



# Communication

#216

New Series

Special Halloween Issue

Volume 5 Issue 8

Submitted for your approval: the grotesque according to Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. We thought we would entertain the grislier side of the Canon, what with the season being Halloween. Halloween does have its roots in Europe, Great Britain in particular.

It is thought to have originated among the ancient Druids. On Halloween evening, Saman, the lord of the dead, called forth evil spirits. The Druids lit great fires on Halloween to ward off these spirits. After the Romans conquered Britain, they added to the Druidic ceremony features of the Roman festival held on November 1 in honor of Pomona, the goddess of the fruits of trees.

No tricks here. We hope you enjoy our treats.

*The Papers on the Sundial*

## Confessions

Birdy Edwards shuffled the cards and slapped them down on the dark brown table. Maria Pinto Gibson leaned forward and touched the deck. Her long dark fingers scooped up half the cards, slid them to one side and then placed the bottom half of the cards on top. Her fingernails tapped the top card three times. She sat up straight, looked at Birdy and smiled.

"Feeling lucky?" Birdy said.

"Luck has nothing to do with it," Maria said, her accent lilting, her voice low.

Birdy took up the deck, said, "Seven card draw, aces high." He slid the cards across the table one

**continued on page 6**

## Macabre Meanderings

One does not have to go too far to find the macabre in the Canon. Being what he is, Holmes has dealt with many a gruesome situation. Not only are the results more than creepy, they are quite diverse.

Those with particularly gory details include "Cardboard Box," "Black Peter," "Veiled Lodger," and "Engineer's Thumb." Indeed, the sight of Victor Hatherly's mutilated hand gave Watson's "hardened nerves a shudder."

Events of a more subtle yet still horrific nature are found in "Lady Frances Carfax," "Musgrave Ritual," "Resident Patient," "Greek Interpreter" and "Dying Detective." The first two are interesting if one considers the effects of claustrophobia—the eponymous Lady trapped in a coffin, and Brunton stuck in the pit once the lid closes. RESI is no less terrifying: hanging. The latter two involve a much slower death: Paul Kratides is imprisoned and Holmes would have met his end had he not been as

**continued on page 6**

# The Lestrade

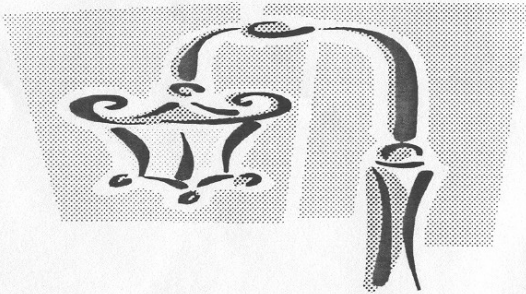
(with apologies to both Edgar Allen Poe and Arthur Conan Doyle)

**D**eep within dear London, cold,  
The fog swirled round the streets so bold,

Forcing hansom on the roads to stop and  
wait a while before

They plowed into a strolling mother  
Or crashed into one building or another  
And found their passengers strewn  
about—strewn about a retail store.  
Strewn about the gowns and shirts laying  
all across the floor.

Strewn about and nothing more.



It was in the bleak October,  
And we had just returned from Dover  
Looking into a crime involving cows and  
consid' rable gore.  
Holmes had test tubes full of slimes  
I was reading the Sunday *Times*  
When we heard familiar footfalls traipsing  
'cross the downstairs floor.  
Traipsing 'cross the carpeted steps and up  
the way and to our door.

Stopped, and silence returned once more.

Holmes obsessed with his beaker,  
No knock came, my soul grew weaker  
Settling farther into my divan that this  
week I had bought at Old Edd's Furniture  
Store.

Lately I had grown quite fond  
Of snoozing once dear Holmes had gone  
On his errands to purchase shag or  
ammunition of narrow bore.  
Or new test tubes for those he broke and  
nothing more.

On his errands and nothing more.

Presently my lids grew heavy  
And I knew that sleep would levy  
It's fine against my aging body whose  
muscles were now minimally sore.  
Suddenly four raps were heard;  
My lethargy left, again I stirred,  
Lurching toward the sound echoing from  
behind the door.

I turned the handle and swung wide the  
door.

In stepped Lestrade and nothing more.

"Ah, the ferret," I muttered lowly  
As across the carpet he walked slowly  
And sat upon my new divan and raised his  
feet from off the floor.

continued on page 3

continued from page 2

"Mr. Holmes, I've quite a conundrum,

"And I was wondering if you might have some

"Information to help me with over what I now pore.

"A case that involves a maid, a knife and lots of gore.

"Only this and nothing more."

Holmes smiled wryly at Lestrade's dilemma, Abandoned his beakers, said, "Her name is Emma,"

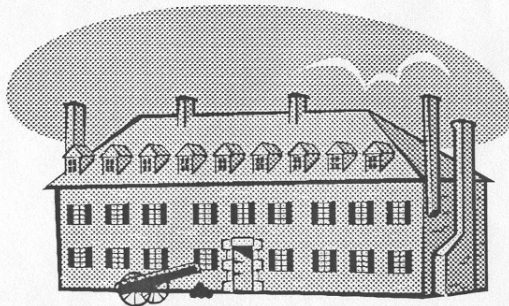
And Lestrade's jaw dropped as I had seen it drop so many times before.

"I read it in the *Times* this morrow,

"Of Lady Washburn and her sorrow,

"Of Sir Washburn's long lost brother whom their mother had named Maggore.

"A brother who had just returned from a



very distant shore.

"Returned to find such ghastly gore."

"Damn the *Times*," Lestrade now muttered.

But more loudly the detective uttered:

"Mr. Holmes, the house was shuttered.

"Shuttered from the misty tor.

"The house was locked, no windows broken.

"The maid was the last person who had spoken

"To Sir Washburn whose body was found mutilated upon the kitchen floor.

"The maid took her leave, by her own admission, as he locked and bolted the front door.

"Locked and bolted the front door."

Said Holmes, "Data is what I am lacking, "You were the one who sent Emma packing—

"Packing off to jail where she now waits pacing to and fro across the floor.

"You cannot now equivocate,

"You must tell me of her weight.

"Tell me before it is too late, what size was she, I implore.

"Was she dainty, was she hefty? Tell me, tell me, I implore."

Quoth the Lestrade, "I know no more."

ere Holmes threw such wild invectives—

Accusing the Scotland Yard detective

Of malfeasance, of gross negligence, of such things I had never heard him speak before.

"When you gave her your first peek

"How did you perceive her physique?

"Was she large or was she sleek when you saw her from across the floor?

continued on page 4

continued from page 3

"How did you perceive her through the door?"

Quoth the Lestrade, "I know no more."

If she were dainty, she'd be hardly able

"To toss Sir Washburn across the table,

"To filet him into pieces of such gruesomeness and gore.

"But if she were large and muscular

"She could seize him, slice his jugular.

"Make him into mincemeat and feed him to dragons from the days of yore.

"Free his soul from his body and send it to its hellish core."

Quoth the Lestrade, "I know no more."

"Less than useless. Unobservant.

"The crim'nal's friend. Moriarty's servant.

"Think man, think. What did you see—what did you see three days before?"

To his eyes a light returned

As if a candle in his thick skull burned

And Lestrade fin'ly knew what it was he was searching for.

His lips grew white and out of his mouth these words did pour:

"She was skinny as an apple core."

"There it is," cried Holmes, exultant.

"The game's afoot, the answer resultant

"From my deduction based upon the facts that came before.

"Washburn likely was done in by greed.

"The family is rare that has no bad seed,

"And this one's name has been decreed to be Maggore.

"The vile and villanous brother who is named Maggore.

Only him and no one more."

And so with haste we left our flat

And hailed a cab and traveled that

Familiar road that we had traveled so many, many times before.

"Indeed I read the *Times* this morn,"

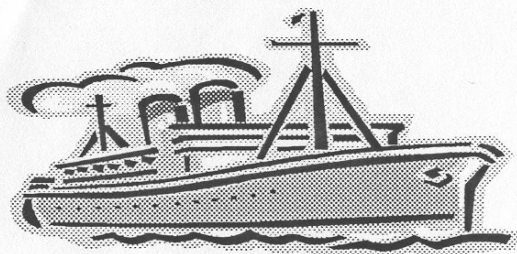
Said Holmes, "And doubts about Maggore were born."

"His whereabouts," said Lestrade, "were checked—he was nowhere, nowhere near the tor."

"I beg to differ," said Holmes,

"He was very much upon the tor.

"Only him and no one more.



"You may think his story verified,

"But I suspect now that he has lied.

"Who else could gain entrance so easily except Maggore?

"Sir Washburn would be so excited

"To see his lost brother that he invited

continued on page 5

continued from page 4

"The relative in to talk of times of yore.

"No windows broken, so whoever entered was known before.

"Only this and nothing more.

**T**he *Times* report was quite first rate.  
"Nearly everything else came from the first mate

"Of the ship on which the lost Washburn traveled, the *Elsinore*.

"I telegraphed him at ten-eleven

"And received his reply at three-oh-seven:

"A report that said since Liverpool Washburn was behind closed doors.

"Since docking in Liverpool, Washburn was sick and behind closed doors.

"Only this and nothing more.

"I am sure that before the *Elsinore* sailed,

"Washburn left and rode the rails,

"Reaching London four nights ago and going directly to his brother's door.

"Gaining entrance, his work was quick,

"Leaving remains to make a mortician sick.

"And then he returned unseen to his berth upon the *Elsinore*.

"Feeling much better the next day he emerged from his cabin door.

"Only this and nothing more."

"Lady Washburn was on holiday,

"So no one knew who could act that way.

"And so upon the maid such guilt did bore.

"The *Times* made no mention of her size.

"So to Lestrade I turned to theorize,

"And pressed him until he told me what I had thought before.

"He told me she was dainty as I had thought before."

"Only this and nothing more."

"But what," I asked, "did he stand to gain

"From his brother who was to be slain?"

"I do not know the motives yet about this crime of heinous gore.

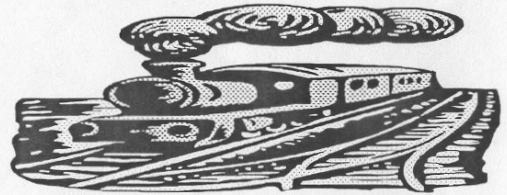
"Money, I suspect," Holmes replied,

"Or perhaps revenge or simple pride.

"But however he may have lied we must journey to see the sights upon the tor.

"We must see the truth that awaits us upon the tor.

"Merely the truth and nothing more."



So within the hansom's fittings,

Lestrade is silent, is still sitting,

Thinking things that I am sure he has never, ever thought before.

Holmes and I, as it started to rain,

Went into the station and took the train

To the Washburn estate about which we had talked before.

A place to which Lestrade shall not return as he hoped before.

To a case he shall investigate nevermore.

continued from page 1 observant as he was.

"Speckled Band" presents not only an odious crime, but literally a bizarre menagerie inhabiting Stoke Moran. A cheetah and a baboon are not your usual house pets.

In "Devil's Foot," we are presented with the effects of madness as the Tregennis Family comes to an unfortunate end. Voodoo finds its way into "Wisteria Lodge," and there are visions of pale men at the window in "Blanched Soldier."

"The Retired Colourman" offers death by gas, the "Creeping Man" presents a biological experiment gone wrong, and the "Crooked Man" shows us torture and disfigurement.

"Sussex Vampire" has more of an implied threat than is really delivered. Indeed, Holmes dismisses vampires at the opening, and his theories are borne out later when the perpetrator is discovered as being the disabled Jacky.

Thus, the stories run the gamut from the violent to the emaciated, from the brutal to the psychological. It is also interesting to note that, according to William Baring-Gould's chronology, nine out of the 60 adventures occur during October. This includes *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, beginning at the end of September, 1888 and concluding on October 20, 1888.

continued from page 1 at a time. Maria took up her cards as each was dealt, as did Jack Stapleton. Giuseppe Gorgiano, however, waited until all the cards were in front of him before he collected them. He held them close to his face, arranged the cards, flicking the corners as he did so.

"I bet ten," Jack said tossing a single white chip to the middle of the table.

"Very well," Birdy said, putting his chip in.

"Bom," Maria said, throwing hers in.

Giuseppe grunted, added his coin to the pile.

"So what happened to you?" Birdy said as he arranged his cards.

"Me?" Giuseppe asked.

"Si," Birdy replied.

"Knife," he said.

"Oh. And you?"

"A dog and a bog." Jack chuckled. "Both rather large I might add."

"Oh. Fancy that. And you, my lady?"

"Oh, I—uh, I, I—uh—"

"I understand if you do not wish to talk about it."

"No, I just—well, it was a gun."

"Oh," Birdy said. "How many cards?"

"T'ree," Giuseppe said.

"Two," Maria said.

"Four," Jack said.

"And the dealer takes two."

"And you?" Jack asked.

"Drowned at sea," Birdy said

Silence fell on the table as the players arranged their cards again.

"I raise twenty," Jack finally said, putting two more white chips in the center of the table.

"I will see your twenty," Birdy replied, "and raise you thirty more."

"Pahh," said Giuseppe. "I'm out."

Maria put in five chips and said, "I call."

Birdy laid his cards down, said, "Two pair."

Maria looked from Birdy to Jack and then placed her cards on the table. "Straight."

Jack grinned and continued on page 7

continued from page 6 showed his cards. "Full house."

Maria groaned but Birdy chuckled and said, "Well played."

Jack gathered up his chips, said, "Another hand?"

"No, *grazie*," Giuseppe said. He got up from the table, stretched his arms.

"How about you?" Jack said to Birdy.

"Perhaps later."

"We could haunt some houses," Jack said. "I hear that Stoke Moran has some new residents."

"Maybe another time," Birdy replied.

"How about you?" Jack said looking at Maria.

"No," she squeaked.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Leave her alone, Jack," Birdy said.

"Who died and left you in charge?"

"We all did," Birdy said flatly.

Jack stood up, stuffed the chips in his pocket.

"Giuseppe, let's find another game." Jack put

his arm around Giuseppe's huge shoulders, said,

"Did I ever tell you about my butterfly collection?" They walked off into the darkness.

Birdy turned to Maria, said, "What's the matter?"

"Nothing," she said, a catch in her voice.

Birdy moved his chair next to hers, the leg squeaking on the floor. "I know something is wrong."

"I wanted her dead," she said suddenly, tears in her eyes. She stood up, stepped away from the table.

"Ohh," Birdy said knowingly, standing up also. "So you had someone killed. We've all done that. Giuseppe's killed something like 50 men. I'm guilty too. Even Jack—his real name is Rodger, but he doesn't like us to use it."

"How do you know—" she paused, as if searching for the right word. "How do you know such things about these people?"

"I worked for Pinkerton's," Birdy said shrugging. "I'm just a curious man. And I'm

very curious about you."

"There's—there's not much to tell," Maria said turning away.

"Was she involved with your husband? Is that why you had her killed?"

Maria faced Birdy, said, "I don't—I am not sure."

"But you suspected that."

"Yes."

"How did she die?"

"I—please don't make me...."

"It's better if you talk about it. We're going to be here a long time."

Maria looked around at the darkness. Then she started to cry. Birdy stepped over to her, took her in his arms. She sank into his chest, sobbing.

After several minutes, she stopped.

"I—I have a confession," she said, her voice husky.

"I thought you might."

"I—I shot myself." She sniffed.

"Oh?" Birdy raised his eyebrows.

"I loved Neil. But when he lost interest in me I started to hate him. I hated his money and his house and England and everything else. I wanted to go home. Home to Brazil. But he would not let me." She paused, a shiver running through her. "I should have just run away. But I knew I would miss him too much."

She straightened up, pushed Birdy away. "So I did it. I knew it was wrong, but I did not care. Neil always said, 'Gracie this,' and 'Gracie that,' and I wanted to get back at both of them. So I did it on the bridge."

"Did it work?" Birdy asked.

"No," she said looking down. "They discovered the gun."

"Oh," Birdy said. He paused a moment, then said, "I have a confession too."

"What is that?"

"I wasn't pushed overboard," he said simply. "I jumped."

**The Pleasant Places of Florida**

*Founded: 1972  
by Leslie Marshall (dec.)*

**Recorder Emeritus: Dr. Benton Wood**

For the record: **THE LAST COURT OF APPEALS**  
**David McCallister**, Master of the House,

**Jeff & Wanda Dow**, The Papers on the Sundial,

**Carl L. Heifetz**, Representative both with the Servants and with the Tradespeople,

**Mike Bryan**, The Unopened Newspaper,

If you see a red check here , this is your LAST COMMUNICATION! To continue your membership, send US\$12.00 (US/CAN) or US\$13.00 (INTL) to Carl Heifetz,

**PLEASE MAKE NOTE OF THE DATE AFTER YOUR NAME ON THE MAILING LABEL.  
THIS IS THE EXPIRATION DATE OF YOUR CLUB MEMBERSHIP.**

**Pleasant Places of Florida  
The Papers On The Sundial**

