

THERE IS SOMETHING VERY STRANGE about Sherlock Holmes. Writer after writer has noticed this fact and then, with scarcely more than a shrug, has passed on to other matters. The Sherlockian scholar D. Martin Dakin, for instance, perceived that there was about Holmes “some enigmatic secret in his life to which even Watson never penetrated” – a secret, noted Dakin, that drove Holmes to retire when less than fifty years old and at the very height of his powers. Sadly, Dakin neglected (or chose not) to follow his facts through to the proper conclusion. The distinguished mystery writer Rex Stout also detected this strangeness. However, he misinterpreted the evidence and came to the erroneous conclusion that Watson was a woman.

To the best of our knowledge, only three earlier commentators and the present writers have perceived the truth. Each of us was unaware of the others’ work, and each must have experienced the same shock of revelation, the same initial incredulity, and then the same realization that fact after fact in the Canon supported the conclusion that had been arrived at so unexpectedly.

Sherlock Holmes told Dr. Watson repeatedly, in words that varied little over the years: “You know my methods. Apply them.” Having followed this precept ourselves, we are now able to state without equivocation that, although Watson was no woman, Sherlock Holmes was.