

A Toast to the Unpublished Cases of Sherlock Holmes
by William O'Neill Curatolo
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In his introduction to “The Problem of Thor Bridge”, Dr. Watson reports that Sherlock Holmes worked on some cases that “involve the secrets of private families”. He says that “a breach of confidence is unthinkable, and that these records will be separated and destroyed”. And Watson and Holmes kept their promise.

Now 100 years later, we know the rough outlines of only a few of these cases. In one example, Watson inadvertently revealed Holmes’ involvement in unraveling the alleged poisoning of Queen Victoria. Holmes showed that the Queen was innocently poisoned by a dinner of quail. He ascertained that said quail had flown north in spring via the western flyway through Algeria into France, during which they fed on the poisonous seeds of the hemlock and hellebore plants, poisoning their flesh for humans. Luckily the Queen survived. And luckily the poisoner accused by Scotland Yard did not go to the gallows.

And then there was the case involving the family in Britain of Charles Brooke, the Second Rajah of Sarawak on Borneo, and the issues involving paternity. And among the strangest cases was the issue of the provenance of the latter works of Robert Louis Stevenson, entrained in the mysterious activities that took place at his home on the Pacific island of Samoa.

And of course there were the internecine complications of the Irish Home Rule brouhaha with Gladstone, Parnell, and Katie O’Shea.

We only know the superficial outlines of these cases. The details that died with Holmes and Watson will never be known.

So let us lift our glasses to the unpublished cases of Sherlock Holmes!