

Holmes would have been able to make a cylinder of his own violin playing of the Barcarolle. Oliver concludes that the imprecise Watson used the word "gramophone" because it was the generic term in use at the time he wrote the story.

Oliver's arguments are interesting and his paper 'Sherlock Holmes and Music' (covering much more than the 'Mazarin Stone' issues) may be found at [http://camdenhouse.ignisart.com/scholars/SHOLMES\\_AND\\_MUSIC.pdf](http://camdenhouse.ignisart.com/scholars/SHOLMES_AND_MUSIC.pdf)

In correspondence with Oliver he advises that the London-based Gramophone and Typewriter Ltd did not start using the 'His Master's Voice' logo on records until 1909. They had their own trademark of a winged cherub sitting on a stylised record and "engraving" the grooves with a quill-pen.

## Canonical Place Names Quiz

Compiled by Karen Murdock (July 23, 2007)

One of the joys of the Canon is the great range of geographical names to be found there. From the Andaman Islands to the Yellowstone River, Luxembourg to Louisiana, Havana to Heidelberg, Rajpootana to the Rio Grande, Terai to Trincomalee - the Canon ranges widely across the globe, mentioning more place names than any geography teacher could hope to hold in her head.

Some of these place names (Moorville, Kansas; the Amoy River; Beauchamp Arriance) are inventions, but most of them are actual places. Can you match these place names with the stories in which they occur? The task is a formidable one, but to make it slightly easier, I have chosen:

- Place names of actual places
  - Names that occur only one time in the Canon (I am indebted to Les Moskowitz, who has compiled a list of all 7785 words which occur only once in the Canon.)
  - No more than one place name per Canonical story (and I am giving you the list of the stories)
- Abergavenny (Wales)
  - Amsterdam (The Netherlands)
  - Brooklyn
  - Darjeeling (India)
  - Halifax (Nova Scotia)

- John O'Groats
- Lebanon (Pennsylvania)
- Marseilles (France)
- Mecca
- Melbourne (Australia)
- Montmartre (Paris)
- New Jersey
- Oporto (Portugal)
- Pernambuco (Brazil)
- Plumstead Marshes
- Rhodesia
- Siam
- Skibbareen (Ireland)
- Suez Canal
- Transylvania

Chose your answers from these tales:

ABBE	BOSC	BRUC	COPP
CROO	EMPT	IDEN	ILLU
LAST	MAZA	MISS	PRIO
REDC	REDH	RESI	SCAN
SIGN	SUSS	3GAB	3STU

Answers on page 50

# AN ADMIRABLE COBBER

by Arthur Williams

By 1920 Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had been engaged for three years in a campaign for the Spiritualist cause that involved speaking up to five times a week as well as writing articles and letters continuously to the press. Additionally, these activities were frequently accompanied by ridicule and hostility towards him. When therefore discussion began concerning a possible tour of Australia the author was tempted by the idea for "the long voyage presented attractions."<sup>1</sup>

The lecture tour proposed was to last from September 1920 until February 1921 and to visit most major cities and some smaller ones with, as well, a detour to New Zealand. He was quite realistic about what he was in for however, summing it up as follows: "The lectures would be numerous, controversy severe, the weather at its hottest and my own age over sixty."<sup>2</sup>



Madame Norman Neruda

One of the deciding factors in his decision to come here was, he wrote later, that, "Mr Carlyle Smythe, the best agent in Australia, had taken the matter up and I felt that we were in good hands." This agent that Conan Doyle referred to was an Australian whose name is almost unknown to Sherlockians. This article's intention is to show that Carlyle Smythe is entitled to both our interest and a special place in our regard.

Conan Doyle was quite correct in his opinion for, at that time, his proposed tour manager was this country's leading entrepreneur in the importation of international celebrities. Carlyle Smythe had inherited his career from his father, the redoubtable Robert Smythe. The senior Smythe had migrated from England as a journalist and, after a few years, had moved into the tour management of visiting celebrity musicians. He proved to be very successful in his selection of artists for the culture-starved colonies, the tours often extending beyond Australia to India and South Africa. (The nick-name by which he was known throughout colonial

Australia was "Much Travelled"). One of his most successful importations was the Austrian violinist Norman-Neruda whose playing had so delighted Holmes in *STUD* that he had interrupted his investigations to hear her again.

Another artist Robert brought here was the soprano Amelia Bailey and it was while on tour with this lady that he fell in love and concluded the season by marrying her. It was entirely in keeping with the Smythes' lifestyle that Carlyle should be born in India during a subsequent tour.

In the 1870s Robert expanded his operation to include lecture tours by famous figures in literature and exploration, one such being Henry Stanley, the American journalist/explorer. Australians, isolated from what they then regarded as the real world, flocked to these events.

<sup>1</sup> Conan Doyle p.13.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p.21



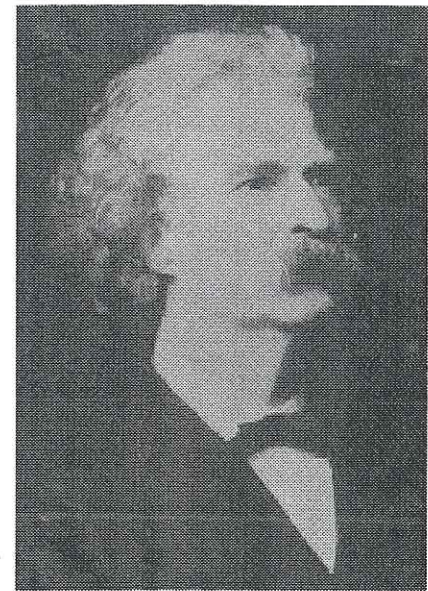
Robert's success enabled him to give his son the best education possible in the Australia of the time, culminating in a Classics and Literature degree at Melbourne University. Carlyle also had a facility for languages that allowed him to spend ten years in Europe as a journalist, the last three of which he held the post of Editor of the 'Brussels Times'. He was thus well qualified to join his father in the family business when he did so in 1895. (Robert eventually retired some fifteen years later, dying in 1917.)

There was much for young Carlyle to learn however about the hazards and problems associated with taking international celebrities on extended tours. This became very apparent with the first such celebrity Carlyle encountered - the great Mark Twain. Smythe Senior had been trying to lure Twain, then one of the world's best known literary figures, to Australia for years - but without success. The author had recently become bankrupt, however, and a tour of Australia and the Indian subcontinent under Robert's management, seemed an ideal way of restoring his finances.

Mark Twain was a superb raconteur but also unpredictable as to what he might say next. Young Carlyle only became "the best agent in Australia" by observing over many years how his father dealt with crises such as the one that erupted from Twain's first press conference. At this event Twain launched into a savage attack on his fellow American writer, Bret Harte, declaring, "He has no heart, except his name" and that in his work there was "Nothing that is genuine".

Unfortunately Harte was greatly admired by Australians in the 1890s and a wave of anger swept away the tour's goodwill resulting in a collapse of ticket sales. Robert had to organize a public apology by Twain followed by a series of further interviews elaborating on this apology. Only by this careful and sustained management of the situation did the ticket sales recover.<sup>3</sup>

Thus when Conan Doyle arrived here the two Smythes had between them overseen the importation of celebrities to Australia for more than sixty years. Carlyle was a stockily built man with a large bushy moustache. His geniality and vast store of anecdotes about those he had escorted around Australia made him one of the most sought-after (and



The problems that arose during Mark Twain's visit initiated Carlyle Smythe into the perils associated with touring Australia with an international celebrity

entertaining) dinner guests in the Country. He was the perfect choice to steer Sir Arthur through what might well develop into a highly controversial tour.

The first meeting was in Adelaide and in the next five months Conan Doyle addressed a total of twenty-five such gatherings. Audiences averaged two thousand although those in Sydney reached three thousand five hundred. Conan Doyle always interpreted these numbers as signs of an ever-growing interest in Spiritualism and would not allow that curiosity to see and hear the creator of Sherlock Holmes could ever be a factor in the packed halls he always faced. This attitude even extended to journalists, for the Sydney Sun reported, "He seemed surprised when questioned about Sherlock Holmes. The impression he gave was that he had more serious and

<sup>3</sup> The comments and incident details can be found in Hoffman p.407.

important things nowadays to think about."<sup>4</sup>

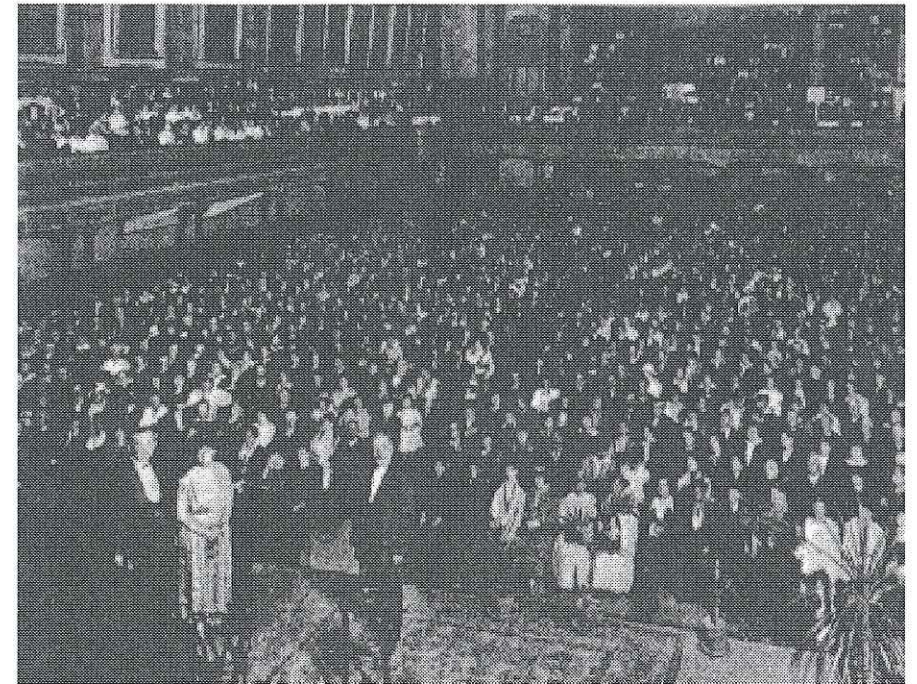
Carlyle Smythe, with a lifetime of experience in audience tastes, disagreed with the author until well on into the tour.

Audience reaction clearly puzzled the veteran showman, for an air of quite fervent belief often became apparent in large numbers of those present. For Sherlockians today, the spectacle of Sir Arthur showing slide photographs of spirits is generally an uncomfortable one.

Many of us would feel that what was really happening with these grieving wives and parents was that they were struggling to come to terms with the loss of a loved one in the First World War (Australia lost over sixty thousand killed in this conflict).

Many of the newspapers respected and admired the author and downplayed the Spiritualist aspect of his visit, treating him with courtesy and interest, although *The Melbourne Argus* was an exception. It ran an editorial against his views in which terms such as "black magic" and "witchcraft" were used.<sup>5</sup> He later wrote of his visit to Melbourne, "Never in any British town have I found such reactionary intolerance as in this great city".

Carlyle Smythe's doubts about Sir Arthur's approach to the tour were probably finally removed in Sydney, for not only did the crowd numbers attending our city's Town Hall break the previous record for a matinee but when the author appeared on the stage he could not say a single word for a full ten minutes so prolonged and so enthusiastic was the applause. The decline in interest that the entrepreneur had feared never occurred and the admiration he felt for Sir Arthur's unwavering conviction and determination (to say nothing of his drawing power!) is apparent in Carlyle's farewell letter to him: "For an equal number of lectures, yours has proved the most prosperous tour of my experience. No previous tour has won such consistent success. From the push-off in Adelaide to the great boom in New Zealand and Brisbane, it has been a great dynamic progression of enthusiasm. I have known in my career nothing parallel to it."<sup>6</sup>



Sir Arthur at a meeting during his Australian tour. In Sydney, when he first appeared on stage, the applause was so enthusiastic that it was ten minutes before he could speak.

<sup>4</sup> Groves. p.41

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p.41 (for this and the following quotation).

<sup>6</sup> Conan Doyle p.263.



For the tour of New Zealand, Lady Conan Doyle and the children remained in Australia resting. It was while on this part of the tour that Sir Arthur witnessed Carlyle's managerial expertise in action for there was suddenly the possibility that the pair would be cut off from the world for an indefinite period by a National Maritime strike (on a previous such occasion Carlyle had been stuck in New Zealand for four months). The entrepreneur was able to get them both on the last ferry to leave the South Island and then, with the strike beginning, they left the North Island on a little steamer for Australia. This was only achieved by the crew being bribed ("increased pay offered" was how Conan Doyle politely described it).<sup>7</sup>

One of the qualities that is most commendable about the creator of Sherlock Holmes was the utterly honest way in which he expressed his opinions. After six months of working closely with his tour manager, Conan Doyle reflected on that relationship when, on the voyage home, he wrote *The Wanderings of a Spiritualist*. Right from the start they got along well together, Sir Arthur putting it this way about their initial meeting in Perth: "Mr Carlyle Smythe, my impresario, had also arrived, a small, alert, competent gentleman, with whom I at once got on pleasant terms, which were never clouded during our long travels together upon our tour."<sup>8</sup> After he had got to know the Australian well his verdict was, "I was fortunate indeed to have so useful and so entertaining a companion, a musician, a scholar and a man of various experiences".<sup>9</sup>

During the New Zealand tour the two men travelled around the North Island on a small vessel with accommodation so limited they had to share a cabin. On one occasion, while sailing through waters with a long history of shipwrecks, this vessel encountered a thick fog. The two were in their cabin at the time and Sir Arthur wrote of the event as follows:

"Mr Smythe had only one defect as a comrade, and that was his conversation in a fog. It was of a distinctly depressing character as I had on one occasion to learn when we ran into very thick weather among the rocky islands which make navigation so difficult to the north of Auckland. Between the screams of the siren I would hear a still small voice in the bunk above me.

"We are now somewhere near the Three Kings. It is an isolated group of rocks celebrated for the wreck of the 'Elingamite', which went ashore on such a morning as this.' (Whoo-ee! remarked the fog horn). 'They were nearly starved, but kept themselves alive by fish which were caught by improvised lines made from the ladies' stay-laces. Many of them died.'

"I lay digesting this and staring at the fog which crawled all round the port hole. Presently he was off again.

"You can't anchor here and there is no use stopping her, for the currents run hard and she would drift on to one of the ledges which would rip the side out of her.' (Whoo-ee! repeated the foghorn). 'The islands are perpendicular with deep water up to the rocks, so you never know they are there until you hit them, and then, of course, there is no reef to hold you up.' (Whoo-ee!)

"Close by here is the place where the 'Wairarapa' went down with all hands a few years ago. It was just such a day as this when she struck the Great Barrier."

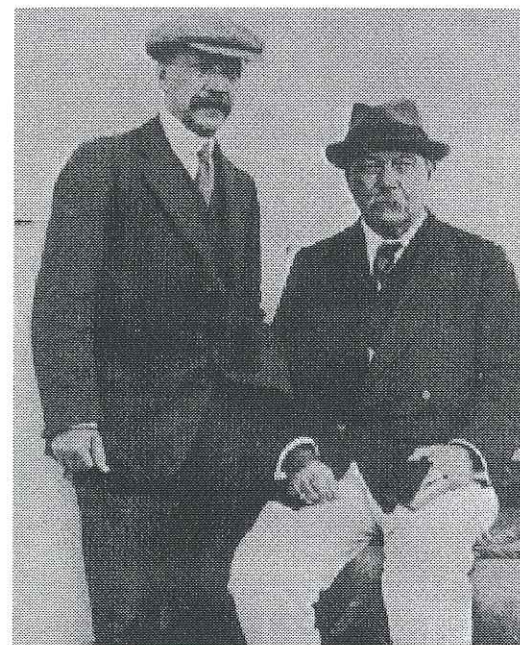
"It was about this time," Sir Arthur observes drily, "that I decided to go on deck."<sup>10</sup> (Dare I suggest that this dialogue is proof that their friendship had progressed to a point where the

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.218.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.61.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p.61.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 178.



If a title were to be given to this 1920 photograph, surely it would have to be 'The Two Cobbers'. Note that Sir Arthur, ever courteous, ever considerate, is seated so as not to tower over the stockily built Carlyle Smythe.

comment about his tour manager - a comment that requires no further elaboration. Indicating that he was using "the pal phrase of the Australian soldier" he wrote, "In Mr Carlyle Smythe, however, I had an admirable cobbler."<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p.176.

Australian felt free to indulge a little in the national pastime of using grim sardonic humour to lighten a situation?)

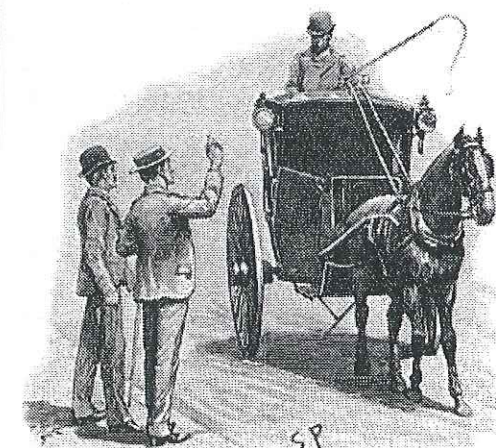
A few years after these events Carlyle Smythe was involved in a serious accident when, in a fire at his home, both his hands were severely burnt. He was unable to find a surgeon here who could help him and so he travelled to Europe to seek assistance there. An operation was performed in France but he failed to recover from this, dying in December, 1925.

The success of the tour he had organized for Conan Doyle had a marked influence on the final decade of the writer's life for it inspired him to embark on similar ones to the United States, Canada, France and Belgium, South Africa and Scandinavia.

All Sherlockians are aware that the cry of "Cooee" in BOSCO gave Holmes the clue by which he could solve that story's mystery and most of us have assumed that this was Conan Doyle's sole use of the Australian vernacular, but there is another equally revealing.

As his ship sailed homeward and he thought back over all aspects of his six months of travelling and lecturing across the two countries, he wrote a final

#### Engravings... by Matt Stretch



"Can I borrow your whip please? This charity collector won't leave me alone!"