

A Sherlockian Toast (posted 2023-7-10)

A Toast to Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen  
by Jennifer Kneeland  
before a meeting of The Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes  
in New York City, on May 28, 2022

When asked to offer a toast to Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen, I thought I must have forgotten or skipped over something.

We're told her lineage, that she is the second daughter of the King of Scandinavia. But about her as a person? Here it is, the entire description that we have of the woman the King of Bohemia wanted to marry:

"She is herself the very soul of delicacy."

That's it. The woman that is the reason behind King Wilhelm Gottsrieich Sigismond von Ormstein seeking help from Sherlock Holmes, and we know nothing about her other than that her fiancé considered her the soul of delicacy. He goes on to say that "A shadow of doubt as to my conduct would bring the matter to an end" but I don't even give that a lot of credence. After all, it's not as if he asked her!

If I were in a more purely scholarly mindset, I would have dug up as much as I could about the real Saxe-Meiningen family that led a duchy in what is now Germany. But there was no Clotilde Lothman among them.

So instead, I will assert that to offer a toast to a woman about whom we know so little is, in some ways, to offer a toast to that which inspires us.

We come to these stories for such a variety of reasons. The friendship, the adventure, the sense of righting a wrong, and getting swept up in a fictional world when we may find our own world scary or otherwise lacking. We come to them, and we embrace them. The characters that earn our disdain we tend to truly loathe. Those we admire we absolutely cherish.

But it may be the characters like Clotilde that really offer us a way in because she can be, to each of us, a person who would motivate us to seek the great detective's assistance.

Are you picturing someone whose thoughtfulness knows no bounds? Someone who makes you laugh, whether you want to or not? Someone who challenges you, or supports you, or even just keeps your attention? She can be any of those or none at all. No one can really prove you're wrong.

So please join me in raising a glass to Clotilde Lothman von Saxe-Meningen, the soul of delicacy, but more importantly, a woman who inspires action. To Clotilde!

Copyright 2022 Jennifer Kneeland