THE QUOTATION MARK PUZZLE:
AN IMPERFECTION OF “THE FIELD BAZAAR”

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THE QUOTATION MARK PUZZLE
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Ross E. Davies†

The rare, and until now rarely seen, first printing of “The Field Bazaar” — that odd little 1896 Sherlock Holmes and John Watson vignette — has an intriguing defect of punctuation. Or is it a feature? (Versions of the entire story, which is very short, begin on pages 369, 464, and 519 of this Almanac & Reader. Read it now, if you haven’t already.)

The last paragraph of “The Field Bazaar” is in Holmes’s voice. He is speaking about his interest in violins made from the trees of Cremona, in Italy. When that paragraph ends, Holmes stops speaking, of course. But there is no closing quotation mark at the end of the paragraph. See for yourself. Here is a picture of that paragraph — the original version — from page 36 of the November 20, 1896 issue of Edinburgh University’s The Student magazine:

“It is as easy as possible,” said he, “and I leave its solution to your own ingenuity. In the meantime,” he added, raising his paper, “you will excuse me if I return to this very interesting article upon the trees of Cremona, and the exact reasons for their pre-eminence in the manufacture of violins. It is one of those small outlying problems to which I am sometimes tempted to direct my attention.

Now compare that original version to leading early reprints. The first reprinting — A.G. Macdonell’s — was made in 1934:

“It is as easy as possible,” said he, “and I leave its solution to your own ingenuity. In the meantime,” he added, raising his paper, “you will excuse me if I return to this very interesting article upon the trees of Cremona, and the exact reasons for their pre-eminence in the manufacture of violins. It is one of those small outlying problems to which I am sometimes tempted to direct my attention.”

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† For the entire issue of The Student, see pages 327-419 above.
Vincent Starrett’s, in 1940⁴:

“It is as easy as possible,” said he, “and I leave its solution to your own ingenuity. In the meantime,” he added, raising his paper, “you will excuse me if I return to this very interesting article upon the trees of Cremona, and the exact reasons for their pre-eminence in the manufacture of violins. It is one of those small outlying problems to which I am sometimes tempted to direct my attention.”

Edgar Smith’s, in 1947⁵:

“It is as easy as possible,” said he, “and I leave its solution to your own ingenuity. In the meantime,” he added, raising his paper, “you will excuse me if I return to this very interesting article upon the trees of Cremona, and the exact reasons for their pre-eminence in the manufacture of violins. It is one of those small outlying problems to which I am sometimes tempted to direct my attention.”

The Daily Californian’s, in 1969⁶:

“It is as easy as possible,” said he, “and I leave its solution to your own ingenuity. In the meantime,” he added, raising his paper, “you will excuse me if I return to this very interesting article upon the trees of Cremona, and the exact reasons for their pre-eminence in the manufacture of violins. It is one of those small outlying problems to which I am sometimes tempted to direct my attention.”

Jack Tracy’s, in 1980⁶:

“It is as easy as possible,” said he, “and I leave its solution to your own ingenuity. In the meantime,” he added, raising his paper, “you will excuse me if I return to this very interesting article upon the trees of Cremona, and the exact reasons for their pre-eminence in the manufacture of violins. It is one of those small outlying problems to which I am sometimes tempted to direct my attention.”

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³ Vincent Starrett, 221B: STUDIES IN SHERLOCK HOLMES 4 (Macmillan 1940).
Richard Lancelyn Green’s, in 1983:

‘It is as easy as possible,’ said he, ‘and I leave its solution to your own ingenuity. In the meantime,’ he added, raising his paper, ‘you will excuse me if I return to this very interesting article upon the trees of Cremona, and the exact reasons for their pre-eminence in the manufacture of violins. It is one of those small outlying problems to which I am sometimes tempted to direct my attention.’

You can see the critical, terminal difference: Unlike the original story from 1896, all the reprintings end with a closing quotation mark.

In 1934, when A.G. Macdonell commissioned the Athenæum Press to produce the first reprint edition of “The Field Bazaar,” either Macdonell ordered insertion of the additional quotation mark or someone at the press — perhaps a helpful typesetter — added it on their own initiative. I do not know why whoever did it did it, but I am inclined to suspect that it was a manifestation of the natural, good-spirited, often unconsciously exercised human impulse to correct errors, to tie up loose ends. It would have felt right to end “The Field Bazaar” with a closing quotation mark, marking the end of Holmes’s comments on trees and violins, and the end of the story — because a story isn’t over until the last speaker stops speaking. Later editors and publishers of “The Field Bazaar” either worked from the 1934 Macdonell edition (or a successor to it), or were moved by an impulse not unlike the one that was at work when the type was set in 1934.

7 SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, THE UNCOLLECTED SHERLOCK HOLMES 151 (Penguin 1983) (Richard Lancelyn Green ed.).
8 See Richard Lancelyn Green, INTRODUCTION, 23 SHERLOCK HOLMES J. (Winter 1996) (supplement), reprinted at pages 308-309 above.
10 Though at least one returned to the primary source. See Green, INTRODUCTION, 23 SHERLOCK HOLMES J. (“The Centenary Edition [of ‘The Field Bazaar’] is set from the copy of the Student used by A.G. Macdonell and is published by The Sherlock Holmes Society of London as a supplement to the Sherlock Holmes Journal (Winter 1996).”).
But what if there was no error to correct? It seems only fair to begin with the presumption — rebuttable, to be sure — that the editors and publishers of *The Student* did a good job in 1896 of faithfully converting Conan Doyle’s manuscript into type and then text. (Unfortunately, the manuscript itself is nowhere to be found.) This starting point is made more difficult to avoid by two facts: (1) *The Student*’s version of the story was the only one published in Conan Doyle’s lifetime, and (2) Conan Doyle seems never to have objected to it. Moreover, the best available evidence — contemporaneous issues of *The Student* (November 12 and 27, and the November 20 “Bazaar Number” containing “The Field Bazaar”)

— indicates that *The Student* was edited and published by meticulous punctuators of even the most elaborate dialogue. And with respect to closing quotation marks in particular, they were quite good. In those three issues of *The Student*, there are seven works — other than “The Field Bazaar” — that indisputably ought to close with a closing quotation mark. All of them do. So, in a magazine with impressively clean and complete punctuation, the nonexistent closing quotation mark at the end of “The Field Bazaar” is either an extraordinary error or an extraordinary adherence to an original text.

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**Stories of Arthur Conan Doyle** 11 (Polygon 1981).

12 Facsimiles of all three issues in their entirety are at pages 310-436 above. For a snapshot of the context in which “The Field Bazaar” occurred, see Ross E. Davies, *Philanthropical (and Apocryphal, or Canonical?) Cricket in Edinburgh: The Geography and Scenery of a Sherlock Holmes Vignette*, 2016 *Green Bag* Alm. (supp.).


14 More impressive, it might be said, than the 1934 Macdonell version. In addition to adding the closing quotation mark at the end of “The Field Bazaar,” the Athenæum Press made two other changes in punctuation that were undoubtedly wrong. First error: In the 19th paragraph of the story — which, like the paragraph at the end of the story, contained one of Holmes’s little speeches to Watson — the closing quotation mark (present in the original version in *The Student*) was left out. Second error: In the same paragraph, a comma (also present in the original version in *The Student*) was left out of the first sentence. With the comma in place, the original version fluidly introduces a paragraph of classic Holmesian reasoning. Without the comma, the Macdonell version opens in a slightly clumsy and confusing rush. This critique is, I must admit, of the pot-versus-kettle variety. The *Green Bag* has never put out a perfect publication.

15 The absence of a manuscript against which to check *The Student* does leave open one other chilling possibility: copyfitting by cutting. “The Field Bazaar” does fit very snugly onto two pages. It is possible that a tail end — a few lines? a few paragraphs? — was lopped off at a late stage in the publication process, after the point at which a good-spirited typesetter might have had an opportunity to spot and correct the resulting end-of-story
The Quotation Mark Puzzle

If The Student’s original version of “The Field Bazaar” is indeed the true version, then attentive readers must take all of it — including the punctuation — seriously, as they do when reading anything else, from Shakespeare\textsuperscript{16} to the U.S. Constitution.\textsuperscript{17} And then what does the odd ending of “The Field Bazaar” mean? What could explain a nonexistent-but-not-missing closing quotation mark?

The most obvious possibility — the grammatical one — is that Holmes had at least one more paragraph of thoughts to express,\textsuperscript{18} perhaps about violins or cricket or medical education, or perhaps about some interesting case that had just come to his attention. In other words, the nonexistent closing quotation mark suggests that either (a) “The Field Bazaar” was longer than the vignette published in The Student, or (b) “The Field Bazaar” was itself just an excerpt, one scene, from some longer story.

There is precedent for thinking along these lines. Consider the cutting and pasting of the opening scenes in two other Holmes stories — “The Adventure of the Resident Patient” and “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” — both published in 1893. Holmes scholar Donald E. Curtis nicely encapsulates that business in “An Examination of ‘The Resident Patient’”:

[“The Resident Patient”] opens at 221B Baker St. with Watson reading the paper and Holmes lying “in the very center of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out . . . .” Here we are treated to an outstanding example of Sherlock Holmes’s deductive abilities, for

defect. But, as unfortunate as such an event might have been, accepting that theory of the case would mean accepting that “The Field Bazaar” was part of a more substantial story than the one that appeared in The Student.


\textsuperscript{18} \textsc{Chicago Manual of Style} § 10.29 (14th ed. 1993) (“If a passage consisting of more than one paragraph from the same source is quoted and is not set off as an excerpt, quotation marks are used at the beginning of each paragraph and at the end of the last paragraph. That is, quotation marks are not used at the \textit{end} of any paragraph in the quotation except the last one.”).
as Watson drifts into a “brown study,” Holmes seemingly reads Watson’s mind! (This wonderful passage was originally part of “The Cardboard Box” as published in the Strand Magazine. [“The Cardboard Box”] was left out of the collected stories published as The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes and later included in His Last Bow. When The Complete Sherlock Holmes Short Stories was published in 1928, this “mind-reading” passage was included in both [“The Resident Patient”] and [“The Cardboard Box”].)\textsuperscript{19}

Why was this done? No one is certain (the evidence is sparse), but most commentators agree that the mind-reading scene that was originally part of “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” was felt to be too good to lose when that story was excluded (perhaps because of its racy content) from most editions of Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes. So, the scene was moved to “The Adventure of the Resident Patient,” which was included in the Memoirs.\textsuperscript{20} Whatever the reason, the fact that a scene was susceptible to excision from one story and engrafting onto another means that the “The Field Bazaar,” too, could have been excised or engrafted or both. That is, it might once have been, or have been intended to become, part of a complete Sherlock Holmes mystery.

Consider also some Holmes stories with opening scenes that might, with slight revision and re-dovetailing, introduce a different mystery. For example, in just the first handful, published in 1891, there are:

- “A Scandal in Bohemia”— with Watson’s reflections on marriage, his visit to 221B Baker Street, and then Holmes’s deductions, based on Watson’s appearance, about his home and professional lives, which then segue into the case of the adventures of Irene Adler.

- “A Case of Identity”— with the fireside debate between Watson and Holmes, aided by a newspaper, about Holmes’s claim that “there is nothing so unnatural as the commonplace,” which then segues into the case of the romantic problems of Mary Sutherland.

\textsuperscript{19} Donald E. Curtis, An Examination of “The Resident Patient,” 50 Baker Street J. 41, 42 (Summer 2000).

\textsuperscript{20} Id.; see also, e.g., H.W. Bell, On the Variant Readings of The Resident Patient, 1 Baker Street J. 312, 313-14 (July 1946). “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” was included in the first U.S. edition of the Memoirs, published by Harper & Brothers in 1894, and in that edition it retained the mind-reading scene, while “The Adventure of the Resident Patient” remained in its original form, without any overt mind-reading. See A. Conan Doyle, Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes 29-32, 181-82 (1894).
This illustration for the mind-reading scene in “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box” in *The Strand Magazine* (January 1893, page 61) was recycled to illustrate the same mind-reading scene in “The Adventure of the Resident Patient” in *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* (1894, page 168).

- “The Five Orange Pips” — with its inventory of unreported cases and discussion of the foul weather, followed by Holmes’s deductions about his prospective client, and only after all of that the segue into the case of the KKK’s vengeance on the Openshaws.

A complete list of promising candidates would be wearilying long. And the point would remain the same. The structures of numerous stories about Holmes and Watson leave open the possibility of changeable, even interchangeable, opening scenes.

Questions about the substance of the story told in “The Field Bazaar” are beyond the scope of this little paper, which is limited to documenting one little punctuation puzzle. No doubt there are troubling inconsistences between some facts presented there and some facts in other Holmes stories. For example, I doubt anyone could read Catherine Cooke’s
“Making Bricks without Clay: The Medical Training of Dr. Watson,” and fail to doubt the accuracy of Holmes’s statement in the “The Field Bazaar” that Watson received his Bachelor of Medicine degree from Edinburgh University. Inconsistencies abound in the Holmes stories, however, and some may even be of importance comparable to Watson’s academic pedigree. The number, identities, and lifespans of Watson’s spouses come to mind. So, it may be that the explaining away, or not, of inconsistencies cannot by itself resolve basic questions about the nature or status of “The Field Bazaar.”

“The Field Bazaar” has never been in the same league with the traditional Sherlock Holmes canon of 56 short and four novel-length works of detective fiction published under the byline of Arthur Conan Doyle. But is this little story something more than just a pastiche that happens to have the same Conan Doyle byline as the canonical stories? Is it — though not substantially canonical on its own — enough of a kernel or fragment or vestige of such a story to be treated as something more than a mere trivial echo? Could it be a demi- or semi-memoir of Sherlock Holmes (the full title in The Student is “The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes. ‘The Field Bazaar.’”), doomed to perpetual imperfection?

On the other hand, could the nonexistent closing quotation mark in The Student’s original version really be just an editorial or typographical error at the end of an otherwise well-written and well-set short story, in an otherwise meticulously punctuated and typeset magazine? Yes, it could, though for the reasons given earlier in this paper that is not an answer to be accepted lightly.

In any event, the most interesting question about “The Field Bazaar” remains unanswered, at least for the moment: Is there an Arthur Conan Doyle scholar (or Sherlock Holmes artist) resourceful enough (or creative enough) to find (or fabricate) the fuller story of which it was (or should have been) a part?

APPENDIX A

THE FIELD BAZAAR
IN THE DAILY CALIFORNIAN
JANUARY 14, 1969, PAGES 1 & 11

actual size: approximately 11 inches wide by 17 inches tall
source: Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley
permission: The Daily Californian

There is one copy of the original of this version of “The Field Bazaar” in existence (other than any in inaccessible private collections), or at least that is what my exceedingly resourceful colleague Cattleya Concepcion and I concluded after a lot of digging. The top of page 1 (see below) is reproduced here only for information about provenance and citation. Page 11 (see next page) includes, in addition to “The Field Bazaar” in its entirety: (1) Edgar W. Smith’s introduction to his 1947 pamphlet edition of “The Field Bazaar,”¹ (2) Arthur Conan Doyle’s Holmes-Watson pastiche, “How Watson Learned the Trick,” and (3) a short explanation of the provenance of that story.² The “How Watson Learned the Trick” material is redacted because we are not 100% certain about its copyright status. The rest is reproduced here in facsimile for the convenience of readers who might otherwise have to exert themselves in order to see it.

² “How Watson Learned the Trick” is available in a nice modern edition that includes a replica of the original miniature volume and a pamphlet containing a transcript and background information about the story. ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE, A MINIATURE TREASURE FROM QUEEN MARY’S DOLLS’ HOUSE: HOW WATSON LEARNED THE TRICK (Walker Books 2014).
Two ‘New’ Holmes Tales

The Field Bazaar

The coruscation of the Sacred Writings consists of the sixty canonical tales brought forth in celebration of the saga of Sherlock Holmes—all of them, with four admitted sacrilegious forgeries, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Deriving from this bibliographic source, the Writings are fixed and definitive as they are written, their significance being that the Writings can neither change nor accrue meaning unless, upon blessed day, the coven of the bank of Cox & Co. at Charing Cross give up the secret they have held so long. Then, and only then, will there be further revelation in the divine wisdom of the texts.

It is, of course, obvious, to think that any such subterfuge toward the Masons could bear scrutiny in the forensic light thrown by the true word. The crown is justified in the purity of its inspiration and of the purity of its intentions. The sacred texts cannot be subverted without its consent—two of which were written by Sherlock Holmes himself, with a third, only a little lower in the plane, acceded to his brother Mycroft—stand uncorrupted and unaltered in the sublime company they found themselves obliged to keep. No mere curio, certainly, can ever hope to assimilate a hieratic so highly blessed.

Yet for all that the canon is whole and inseparable in its own right, there is much material, revealing close upon the threshold which must be met, if not in reverent, at least in deep respect. Super- pose to all else in this empyrean, certainly the Sherlockian pantheon of Dr. Watson’s close friend and associate, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, whose writings so closely resemble the Writings themselves than efforts have assimilating bashfully, by the historians, to endure them with the fall side of sanctity. They are, in fact, the opus of the Apocrypha, as distinguished from the earlier lower order of the Higher Criticism, and the apocryphal, as distinguished from the sacred texts, not only raised to the status of a canonical text itself, together with a scenario for another tale, a tale of Dr. Doyce’s private edition—of which is found in the Sherlock Holmes. Volume II, in the field of the paradoxe-pistle called “The Field Bazaar.”

This amusing little piece appeared originally in the University of Edinburgh undergraduate magazine, The Student, in November, 1977, carrying the barest and still unsigned signature of A. Conan Doyle. It has since been reprinted in a 1984 private edition by A. G. Measom in 1984, and its inclusion in the Sherlock Holmes—Omnibus book, but in none of its appearances has it reached a wide circle of readers. As imitators go, it is a good one: it is, in fact, one of the best ever done, despite the readily-observed flaws and the obvious which stamp it as Canonical rather than canonical, Dr. Watson, a degree of Doctor of Divinity at the University of London in 1875, is in apparent defiance to the purpose the tale is designed to serve, the purpose it was a part of. Instead, as in the case of the sacred text, and in the case of the sacred text, the author of the tale was not a doctor at all, as long as and even if he had only been a house surgeon. Worse still, the object of the action in the tale is dead dangling and without explanation of any design.

Yet we must not carp or quibble when such opportunity is laid before us. “The Field Bazaar” is ill-read, too, although I slighly marvelling, it is true; but we shall take it to our hearts unchallenged, because it was written by that great and good man who walked and talked with Dr. Watson, and who has done more than we are willing to admit in make the name of Sherlock Holmes respectable. He is, indeed, a true Sherlock Holmes.

Edgar W. Smith

Sunnyside, N.J., July 1, 1947

“I should certainly do it,” said Sherlock Holmes. I started at the interruption, for my companion had been eating his breakfast with his attention entirely centered upon the paper which was propped up by the coffee pot. Now I looked across at him to find his eyes fastened upon me with the half-amused, half-questioning expression which he usually assumed when he felt that he had made an intellectual point.

“Do what?” I asked.

He smiled as he took his slipper from the manuscript and drew from it enough strong tobacco to fill the old clay pipe with which he invariably rounded off his breakfast.

“A most characteristic question of yore, Watson,” said he. “You will not, I am sure, be offended if I say that any reputation for sharpness which I may possess has been entirely gained by the admissible fools which you have made for me. Have I not heard of debasements which have been imposed upon plaintexts by their custodians? There is a certain analogy.”

Our long companionship in the Baker Street room had left us on these easy terms of intimacy when much may be said without offense. And yet I retrenched that I was not so reticent as he made it appear.

“I may be very obtuse,” said I, “but I confess that I am unable to see how you have managed to know that I was . . . I was?”

“Ailed to help in the Edinburgh University Band.”

“Precisely. The letter has only just come to hand, and I have not spoken to you since.”

“In spite of that,” said Holmes, leaning back in his chair and putting his fingers together, “I would even venture to suggest that the object of the bazaar is to enlarge the University cricket field.”

I looked up from the well-bonked piece that I had been chewing with silent laughter.

“The fact is, my dear Watson, that you are an excellent subject,” said he. “You are never dull. You respond instantly to any external stimulus. Your mental processes may be slow but they are never obscure, and I found during our conversation that you were easier reading than the leader in the field of front of me.”

“I should be glad to know how you arrived at your conclusion,” said I.

“I fear that my good nature in giving explanations has seriously compromised my reputation,” said Holmes. “But in the case of the reasoning is based upon such obvious facts as no credit is due to your own powers. You entered the room with a thoughtfulness, the expression of a man who is deferring some point in your mind. In your hand you held a solitary letter. Now last night you retired in the same mood, and it was clear that it was this letter in your hand which had caused your change in you.”

“Then it is obvious when it is explained to me. I naturally asked myself what the letter could contain which might have turned my attention to the photograph, therefore, and saw at once that it con- stituted of yourself as a member of the Edinburgh University Eleven, with the and the cricket-field in the back- ground. My small experience of cricket clubs has taught me that next to churches and cavalry ensigns they are the most debt-laden things upon earth. When upon your return to the table I saw you take out your pencil and draw lines upon the envelope, I was convinced that you were endeavoring to realize some pro- jeeted improvement which was to be brought about by a bazaar. Your face still showed some indication, so that I was able to be in upon you with my advice that you should insist in so good an object.”

I could not help smiling at the extreme simplicity of his explanation.

“Oh, of course, it was as easy as possible,” said Holmes, as he sat down. “My remark appeared to settle him. “I may add,” said he, “that the peculiar technique which you have been asked to give was that you should write in your album, and that you have already made up your mind that the present incident will be the subject of your article.”

“But how?” I cried.

“It is as easy as possible,” said he, “and I have an instruction to your own ingenuity. The method manufactured,” he added, raising his paper, “you will excuse me if I return to this very interesting article upon the trees of Cremorne, and the exact reason for their pre-eminent in the manufacture of said trees, and the other outbuilding troubles to which I am sometimes tempted to direct my attention.”