On the Tracks of Arthur Conan Doyle: The “Canada”

Dawn Nuhn

In the early part of the 20th century, Canada was rapidly growing and developing, especially westward. In an effort to promote the railways, attract investment, and boost tourism and immigration in 1914, the Canadian government invited celebrated author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to tour the country and write about his experiences.

Arthur and Jean travelled across Canada in a private, luxurious railway car:

“...The Grand Trunk Railway System... will have a private railway car to meet you at Quebec or Montreal, will send you wherever you want to go in eastern Canada, furnish you with the best on their steamers on the Great Lakes, have another car waiting for you at Port William, and send you all over the Western portion of the trip on their lines.”

- The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, John Dickson Carr

The Grand Trunk Railway (Canadian) made matters easy for us by generously undertaking to pass us over their system and to place a private car at our disposal. This proved to be a gloriously comfortable and compact little home consisting of a parlour, a dining-room and a bedroom. It belonged to Mr. Chamberlin, the president of the line, who allowed us the use of it.

- Memories and Adventures, Arthur Conan Doyle

This “gloriously comfortable” house on wheels was named the “Canada” and while it was lent to the Conan Doyles by Edson Joseph Chamberlin, it was designed by and built for the previous GTR president, Charles McVille Hays.

Hays was born in Illinois on May 16, 1856. At 17 he started working for the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad. He married Clara Jennings Gregg in 1881 and they had five daughters: Mary (1882), Orian (1884), Louise (1885), and Clara (1887). Hays was employed by several railway companies and moved up the ranks with each employer until in 1896 he became general manager of the Grand Trunk Railway and moved his family to Montreal. He left the GTR for another job in 1901, but quickly returned and was promoted to vice-president. In 1904 Hays became president of the Grand Trunk Pacific and in 1909 was appointed president of the Grand Trunk Railway, a position he held until his death. Charles Hays made sweeping changes, creating a more streamlined and

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THE GREEN SETTEE

Two Decades of Friends and Family
The Friends of the ACD Collection celebrated their twenty year anniversary in 2017

DOUG Wrigglesworth & CLIFF GOLDFARB

In 1997, the Bootmakers of Toronto celebrated a quarter century of Sherlockian scholarship and fellowship with an international conference entitled, appropriately enough, “Lasting Impressions.” The resulting gathering of Sherlockians, Holmesians and Doyleans from the four corners of the world focused attention on that literary treasure trove, the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Reference Library.

The Bootmakers are indeed offspring of the Collection, having been formed as a result of its opening in 1972. The first Curator, Cameron Hlery, together with some prominent local Sherlockians and with the strong encouragement of the great collector and gadfly John Bennett Shaw, were instrumental in the birth of the Bootmakers.

After “the tumult and the shouting died, and the Captains and the Kings departed” [apologies to Tennyson], several locals turned their thoughts to the ACD Collection, and how to help it to flourish over the next 25 years. Maureen Green and Cliff Goldfarb had been appointed by the Bootmaker Executive to look into ways to support the Collection, knowing that the Bootmakers themselves would not be an appropriate organization for such a purpose. Doug Wrigglesworth, Chair of the Conference, suggested the formation of a “Friends” organization, a concept with which he had some experience.

A small group of enthusiasts gathered at Cliff’s office on November 18, 1997, to formulate a plan.¹ Initial suggestions included the publication of a newsletter and the creation of a mailing list, beginning with the Conference attendees and the wide range of personal contacts that was available. Doug and Cliff found themselves appointed as Chair and Vice-Chair pro tem.² By the spring of 1998 the first mailing went out, and within a year the Friends had grown to over 100 members.

¹We were soon aware of the need to connect with senior Library staff, and of the advantages of working with the Toronto Public Library Foundation, a registered Canadian charity. Cliff established a strong and helpful relationship with its President, Jennifer Blunt, which has continued with her successors, first Heather Runball and now Jennifer Jones. The Foundation has been our host since day one, which gave us immediate charitable status. An important result of this relationship was the forming of the American Foundation for the TPL, which allowed our American Friends to receive U.S. charitable tax treatment for their donations.

Doug had several meetings with David Kotin, then Head of Special Collections, concerning the exact nature of the Friends’ role. Once David was assured that we were interested in supporting the Collection and not interfering with Library operations, he gave us his complete support. His successor, Mary Rae Shum, continued to provide advice and assistance.

As to the Collection itself, the ACD Friends have been blessed with wonderful support from the Curators as well as many other TPL staff. Cameron Hlery continued working with us following his retirement, until his untimely death. Victoria Gill, who followed Cameron, was always cooperative. Peggy Perdue succeeded Victoria and immersed herself into our world of Sherlock Holmes and Arthur Conan Doyle. Peggy has earned an international reputation and awards for her enthusiastic and learned outreach activities and her writing. Since Peggy’s recent promotion to Department Head of Special Collections, Jesse Ansaldo has become the latest Curator and joined our family.

So, what have we accomplished over the past 20 years? Here are a few of our major achievements.

1. **Promoted the Collection’s international profile:**
   - One of the “go to” places for research and as a source of primary documents on ACD and the Sherlockian Canon
   - A family of supporters, gained through our newsletter, The Magic Door, and personal contacts made by many, not the least of whom Peggy Perdue, whose travels have added to the fold

2. **Conferences:**
   - While the 1997 conference “Lasting Impressions” was really a Bootmaker event, it introduced the Collection to visiting Sherlockians, many of whom became Friends
   - “Footprints of the Hound” in 2001 celebrated the centenary of the publication The Hound of the Baskervilles and brought together a quite remarkable group of international experts, as well as a large audience from as far away as Japan and Denmark
   - “ACD 15” in 2006 was also successful in providing a hospitable welcome and entertainment to another international group
   - “Study in Scandal” [Sins] in 2011 was an attempt to debunk some of the silly rumours and myths that plague all great public figures

3. **Cameron Hlery Memorial Lectures:**
   - In 2002 we established an annual lecture by prominent ACD and Sherlockian scholars to honour Cameron and celebrate his life and work. Since 2008, the lectures have been published in booklet form and are included in the Friends annual membership. Some of our lecturers:
   - 2002 Isaac Gewirtz, Curator of the Berg Collection, New York Public Library
   - 2004 Maureen Jennings, crime writer, creator of Murdoch Mysteries TV series
4. New 'Digs' for the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection:
When the Toronto Reference Library opened in 1977, the ACD Collection was happily ensconced in a comfortable Victorian room on the fifth floor. The only drawbacks were lack of space, and access which was limited to only a few hours per week. As a part of a major renovation completed in 2014, a wonderful new space was created in the new Marilyn and Charles Baillie Special Collections Centre. Many Friends generously donated to the completion of the new Room. Happily, the welcoming environment of the earlier Room has been maintained—and the Collection is now accessible during Library hours.

5. Additions to the Collection:
Over the years the Friends have helped the Collection to purchase important additions. Just a few examples include:

- An autograph manuscript explaining Arthur Conan Doyle's views on religion—our first major acquisition
- A selection of books from ACD's personal library, found in a bookshop in Switzerland
- Journals of ACD and wife Jean from their 1914 travels across Canada
- Manuscript drafts of the 1914 poem “Athinacca Trail”
- A lot from the 2004 Christie’s sale: “Canada and the Empire”
- “The Nelson Notebook”—manuscript research notes gathered by ACD
- Manuscripts of ACD's short stories “The Marriage of the Brigadier” and “The Farish Magazine”

6. Publications:

- Issues of The Magic Door have been published, mostly tri-annually, since 1998. Early editors included Chris Redmond and Peter Wood. Doug Wrigglesworth acted as managing editor for the first 17 volumes. Since then, a stalwart group led by editor Dayna Nuhn, now joined by co-editor Donny Zaldin, continue to produce quality issues
- The annual Holleyer Lecture booklets
- A limited edition of The Four Points, the story of the founding of the Collection, as well as several occasional papers
- Assisting Georgina Doyle in publishing her account of ACD's first family, Out of the Shadows
- Not a print publication, but our website, www.acdfriends.org, created and maintained by Doug Elliott, tells of our history and keeps our Friends up-to-date

Executive:
Special thanks must go to all of the members of our Executive over the years! Doug stepped down as Chair in 2008 (but continued as an active member of the Board). Cliff became Chair and Barbara Rasch Vice-Chair, and served as Chair of our sins Conference. Dayna Nuhn took over as our Publications Director. Philip Elliott has doubled as our meeting secretary and merchandise co-ordinator.

Friends and Family:
The title of this article spoke of Friends and Family. Family indeed! We cannot thank enough the many, many people who have been involved in the Friends’ successes, both within and beyond the Library. It would be a most hazardous and foolish enterprise to name all who have helped out—and unfair to leave out any, but special mentions must go to the TPL Foundation and its staff, particularly Liza Fernandez, have been a constant presence throughout our history; the TPL Graphics Department; the Special Collectors Team; the Bookmakers; our American Friends led by Glen Minnsker; and our many European, Australian and Japanese friends.

The Future:
We intend to continue with our publications, Holleyer Lectures, and special events. Another conference is not out of the picture and we are planning exciting additions to our website.

Endnotes:
1. The initial meeting took place, strangely enough, on the very day that Dame Jean Conan Doyle, ACD's daughter, passed away. In attendance, besides Goldfarb and Wrigglesworth were Victoria Gill, then Curator, Cameron Holleyer, Curator Emeritus, David Kolin, Barbara Rasch, and David Sene Melvin.
2. "Por Te" seems to have listed for a long time.
3. Cliff had become the Foundation's lawyer by this time and was asked to set up an American 501(c)(3) organization to help the friends of the TPL's special collections, the ACD, Merith, and Osborne, to receive charitable gifts from their American supporters.
4. Two prime examples were Richard L. Burns, Curator of Special Collections; and Sir Christopher Foulsham, Director of the Royal College of Art.

Arthur Conan Doyle Room in the Toronto Reference Library
On the Tracks of ACD:
The “Canada”
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efficient organization and also borrowing American railway practices to help turn the heavily-indented railway around. Hays was hard-working and a visionary, but he was also opinionated, intolerant of interference, and opposed to organized labour. Unfortunately, he didn’t live long enough to see the Pacific Railroad extend to Prince Rupert, B.C. Although initially successful in making the GTR profitable, policies put in place under his leadership (many to do with the Grand Trunk Pacific) plus a variety of factors such as overspending, mismanagement, lack of foreign capital, the First World War, and the slowing of western immigration brought about financial disaster for the Grand Trunk Railway. The company declared bankruptcy in 1919 and was absorbed by the Canadian National Railway.

When Charles Hays became the general manager in 1896, he ordered a private railway car from the Wagner Palace Car Company of Buffalo. The car was finished in 1897 and became Hays’ official home-away-from-home and travelling office as he inspected the company’s holdings and building progress across the country. It was named “Canada” and measured 76’ 8” in length (including platforms), 9’ 10 1/2” wide, and 14’ 1 1/2” tall with clerestory roof windows. A little over half the length is devoted to 2 bedrooms with washstands, a dining room/palour, and an observation room with maps and a speed recorder, with the balance of the car being used for kitchen and staff accommodations.

The interior is finished in mahogany, of plain design throughout, with the exception of the kitchen, which is cherry. The upholstery is Ooze® leather, and the floors are covered with green Wilton carpet—the draperies being made to match. The floor space is divided up so as to afford very ample accommodation. The two staircases, which can be arranged en suite, are furnished with stationary beds and individual toilet accommodations. The locks and most of the other metal fittings in the car are of Persian brass, the washstands and accessories being of nickelplate. These are supplied with both hot and cold water service.

The car is lighted with Pintsch gas and heated with the ‘anti-pounding’ steam-heating system.

— The Railway and Shipping World (Toronto), May 1898

When the Canadian National Railway absorbed the Grand Trunk Railway in 1919, the “Canada” was included. Electric lights were installed in the 1920s, the kitchen and bathrooms were modernized, and in the 1930s the outside was re-clad in metal. These were minor changes and the inside has remained virtually intact from the time the Conan Doyle travelled in it. The “Canada” was still in use in the 1960s and was decommissioned in 1974. This amazing piece of Canadian railway history was saved for posterity when it was purchased by Hays’ daughter and donated to Exporail, Canada’s Rail Museum in memory of her father. The car is displayed inside the main building and in December visitors can enjoy a Christmas Tea in the “Canada”. The car is closed the rest of the year to preserve the interior.

Last summer I was given a private tour by the Curator, Jean-Paul Vian, who generously shared his knowledge of Hays and the “Canada.” I had seen pictures of the exterior, but never the interior. Considering the age of the car, it is in remarkable shape and it was an incredible feeling for me to step back in time and literally walk along ACD’s tracks. I stood beside the bed where ACD slept, sat in the dining room, and saw the whole car.

While the “Canada” is the main link between Hays and ACD, there are other connections. Near the end of their tour, on the evening of July 1, our country was a mere 47 years old that day), the Conan Doyle arrived in our nation’s capital. ACD briefly described this portion of the tour in “Western Wanderings.” Ottawa was “a flying visit and a fleeting impression” and “quiet, well-ordered, daintily with really magnificent Government buildings.” Their train pulled into the Grand Trunk Railway Central Station which was connected by a tunnel to the Château Laurier Hotel across the street. Both of these buildings were commissioned by Charles Hays and constructed from 1909 to 1912. The Conan Doyle spent the night in a suite of rooms at the Château Laurier.

Sir Arthur speaks in the warmest terms of everything he has seen, and pays a glowing tribute to the Grand Trunk and Grand Trunk Pacific Railways and the hotels they have provided, particularly at Ottawa and Winnipeg, for the comfort of the traveller. He was especially impressed with the Château Laurier and Fort Garry. Lady Doyle expressed the belief that the Château Laurier was the finest hotel in America, but Sir Arthur laughingly refused to talk on that point because he had expressed a similar opinion about the Fort Garry, Winnipeg.

— Montréal Gazette, July 4, 1914

As well as staying at the Château Laurier, Arthur gave his talk on “The Future of Canadian Literature” to the Ottawa Branch of the Canadian Club at the hotel the next day. He finished his speech by reading “The Athabasca Trail,” which was first published that same day in the Montréal Gazette. On July 4, the Ottawa Citizen wrote in their comment section: “Conan Doyle is perhaps the only man with nerve enough to come here and read a poem in our very faces and make us like it.”

On July 2 and 3, Sir Arthur and Jean left Ottawa for Montreal to prepare for the voyage home on July 4.

The final link between Charles Melville Hays and Arthur Conan Doyle was the latter’s choice of the Olympic for the voyage to New York in May of 1914. I have to admire ACD’s bravery: I would not have sailed on the Titanic’s sister ship a mere two years after the disaster.

One wonders if it was a touch of sardonic humor, or simply his characteristic daring, that made him book passage on the sister ship of the Titanic...

— The Adventures of Conan Doyle, Charles Higham

After his encounter with George Bernard Shaw over the Titanic, Arthur made a statement in choosing the sunken liner’s sister, the S.S. Olympic:

— Conan Doyle, Andrew Lycett

In May 1914, Conan Doyle set sail for America aboard the White Star liner Olympic, sister ship of the Titanic. Two years had elapsed since his quarrel with George Bernard Shaw, and if he felt any qualms about the Olympic’s captain or crew, he managed to conceal them as
CHATEAU LAURIER
OTTAWA, CANADA
Grand Trunk Railway System


F. W. BERGMAN, Manager-in-Chief Hotels, Grand Trunk Railway System.

May 1912 advertisement for the Chateau Laurier. Pictured in the lower right corner is the Grand Trunk Railway Central Station.
In the upper left are the Parliament buildings as Conan Doyle saw them, before they were destroyed by fire (except for the library) in 1916.

He waved cheerfully from the departure deck.

— Teller of Tales, Daniel Stashower

Conan Doyle travelled on the Olympic. Hays was a passenger on the Titanic. Charles Hays, accompanied by his wife, left Montreal on February 12, 1912, riding in the “Canada” to New York City. From there they sailed to England for a meeting with the GTR Board of Directors. They travelled home in the company of their daughter, Orian, and her husband, Montreal financier Thornton Davidson, as guests of White Star Line’s managing director J. Bruce Ismay. It was reported that Charles and Clara wanted to get home earlier because of their daughter Louise’s difficult pregnancy, and there was also the opening of the Chateau Laurier to consider. It is rumoured that the hold of the Titanic contained furniture purchased by Hays for the hotel.24 On the evening of the 14th, Colonel Archibald Gracie of the US Army was chatting with Hays in the smoking lounge. According to Gracie, Hays expressed the opinion that the “Hamburgh American lines are devoting their attention and ingenuity to vying with one another to attain the supremacy in luxurious ships and in making speed records. The time will come soon when this will be checked by some appalling disaster.” Charles Hays would be proved correct that very night.

Clara and Orian had retired to their rooms, but were still dressed, when the ship hit the iceberg. Mr. Hays and Mr. Davidson were on deck. After the ladies joined them there, the men went back to their cabins and returned with fur coats for their wives. Although Hays was certain that the Titanic would last at least eight to ten hours and that a rescue ship would arrive long before the ship sank, if it sank at all, he helped Clara, her maid Mary Ann Perceval, and Orian into one of the last lifeboats as a precaution. So sure were the women that they would see their husbands again that they didn’t think to kiss them goodbye. Charles Hays, Thornton Davidson,25 and Hays’s secretary, Vivian Payne, perished in the sinking of the Titanic.

The “Canada” was waiting in New York for the Hays’s return. When it was incorrectly reported that the Titanic was being towed to Halifax, the train started the journey there. After the false and accurate news of the disaster was received, the train was flagged down in Maine and returned to New York. Clara and Orian arrived on the Carpathia and returned to Montreal in the “Canada.”

At 11:30 on April 25th all the GTR trains stopped, telephones and telegraphs were silent, and employees paused work for 5 minutes to honour Hays. At GTR stations and offices, flags flew at half mast and the buildings were draped in black. Hays’s body was recovered by the Minia on April 26 and the “Canada” was sent to Halifax to carry his remains to Montreal for burial. Because of the tragedy, the openings of the Chateau Laurier and Grand Trunk Railway Central Station were postponed from April 26 until June 12.

Was Conan Doyle aware of the history of the “Canada” and that the...
NOTES FROM THE CHAIR

CLIFF GOLDFARB

This is my second column dealing with Sherlock Holmes and charity, drawing your attention to the importance of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection for donations of money and materials. The Friends are part of the Toronto Public Library Foundation, which is a registered Canadian charity, and they are also supported by the American Foundation for the Toronto Public Library, which is a US 501(c)(3) organization. If you are interested in helping the Friends to support the Collection, our Foundation partners would be pleased to discuss a gift or legacy with you.

Arthur Conan Doyle was a well-known supporter of a wide variety of charitable causes. In 1923 he was one of many famous British writers, artists and craftsmen who were asked to create a miniature book, painting, or object for a Dolls’ House, designed by the architect Sir Edwin Lutyens for Queen Mary, wife of King George V. The Dolls’ House is a remarkably detailed and complete 1/12 scale model which is now on display at Windsor Castle. One of the artists who created an original picture for the model was William Barnes Wollen, the illustrator of the Brigadier Gerard stories.

Most of the writers simply copied something from their own published work. But, as in the case of his earlier creation of an original Sherlock Holmes tale, “The Field Bazaar,” for the University of Edinburgh in 1896, Conan Doyle created a non-Cannonical Sherlock Holmes tale, “How Watson Learned the Trick.” It is 503 words, hand-written in 34 pages and bound into a 3.75 cm x 3.15 cm booklet.

The short story is a light-hearted parody of a common Sherlockian theme. Here, Watson starts by challenging Holmes: “I was thinking how superficial are some of your tricks of yours, and how wonderful it is that the public should continue to show interest in them... Your methods... are really easily acquired.”

“No doubt,” Holmes answered with a smile, “Perhaps you will yourself give an example of this method of reasoning.”

Watson then makes a series of deductions, including that Holmes has taken to financial speculation, with Holmes seemingly encouraging him to continue. Watson confidently concludes:

“I have no doubt that I could find other points, Holmes, but I only give you these few, in order to show you that there are other people in the world who can be as clever as you.”

Holmes then proceeds, almost sarcastically, to systematically demolish each of Watson’s conclusions—including that he was not looking at the financial pages of the morning paper, but rather at the adjoining cricket scores. Finally, he cannot resist video-watching his disconsolate companion, “But go on, Watson, go on! It’s a very superficial trick, and no doubt you will soon acquire it.”

THE LUMBER ROOM

JESSIE AMAOLO

Editor’s Note: We are sorry to say goodbye to Peggy Fervue as Curator of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection. Peggy expertly managed the Collection for years and has now been promoted to Department Head. This issue we are pleased to welcome Jessie Amaolo to the pages of Magic Door. Congratulations to Peggy and Jessie on their new positions.

When I was offered the position of Services Specialist and Curator of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection in the Toronto Public Library’s Special Collections Department, I was beyond thrilled. I could not wait to begin my new placement and to dive deep into the worlds of Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes.

Just three years ago, I was a novice librarian working part-time in the Special Collections Department when I was offered a six-month full-time appointment as Curator of the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection while Peggy Fervue took a sabbatical. I remember feeling excited and challenged as I knew I would have a great deal of work to do to live up to Peggy’s high standard. However, my unease quickly subsided as I became aware of a whole community of people, many of them Sherlockians, who were happy to build connections and were willing to share their knowledge and resources on Arthur Conan Doyle and his writings.

During my six months, I gained the experience necessary to qualify for my current position by leading tours, handling class visits, and facilitating programs such as the annual Cameron Holley Memorial Lecture. These activities piqued my interest in all things Doylean. I also had the opportunity to make contemporary as well as rare book purchases, and was involved in the acquisition of the one-of-a-kind Arthur Conan Doyle short story manuscript “The Parish Magazine,” purchased by the Friends of the ACD Collection. I also assisted with many research requests and
one-on-one consultations. Those valuable experiences increased my knowledge of Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes and prepared me for the role I have today.

I am grateful to be back in the Collection that I love. Peggy has been promoted to Department Head, and I am able to draw on her knowledge, connections, and years of expertise. I really look forward to building my own knowledge and specializing in a genre, an author, and a character which have been so influential and hold so much appeal for people all over the world, including myself. I will follow in Peggy's footsteps and continue to work hard at building and maintaining a Collection that is world-renowned and provides tremendous research value and potential for those making advances in Doylean and Sherlockian scholarship.

I look forward to connecting with the Friends of the Collection and patrons, as well as welcoming newcomers. When the day comes that my time is up as Curator, I hope that people reflect on my years of dedication and influence with satisfaction and hold me in the same high esteem as they do Peggy Perdue.

“...Sherlock Holmes said you stole the beryl coronet and that Arthur saw you pass it to Sir George,” I exclaimed.

“Neither Arthur nor I stole the coronet. I don’t know why Uncle thought I could reclaim Arthur from his dissipate life when I was just as prodigal. I’m afraid Uncle was too simple and trusting. We stole the cash box. Uncle kept in his bureau drawer and divided the money. I was determined to set out on my own, and Arthur was desperate to pay his debts of honour.”

“Did you guess that the coronet was a fake?” I asked.

“Yes,” she said. “Lords and princes don’t enter banks. Their men of business handle their financial affairs, or they summon their bankers to see them. If they have friends in business, those friends arrange matters. Uncle wanted to be among the Cassels and Rothschilds surrounding the...well, like them. So when a man who looked like...the man Uncle thought he was...came into his office, offering a ‘national treasure’ as collateral for a ‘trilling loan’ of fifty thousand pounds, Uncle ate it up. He was in such a dither, or he did not want to embarrass the...the borrower by having the jewels appraised. It was his heaven on earth, to have the P—the Personage—in his debt and be confided in with secrets, and the treasure among his collars and studs. He was ‘One of Them’ now, as good as a Rothschild.

“Perhaps Sir George played a part in the deception,” she added. “I doubt that Arthur did. He was too honest, and he loved his father. Uncle must have waited for the personage to repay the loan and redeem the coronet until he could wait no longer. He must have taken the coronet to Marlborough—the great man’s house—and demanded an audience. He probably threatened not to leave when he was denied, so the Comptroller of the Household saw him.”

“Sir Dighton Probyn?”

“Yes.”

“I could hardly keep a bland face at her slip. Sir Dighton Probyn was the Prince of Wales’s Comptroller. The Duke of Marlborough sold his family’s treasures to keep up Blenheim Palace, but she had just confirmed that it was Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales, leader of the Marlborough House Set.

“I’m sure the matter was hushed up as much as possible. But the collapse of the second largest private bank in England had to be avenged. I suppose Mr. Sherlock Holmes was called in to find who took the money and to restore it to the bank, as well as to keep down the gossip and fudge the truth. Many wealthy and highly placed persons banded with my uncle. If Mr. Holmes saved the bank from calamity, they would not be roused and neither would Uncle.”

“I wondered if Mary had ‘fudged the truth’ to me. Had the Prince of Wales been blackmailed, or had he wanted the money on behalf of a lady? Had ‘The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet’ been written to divert suspicion from the Prince onto a scapegoat—a banker with too great a desire to hobnob with royalty? Or did Arthur’s indulgent father pay Sir George Burnwell for silence about his sexual peccadilloes? Were Holmes and Watson instructed to arrange a cover story to protect a royal personage and one of the foremost private banks in England from association with an unsavoury scandal?

“What happened to you?” I asked.

“I went to France, and then to Germany. I was governess to a baron’s children. Germans admire for English governesses to teach their children, so they treat them well. I married the baron’s cousin, a diplomat, and travelled half the world. I did very well.”

CANON FODDER

We read about Lord Hartington’s take on “The Beryl Coronet” in Magic Door, Volume 18, Issue 1. This time we hear about the case from Mary Harding’s viewpoint.

Marilyn Penner

“My uncle badgered me to marry my cousin Arthur almost constantly. I would have a secure home. It would satisfy propriety after his death. Uncle said, for Arthur to marry me. A lone maid was helpless, even though she had cared for her aged relatives and maintained their household. Domestic service, he said, would disgrace our good name. If we married, Uncle would retain his unpaid housekeeper. I was such a pattern of sense and virtue, I would keep Arthur steady. It would benefit everyone.” She paused. “But I chafed at drudging for the family. I no longer wanted my relations to assume control over my life. Sir George Burnwell’s adventures made me restless for self-fulfillment. So when Uncle pressed me again to marry Arthur and remain the ‘angel in the house’, I ran.”

“You stole the coronet and eloped with Sir George?”

“No. I did not. Sir George and Arthur were...betroth friends. Do you know what I meant? Arthur proposed to me because he could confide in me. I knew what he was. He would give me children if I wanted them. I would be respected, a married woman and mistress of the house, and he would always keep my secrets as he knew I would keep his.

“I told Arthur, much as I cared about him, I would not sacrifice myself for his friendship with Sir George Burnwell.”

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On the Tracks of ACD: The “Canada”

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first owner had met such a tragic end two years earlier on the Titanic. It seems unlikely, however, the “Canada” and the tracks of the Grand Trunk Railway connect these two great men who never met. Or did they? It would be fitting if Arthur Conan Doyle, the spiritualist crusader, encountered the most famous of the Chateau Laurier’s purported ghosts.

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Special thanks to Jean Paul Vaud and Exporail for the Canada’s car dining room information and tour.

End Notes:
1 General Joaquin Rogers, Superintendent of Jasper Park.
2 In “Western Wanderings,” ACD called Chamberlin a “bull
dog Captain of industry”.
3 I found one reference only for a fifth daughter, Agnes, born
around 1889, who predeceased her father.
4 The “Canada” is often erroneously described as a Pullman
car.
5 One was a very soft leather usually made from calfskin
using a vegetable tanning process producing a suede-like
finish on the fleshy side.
6 A Wilton carpet is woven on a Jacquard loom with looms
that are then cut to create a velvety pile.
7 Nickelate, also known as Nicielite (Nickel Arsenide NiAs)
is a pale grey-red natural with a metallic lustre
composed of 43.9% nickel and 56.1% arsenic.
8 Pintos Gas was invented in 1831 by Julius Pintos, a
German chemist and inventor. It is a bright, long
burning gas made of compressed sulphur. Although
the gas was dangerous, it was used in railway cars
because the lamps weren’t affected by the rough motion
of the train.
9 The museum is located in St. Constant, Quebec.
10 The Parliament buildings, constructed in Gothic Revival
style, were opened in 1886.
11 The station is still in use as a government convention
centre.
12 The Fort Garry Hotel in Winnipeg, which was also
commissioned by Hays, opened in 1913.
13 George Bernard Shaw wrote an article for the Daily
News and Mail in May of 1912 decrying the public’s
need to turn the Titanic disaster into an epic, romantic
fable instead of focusing on the facts. Conan Doyle,
over the defender, published a rebuttal to Shaw’s
arguments, to which Shaw replied relating ACD’s points.
Conan Doyle replied one last time and finished with:
“The worst think or say of Mr. Shaw is that his many
brilliant gifts do not incline the power of weighting
evidence nor has he that quality—all it good taste,
humanity, or what you will—which prevents a man
from needlessly hurting the feelings of others.”
14 I have not found confirmation for this story. However,
Hays did commission French sculptor Paul Cherat
to create a bust of Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier for
the lobby of the Chateau Laurier. Cherat was also on
the Titanic, travelling to attend the hotel opening. He
was playing cards when the ship hit the iceberg and
later boarded lifeboat #7 and survived. The bust was
transported on a different ship and can be seen in the
hotel lobby.
15 Thornton Davidson’s body was not recovered.