

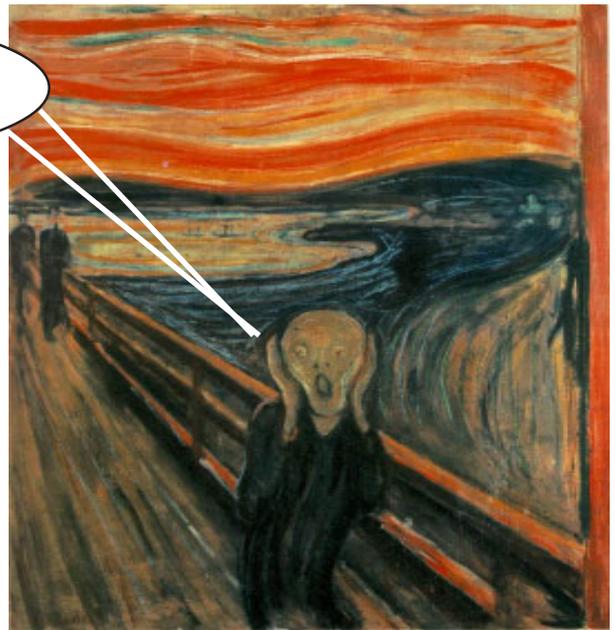
The
Valley of
FEAR

... a Quiz, by Your Servant, MARTIN ARBAGI

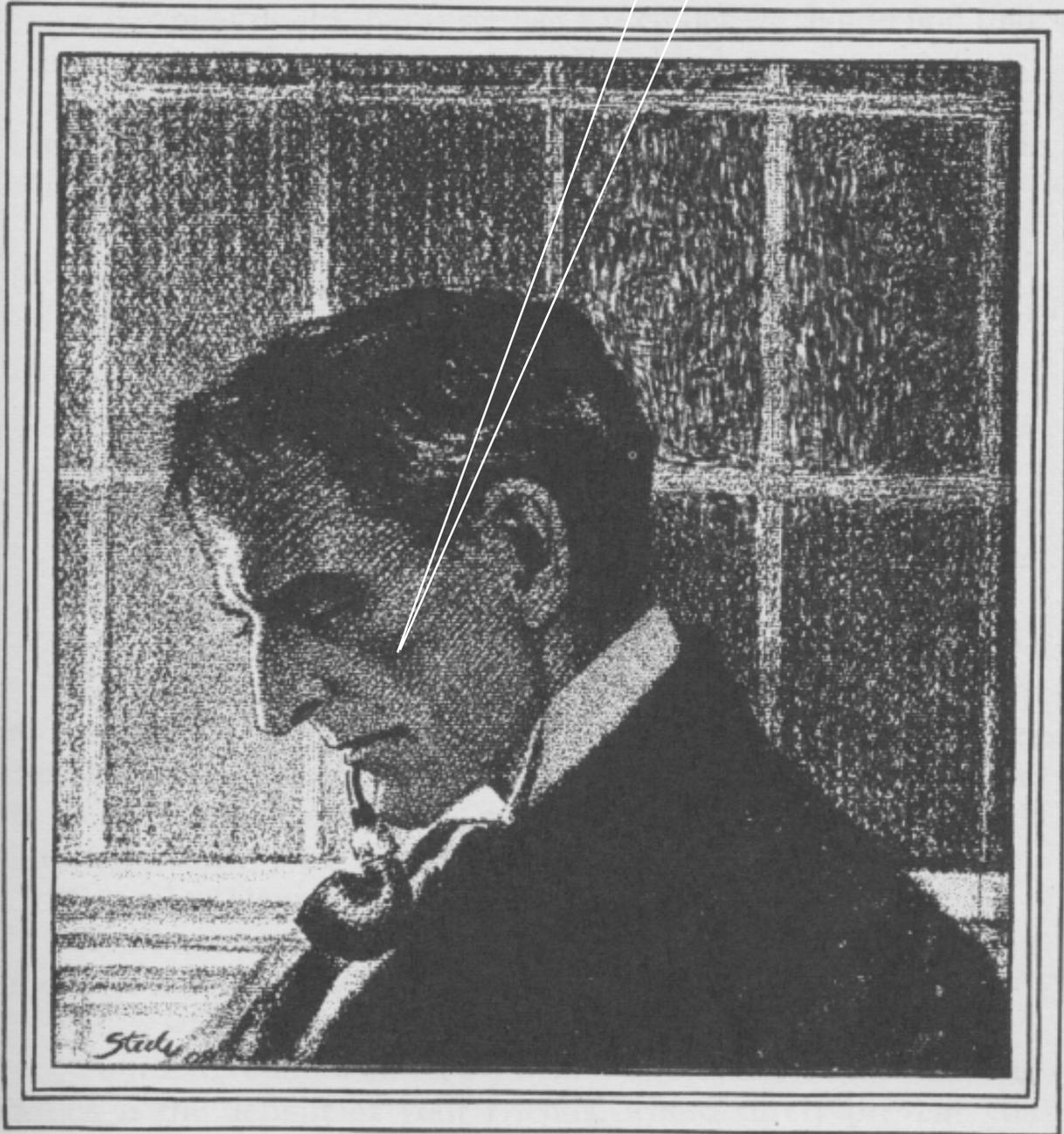
“ ... a short, stout, elderly man, whose olive face and curly hair, formerly coal-black, but now thinning and grizzled, proclaimed his Levantine origin, though his speech was that of an educated American.”

expressly prepared for the Meeting of
THE AGHA TREASURERS,
at the Instant of
19 May, in the Year of Our Lord 2007

**Good Lord! It's a (gasp!) Wright
State University Freshman!**



I trust, ladies and gentlemen, that you will consider this quiz in the light of pure reason, despite its origin in a devious — indeed, a Byzantine — mind!



IT IS A TYPICAL SCENE after a late breakfast at Baker Street, with Watson ruminating, while Holmes carefully examines a message delivered in that morning's post.

"I am inclined to think —", says Watson.

"I should do so," replies Holmes, brusquely.

In the end, though, Watson gets the better of the exchange. It turns out that Holmes is examining a coded message sent by one ... **1** ... (not his real name), an associate of Professor Moriarity, "the famous scientific criminal, as famous among crooks as —"

"My blushes, Watson," murmurs Holmes.

"I was about to say 'as he is unknown to the public,'" replies Watson. Holmes had fallen into the trap.

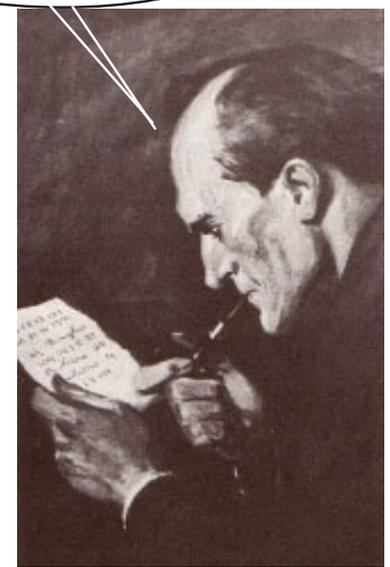
"You are developing a certain unexpected vein of ... **2** ... humour, Watson, against which I must ... guard myself."

The coded message has not come with a key, since it would be absurd to enclose both code and key in a single letter. However, another letter from the informer arrives by the second post, saying he cannot go further in the matter, since Moriarity is suspicious of him.

Left to his own devices, Holmes must break the code. After some discussion with Watson, Holmes determines that the code is words drawn from a long book, printed in double columns, and one that is standard, and thus found on most bookshelves. That book is ... **3** ...

Unfortunately, when Holmes determines the correct book, the message turns

Hum! Watson, I thought this was a cipher from Zamonski, but it is clearly a paper from a freshman at Wright State University! Professor Arbagi must have left it here when he last visited, using Mr. Wells's machine!



1*

- A. Hal BARRINGTON
- B. Sebastian MORAN
- C. Fred PORLOCK
- D. John ZAMONSKI

* Alphabetical order by last name used throughout.

2

- A. acerbic
- B. delicate
- C. epigrammatic
- D. pawky
- E. sly
- F. whimsical

3

- A. The Bible
- B. *Bradshaw*
- C. *The Encyclopedia Americana**
- D. *The Encyclopædia Britannica*
- E. *Whitaker's Almanack*

* Holmes actually says: "The American Encyclopedia."

out to be gibberish. Suddenly, Holmes dashes to a cupboard, saying: “We pay the price, Watson, for being too up-to-date.” The month was ... **4** ... , and a new edition of the book in question had come out. Holmes’s informer had used the old edition.

The decoded message warns that someone by the name of “Douglas,” who lives at a country estate called “Birlstone,” is in mortal danger.

Just then, Inspector ... **5** ... of Scotland Yard is ushered in by ... **6**. The inspector is startled by the decoded message. It seems that “Mr. Douglas, of Birlstone Manor House, was horribly murdered this morning.”

Holmes quickly explains to the inspector the circumstances surrounding the message. The Inspector expresses some skepticism, not about the informer, but about Professor Moriarity. The inspector has actually visited the Professor’s house, and found him a learned, paternal figure, altogether above suspicion. Holmes asks whether the inspector noticed the picture in Moriarity’s study. It is by the French painter, ... **7** ... , and was bought in 1865 for approximately ... **8**. Moriarity’s “salary can be ascertained in several trustworthy books of reference” as £700 annually. In addition, his household checks — “just common innocent cheques that he pays his household bills with” — are “drawn on six different banks.”

While the inspector had been growing steadily more impressed with Holmes’s discourse, his more practical side demanded that Holmes and Watson join him

4

- A. January
- B. March, when the 9th edition of the *The Encyclopædia Britannica* was published. This helps fix the date, since the 9th edition came out in early March, 1888.
- C. May, when the annual editions of *Whitaker’s* were usually published until after World War I. (The editions of 1881 and 1883 were published in April, which muddles attempts at dating. However, Watson mentions a “fire” and cold weather, which would be more likely in April — especially early April — than in May.) After World War I, the Almanac was published each February until it went out of business in 1938, a victim of the Depression.

5*

- A. GREGORY
- B. GREGSON
- C. Stanley HOPKINS
- D. G. LESTRADE
- E. Alec MACDONALD

* Alphabetical order by last name used throughout.

6

- A. Billy the Page.
- B. Mrs. Hudson
- C. the maid

7*

- A. Eugène DELACROIX
- B. Jean-Baptiste GREUZE
- C. Claude LORRAIN
- D. Antoine-Charles (also called “Carle”) VERNET (Holmes’s maternal great-uncle)
- E. Hubert WALTER

* Alphabetical order by last name used throughout.

8

- A. £2,000
- B. £3,000
- C. £4,000
- D. £5,000
- E. £6,000

at once on the Sussex train. He gave the two an account of what happened in the cab to the station. His narrative was necessarily brief, since it had been sent in the early morning via the “milk train” by the local investigating officer, ... **9**.

The victim, John (“Jack”) Douglas, was a good-looking and athletic man of about fifty. He was either a native American or had lived there for many years. He had made some of his money in the California gold fields with Cecil Barker, an Englishman. Douglas had sold out his claim abruptly and moved to England, where he married and settled in Birlstone, a village at the northern edge of Sussex County. His wife was about twenty years younger than he. The Douglasses had soon become locally popular. Some years later, his former partner, Barker, had returned to his native England, settled near the Douglasses, and visited them frequently.

Jack Douglas always had an air of mystery about him, even to his wife and other close friends. His past was murky. Barker told the investigators that he knew Douglas was a widower when he met him, and had actually seen a picture of his wife. She was quite beautiful, but had died ... **10**. Barker also said that Douglas had apparently once lived in Chicago, or was at least familiar with that city. Douglas had left California hastily after receiving a letter, and about a week after his departure, there was a “mighty hard-looking crowd” of men asking about him. The aura of mystery and danger was heightened by one precaution he took: when he bought and restored the ruined Manor House at

9*

- A. Baynes BLACK
- B. Baynes WHITE
- C. Black BAYNES
- D. Black WHITE
- E. Mason BLACK
- F. Mason WHITE
- G. White BAYNES
- H. White MASON

* Alphabetical order by first name used throughout. Names conform to Federal Affirmative Action Regulations, §§3(r) and 14(e), as amended in 1989 and 2001. No offense to Portuguese, Turks, or Laotians intended.

You say you have the Key to Professor Arbagi's multiple-choice Final Examination! You want to sell it. I want to buy it. So far, so good! It only remains to fix a price. I should want to inspect the Key, of course.



10

- A. in childbirth
- B. of cancer
- C. of diabetes
- D. of diphtheria
- E. of typhoid

Birlstone, he had insisted that the ancient moat that surrounded the house also be restored. (It was fed by a stream, so the water was never stagnant.) Douglas also rebuilt the old drawbridge, and pulled it up every night at sunset.

That drawbridge had been drawn up later than usual on the night Douglas was murdered, because Mrs. Douglas had had some friends in to tea.

Later that night, the body had been found by Barker, who was visiting the Douglasses. Barker heard a gunshot from the study, and entered the room to find Douglas dead from a close range sawed-off shotgun blast. Most of his face had been blown away. A bit of the jaw was left, with a sticking-plaster on it. ... **11**

..., the Butler, recalled that Mr. Douglas had cut himself while shaving that morning, indicating to Holmes that he was nervous about something. Another item (aside from the clothes) that helped identify the corpse was a circular mark branded on Douglas's right forearm, with "V.V. ... **12** ... " on it. Barker was familiar with it, and the Butler also saw it "many a time when the master ... rolled up his sleeve."

A sawed-off shotgun is a typically American weapon. That and the American manufacturer (Holmes identifies the maker as the ... **13** ... Company) indicated that Douglas' mysterious American past had at last caught up with him.

There are several curious things about the murder. Why would the perpetrator use a shotgun, when he knew it would rouse the household? Also, Douglas's wedding-ring had been taken from his

11

- A. Ames
- B. Bannister
- C. Barrymore
- D. Brunton
- E. Macphail

12

- A. 134
- B. 143
- C. 314
- D. 341
- E. 413
- F. 431

13

- A. Dahlgreen
- B. Gatling
- C. Pennsylvania Small Arms
- D. Remington
- E. Smith & Wesson
- F. Sturm, Ruger, & [Co.]

hand. But that involved the removal of another ring that he wore above his wedding-band, then the replacement of the other ring. Finally, one of a pair of dumbbells Douglas used for his workouts was missing. Holmes seemed to attach quite a bit of importance to that. As the local investigating officer remarked, the case was “a real ... **14!**”

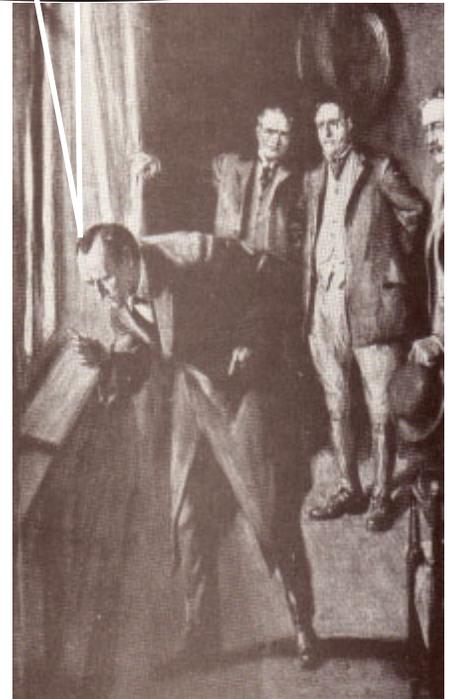
However, one thing was not mysterious: the murderer had clearly entered the house unnoticed that evening, taking advantage of the fact that the drawbridge had been kept lowered later than usual. His gruesome deed done, the fellow was then obliged to escape via the window, wading the moat, which was nowhere more than three feet deep. His bloodstained footprint was upon the window-sill. Then, toward the end of Holmes’s examination of the murder scene, Barker enters to say that the murderer’s bicycle, a ... **15** ... , “splashed as from a considerable journey,” has been found. This adds yet another enigma to the case. Why didn’t the murderer use his bicycle to escape, when he must have been aware that, since the blast of his shotgun probably roused the house, the entire countryside would be looking for him in a couple of hours?

Holmes, however, was seeing a dawning light. The police, in pursuit of the murderer, went to the nearby town of Tunbridge Wells, upon the reasonable assumption that Douglas had become nervous while on a visit there — so nervous, it will be recalled, that he had cut his chin while shaving the next morning. Sure enough, they discovered that a stranger

14

- A. poofer
- B. puffer
- C. snorter
- D. whiffer

Yes,
I see the print! It is a large foot, with toes as distinct as the fingers of a human hand. It must either be Dupin's Ourang-Outang ... or a Wright State University freshman!



15

- A. Dunlop
- B. Openshaw
- C. Rudge-Whitworth
- D. Swinton-Queensbury
- E. Warburton

had registered under the name of ... **16** ... at the ... **17**. Though he gave a London address when registering, the man was undoubtedly an American, and he had a bicycle with him. The police now had a description of the fellow from the hotel staff, and this had been “put on the wires.” Meanwhile, however, Holmes borrowed Watson’s umbrella, and spent some time at the murder scene.

Next day, the police found that the “murderer” had been sighted in ... **18** ... cities, and in three of these, he had actually been arrested! Holmes showed both men a booklet about the history of Birlstone Manor, available at the local tobacconist’s for a penny. He also advised them to abandon the search and take a long country walk that day, but to rejoin him at four o’clock that afternoon. Surprised and not a little annoyed, the policemen asked Holmes if he were joking. Holmes replied that they could spend the day any way they wished, but they should rejoin him at four without fail.

At four, all four men: Holmes, Watson, the Scotland Yard Inspector, and the head of the local constabulary, met. Holmes asked one of the latter to write a note to Barker (not Mrs. Douglas), informing him that workmen would drain the moat the next day in search of evidence. The note was hand-delivered to the Manor, while the four investigators waited in concealment outside among some ... **19** ... bushes. Sure enough, a lamp was lit in the room where the murder had taken place, a window opened, and a hand stealthily reached for something in the shallow moat.

16

- A. Baldwin
- B. Edwards
- C. Hargreave
- D. Scanlan
- E. Swinton

17

- A. Eagle Commercial
- B. Leathern Bottle
- C. Prancing Pony
- D. Railway Arms
- E. Saracen’s Head

18

- A. fourteen
- B. fifteen
- C. sixteen
- D. seventeen

19

- A. furze
- B. forsynthia
- C. laurel
- D. rhododendron
- E. wisteria

“*Now!*” cried Holmes. They all dashed into the house, and found Cecil Barker in the room, with a waterlogged package that he had hastily thrust under the writing-table. The package contained clothes which met the description by the hotel staff of those worn by the murderer. Barker, stubborn and defiant, refuses to explain anything. Mrs. Douglas enters the room. Holmes asks, in a loud tone of voice, *Mr. Douglas* to explain everything. Suddenly, Jack Douglas appears from a secret room. It turns out that the would-be assassin was himself killed by Douglas in a struggle. Since the victim’s face had been blown off, Douglas, thinking quickly, had put his clothes on the corpse to give the impression that it was he. They were of roughly the same height and weight, and both had the brand on their forearms. Barker, who helped him, had placed the bloody footprint on the window-sill. However, Douglas could not get his wedding band off. In addition, Holmes overlooked another inconsistency: had he removed the sticking-plaster on the corpse’s jaw, he would not have found any cut beneath it.

Holmes explains to the others that his initial suspicions had been aroused by the dumbbell. Whenever a weight is missing, and there is a body of water nearby, the presumption is that the weight has been used to sink something. Using Watson’s umbrella, Holmes had fished the clothes out of the moat. Who else knew that they were there? Holmes replaced the clothes, and was then able to draw Barker out by the moat ruse. Holmes recommends to

Plead if you wish, freshman dog! It will do you no good. You are prostrate, crippled, and helpless! Look up to the sky. Do you see the vultures already circling, circling, waiting to dig out your eyeballs with their curved beaks? Har, har!



the police that they should have read the penny history of the Birlstone Manor House, which would have informed them that the old structure had a secret room, where King ... **20** ... had lay hidden during the English Civil Wars of the 17th Century.

The mystery, then, had neatly been solved by Holmes. But, despite the failure of the first murder attempt, Douglas's mysterious American past doomed him. What was this past? And how would he meet his death, not very long after the first attempt?

Stay tuned for the *next* exciting episode of ...

THE VALLEY OF FEAR!

Featuring ...

- **Drunken Irish!**
- **Extortion!**
- **Murders!**
- **Pennsylvania!**
- **Secret Societies (not the St. Bridgid's Ladies Rosary Club)!**
- **Socialists!**
- **Terrorism!**
- **Wright State University Freshmen!**

Mamma mia ... Pinkerton's Chicago office wasa wrong! Dese are Irishmen, not Mafiosi! Maybe I can passa myself off as a (gulp!) Pole.

John Zamonski's great great-grandpa changes his DNA.

20*

- A. Charles
- B. Henry
- C. James
- D. Richard
- E. William

* Alphabetical order used throughout.

