

A Toast to Mr. Sherlock Holmes

*delivered at the Spring Meeting of
the Sons of the Copper Beeches
April 15, 2016, at the Racquet Club
in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

by
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(with apologies to a great Philadelphian)

Once upon a Philly Friday (Copper Beeches coat-and-tie day),
After many a hale, exuberant greeting just inside the door,
While I mingled, all contriving how to speed my drink's arriving,
Suddenly the clock's conniving, diving hand gave no time more:
"Tis the moment now," I muttered, "when we do as oft before –
Time for toasts,
so let us pour."

Presently my soul grew bolder (though our supper somewhat colder);
"Sons," said I, "of Copper Beeches, your indulgence I implore,
But this duty makes me lack some fealty to an acting maxim
Whose existence I may track from back some seven years or more:
"Never follow babies, hosts, dancing ladies, puppies, ghosts –
And never give
the op'ning toast."

Cradle of Detective Fiction, though I rise with all conviction,
This toast, I fear, with little diction, little eloquency foams;
Confess we, though, that Mighty Brain (or helped or hindered by that name)
Was destined quite to put to shame any sleuth who fiction roams –
Out-deducing and o'er-shadowing ev'ry sleuth who fiction roams,
And with such name as –
Sherrinford?

Thank you, Providence, our backer, sparing us that bitter cracker!
(Could be much worse: "Ormond Sacker"?! Mention of it turns me pale.)
"What's in a name?" the poet wondered. (Or in a plot – God knows *he* plundered!)
Yet our Hero's name has thundered ever since the Age of Rail;
Like him is no other sample, he alone the sole example,
the Detective
sans pareil.

Now near Eastbourne he is sitting, retired, perhaps, but never quitting,
Joined, I hope, by one much like a walrus in his Sunday clothes;
And, on either side the fire, as they reason and conspire,
Wreaths of pipe smoke wafting higher drift across the scrapbook tomes.
Now a toast: to that great Caesar of imagination's Rome –
Here's to
Mister
Sherlock
Holmes.