

Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem Investiture

January 21, 2012

Often in the Canon, we read of creatures of varying dispositions. The menagerie ranges from the Lion's Mane to the dreaded Swamp Adder to a cheetah and even a baboon. Of course, we know the fear for life caused by the soulful baying of the Hound of the Baskerville. But, we sometimes forget the more amenable creatures such as Toby the Dog.

When we meet Toby, the good Doctor describes him in the Boscombe Valley Mystery as being a "ugly long haired, lop-eared creature, half spaniel and half lurcher, brown and white in colour, with a very clumsy waddling gait." So this is strange canine indeed since we know that these dogs were bred to hunt rabbit and hare in Ireland and Great Britain by Irish gypsies and tinkers in the 1600's. They have inherited fast agile movements from the sighthound crosses in them. Lurchers have the strong hunting instincts of the sighthounds. This combination also proved to be a good obedient dog which learns commands fast. Good for the outdoor type families; they are usually gentle with people, which make an amendable companion. But when crossed with a spaniel, well that does give us a most noble creature.

But the Master was enamored with Toby. He even said, "I would rather have Toby's help than that of the whole detective force of London."

One noted Sherlockian has even offered a theory that a younger Sherlock Holmes may have known Toby (or a close relative) when he grew in the rolling hills of England as a scion of a country squire. So there is some possibility that Holmes' affinity for this dog was more deeply rooted than we can learn directly from The Writings.

In Nashville, we are blessed with a faithful friend who is as valuable to us as Toby was to Holmes. Today, we ask Debra Hussey to our midst with the invested title of Toby.

The first Toby served the Master and now Nashville's Toby, Debra Hussey, will serve equally well to keep green the memory.