ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE comes out in the USA in late '91 from G.K. Hall. A new book from Kelvin I. Jones (Sir Hugo Books, 10 Athelstan Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 6EJ), is not strictly Holmesian: THE OBSIDIAN & OTHER STORIES tells three tales of an Edwardian psychic detective, John Carter. (Limited edition of 100, 60 pages, £2 + 30p postage. Cheques, to Kelvin I. Jones, please.) ISIS tapes have released a complete reading of THE SIGN OF FOUR by Patrick Tull; it lasts 4½ hours and costs £21.50 plus VAT. The fifteenth issue of Geoff Bradley's magazine CADS (CRIME AND DETECTIVE STORIES) is now out, packed full of fascinating articles and comments (£3.50 from 9 Vicarage Hill, South Benfleet, Essex SS7 1PA; please ask Geoff about overseas rates).

The Northern Musgraves' meeting on Saturday 12th January will feature an auction. Among the very special items for sale will be a copy of the script for the forthcoming Granada adaptation of "The Creeping Man", autographed by Jeremy Brett, Edward Hardwicke & Michael Cox, as well as two (2 - count 'em! - 2) of Bert Coules' scripts from the current BBC radio series THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, both signed by Bert. Further information from David Stuart Davies, Overdale, 69 Greenhead Road, Huddersfield HD1 4ER. Those interested in Holmes' relationships with the police should consider joining The Constabulary, a corresponding scion of the Baker Street Irregulars (John B. Taylor, PO Box 804, Midlothian, Texas 76065, USA). The first 1991 meeting of The Priory Scholars will, be on the 2nd February at The Old Tudor Rectory, Main Street, Glenfield, Leicester; the speaker will be the ubiquitous David Stuart Davies (further details from Sheila Redfern, 12 Groby Road, Glenfield, Leicester LE3 8GJ).

The December issue of the BAKER STREET JOURNAL consists largely of a well-deserved tribute to our old friend John Bennett Shaw ("The Hans Sloane of My Age", BSI). Apart from John only Julian Wolff (and I think Vincent Starrett) have been honoured with a portrait on the title-page. Congratulations, John!

Rupert Books (59 Stonefield, Bar Hill, Cambridge CB3 8TE) has (have?) issued a Christmas list, being a selection of new titles in the Holmesian field, including Kelvin Jones' THE OBSIDIAN (£2.30), June Thomson's THE SECRET FILES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES (£11.95), Clive Brooks' SHERLOCK HOLMES REVISITED vol. 2 (£11.99), Ronald C. Weyman's THE MARK OF THE BEAST (£9.95), M.J. Trow's LESTRADE & THE DEADLY GAME (£11.95) and John North's SHERLOCK HOLMES & THE ARABIAN PRINCESS (£9.95). And that's just a selection from the selection! You can order by phone on 0954 781861.

Late news about the 12th January Musgraves meeting! (The lateness is my fault, not the Musgraves'.) Besides the auction, this 4th birthday celebration will feature a new drama, FIXED POINT: THE LIFE & DEATH OF SHERLOCK HOLMES. The meeting will start at 12.30 pm. at the Huddersfield Hotel in the town centre, and for £9.75 you'll get a champagne toast, buffet lunch and coffee. Applications to David Stuart Davies.

From Evelyn Herzog of the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes comes news of the great Trans-Atlantic Junketings. The Martha Hudson Breakfast takes place at the Algonquin Hotel in New York from 8.30 to 10.30 am (\$17 - send cheques, payable to the Baker Street Irregulars, to The Stetaks, 15529 Diagonal Road, LaGrange, Ohio 44050). At the same hotel, at 6 pm on the same day, the Adventuresses will hold their own Birthday Dinner (\$50 - send cheques, payable to the Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes - to Evelyn A. Herzog, 235 West 15th Street, New York, NY 10011). Finally "the annual reception for all Sherlockians and their friends, will be held on Saturday January 12, 1991, at 24 Fifth Avenue from 2.30 to 5.00 pm". (\$28 - send cheques, payable to the Baker Street Irregulars, to Robert E. Thomalen BSI, 69 Glen Road, Eastchester, NY 10709.)

PUNCH is currently running a 3-part, serial by Julian Symons, "Sherlock's Christmas", a case for Sheridan Haynes. The catch is that you have to work out whodunnit; get it right and you could win a prize. From Peter Blau: GOOD NIGHT, MR HOLMES by Carole Nelson Douglas (Tor Books, #18.95) tells the story of Irene Adler from her viewpoint; "entertaining and well written", says Peter. Along with Charlton Heston in the new film of THE CRUCIFER OF BLOOD will be Richard Johnson as Watson, Edward Fox, Simon Callow & John Castle. Director is Fraser Heston. Looks good.

The Compliments of the Season to all.

