



The Pink 'Un



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I Find It Recorded in My Notebook . . .

The Hansom Wheels met once again via the Zoom teleconferencing app on April 15. Thirty-one people or thereabouts, depending on how you count them, attended; there were a couple of cases where an additional person appeared onscreen but his or her name did not appear at the bottom of the picture. I'm assuming that they were the husbands/wives of the named persons. Many of these folks were new to me; I think some if not all of them may have been from Canada, since that's where our speaker was located, and she and her husband had invited some of their friends. The attendees were **Donny Zalkin**, the speaker's husband; **Mike Ranieri**; **Steve Mason**; **George and Sarah Linder**; **Pat, Allison, and Alan McNeely**; **Michael Pollock** (and wife?); **Jerred Metz**; **Wayne Scott**; **Tom Elmore**; **Carlina de la Cova**; **Becky and Kevin Lewis**; **Brenda Rossini**; **James Reese**; **Philip** (no last name given); **Michael Ellis**; **Hartley Nathan**; **Robert Katz**; **Dayna Nuhn** (and husband?); **Alan Jacobson**; **Richard Krisciunas**; **Julie Smoak**; somebody whose name showed up as **Video for TV**; our speaker, **Barbara Rusch**; my wife, **Mary**; and me, **The Tantalus**.

I announced that the game was afoot; we toasted *the woman*, Irene Adler; and I led the group in the responsive reading of the Musgrave Ritual. That brought us to the Happy Hour Posers, in which the trick is to dope out the titles of Adventures from convoluted clues: 1. Beatrix Potter's most famous character fell into a vat of tar (he wasn't hurt, though) = "Black Peter" (Peter Rabbit). 2. At the end of *The Wild One*, Johnny Strabler (Marlon Brando) returns to Wrightsville without his gang = "The Solitary Cyclist" (the gang was a motorcycle gang). 3. What's this on the porch? It's my order from Amazon Prime! = "The Cardboard Box." 4. I should have taken off my wedding ring before I painted the ceiling. Now it's got little spots all over it = "The Speckled Band."

The Featured Presentation was "To Boldly Go: Mr. Spock, Leonard Nimoy, and Sherlock Holmes," by the aforementioned **Barbara Rusch**, a member of the Bootmakers of Toronto society (named after the label in the boot Holmes pulls out of the Great Grimpen Mire at the end of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*). **Barbara** heroically put the talk together while dealing with a

serious family situation and wasn't sure if she would be available to deliver it live on the night of the meeting; therefore, she prerecorded it as a Zoom presentation and sent me the link so that I could run it—a Zoom within a Zoom! Luckily, she *was* able to be there, but we decided to go ahead with the recorded version anyway. Of course, I mucked it up by turning off my microphone when I started playing the recording, not realizing that doing so would also shut off the audio on the presentation. This was forcefully called to my attention by the other attendees. I started it over, but then the sound was garbled for some reason. So **Mike Ranieri**, who also had a copy of the video, offered to run it from his computer, and everything went well from then on.



Barbara Rusch on Zoom

It was a *fascinating* (to use one of Spock's favorite expressions) talk, in which **Barbara** pointed out the many similarities between Sherlock Holmes and Mr. Spock, including appearance ("tall, lean, austere-looking and sharp-featured"), character and temperament ("proud and somewhat pretentious, measured and mannered, cerebral and articulate . . . exude a sense of serenity, of calm resolution"), devotion to logic, and having a colleague "with whom they reside and with whom they sometimes find themselves at odds—one a doctor, the other a Star Fleet captain—who in significant ways is their intellectual inferior, is less intriguing and who keeps a log chronicling their adventures together." She even found evidence that Spock is (or will be) a descendant of Holmes! The discussion afterward seemed a bit more like a *Star Trek* convention than a Sherlockian gathering, but that's OK.

I ended the evening with an illustrated reading of Vincent Starrett's Sacred Sonnet, "221B," and we all went nighty-night.

For August: Still Zooming after All These Months!

We had hoped to be able to gather in person, but because of the COVID-19 delta variant, The Hansom Wheels will meet once again via the Zoom teleconferencing app at **7:45 pm Thursday, August 19**. Be sure to have a beverage nearby for toasting *the woman*! Happy Hour Posers are on page 2 of this issue. The Assigned Story is "The Priory School." The Featured Presentation will be "Bicycles in the Canon" by **Dr. Franklin Saksena** of the Chicago Sherlock Holmes society The Criterion Bar Association. If you don't

already have the **free** Zoom app, you will need to download it to your PC, laptop, or smartphone. Several times over the next few days I will email you an invitation; at meeting time, all you will have to do is click on the link in any one of those messages and wait to be admitted. **Note:** If you don't have any of the devices mentioned above, you can **dial the number in the invitation and attend via your landline telephone** (audio only, of course)! If you have any questions, email me at hansomwheels@aol.com. See you there!

Happy Hour Posers (Name the Adventures):

1. He said that he would neither buy a new boat, _____.
2. His twelve-inch ruler is burning in Hell!
3. She is enrolled in an online educational institution; before that, she attended a different one.
4. In the old days, at a certain time of the evening many radio and TV stations would play “The Star-Spangled Banner” and shut down until the next morning.

The New Woman Cyclist



by Liese Sherwood-Fabre

Violet Smith, the solitary cyclist who seeks Holmes’s assistance, represents the new type of single, working woman who emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. Sarah Grand coined the term “the new woman” in 1894 to describe the increasing number of well-educated and self-supporting woman who emerged as the social climate and demographics shifted.¹ At the end of the 1800s, approximately half of the women aged twenty to forty were unmarried and outnumbered eligible men. With little prospect of ever becoming a wife, William Rathbone Greg estimates, about 300,000 of them are doomed to life devoid of marriage and consisting instead of “celibacy, struggle, and privation.”² Despite Greg’s concern about their failure to fulfill their role as wife and mother, many of those in this age group found new prospects opening to them, and the bicycle was both a symbol and a major contributor to their newfound freedom.

Toward the end of the century, two major improvements to the bicycle made them safer, more comfortable, and—over time—more affordable transportation: the “safety bicycle” with two equal-sized wheels and a chain-driven rear wheel, and the pneumatic tire.³ While both women and men found these innovations to their liking, this new form of mobility had a much greater impact on women. Victorian etiquette restricted women, particularly those of the middle class, to a very limited set of “respectable” activities: visiting, attending certain cultural events, supporting certain charitable activities, and some recreational outings. Bicycling extended women’s geographic and social boundaries. They were able to travel farther and into areas not previously visited, and possibly to do so unaccompanied.⁴

This design, however, required different clothing, and led to additional freedom in that arena as well.⁵ At a time when showing her ankle was enough to mark a woman as a prostitute, and ladies only rode sidesaddle, many donned pantaloons or bloomers, permitting the whole lower leg to be visible (although covered by woolen stockings or boots). The volume of fabric used in this fashion, however, proved as great, or greater, hindrance than some skirts. Some forward-thinking cycling and women’s rights advocates went so far as to disparage the corset and discouraged its use as well.⁶ In the end, the majority of women continued to wear skirts and corsets when cycling. Bicycle manufacturers developed a number of devices to help maintain the women’s modesty, but none were truly effective.



Despite Greg’s concerns about women’s marital prospects, the situation was not as dire as the one he painted. The rise in educated women led to a rise in their involvement within the workforce. Many single women moved into professional positions such as secretaries, teachers, governesses, etc. and were able to live independently, without the support of a father or husband.

Long-distance romances. In addition, women had a larger pool of prospects from which to choose. Couples no longer had to live in the same village or neighborhood. They were able to travel outside such areas to meet, often unchaperoned. Such an arrangement was common enough to be immortalized in the Harry Darce song “Daisy Bell” and her bicycle “built for two.”⁷

Miss Smith displayed the aspects physical fitness, freedom of movement, and self-supporting income that might have labeled her as “a new woman,” with the exception of her marital prospects. While some new women might never receive an offer of marriage, she had the choice of three (albeit were two undesired). All the same, she had to freedom to refuse the two unwanted ones, and thanks to Sherlock Holmes, retained her independence to make that choice.

1. Sarah Grand, “The New Aspect of the Woman Question,” *North American Review* (1894).

2. William Rathbone Greg, *Why are Women Redundant?* (London: N. Trubner, 1869), p. 17.

3. <https://victorianist.wordpress.com/2015/04/13/chains-of-freedom-the-bicycles-impact-on-1890s-britain/>.

4. Clare S. Simpson, “A Social History of Women and Cycling in Late-Nineteenth Century New Zealand” (PhD diss., Lincoln University, 1998).

5. *Ibid.*

6. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/wellbeing/diet/8419028/Bicycles-The-chains-that-set-women-free.html>.

7. <https://victorianist.wordpress.com/2015/04/13/chains-of-freedom-the-bicycles-impact-on-1890s-britain/>.