

'The Captain's Quiz' was conducted next, so that the answers might not be inadvertently revealed during later discussions. As usual, it proved deceptively challenging, provoking lively and humorous debate about the answers. To no one's surprise, Passenger Nicole Buckley triumphed again, but her mettle was tested by Chris Sequeira and Diana Saw in very close second and third place. Passenger Dick Hughes recalled reading from this story during one of his jazz broadcasts on the ABC during the 1980s and later led the company in drinking the health of Dr Watson, to whom he fittingly applied the description originally accorded to John Hebron of Atlanta in *The Yellow Face* – "no nobler man ever walked God's earth".

Passenger Phil Cornell addressed Sherlock Holmes's uncharacteristic behaviour in *The Three Gables*, examining the charges of racism that have been brought against him by his treatment of Steve Dixie, contrasting his enlightened and clearly unprejudiced views as exemplified in *The Yellow Face* and comparing his similar handling of the white thug Sam Merton in *The Mazarin Stone*. By transposing Holmes's controversial remarks to an exchange with a hypothetical Irish bully (enacted with a painful attempt at an 'Oirish' accent) an attempt was made to demonstrate that all of Holmes's epithets were capable of bearing a non-racist interpretation. The hypothesis, initially raised in the 'Welcome Holmes' internet discussion group, was advanced that the tough-talking Holmes of *The Three Gables* may have been influenced by the advent of the hard-boiled detective yarns then becoming popular in the pages of the American pulp magazines. Sally Cornell proposed a toast to Queen Victoria, and the age she exemplified, to which Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson rightly belong.

Captain Bill Barnes reported to the group on the theory that "Langdale Pike" may have been modelled on the Victorian journalist and amateur criminologist George R. Sims, and Steve Dixie derived from a notorious pugilist of the day known as "Kangaroo". All the Passengers joined in drinking a toast to the memory of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose breadth of interests truly made him a "man for all seasons". *The Three Gables* may still not be counted among the more highly regarded Canonical tales, but it is refreshing to see how many points of interest could be found in even the least of Watson's narratives.

It was pleasing, too, to see among the Passengers, newcomers Diana and Eugene Saw, and familiar faces Dick Hughes, Gurfateh Singh, Nirmal Singh, Bruce Gustavson, the Donovan family and Margaret Jewell, who for various reasons had not been able to join us recently.

(It belatedly became clear that a number of Passengers had their "Signals" for this meeting inexplicably delayed in the mail. Our apologies if any Passengers were prevented from attending by this regrettable lapse on the part of Australia Post.)  
-Phil Cornell

## Mere Trifles

1. Which actor has played both Professor van Helsing and Professor Moriarty on screen?
2. Name two of the four actors who have played both Sherlock Holmes and Count Dracula.
3. Which 19th century actor/manager was possibly the inspiration for both Count Dracula and Sherlock Holmes?
4. In 1889, J.M. Stoddart had dinner with two authors and commissioned them each write a story for *Lippincott's* magazine. Name the authors and the stories they wrote.

Answers on page 17

# SHERLOCK HOLMES & COUNT DRACULA

by  
Philip Cornell

## an investigation into their common ancestry

[This paper was originally read at the Sydney Passengers' "Sussex Vampire" meeting on Nov. 25 2000.]



Brett as Holmes

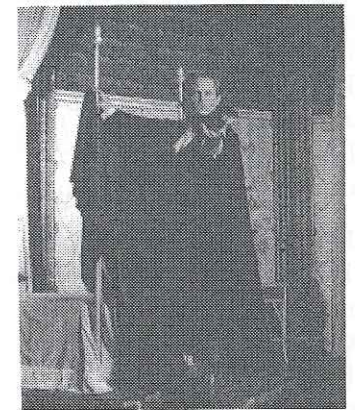
characters on stage or screen during their careers -

Christopher Lee – eight times Count Dracula between 1958 and 1977<sup>3</sup>, played Sherlock Holmes three times between 1962 and 1991.<sup>4</sup>

Frank Langella – the toast of Broadway as Dracula during the 1970s revival of the play, and star of the subsequent stylish film version, played Sherlock Holmes in the William Gillette play and in an HBO television film of that play in the early 1980s.

Peter Cushing - a memorable Sherlock Holmes in two films, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* in 1959 and *The Masks of Death* in 1984, and in a BBC television series of the late 1960s, starred in the title role of the 1973 French film *Tendre Dracula*.

Jeremy Brett, *the* Sherlock Holmes to admirers of the Granada television series, succeeded Frank Langella on the Broadway stage as Dracula.



Brett as Dracula

<sup>1</sup> Robertson, Patrick *The Guinness Book of Film Facts and Feats* pp. 61-63. The figures given are from 1980, but the predominance of the two characters almost certainly still holds

<sup>2</sup> The Count and Sherlock Hemlock

<sup>3</sup> In Hammer Films' *Dracula* ('58), *Dracula Prince of Darkness* ('65), *Dracula Has Risen From The Grave* ('68), *Scars of Dracula* ('70), *Taste The Blood of Dracula* ('70), *Dracula A.D.1972* ('72), and *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* ('73), as well as the Spanish film *El Conde Dracula* ('70) and the French film *Dracula Pere Et Fils* ('77). He also appeared as the historical Vlad Dracula in a 1975 documentary

<sup>4</sup> In the German film *Sherlock Holmes und Das Halsband de Todes* ('62) and in *Sherlock Holmes and the Leading Lady* ('90) and *Incident at Victoria Falls* ('91)



Clearly there is some quality in both Sherlock Holmes and Dracula - some supreme self assurance, something sinister, some combination of the intellectual and the physical, something larger than life and larger than death - that is peculiarly fitting for certain actors.

There are, of course, the physical characteristics. Both Holmes<sup>5</sup> and Dracula<sup>6</sup> are exceedingly tall and thin, with lofty brows, piercing eyes, bushy eyebrows, prominent aquiline noses and firm decisive jaws. The Count has in addition a drooping moustache (though that is frequently forgotten) and, in one scene of the book<sup>7</sup>, a goatee beard. In *His Last Bow*, Holmes also sported a goatee. So closely indeed do they resemble one another that one pastiche writer<sup>8</sup> has used their physical similarity as a major plot point: each disguises himself as the other in the story and they are, he reveals, related! That writer has, I think, chanced upon the truth, for I would suggest that Sherlock Holmes and Count Dracula are in fact related - very closely indeed. For they are twins in a sense - two sides of the same coin: the light and the dark.

Both of course are profoundly magnetic individuals, inspiring in those with whom they are associated either extreme devotion (Dr Watson's loyal friendship with Holmes on the one hand and the hapless Renfield's slavish devotion to the one he calls "the Master"<sup>9</sup>, Dracula, on the other) or provoking deep hatred in their enemies. And the foremost foe of each is a Professor<sup>10</sup>. Both possess towering intellects. In Holmes this intellect is his predominant characteristic - "a brain without a heart, as deficient in human sympathy as he was pre-eminent in intelligence"<sup>11</sup>. More human and carnal desires are, in him, suppressed. In Count Dracula's case, the great tactical and military genius he exhibited as Voivode Dracula, who drove the Turks from his native Transylvania in the sixteenth century, are sublimated in his Undead state by the overwhelming carnal lust for blood. He is the ultimate decadent sensualist. Both have a tendency to an arrogant disregard towards those they consider inferiors. In Holmes's case this manifests itself in his impatience with Lestrade and his fellows. As for Dracula, he holds the whole mortal race in contempt, describing them as sheep.<sup>12</sup> Yet both are capable of courtly manners when it suits them. Dracula is the epitome of the gracious host to Jonathan Harker when first he reaches Castle Dracula, and Watson speaks of Holmes's capacity for courtesy and gentleness, particularly with women.

Dracula's creator, Bram Stoker seems to have occupied himself composing *Dracula* between 1890 and 1896 while he worked as business manager and private secretary to the great actor/manager, Sir Henry Irving. It has been suggested by several biographers and commentators<sup>13</sup> that, consciously or unconsciously, the figure of Count Dracula was inspired by Sir Henry Irving. Those favouring a Freudian approach see parallels between the great actor's constant demands upon the life of his loyal secretary -(he expected Stoker to sit up with him until dawn in conversation as he unwound after each evening's performance and then attend to

<sup>5</sup> The principal description of Holmes occurs in chapter 2 of *A Study In Scarlet*. The additional mention of the bushy eyebrows may be found in chapter 1 of *The Valley of Fear*

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Harker's journal records a description of the Count in chapter 2 of *Dracula*

<sup>7</sup> Recorded in Mina Harker's journal entry for September 22<sup>nd</sup>, in chapter 13 of *Dracula*

<sup>8</sup> Saberhagen, Fred, *The Holmes/Dracula File*

<sup>9</sup> As an aside, American Sherlockians of a previous generation habitually referred to Holmes by the same sobriquet.

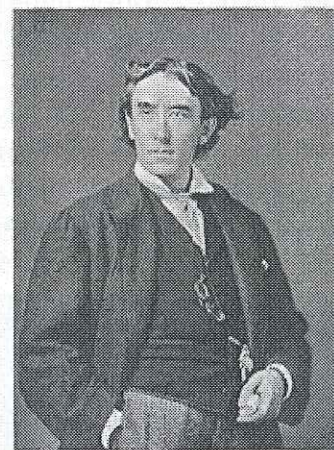
<sup>10</sup> In another of those coincidences which abound in this topic, Sir Laurence Olivier has played both Professors on the cinema screen.

<sup>11</sup> Doyle, Arthur Conan *The Greek Interpreter*

<sup>12</sup> Stoker op. cit. chapter 23

<sup>13</sup> e.g. Daniel Fanson in *The Man who wrote Dracula*, Barbara Belford in *Bram Stoker: A Biography of the Author of Dracula*, Nina Auerbach, quoted in Martin Hindle's introduction to the Penguin Classics annotated edition of *Dracula*.

other business during the day while the actor rested) and the bloodsucking Dracula's depredations upon his victims' vitality. If this is true then, as Leonard Wolf<sup>14</sup> points out, Stoker appears to have been unaware of it, for his writings, diary entries etc. betray no hint of anything but loyalty and admiration for Irving but, at some deep, subconscious level there may be some truth to it. Certainly the identification of Irving with Dracula has become so accepted that Penguin Books have used a photograph of Irving in his celebrated role of Mephistopheles in *Faust* to adorn the cover of their edition of *Dracula*. On a conscious level, Stoker could hardly have avoided mentally "casting" Irving in the Dracula role during its composition. He had ambitions to see the work performed on the stage and must surely have seen the part as a potential role for Irving.



Henry Irving 1874

Henry Irving - a possible model for Sherlock Holmes

Tall, lean to the point of emaciation, with a long face, thin sharp nose, broad forehead, bushy dark eyebrows and a mane of wavy hair, Irving would doubtless have made a memorable Dracula as written by Stoker (as opposed to the brilliantined lounge lizard popularized thirty years later by Bela Lugosi). The story is often related<sup>15</sup> that when, after *Dracula's* publication in 1897, Stoker organized a dramatic reading on the stage of the Lyceum in order to establish a copyright for any future play version, Irving departed after the performance with the one word verdict "Dreadful!" This is customarily quoted as both an example of Irving's disdainful attitude towards Stoker's feelings and as a heartfelt disappointment to the author. I wonder though if such an interpretation may be overlooking the nineteenth century connotations of the word - when dreadful could still mean literally "full of dread". At any rate, as Christopher Frayling summarizes, "It may be that, at one stage, the character of Dracula was considered as a possible custom-made vehicle for Irving. The vocal tricks of the Vampire Count, and some

of his physical mannerisms (such as holding women at arm's length and shouting at them) would seem to resemble Irving's performances".<sup>16</sup>

Bram Stoker crossed paths with Conan Doyle in 1892 when Irving purchased Doyle's play *A Straggler of '15* as a vehicle for himself, re-titling it *Waterloo*. It was Doyle's first play and he was thrilled to have it accepted by Irving since, as he writes in his *Memories and Adventures*, "I sent it to Sir Henry Irving, of whose genius I had been a fervent admirer since those Edinburgh days when I had paid my sixpence for the gallery night after night to see him in *Hamlet* and *The Lyon Mail*". Martin Booth<sup>17</sup> reveals in his biography that the young Doyle had first been impressed by Irving when still a schoolboy at Stonyhurst, after being taken to see him during a trip to London.

<sup>14</sup> Wolf, Leonard, *Dracula: The Connoisseur's Guide* p. 144

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Wolf, Leonard, *The Annotated Dracula*, p. 164 where it is accorded the description "legend". The story was related by Noel Stoker to Stoker's biographer, Harry Ludlam.

<sup>16</sup> Frayling, Christopher, *Nightmare: The Birth of Horror* p. 93

<sup>17</sup> Booth, Martin, *The Doctor, The Detective & Arthur Conan Doyle* p.34



It is universally accepted, for we have it from Doyle's own pen,<sup>18</sup> that the inspiration for Sherlock Holmes lay in Dr Joseph Bell, under whom Doyle studied medicine in Edinburgh: "I thought of my old teacher Joe Bell, of his eagle face, of his curious ways, of his eerie trick of spotting details. If he were a detective he would surely reduce this fascinating but unorganized business into something nearer an exact science." Bell, while feigning embarrassed modesty, clearly enjoyed the idea, and even contributed a preface to a reprint of *A Study in Scarlet*. Yet Owen Dudley Edwards makes the perceptive point that "Doyle seems to have encouraged the simplistic Bell equals Holmes notion out of affection for Bell who clearly basked in the identification even to the point of bombarding Doyle with unusable plots for Holmes stories".<sup>19</sup>

We may then be justified in looking elsewhere for models who contributed to the final composite that was given life as Sherlock Holmes. First and foremost there was Doyle himself, as was demonstrated in the Edalji and Slater cases. But in his bluff gregariousness and modest sincerity, as well as physical appearance, Doyle more closely resembles Watson.

Holmes's eccentricity, his ego, his awareness of his own genius and much of his physical appearance (even down to those bushy eyebrows) may clearly be seen in Sir Henry Irving who had so impressed the young Doyle. There can be little question that Sherlock Holmes derived his unique talent for observation and deduction from Dr Bell's remarkable diagnostic ability and from Doyle's own flair in that direction: "You'd have made an actor and a rare one. You had the proper workhouse cough, and those weak legs of yours are worth ten pounds a week" remarked Inspector Athelney Jones famously in *The Sign of Four*.<sup>20</sup> Here the person of Sir Henry Irving comes more clearly into focus in the character of Sherlock Holmes. Holmes's fondness and facility for disguise, particularly the imitation of old age, is paralleled in Irving. It would be tempting to draw a comparison between Holmes' impersonation of the old seafarer in the second Holmes tale and Irving's acclaimed portrayal of the old soldier, Gregory Brewster in Doyle's own *Waterloo* (of which even the caustic George Bernard Shaw conceded that "he depicts with convincing art the state of an old man's joints"<sup>21</sup>) were it not that Holmes's decrepit seaman in *The Sign of Four*, his aged cleric in *A Scandal In Bohemia* and his venerable Italian priest in *The Final Problem* all predate Irving's triumph as the Waterloo veteran. The elderly bookseller in *The Empty House* might well directly recall Irving, however. "I am glad to stretch myself, Watson...It is no joke when a tall man has to take a foot off his stature for several hours on end" remarked Holmes after discarding his disguise. Irving encountered exactly the same problem in his celebrated portrayal of the Emperor Napoleon<sup>22</sup> in 1897 for *Madame Sans-Genes*.

Moreover, in the relationship between the loyal, admiring (and often slighted or heedlessly taken-for-granted) Bram Stoker and the difficult, self-centred, egotistical and unappreciative



A twist on 'A Scandal in Bohemia'?  
Henry Irving and Ellen Terry in  
'The Vicar of Wakefield' 1885

<sup>18</sup> Doyle, Arthur Conan, *Memories and Adventures* p. 74

<sup>19</sup> Edwards, Owen Dudley *The Quest For Sherlock Holmes* p. 201

<sup>20</sup> Doyle, *The Sign of Four* chapter IX

<sup>21</sup> quoted in Pearson, Hesketh *Conan Doyle* p. 108

<sup>22</sup> Belford op. cit. pp. 270-1

Irving, we have a paradigm for the Watson/Holmes partnership – even down to Stoker publishing a reminiscence of his association with Irving,<sup>23</sup> and his tendency to neglect a long suffering wife to attend to his demanding superior. "Come at once if convenient – if inconvenient come all the same"<sup>24</sup> could easily have been a summons to Stoker from Irving rather than to Watson from Holmes. Leonard Wolf<sup>25</sup> observes, "Stoker's job as acting manager, for which he received £22 a week (a generous salary at the time), is not easy to define. He was, in fact, a combination of gofer, front man for Henry Irving, glorified secretary, accountant, speech writer and theatre manager; but, most importantly, he was available to Irving as a sounding board, an unthreatening companion." Compare Dr Watson's telling description, as recorded in *The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes*,<sup>26</sup> of his relationship with Holmes: "The relations between us in those latter days were peculiar: He was a man of habits, narrow and concentrated habits, and I had become one of them... I was a whetstone for his mind. I stimulated him. He liked to think aloud in my presence. His remarks could scarcely be said to be made to me - many of them would have been as appropriately addressed to the bedstead - but none the less, having formed the habit, it had become in some way helpful that I should register and interject."

Other aspects of Stoker may be detected in Watson too. According to Daniel Farson, Stoker's great nephew, Stoker "enjoyed the reputation of being a 'womaniser', reputedly famous for his sexual exploits".<sup>27</sup> Doctor Watson's own boast of "an experience of women that extends over many nations and three separate continents" and Holmes' remark to him in *The Second Stain* that "the fair sex is your department" are quickly brought to mind. At this point, it must be admitted that more recent writers have cast doubt on Farson's assessment finding both in Stoker's devotion to Irving and in the subtext of *Dracula* intimations of a repressed homosexuality. Be that as it may, and the evidence is far from clear on the issue, Stoker's reputation as a ladies' man, true or not, still invites comparison with Watson's (which has also been drawn into question by some commentators). Stoker too was an aspiring writer whose literary ambitions were sublimated to his duty to Irving. Similarly, Watson's attempts to publish his accounts of Holmes' exploits were hampered and scorned by Holmes. Sherlock Holmes enjoyed pulling his companion's leg. Irving did likewise to his entourage, Stoker especially.<sup>28</sup> Stoker, like Watson, possessed physical courage, being awarded a decoration by The Royal Humane Society for leaping into the Thames and dragging out an elderly man attempting suicide<sup>29</sup>.

Even before 1891 (when the first series of short stories was appearing in *The Strand*) Doyle and Stoker moved in the same circles, had mutual friends in Oscar Wilde and Hall Caine and undoubtedly knew each other. In that year Stoker joined William Heinemann in launching *The English Library*. Among the authors whose works they purchased for publication was Conan Doyle<sup>30</sup>. Stoker and Doyle were alike in their keen sportsmanship as well as in their literary pursuits. Doyle

<sup>23</sup> Stoker, Bram *Personal Reminiscences of Henry Irving* 2 vols. 1906

<sup>24</sup> Holmes's peremptory telegram to Watson in *The Creeping Man*

<sup>25</sup> Wolf op. cit. p. 129

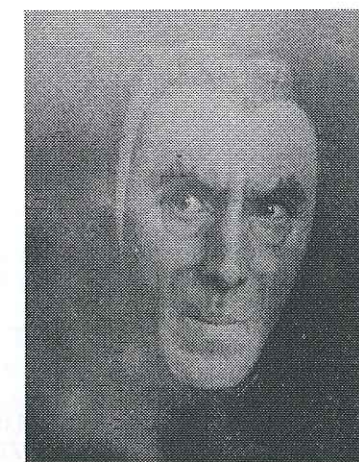
<sup>26</sup> Doyle, *The Creeping Man*

<sup>27</sup> Farson op.cit. p.212

<sup>28</sup> Belford op.cit. p.174.

<sup>29</sup> Belford op.cit. pp. 136-7

<sup>30</sup> Belford *ibid.* p.231



Irving as Mephistopheles



encouraged Stoker's literary endeavours, writing to Stoker of *Dracula* that "I think it is the best story of *diablerie* which I have read for many years. It is really wonderful how with so much exciting interest over so long a book, there is never an anticlimax."<sup>31</sup> They became sufficiently close friends for Stoker to be invited to Doyle's wedding to Jean Leckie in 1907.<sup>32</sup> It is not hard to imagine facets of Stoker finding their way into Doyle's depiction of Watson.

But it is in Holmes that we can most clearly see Doyle drawing upon a real figure for inspiration. It is perhaps significant that when the young Conan Doyle was so deeply impressed by Irving as Hamlet, Irving was about the same age as the young Holmes we first meet in *A Study In Scarlet*. Whether Doyle saw Irving's controversially sympathetic and dignified Shylock in 1879 we do not know (though, as an admirer of Irving, he could hardly have been unaware of it), and the temptation is there to infer that Doyle's change of Holmes' forename from Sherrinford to Sherlock might have been influenced at some level by memories of Irving's performance. Barbara Belford, in her biography of Stoker,<sup>33</sup> reveals that when he first considered adapting Sherlock Holmes to the stage, he approached Sir Henry Irving with the idea long before he ended up collaborating with William Gillette.

Conan Doyle had a further source for reminiscences and anecdotes about Sir Henry Irving as well for he and the great actor's son, H.B. Irving, himself an actor and member of his father's company, were fellow-members of The Crimes Club.<sup>34</sup> The younger Irving was a barrister as well as a thespian and took a keen interest in true crime, authoring *A Book of Remarkable Criminals*. In 1904, Sir Arthur was made a life member of the club, whose members included Irving, A.E.W. Mason and Bertram Fletcher Robinson. In view of Conan Doyle's admiration for Sir Henry, it is difficult to believe that stories of his eccentricities would not have been the subject of conversation.

Can we be surprised then that *Dracula* and Sherlock Holmes should share so many traits in common? For the likelihood is that each contains a fair proportion of the magnetic, eccentric, infuriating yet loveable Sir Henry Irving. In *Dracula* we have embodied the dark side of Irving (whether consciously or not); in Holmes we see his eccentricities portrayed in a more positive light. In the physical characteristics of each we can clearly perceive the face and figure of Sir Henry Irving.

Sherlock Holmes and Count Dracula are half-brothers, and the theatrical blood of Sir Henry Irving courses through the veins of both.

#### *Afterword: Doyle and Dracula, a hypothesis.*

The suggestion has been made that because *Dracula* seems a more accomplished work to many critics than Stoker's other fiction, which has stood the test of time perhaps less well, Stoker may have had an unheralded collaborator on that landmark novel. The American writer of horror fiction, H.P. Lovecraft, claimed (with infuriating vagueness) to have once met a writer who had been approached for the job of revising *Dracula*.<sup>35</sup> The discovery, by almost miraculous chance, of Stoker's notes and annotated typescript of *Dracula* only twenty

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Belford *ibid.* p.275

<sup>32</sup> Belford *ibid.* p 311

<sup>33</sup> Belford *ibid.* p251. Irving turned the offer down.

<sup>34</sup> Green, Richard Lancelyn (ed.) *The Uncollected Conan Doyle*, pp. 113 - 117

<sup>35</sup> Cited, if memory serves correctly in Carter, Lin *Lovecraft* (though having misplaced my copy I have been unable to check the reference)

years ago in Philadelphia, would seem to disprove the intervention of another writer to "polish" *Dracula* before it was published but the suspicion exists that Stoker may have had uncredited assistance. I raise the possibility, in the lack of any real evidence, that *if* such an unseen collaborator did exist (and *Dracula's* perceived higher quality may merely be the result of the seven years he spent working on it), who more likely in Stoker's circle to have offered assistance than Conan Doyle?

Alone of the writers to whom Stoker was close, Conan Doyle worked within the mystery/horror genre. He had at least once before anonymously completed the unfinished novel of a friend, Grant Allen, when Allen died before concluding *Hilda Wade*. He encouraged Stoker's writing and even enlisted him as one of twenty other writers who, with Doyle, each contributed a chapter to a "round robin" mystery novel, *The Fate of Fenella*.

It is curious, at a time when mystery fiction abounded with imitations of Holmes and Watson, that in *Dracula* a "clever detective, Cotford" and his Watson-like assistant, were *eliminated* from the story at an early stage of composition: was it at Conan Doyle's advice?

It is a hypothesis only and one unlikely to be tested until all the Doyle papers become available but, in view of the immortal popularity of both Sherlock Holmes and *Dracula*, it is an intriguing possibility.

<sup>36</sup> Look at Martin Hewitt and his chronicler Brett, *The Thinking Machine* and Hutchison Hatch, and soon Poirot and Hastings



**Able Seaman Ian Richardson:** Dear Bill, Thank you so much for sending me the "Passenger's Log", which seems to have a disproportionate amount of me in it. Thank you also for finding out about the amputation kit [Joseph Bell's amputation kit was for auction on the Internet -Ed]. As I think I said to you before, much as I would like to have had it, I really don't know what I would have done with it, and our house is already groaning under the weight of memorabilia which we can't bear to get rid of, but collects an awful lot of dust! I very much enjoyed meeting you and Rosane, and I hope that it won't be the last time. With my best wishes, Ian. (Exeter, England)

**Brian Pugh** (The Conan Doyle Establishment): Many thanks for the recent Passengers Log, as usual a very high standard and variation in the contents. I was interested in your own article about Richard Roxburgh as I specialise in collecting Hound. A brief paragraph appeared in one of our daily newspapers, The Daily Mail, on Wednesday 31 July and reads as follows, "Upper-Crust actor Richard E. Grant, 44, is currently filming a drama remake of The Hound of the Baskervilles by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle for the BBC. So which character does he play in the new film? 'Er, I can't remember actually,' he admits. What a humiliating business!" [Grant played Stapleton - Ed.] His part and the making of the film does seem to have left him without any sort of lasting memory, what does this say about the film I wonder. As Ian Richardson is in my opinion one of the best Holmes, if not the best, your