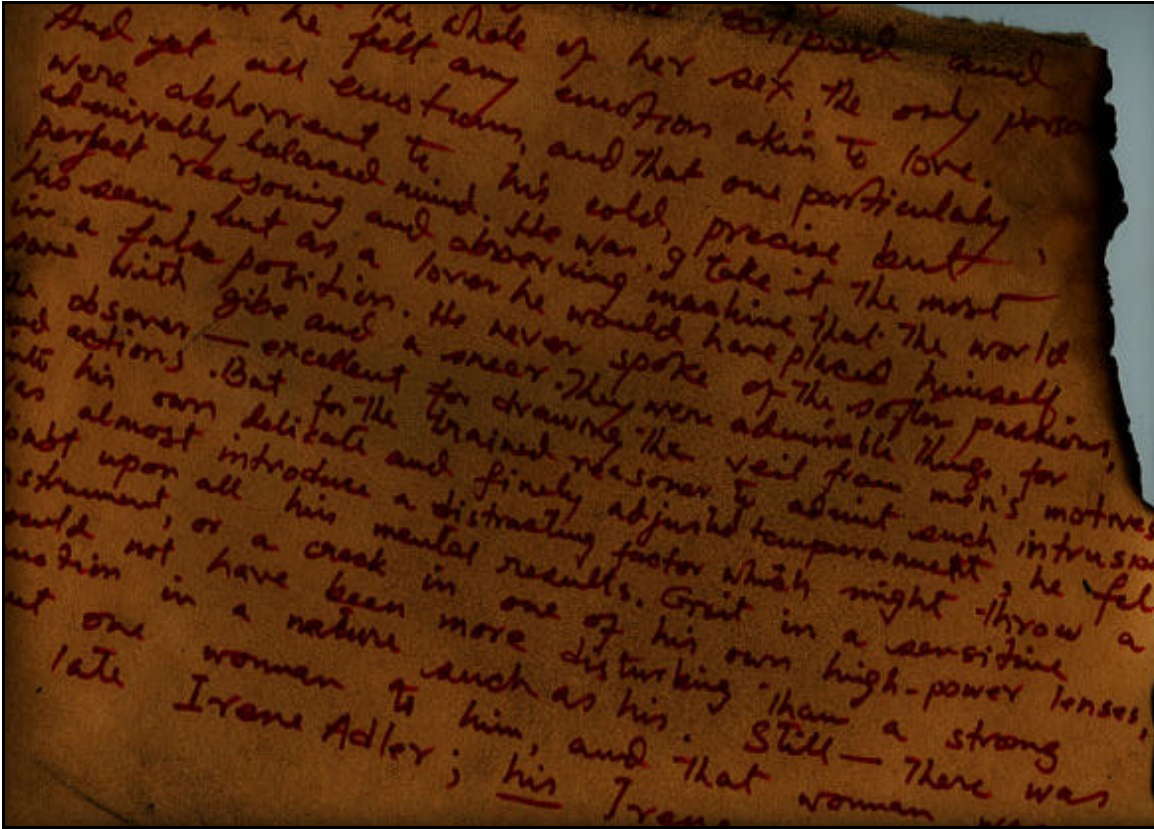


A Case of Identification

: Arafat Kazi



Knowing well my researches and labors in the field of Sherlockian studies, my friend, Richard Gaylord (of Gaylord Bros. Library Services, accessible online at <http://www.gaylord.com>), sent me the above manuscript with the following letter:

Dear Arafat,

Hope everything's well. As you well know, my great-grandfather, Peter Johnson Gaylord, founded our company in 1896. He was an eccentric man. A scholar, artist and musician, he was in correspondence with many of the leading intellects of his day, including G. K. Chesterton and P. G. Wodehouse. (Apparently he sent Plum archiving products free of charge when the young Plum was a student at Dulwich in the mid-1890s and grandpa Gaylord a budding businessman!) Among his friends he counted Arthur Conan Doyle, although they had a falling out in the 20s because of grandpa Gaylord's open experimentations with homosexuality.

However, that is not germane to the issue at hand. I discovered this (see the manuscript in the accompanying box) in one of our old warehouse rooms, in a trunk that seems to have been unopened since the early 20th century. I would deduce from its contents that the trunk contained documents that grandpa

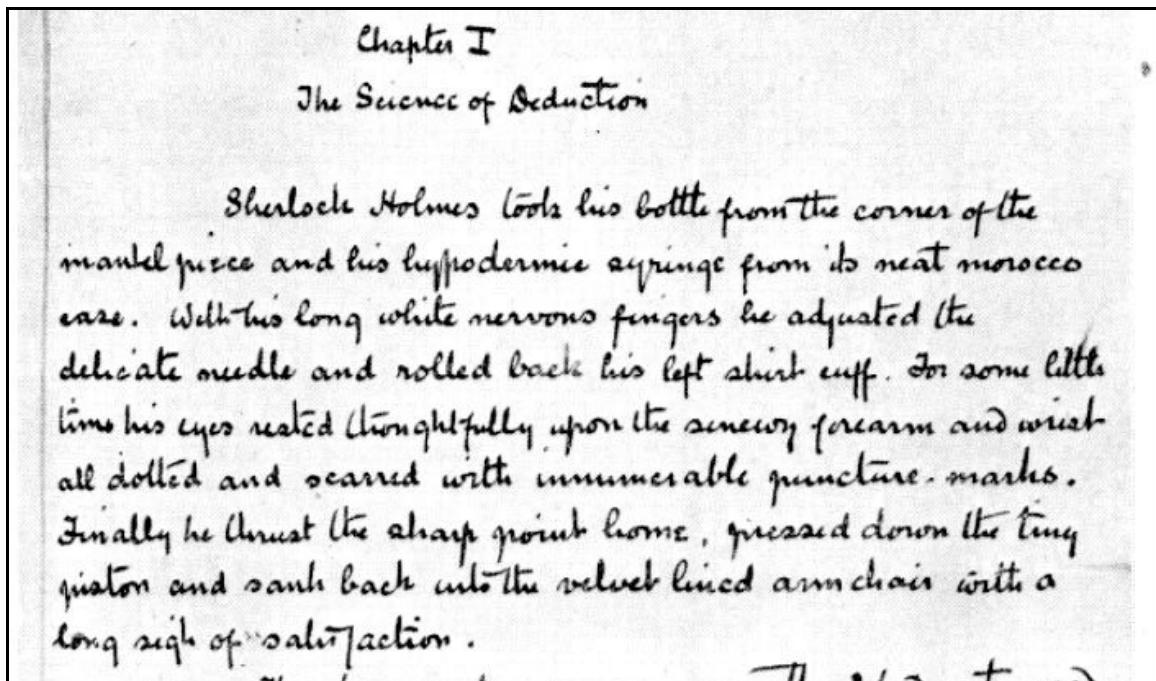
Gaylord felt were symbolic of parts of his life that he wished to leave behind at the fag end of his career.

As you can plainly see, the page appears to be a manuscript of the first paragraph of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes story, A Scandal in Bohemia. It becomes difficult to tell for sure whether this was Doyle's own hand. The handwriting is similar, but the text has enough differences with what I have seen of Doyle's hand (see attached photocopy) to raise the possibility of it having been written by someone else. Just look at the prominently printed "I"s near the bottom and you'll see what I mean. Of course, what I've seen of Doyle's handwriting is from fair copies only, while it seems that the manuscript I'm sending you was dashed off in a hurry. That may or may not explain the discrepancies; I don't know, and it isn't for me to judge. The text itself is different from the famous first paragraph of the published story, as you will see, in subtle but significant ways.

I know well your passion for Sherlockian scholarship, which is why I'm sending you this manuscript, in spite of the fact that you are busy with your book on W. G. Sebald. What's it supposed to be again, a sequel to The Rings of Saturn that you're calling The Ring around Uranus?


*I remain, Arafat,
Yr hardy pal and humble servant,
Dick Gaylord.*

ATTACHMENT: photocopy of a facsimile of the first paragraph from Doyle's The Sign of Four.



I have no expertise in the study of what is known as questioned document examination, and so I shall limit my observations to the textual variations of the manuscript from the standard reference version, in this case a facsimile of the story's first publication, from the Strand Magazine, Volume II, July 1891.

In the table below, I have included the Strand, or *S* version, with a transcription of the manuscript (*MS*) version. Differences are demarcated in red, with the parts not seen visible in my (partial) scan of the manuscript filled in.

Strand Version	Manuscript Version (transcription)
 <p>O, Sherlock Holmes she is always <i>the</i> woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex. It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler. All emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen ; but, as a lover, he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer—excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament was to introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his. And yet there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory.</p>	<p>To Sherlock Holmes she was always <i>the</i> woman. In his eyes she eclipsed and predominated the whole of her sex, the only person for whom he felt any emotion akin to love. And yet all emotions, and that one particularly, were abhorrent to his cold, precise but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen, but as a lover he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer. They were admirable things for the observer—excellent for drawing the veil from men's motives and actions. But for the trained reasoner to admit such intrusions into his own delicate and finely adjusted temperament, he felt, was to almost introduce a distracting factor which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results. Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, could not have been more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his. Still— there was but one woman to him, and that woman was the late Irene Adler; <i>his Irene.</i></p>

Since there is no way to date the manuscript at present, I will talk about the two texts as if they were written and published concurrently. There is the possibility that chemical research and handwriting analysis may prove otherwise, i.e. that the *MS* version was written by Doyle himself before *S* was actually published. Proof of that would

radicalize (and, in some cases, invalidate) a lot of Sherlockian criticism and speculation. However, until such a conclusion is scientifically reached, let us err on the side of caution. From time to time, I treat *MS* as if it were definitely written by Doyle; but that is only for the purposes of divining the ramifications *MS* has on the Text of *A Scandal in Bohemia* as We Know It.

The most prominent difference is the implication that the relationship between Holmes and Adler went far deeper than *A Scandal in Bohemia* may suggest. Let me first quote the only (and highly indirect) reference made of Adler outside of *SCAN*, which is in *The Five Orange Pips*:

"I have been beaten four times—three times by men, and once by a woman."

Aside from that, Watson does not mention Irene Adler at all in a body of work that spans fifty-six short stories and four novels. This is important because it means that all deductions and theories on the Holmes-Adler relationship come solely from *SCAN*. Biographical speculation on Holmes's romantic or sexual life is rife and often fantastic, ranging from Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson being a homosexual couple to the far kinder portraiture by William S. Baring-Gould, who suggested that Holmes and Irene later met and married, giving birth to Nero Wolfe and with the great detective's dying words being "Irene, Irene." If one were to follow the Baring-Gould school, as I do, this manuscript would provide an invaluable resource in the defense of our point of view.

MS talks about Irene Adler in the past tense, while in the *S* version she is talked about in the present¹ tense. The second sentence in *S* is deleted in the *MS* version. Together, these may be taken to signify that ACD imagined Watson to actually be acquainted with Irene Adler, since one would only talk about a deceased stranger in the present continuous, as we see in *S*. (Please note that this wasn't the crazy 20th century where anything goes!) There are other instances of changes to support this claim: the most important is the direct assertion in *MS* that Adler was to Holmes "the only person for whom he felt any emotion akin to love." The *MS* version also ends by calling Irene Adler "*his* (Holmes's) Irene," whereas *S* has "Irene Adler, of dubious and questionable memory." To go on: the potential "would" in *S* becomes an assertive "could not have been" in *MS*. Similarly, Sherlock Holmes ("he") "feels" that love could "almost" induce a distracting factor "which might throw a doubt upon all his mental results" (*MS*). Once again, the abstract becomes personal, as it does throughout *MS*. The "still—" of *MS* as opposed to the "and yet" of *S*, beginning the final sentence, serves to reiterate the sense of a romantic bond between Sherlock Holmes and Irene Adler (although this simply might be because the words "and yet" occur earlier in *MS*).

We can see from the uneven lines and punctuation less **robust** than *S* that the writer of *MS* wrote in a hurry (for example, an em-dash is repeated within the space of four sentences, and there's an ill-placed semi-colon before "*his* Irene"). Because there are no crossings-out, however, it may be counter-argued that even if it wasn't a fair copy *per*

¹ Continuous? I know not, sir!

se, it was copied out from an existing text. If that is the case, then is the sloppy punctuation indicative of an earlier iteration of the text, where it was also intended that Holmes should have relations with Irene Adler? Is the manuscript just the wistful imagining of a Sherlockian critic?² I would personally like to believe that the Dr. Watson of *MS*, who wrote of an Irene that his friend Sherlock Holmes knew and loved, is Doyle himself.³ If it is, does this mean that he originally intended Sherlock Holmes to have a paramour or even a wife? Or is it a revision of an earlier text into what he felt he *should* have done?

The text of *SCAN*, with or without the *MS* version's amendments, does not definitively answer the questions that crop up thick and fast. Is *MS* to be interpreted as a post-Romantic symbol of Holmes's eternal love for Irene, *his* Irene, like a pot of Basil Rathbone?⁴ The only way we shall ever find out is if Richard "Dick" Gaylord discovers the end page, and perhaps, if the scientists allow it, we shall finally understand Sherlock Holmes's voice when he speaks of Irene Adler under the honorable title of *the* woman.

² For we know that there are imitations and criticisms as early on as 1896 or 1906, I can never get that date and it's too late to check it out and I doubt you'd care.

³ Actually it was Ammu! Bwahahahaahahaha!! Take *that*, Dick Gaylord!

⁴ Keats/Isabella/*Pot of Basil*/Basil Rathbone: Allah, I am brilliant!