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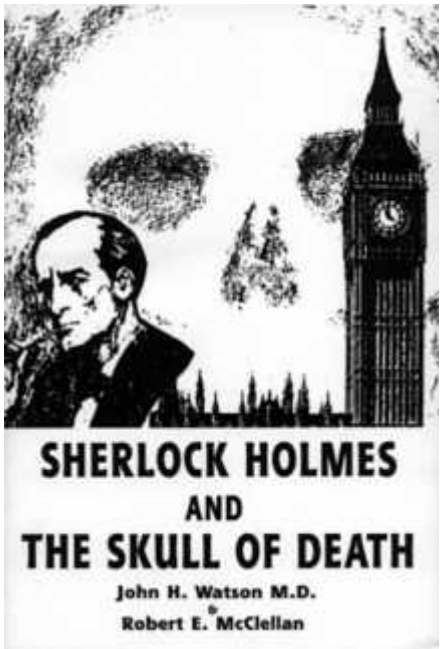
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THREE VALUABLE ADDITIONS TO SHERLOCKIANA

Sherlock Holmes and the Skull of Death *by* Robert E. McClellan, (6x9 softcover)
1st Books Library,2511 W. Third Street, Bloomington, IN 47404, USA. , ; 196 pages: ISBN 1-58820-662-9. Publication Date 2001: Price, $9.95 (Free Shipping!).

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After the character of Sherlock Holmes became popular in late 1890s, it became almost a fashion for other authors to mimic Arthur Conan Doyle, and write similar Sherlock Holmes stories. The aim was of course to cash in on the popularity of the Great Detective. Some authors were successful in this attempt; others were not. Now 1st Books Library has come up with three Sherlock Holmes books which are not original Arthur Conan Doyle stories, but reasonably well written by other authors.

The first book in this series is "Sherlock Holmes and the Skull of Death". This book makes as its base, one of the most outrageous scientific hoaxes of all time - The case of the Piltdown Man. In 1912, some important finds were unearthed from a gravel pit near Piltdown Common, in East Sussex, by a man called Charles Dawson, who was an eminent lawyer, amateur geologist and fossil hunter. The finds included prehistoric flint tools, fossilized teeth and a fragment of unusually thick human skull. Quite excited by his finds, he quickly sent these artifacts to the paleontologist Dr. Arthur Smith Woodward, working at the British Museum. To him, the fossils seemed to belong to the much sought after "missing link" predicted by Charles Darwin as far back as 1859. The creature to whom these fragments belonged quickly became known as "The Piltdown Man" after the name of the site where the fragments were found. Some however preferred to call it "The Piltdown Woman", as the remains were found to belong to a female.

The two men -Dawson and Woodward-, then searched the site together. Three years later, in 1915, Dawson found teeth and skull fragments of a second Piltdown man, in a field 2 miles from the pit. This caused both men to intensify their searches further. Dawson however died next year - aged 52. Woodward continued for another five years, but finding nothing more, eventually gave up.

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That the whole thing was actually a hoax was discovered almost forty years later, when in 1949, a young geologist at the British museum, Dr. Kenneth Oakley took minute samples from the bones and dated them with a newly discovered technique. If bones are buried for any length of time under the earth, they would absorb fluoride from ground water. The longer they remain buried, the more fluoride would they absorb. This became a reliable tool to determine the period for which any given bone is buried under the earth. When the age of bones were determined by this method, it turned out that the age of the skull was merely 50,000 years - the time when modern Neanderthal man roamed on earth. The belief that both the "missing link" and the Neanderthal man roamed the earth at the same time was quite unpalatable to scientists.

...if you are as much of a Holmes' fan as I am, you surely are going to enjoy this little book. In this book, Holmes and Watson risk death following a trail of clever clues to a fantastic plot. What was that fantastic plot? Was it a scheme to unseat the crowned heads of Europe, or something else? Read this interesting book to find out. Fully recommended to all Sherlock Holmes fans, and fans of murder mysteries...

More researches by Dr. J.S. Weiner, an anthropologist at Oxford University proved that although the skull was a genuine fossil (albeit not of "the missing link"), the jaw was a cunningly stained fake. It belonged to a modern day orangutan. Some experts now even believe that both the skull and the jaw are about 500 years old only.

From the day, the hoax was unearthed, people have wondered who played this hoax on the scientific world. Most evidence pointed in favor of Charles Dawson. He did not need money. Fame was the only thing he was after, and this he did get with these finds; the newly found species was

even named after him *Eoanthropus dawsoni* (Dawson's dawn man). The finds ceased after his death. Also a story was long doing the rounds among the scientific circles, that once he had been caught staining bones in his office, when someone entered it without knocking.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was alive and active when this hoax was perpetrated - in 1912, yet in his works, it fails to find mention. The place where these fossils were found was close to Sir Doyle's home, and it was inevitable for him to mention these facts somewhere in his works. His failure to do so, has led many people to believe that it was he who actually was involved in the whole hoax.

The theory of his involvement in the hoax was most strongly propounded in 1997 by one Richard Milner, a historian at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. He quotes from one of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's own works *The Adventure of the Silver Blaze* - "It is like the dog that did not bark in the night. Why didn't Sir Arthur refer to it? It was a very exciting find".

Mr. Milner thinks that the main evidence against Sir Arthur was his motive, and clues in his novel *The Lost World* - in which a scientist announces the discovery of dinosaurs to a skeptical scientific establishment. Interestingly the work, which was published in the same year as that of the infamous finds, has one of its characters saying that faking bones was as easy as faking photographs. The book also contains a key, containing 18 characters, which Mr. Milner believes is a cryptogram holding the solution to the Piltdown hoax.

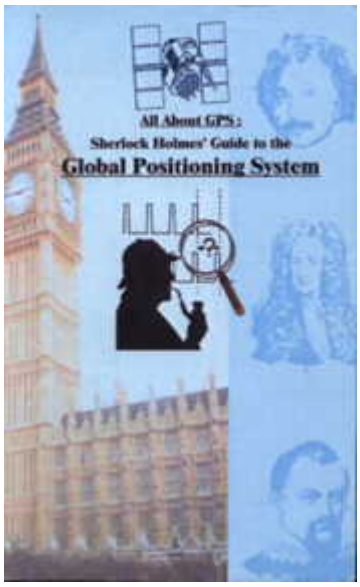
The book under review builds on this hoax. The story starts on a foggy, wintery dawn on London Bridge, as two weary horses are seen pulling a lorry across Thames. There are two thugs in the lorry along with a box with a chimpanzee in it. They intend to decapitate it and then use its skull for the fake.

What happened next? Did Sherlock Holmes come in and expose the fraud? If he discovered the truth, why did he not expose it to the world at that very time? Why did he keep it a secret? Was the much dreaded Professor Moriarty also involved?

Well, if you are as much of a Holmes' fan as I am, you surely are going to enjoy this little book. In this book, Holmes and Watson risk death following a trail of clever clues to a fantastic plot. What was that fantastic plot? Was it a scheme to unseat the crowned heads of Europe, or something else? Read this interesting book to find out. Fully recommended to all Sherlock Holmes fans, and fans of murder mysteries.

All About GPS: Sherlock Holmes' Guide to the Global Positioning System *by* Jerry Huang, (5x8 softcover)
1st Books Library,2511 W. Third Street, Bloomington, IN 47404, USA. , ; 132 pages: ISBN 1-58820-254-2. Publication Date 2000: Price, $8.95 (Free Shipping!).

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This is not a traditional murder mystery. Instead it is a pure book on science - on Global Positioning System (GPS) - to be precise. But it makes good use of the tremendous popularity of Sherlock Holmes to explain some of the more vital concepts.

The book starts not with a murder mystery, but with a kidnapping mystery - so to say - when a beautiful young lady Vickie from a very rich and famous family is kidnapped. She is taken somewhere to a ten storey building. This is a place from where she can hear the chimes of the Big Ben, the famous London Clock. The time period between each chime is 4 seconds. To give her company, the kidnappers give her a radio, which is always loudly blaring. One of the purposes of that radio was to drown out kidnappers' own voices, so she could not recognize them later. Incidentally the radio transmits the Big Ben's chimes each hour too, to indicate time to its listeners.

When she is still a hostage in one of the rooms of that ten-storey house, Vickie hears the Big Ben chiming, but interestingly she hears 13 chimes instead of 12. How is this possible, she thinks. Anyway, the next day, when her kidnappers ask her to make a tape-recording (asking ransom) to her family members, she mentions these two facts in her tape-recording; that she was somewhere in a ten-storey house, and that she heard 13 chimes the previous day instead of 12. The kidnappers check the recording and suspecting nothing, send it to Vickie's family members.

Vickie's family members take the help of Sherlock Holmes III, the grandson the famous detective. He makes use of logical deduction and finds out Vickie's hiding place before the kidnappers can collect the ransom! He does this by making use of a very vital scientific clue. Do you want to know which one was this? Well, I will tell you just this one, but not more.

Vickie had a radio with her, as we all know. The radio transmits the chimes instantaneously, but simultaneously Vickie was hearing chimes directly from Big Ben too. There was no other way, she could hear 13 chimes, as the readers would find out after reading this book. This meant that she was somewhere near the Big Ben. When she heard the first chime, it was undoubtedly from the radio, which instantly relayed the chime to Vickie. The actual chime from the Big Ben however started rushing in Vickie's direction too, and reached her just about the time when the radio transmitted the second chime to Vickie. Thus the two chimes - the second chime from the radio, and the first actual chime from the Big Ben - overlapped, which Vickie heard as one. Sound travels at the rate of 1000 feet per second, and this means she was somewhere on a circle with a radius of 4000 feet from the Big Ben.

...I thoroughly enjoyed this book, partly because I am an avid science fan, and love true science tales, and partly because this book is so well written. I sincerely think that anyone trying to know more about Global Positioning System (GPS) would derive great benefit out of this book. Written in a style easily comprehensible to as young as about 13 years olds...

Subsequently Vickie kept hearing the overlapped chimes, till the twelfth one. Finally the thirteenth chime arrived, which was actually the twelfth chime, which came directly from the Big Ben.

Sherlock Holmes III could thus logically deduce that Vickie was somewhere on a circle with the Big Ben as the center. And the radius of that circle had to be 4000 feet.

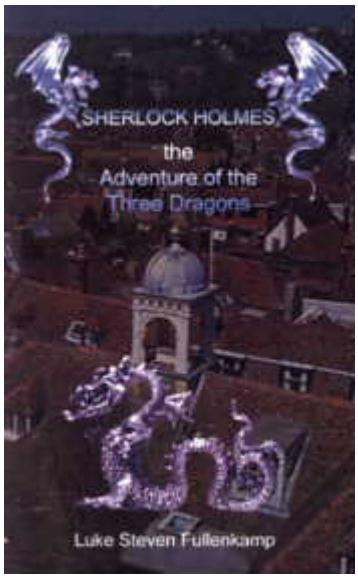
This book will not only solve this profound kidnapping mystery for you, but would explain you the key concepts of Global Positioning System in a very simple and interesting way. GPS works in much the same way, as Vickie's radio did (and helped Sherlock Holmes III to retrieve her). There are 24 satellites always revolving the earth in six different orbital planes. Three of these are spares by the way. They are 20,200 kilometers above the earth's surface and their orbital period is about 12 hours. At least four of these are visible at all times from all points on the earth. They emit what is called a *pseudo-random number* (PRN) or *pseudo-random code* (PRC). This code appears random, but is not random actually and that is why it is called pseudo-random. This code is analogous to the London's Big Ben chiming. A similar code is emitted by the GPS set which the person on the earth holds. This GPS hand receiver set is analogous to the radio which Vickie had. The trick which Sherlock Holmes III used to find out Vickie (to position her in scientific terms), was to use the difference in time period between the actual chimes, and the chimes received by Vickie's radio set. The GPS handsets (analogous to Sherlock Holmes III in the story), also find out the position of the person, by calculating the time difference between these two codes - the one generated by the satellites and the one generated by one's own handset.

GPS is used these days in a number of scientific endeavors, not the least important of which is recovery of airliners' wreckage in cases of explosions occurring in mid air. In this very issue of the journal, we have reviewed a book on explosions (Forensic Investigation of Explosions), which explains how GPS can be used to accomplish this. Readers interested in this particular application of GPS may want to refer to this book.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, partly because I am an avid science fan, and love true science tales, and partly because this book is so well written. I sincerely think that anyone trying to know more about GPS would derive great benefit out of this book. Written in a style easily comprehensible to as young as about 13 years olds! Fully recommended reading.

Sherlock Holmes and the Adventure of the Three Dragons *by* Luke S. Fullenkamp, (5x8 softcover) 1st Books Library,2511 W. Third Street, Bloomington, IN 47404, USA. , ; 182 pages: ISBN 1-58500-773-0. Publication Date 2000: Price, $9.95 (Free Shipping!).

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This is the third Sherlock Holmes mystery published by 1st Books Library. In this book, an oriental master of the three dragons gives out a threat to destroy London - the adobe of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. The complete and utter destruction of London seems imminent. The duo has never met an enemy with such a powerful and terrible technology at his disposal - not even Professor Moriarty. What was this technology? Who is the mysterious and beautiful woman who enters and captures Watson's heart? What is her connection with the Master of the Dragons? There is an enigmatic character called "Guardian" too in this book. Who is he, and how does he fit in the whole story?

Read this interesting little book to find out. Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson are at their best in this one.

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