

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE COLLECTION

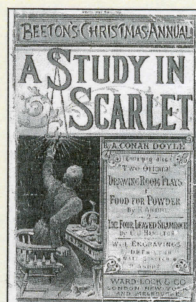
at the Newberry Library

BY DONALD J. TERRAS, Lecturer of Anthropology

"Here, though the world explode, these two survive, And it is always 1895."

Although penned more than 60 years ago by the renowned *Chicago Tribune* columnist Vincent Starrett, this stanza from his poem "221B" immortalizes Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson as those "Who never lived and so can never die." In fact, interest in the master detective and the doctor—and, of course, their creator, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—continues unabated to this day. The recent donation of Dr. C. Frederick Kittle's collection of Conan Doyle's written works to Chicago's Newberry Library underscores this fact. The material in The Kittle Collection of Doyleana (materials related to Conan Doyle) includes bibliographic items, artwork and other artifacts. Many literary authorities consider the collection one of the finest of its kind in the world.

Conan Doyle's first Sherlock Holmes story, "A Study in Scarlet," was originally published in the 1887 edition of *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. The copy in The Kittle Collection at the Newberry is one of only 12 known to exist.



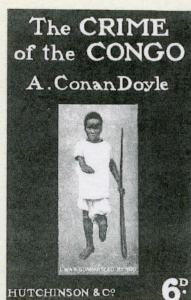
"A Study in Scarlet" – indeed all of the four novels and 60 short stories in which Holmes appears – have had a decided impact on the crime scene methodology that law enforcement officials have developed over the

years. The stories can be seen as fictional forerunners of such present-day television series as "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation."

But Conan Doyle's association with the Sherlock Holmes stories causes people to overlook some of his other books and literary characters he created. Arthur Conan Doyle was one of the most prolific and important writers of the Victorian Era. Many of his non-fiction writings — "The Great Boer War" (1900), "The War in South Africa" (1902) and "The Crime of the Congo" (1909) —

chronicle significant events in human history.

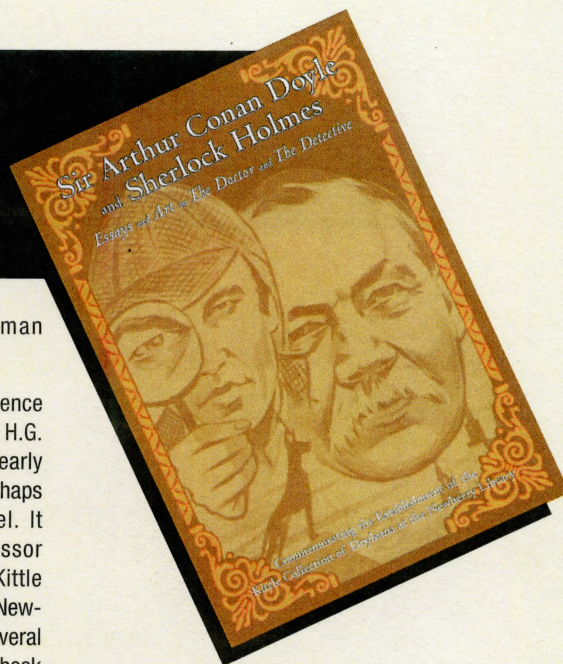
Conan Doyle also excelled in writing science fiction and, along with Jules Verne and H.G. Wells, was an important figure in the early years of this genre. "The Lost World" is perhaps his best-known science fiction novel. It introduces the swashbuckling Professor Challenger as his protagonist. The Kittle Collection at the Newberry contains several first editions of the book from 1912, originally published as an eight-volume set.



In all, The Kittle Collection of Doyleana at the Newberry Library numbers well over 500 bibliographic items and related artifacts.

One of the more unusual artifacts in the collection is a decorative sterling silver centerpiece in the shape of a cornucopia. Its inscription reads, "Arthur Conan Doyle from his friend Rudyard Kipling." It is often the case that famous writers of a period cross paths, and Conan Doyle and Kipling had an enduring friendship.

It is also interesting to note that Conan Doyle came from a family of very gifted artists. Most notable were his father, Charles, and uncle, Richard "Dickey" Doyle. Both were well-known graphic artists whose illustrations graced the pages of many Victorian Era books. One of



several examples in The Kittle Collection is the artwork provided by Richard Doyle for the children's book, "Jack the Giant Killer" (1888). The contribution of this private collection to the Newberry Library will make it possible for future generations to study this wide range of material and gain a better understanding of this period in time. ■

DONALD J. TERRAS acted as consultant to Dr. Kittle on the transfer of his collection to the Newberry Library. Terras also served as project manager and contributing editor for a book that was independently published by Northeastern Illinois University to commemorate the establishment of The Kittle Collection of Doyleana at the Newberry Library. The book, "Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and Sherlock Holmes: Essays and Art on The Doctor and The Detective," provides insight into Conan Doyle, his many contributions to literature, and his personal interests.

FOR FANS OF DETECTIVE FICTION...

The art of writing detective fiction has evolved and expanded tremendously since Arthur Conan Doyle. Today, authors bring their gender and ethnic backgrounds to the genre, making detective fiction one of the most vibrant forms of writing today.

Northeastern Illinois University will sponsor a number of events during fall 2004 celebrating both traditional and contemporary detective fiction and the diversity of the authors who write it. "Gender, Multiculturalism, and Detective Fiction" will include lectures, symposia and other activities. For more information, visit www.neiu.edu/~mystery or contact Susan Stall at 773-442-4777 or s-stall1@neiu.edu