

## A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF LOUISE CONAN DOYLE

Jeremiah Hawkins was a landowner and farmer who worked the land in Minsterworth, Gloucestershire. His brother died without heir, and his unmarried sister was beyond childbearing age. The task of preserving the family line therefore fell on Jeremiah's shoulders. He dutifully married Emily Butt, the daughter of a neighboring farmer just across the River Severn. She was only nineteen years old; Jeremiah was fifty.

Despite their age difference, the two were fruitful and they did multiply. Over the next fourteen years Emily gave birth to seven children. She was pregnant, nursing, or both, for a decade and a half. In the end, she outlived her husband, which was to be expected, and outlived four of her children, which was tragic. Only one of her children, Louise, would provide grandchildren, neither of whom would marry. That branch of the Hawkins family tree came to an end, to be forever unremarkable until Louise was discovered to have created Sherlock Holmes.

The first person to write substantially of Louise was Arthur's step-niece Georgina Doyle. In her 2004 book *Out of the Shadows: The Untold Story of Arthur Conan Doyle's First Family*, Ms. Doyle was the first to reveal that Arthur was not quite the unblemished hero portrayed by his many biographers. Her description of how badly Arthur and his second wife treated the children from Arthur's first marriage removed more than a bit of the veneer from Arthur's previously unblemished legacy. Even Ms. Doyle, though, failed to recognize that it was Louise, not Arthur, who created Sherlock Holmes. The name of our book, *Shadow Woman: The True Creator of Sherlock Holmes*, is nonetheless intended as tribute to her groundbreaking work.

### A Tubercular Family

Louise was born in 1857 on the family's farm in Wales. She was the sixth of Emily's and Jeremiah's seven children. Five of the seven would die before their time, perhaps in each case from tuberculosis.

Georgina Doyle tells us that Mary, Louise's oldest sibling, died not long after moving to New Zealand, in 1883 at age 36. "Poor Mary must have endured a painful voyage, dying of a disease of the bone in two vertebrae which she had suffered for several months, and also an abscess on the brain." Mary's symptoms are consistent with tuberculosis of the spine, an advanced case in which the bacteria found their way to the brain. Also known as Pott's disease, its victims include English Poets Alexander Pope and William Ernest Henley, Mark Twain's wife, Olivia Clemens, Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and Professor Moriarty in *The Final Problem*.

Charles died at age 31, in the same year and in the same faraway place as Mary, who had followed him to New Zealand.



Pott's disease in an Egyptian mummy (left) and Moriarty (right)

See *Shadow Woman* for details

John, Louise's only younger sibling, died in 1885 at age 25, a resident patient of Dr. Arthur Conan Doyle. John succumbed to cerebral meningitis, a common secondary infection of tuberculosis.

Jeremiah, hereafter referred to as Jeremy to minimize confusion, was Louise's oldest brother. He died at age 47 of "diarrhoea lasting five days and long-standing general debility." His symptoms are consistent with a persistent tubercular infection that spread to his abdomen. One of the classic symptoms of abdominal tuberculosis is sustained and uncontrollable diarrhea.

Because tuberculosis ran in families, people long believed it to be hereditary. After Robert Koch's identification of its bacterial origin, people came to understand that families shared the disease because they breathed the same air and ate the same food. Tuberculosis of the lungs usually spreads through the air, and the extrapulmonary forms can spread via contaminated meat and milk.

Bovine TB affects a broad range of mammalian hosts, including cows, badgers, and humans. Not only did infected cattle spread bovine TB among their own herd, badgers spread the disease from herd to herd. This was a particular problem in rural Victorian Britain where the badgers were drawn to the oil cakes used to feed the cows, where the milk was not pasteurized, and where neither the cows nor their milk was tested for TB.

Since each of the Hawkins children, other than John, had been born on a farm, *Mycobacterium bovis* provides a feasible explanation for Mary's spinal affliction, Charles's early death, and Jeremy's

debility and fatal diarrhea. Even children such as John, born and raised in an suburban area, were at risk of bovine TB from the milk imported and consumed.

Thomas Dormandy explained all this in *The White Death: The History of Tuberculosis* (2000).

Tuberculosis may infect any part of the body, but most commonly occurs in the lungs (known as pulmonary tuberculosis). Extrapulmonary TB occurs when tuberculosis develops outside of the lungs. [...] General signs and symptoms include fever, chills, night sweats, loss of appetite, weight loss, and fatigue, and significant finger clubbing may also occur. [...] In many people, the infection waxes and wanes. Tissue destruction and necrosis are often balanced by healing and fibrosis. Affected tissue is replaced by scarring and cavities filled with caseous necrotic material. [...]

Intestinal tuberculosis [...] in children was the typical presentation of the bovine strain. It could be an agonisingly painful illness, a succession of episodes of acute or subacute intestinal obstruction [...] Death was often due to progressive malnutrition and general debility.

The bovine organism may also have been responsible for nearly half of all cases of tuberculosis meningitis, the most rapidly fatal form of the system; and it was probably a frequent cause of tuberculosis of the bones and joints, the genitourinary system, the cervical lymph-nodes and lupus vulgaris. In some parts of the world it was – and still is – the chief killer of babies and young children.

Louise would suffer from multiple forms of tuberculosis, including pulmonary and, late in life, laryngeal. In her final days she suffered delirium, possibly from cerebral meningitis. She died on 4 July 1906.

Thirteen years early, when her doctor determined that her pulmonary tuberculosis had turned “galloping and wasting,” he explained to Arthur that there was little hope, particularly given her family history. It seems clear to me that her *Final Problem* was an allegory for her struggle against tuberculosis. *Moriar*, after all, is Latin for *die*.

### **Louise and John**

When Louise was only two years old, her father retired from farming and moved the family to Leckhampton Road, an affluent street in an affluent suburb of the affluent English town of Cheltenham. The 1861 census records John being born there and Louise living there, making note of the fact that Louise was even then a “Scholar.” The notation indicates that Louise was already attending school or being formally educated, though she was only three years old.

Louise’s father is described as a retired farmer, wealthy enough to afford a governess and a house servant. As late as 1866, local directories record Jeremiah still living on Leckhampton Road. Sometime before 1870, however, the family seems to have fractured. Local directories show that Jeremiah had returned to Minsterworth. The 1871 census reveals that the blind, 76-year-old Jeremiah was living separately from his 45-year-old wife.

Emily, the mother, was by then living with her sister, Louise's aunt, in Whitchurch, one-hundred miles to the north of Jeremiah. None of her children are listed as living with her. Perhaps, though, Emily was only visiting her sister when the census taker passed through.

Mary, aged 24, and Emily, aged 16, were living with their father on his farm in Minsterworth. Under "Rank, Profession, or Occupation," the census records Mary as "housekeeper" and Emily as "daughter."

Jeremy, aged 23, was living in the Barnwood House Hospital, a private asylum in Gloucester. Joseph, aged 21, was working as a civil engineer, far away near the Bristol Channel in Neath. Charles is not to be found in the census.

John, aged 11, was at Camden House School in Bristol. Herbert Fry, in *Our Schools and Colleges* (1868), described the school thusly:

Bristol, Camden House School, Kingsdown. Instructs in Classics, Mathematics, French, German, &c., boarders at Forty to Fifty Guineas, day boys at Twelve to Sixteen Guineas per ann[um]. William Benham, Ph. D., Master.

Interestingly, in the Sherlock Holmes Canon, Camden House is located directly across the street from 221B Baker Street, being the eponymous structure of *The Empty House* (1903). In reality, Camden House School was tantalizingly close to the Badminton School for Girls, just a mile distant. At the same time that John Hawkins was the second-youngest of 23 resident "scholars" at Camden, 13-year-old Louise Hawkins was the youngest of 23 resident "pupils" at Badminton.

Established in 1858 by Miriam Badcock, Badminton was an independent boarding and day school for girls. An advertising flyer from 1861 summed up the curriculum:

Mrs. William F. Badcock superintends the education of a limited number of Young Ladies. The general course of Study includes French (which is made the medium of conversation) with a sound English Education comprising Writing, Arithmetic, Grammar, Composition, Elocution, Biblical Knowledge, Geography, Ancient and Modern History, Natural Philosophy, Botany, Astronomy, Calisthenics, Deportment, Plain and Fancy Needlework.

Nigel Watson, in *Badminton School: The First 150 Years* (2008), wrote of the school:

Girls could also learn German and Italian for an extra fee. Latin was added three years later. [...] The inclusion of science was unusual. The subject was often ignored in girls' schools although it scarcely fared any better in many boys' schools of the period. When Badminton began, it was the responsibility of William, Miriam's husband, who gave lectures and conducted elementary experiments in an amateur laboratory.

When Dr. Watson first meets Holmes, Holmes is busily at work in a chemistry laboratory. After Nigel Watson mentioned the laboratory at Badminton, he explained that excellent instruction was provided there.

The school was among the earliest to enter girls for the Junior and Senior Cambridge Local Examinations. When the local committee asked Mrs Badcock to send in pupils for the exams, she had no hesitation, calling for volunteers from among the girls. Her daughter remembered that “it was considered a most advanced and dangerous thing to do and there was great excitement about it.” Competitive examinations, remember, were regarded as injurious to female health. All those first entrants passed. They were taught largely by unqualified staff because women could not graduate from an English university until 1878. One girl at the school in the late 1880s recollected that there was only one mistress on the staff with a degree. [...] Mrs Badcock was by all accounts an outstanding maths teacher.

According to the 1871 census, the oldest resident student at Badminton was 19 years of age. Assuming Louise attended Badminton until she was just as old, she would have spent six years there, graduating 1877.

Similarly, the 1871 census records the oldest resident student at Camden House to have been 17 years of age. Assuming John attended Camden House until he was just as old, he too would have spent six years there, just a mile from Louise, graduating just when she did.

Louise and John appear together again four years later, in 1881, at least according to one interpretation of *The Stark Munro Letters* (1895). The book is purportedly a semi-autobiographical epistolary novel based on Arthur’s young adult life. In *Memories and Adventures*, Arthur explained, “I drew in very close detail the events of the next few years [...] I would only remark, should any reader reconstruct me or my career from that book, that there are some few incidents there which are imaginary.”

In the novel, Arthur (in the guise of Stark Munro) is riding on a train, sitting across from an elderly lady (obviously Louise’s mother), Louise herself (in the guise of Winnie LaForce), and one of Louise’s brothers (called Fred), who was “a year or two older.” Arthur’s fellow travelers have given up housekeeping, finding life more pleasant living in apartments. The trio are traveling to Southsea (Birchespool in the novel) to take up residence there. Suddenly, the brother experiences an epileptic fit, kicks Arthur in the leg, and thereby frightens his sister and mother. Arthur saves the day by tearing open the epileptic’s collar, unbuttoning his waistcoat, and holding his head down on the seat. After a heel crashes through the carriage window, Arthur sits across the knees and holds on to the wrists. In gratitude, Louise’s mother gives Arthur her card, and Arthur promises to call on her should he ever be in Southsea.

As of October 1884, Emily, Louise, and John Hawkins were indeed living in Southsea, at No. 2, Queen’s Gate, as close to the English Channel as one could reside in Southsea. In March of 1885, John would suffer cerebral meningitis, become Arthur’s resident patient, die soon thereafter, and be buried on the 27th of the month.

*The Stark Munro Letters* raises multiple issues of interest to us in our search for Holmes’s creator. First and most obviously, the book calls into question Arthur’s claim of when and under what circumstances he first met Louise. In *Memories and Adventures*, Arthur glosses over the issue.

In the year 1885 [...] I was married. A lady named Mrs. Hawkins, a widow of a Gloucestershire family, had come to Southsea with her son and daughter, the latter a very gentle and amiable girl. I was brought into contact with them through the illness of the son, which was of a sudden and violent nature, arising from cerebral meningitis.

Arthur explained that he volunteered to accept the son as a resident patient. Not long thereafter, in the same paragraph, the son succumbed while under Arthur's roof, and the police investigated, but only briefly.

The family were naturally grieved at the worry to which they had quite innocently exposed me, and so our relations became intimate and sympathetic, which ended in the daughter consenting to share my fortunes. We were married on August 6, 1885, and no man could have had a more gentle and amiable life's companion.

Arthur said nothing about meeting them earlier on a train. In fact, it is clear that he claimed to have never met any of them before being asked to care for the ailing John Hawkins. The date of their meeting in *The Stark Munro Letters*, however, is nearly specified. The letter in which Stark Munro tells his pen pal of the epileptic encounter is dated 7 March 1882. The contents of the letter place the encounter no earlier than two days previous.

We are left with a discrepancy of three years. Did Louise and Arthur first meet in March of 1882 or three years later, early in 1885? A short story entitled "Our Derby Sweepstakes" suggests the earlier date to be the more likely.

"Our Derby Sweepstakes" was published in the May 1882 issue of *London Society*, purportedly one of string of short stories Arthur was cranking out to supplement his meager medical income. The story, however, gives clear indications of a female author. It is, for example, written in the first person voice of a young woman. Of his hundreds of works, Arthur published only one other story written in the first person female, that being "The Winning Shot," published just one year later.

"Derby" is narrated by Nelly Montague, a wealthy young woman of seventeen years, living with her mother in Hatherley House. Nelly's father is nowhere to be found in the story, but Nelly has no shortage of male company. In her life are: a brother, Bob; a cousin, Solomon Barker; and an old friend, Jack Hawthorne, recently returned from India. Both cousin Solomon and old friend Jack pursue Nelly's affections, but with only limited success. The two suitors agree that one of them will stand a chance only if the other bows out. They take it upon themselves to decide Nelly's future based on the result of an upcoming horse race. Their plan backfires when Nelly learns of their bet. She snubs them both in favor of the charming Mr. Cronin, "an easy-going athletic young Oxford man," who reads Tennyson aloud in a "deep musical voice," and who, coincidentally, has picked the winning horse.

The geographical name Hatherley appears repeatedly throughout the story. Hatherley House may still exist today as the Hatherley Manor Hotel in Gloucester, 100 miles to the west of London. Hatherley Brook, which is also mentioned in the story, happens to be an inconsequential little stream that springs from Leckhampton Hill, flows parallel to Leckhampton Road, past the home

where Louise was raised as a child, then empties into the River Severn just north of Gloucester.

It is unlikely that Arthur would have been aware of the tiny Hatherley Brook, since there is no evidence that he spent any time in or around Gloucester or Leckhampton before publication of the "Our Derby Sweepstakes." The use of Hatherley as a place name is virtually nonexistent beyond the environs of Gloucester and Leckhampton. Throughout that region, however, such place names are common. The communities of Up Hatherley and Down Hatherley are separated by three miles up and down Hatherley Brook. The byways of Hatherley Road, Hatherley Street, Hatherley Lane, Hatherley Court Road, Up Hatherley Way, and Down Hatherley Lane also wend their way through the area.

Given its female narrator and its references to Hatherley, "Our Derby Sweepstakes" is much more likely the work of Louise rather than Arthur. His role seems to have been as a conduit to publication.

More startling is that within two months of their possible first encounter, Arthur was willing to help Louise see her work published. One possible explanation for his acquiescence appears later in *The Stark Munro Letters*. "Women who claim nothing invariably get everything," writes Stark Munro to his friend, "and so my gentle little wife always carries her point."

A second issue arising from *Stark Munro* is the identity of the brother traveling with Louise when she first met Arthur. He could have been Jeremy, John, or a composite of the two. Fred was "a year or two older" than Winnie; Jeremy was nine years older than Louise; John was two years younger. Fred suffered from epilepsy. Such an affliction might explain Jeremy's 19-year-long commitment to the Barnwood House asylum. The mother, Winnie, and Fred were destined for Southsea. Emily, Louise, and John did take up residence at Southsea. The mixed evidence suggests that Fred was more likely a composite. Perhaps Louise was traveling with both Jeremy and John.

In any case, Louise and John seemed to be close to one another, spatially at least, for much of their youth. What is indisputable is that Louise married Arthur not long after John died in 1885.

### **Louise and Arthur**

As recently described, Arthur managed to compress the entirety of his engagement and marriage into a single paragraph, one he used mostly to discuss Louise's mother and brother. Louise is not even mentioned by name, there or anywhere else in Arthur's autobiography. Instead, on the rare occasion when Arthur does refer to her, he relies on impersonal nouns such as "gentle and amiable girl," "the daughter," "my wife," or (on multiple occasions) "the invalid." Consider, for example, Arthur's justification for leaving Louise behind with his sister, whom he did name, while he toured America: "In the meantime, Lottie's presence and the improvement of the invalid, which was so marked that no sudden crisis was thought at all possible, gave me renewed liberty of action."

Such rude autobiographical treatment of his first wife, Louise, resulted probably from demands of his second wife, Jean. Louise was ultimately purged not just from Arthur's autobiography, but from the family papers as well. Arthur's earliest biographies were written under the supervising eye of Adrian Conan Doyle, youngest son of the second marriage. Owing the great purge, later biographers were left with little material about Louise. Limited to information presumably spoon-fed by Adrian,

the biographers consistently damned Louise with faint praise.

One of the earliest of Arthur's biographers, John Dickson Carr, set the disparaging standard by describing Louise, in *The Life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle* (1949), as a domesticated, unenlightened, fawning personality, thrilled to listen as Arthur talked down to her.

Of Louise, twenty-seven years old – "Touie," her nickname was – he saw a great deal. Though not beautiful, she was of a type which appealed to him; the round face, the wide mouth, the brown hair, the wide spaced blue eyes, shading to sea green, which were her finest feature. Her gentleness, her complete unselfishness, roused all his protective instincts. Louise, or Touie, was what they called a home-girl, loving needlework and an armchair by the fire. He met her in sorrow; and ended by falling deeply in love. Towards the end of April they were engaged.

Carr wrote that the two settled into Arthur's medical office and residence where, in the upstairs sitting room, they passed their free time.

"Shall we read aloud together, my dear," he would suggest, "and improve our minds? Say Gordon's Tacitus? Or perhaps, in a lighter vein, Boswell's Johnson or Pepy's [*sic*] Diary?"

"Oh, do!" cried Touie, who would have been just as eager to hear him read in Sanskrit if he had possessed that accomplishment.

Charles Higham, in *The Adventures of Conan Doyle* (1976), was more direct and thorough with his derision.

Louise was not gifted or well-read, but she made the ideal Victorian housewife, with sewing, mending, and cleaning her chief interests. [...] When he was racked by some complex question of metaphysics, Louise could fix a cup of tea. When he came home from a long walk or from a seance, or sank back pale and exhausted from writing some horrific story, she could ease off his shoes and massage his feet and brow. He loved her with all the passionate adoration of a Victorian man for a little woman who adored him worshipfully. For this tormented genius, as brooding and abstracted as Poe behind the respectable mask of a sports-loving *Times* reader, the relationship worked perfectly.

Martin Booth was exceptionally spare with his words, at least when it came to Louise. Without ever mentioning their meeting or wedding, he dispatched her with a single sentence in *The Doctor, the Detective and Arthur Conan Doyle* (1997).

His marriage was happy, if perhaps unexciting, Louise playing her part as doctor's spouse and housewife, welcoming patients, entertaining visitors and not intruding upon either her husband's creative or his social existence.

*The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* (2007), my favorite of the many Arthur Conan Doyle biographies, deals with Louise more fairly than had the earlier biographies. There, Andrew Lycett records:



Arthur found himself drawn to Louise, a quiet *jolie-laide* woman with wispy brown hair, an appealing rounded face and soft green eyes. Almost twenty-seven at the time of her brother's death, she was two years older than Arthur. Her helplessness and his nagging guilt combined as aphrodisiacs.

Lycett portrayed Louise as a helpless *jolie-laide*, a French term (literally “pretty-ugly”) used to describe someone who is somehow attractive despite being not conventionally beautiful. Photographs present Louise in variable fashion. She could be pretty, but she was neither beautiful nor particularly sophisticated in terms of aesthetics. In *Out of the Shadows*, Georgina Doyle provides a particularly alluring photograph of Louise attired in an all-black dress with long sleeves and a high collar. Louise's back is turned three quarters to the camera, and her head turned only slightly, allowing her face to be lit in almost perfect profile. Her hair is straight and tied up, revealing the curve of her back and a pleasing figure, even soon after childbirth. On her left hip she holds her baby Mary, plump, bald and dressed in an overly long white gown. The contrast between the two consecutive members of the same lineage, particularly in black and white, is striking.

Though Arthur's biographers tend to dismiss Louise's intellect and sophistication, no one has ever questioned her kind and gentle nature. Her daughter Mary provided Arthur's biographer Pierre Nordon this touching recollection, from *Conan Doyle* (1966):

My mother was a tiny little woman with dainty hands and feet, and lovely shadowy eyes that always seemed to see beyond what she was looking at. There was a gentle all-lovingness about her that drew the simple folk, children, and animals to her, as to a magnet. She had the quiet poise that comes rather from the wisdom of the spirit than from the knowledge of the world, and there ran through her a bright ripple of fun, that would glint in the eyes, and hover round her mouth. It was a sense of fun rather than a more sophisticated sense of humour, because Mother never smiled at a joke at anyone else's expense. At such moments a shadow passed over her face, and her silence would rebuke the joker. But she loved the comical aspects of life and the unconscious humour in people and things.

Georgina Doyle had access to family knowledge unavailable to other biographers. Her biography focused, at least more than did the others, on Louise and her two children, and she aptly entitled it *Out of the Shadows: The Untold Story of Arthur Conan Doyle's First Family*. Louise has indeed been a shadowy figure, but Georgina's book brings some light.

The Doyle family adored Louise. Again and again I have had clear indication of this: from my husband, John, whose inherited knowledge of her came from her daughter, Mary, and also indirectly from Innes [Arthur's substantially younger brother]; from Claire Oldham [daughter of one of Arthur's sisters]; and from Barbie Foley through her mother-in-law, Ida [another of Arthur's sisters]. Between them, down through the years, they have kept alive the memory of a beautiful, charming, and unaffected woman, who had a warm, gentle, and loving personality.

Georgina Doyle, whom I consider to be a Louise biographer rather than an Arthur biographer, was the first to paint Arthur with something other than a completely flattering brush. She was also the first to suggest that Louise was not quite the vapid homebody that Arthur's biographers portrayed.

Georgina noted, for example, that the 1861 census recorded the young Louise as a "Scholar." The notation means that Louise was already attending school or being formally educated, though she was only three years old. Everyone, including Georgina Doyle, seems to have missed the obscure entry in the 1871 census, listing Louise as a resident student at the prestigious Badminton School for Girls.

Louise and Arthur were wed at St. Oswald's Church, Thornton-in-Lonsdale, Yorkshire, on 6 August 1885. After John's death in Southsea, Louise had been sent north to await the wedding as a guest of Arthur's mother. Arthur arrived no earlier than two days before the marriage, having spent the previous months in Southsea, working on his dissertation, and the previous week in Lancashire, playing cricket.

Within days of the wedding, Arthur was in Ireland, unable to stay long off the cricket field. Most biographers who bother to mention Arthur's foray into Ireland claim that Louise and Arthur honeymooned there. Some suggest that Arthur managed to fit in a bit of cricketing. Both positions amount to little more than speculation; no evidence places Louise in Ireland with Arthur. Only Andrew Lycett seems to have considered the alternative.

So Louise may have spent the first week of married life involuntarily bonding with her new mother-in-law at Masongill Cottage. This would have been in keeping with Arthur's unthinking presumptions about the relative merits of his sporting life and her emotional needs.

When Arthur returned to Southsea, his fellow cricketers threw him a celebratory dinner. The 18 September issue of Portsmouth's *Evening News* described the fête.

Presentation to a Southsea Doctor. At the Bush Hotel last evening a presentation was made of a handsome dinner service by members of Southsea Bowling Club to their popular President, Dr Conan Doyle. Mr T. Reynolds [...] alluded to the recent marriage of their President, and wished him every happiness in his future career. The dinner was a slight token of the esteem in which Conan Doyle was held by members, not only in his capacity as President but for his private character.

It seems obvious that Louise was not invited, particularly since they wished only "him every happiness." As a member of the fairer sex, Louise was excluded also from the meetings of the Portsmouth Literary and Scientific Society, the major social organization in the area. Geoffrey Stavert, in *A Study in Southsea* (1987), described the social climate that then prevailed.

This was the period, of course, when Queen Victoria's reign still had another twenty years to run; when men were men and women knew their place. [...] A certain amount of chauvinist piggery, therefore, was only to be expected. Ladies were not eligible to become members of the Literary and Scientific Society. They could attend the meetings, and often did in quite considerable numbers, but only as guests. This meant, however, that since they were only guests they were not allowed to speak; they could not raise questions or join in any discussion.

By 1887, the dues-paying membership of the Society dropped to precipitously low numbers, and

the few remaining members considered the previously unthinkable: perhaps women should be allowed to join if they paid the same dues as men. The editor of the *Hampshire Post* wrote of the prospect, with barely contained distaste.

Whether the ladies will care to be taxed in this way, for the bare recognition of their equality with men, when they know very well, without any payment at all, that they are greatly superior, remains to be seen. But, since they are admitted with gentlemen to witness the performances, there is no reason why they should not be asked, the same as in the case of gentlemen, to pay for the privilege. The subscription will of course confer upon them the right of participating in discussions, but we sincerely trust that they will refrain.

Sherlock Holmes was born eight months after Louise married to Arthur, as though a month premature. We learn of the delivery from an April 1886 letter the proud parents sent to Arthur's sister. "Arthur has written another book," Louise wrote, "a little novel about 200 pages long, called 'A Study in Scarlet.' It went off last night." Also in that letter, Louise mentioned that everyone else had gone off to church and that she and Arthur were left "alone in our glory."

Arthur was an apostate Catholic and Louise a nonconformist Protestant. At least, the Badminton School was nonconformist in its teachings. Nigel Watson wrote of the school's religious leaning while describing its move to Worcester Terrace, where Louise attended: "A number of staunch Anglican residents were appalled that they not only had another nonconformist family in their midst (one was already living on the Terrace) but also a nonconformist school."

It is interesting that Louise would brag of missing church when all those about her were in attendance. For the first 26 adventures, Sherlock Holmes seems equally indifferent, first venturing into religious reverie in the 25th adventure, *The Naval Treaty*. Arthur's questioning led him to a life committed to spiritualism. Before she died, Louise seems to have regained her faith, apparently being baptized and adopting a new name. Though born Louisa and later nicknamed Touie, the name on the death certificate and her casket is Mary Louise Conan Doyle.

On 28 January 1889, while still living in Southsea, she gave birth to a daughter named, not surprisingly, Mary Louise Conan Doyle, thereby honoring both Arthur's mother and Louise's oldest sister. Astonishingly, Arthur seems never to have informed his mother that Louise was pregnant. We learn of that shocking withholding of vital information in a letter he sent his mother on the day of his daughter's birth.

Toodles [Louise] produced this morning at 6.15 a remarkably fine specimen of the Toodles minor, who is now howling her head off in the back bedroom. [...] Forgive me for not telling you dear. I knew how trying the suspense would be, and thought that on the whole it would be best that you should learn when it was too late to worry yourself.

## **Consumption**

Given that Arthur's mother had weathered nine pregnancies of her own, his excuse of protecting her is suspect. Perhaps Arthur withheld the information because he realized from the beginning that Louise's pregnancy would be unusually risky. Though Arthur never acknowledged it, Louise may

have been consumptive even when they married, consumption then being the common and appropriate term for pulmonary tuberculosis. Arthur subsequently assured his mother that Louise and the baby were doing nicely. He wrote her again on 14 February, seventeen days after the birth, informing his mother that Louise was not yet sitting up, but might soon try. On 26 February, four full weeks after the birth, Arthur offered an encouraging announcement: "Touie & baby came down yesterday."

Suspicious episodes appear yearly after Louise's hushed up pregnancy. In 1890, according to *Memories and Adventures*, Arthur claimed he became suddenly interested in Koch's proposed cure for tuberculosis. "I could give no clear reason for this, but it was an irresistible impulse and I at once determined to go." Since we now have reason to believe that Arthur did not actually travel to Berlin, we should be skeptical of his claim that he had only recently become interested in curing tuberculosis.

In 1891, after having settled in the London suburb of South Norwood, Arthur informed his mother that he had purchased a tandem tricycle. The cycle had two large side-by-side wheels and a small trailing wheel. Arthur sat between the large wheels, above and behind the axle. Louise sat somewhat lower, in front of the axle. Though she had access to small pedals, to assist in powering the vehicle, she more frequently used the foot rest and allowed Arthur to propel her over great distances. Arthur was proud of how fast and far he could propel them both. He described to his mother one particular challenging outing: a trip through Woking, Reading, and Chertsey before returning home. He did not mention that the distance, should he have actually pedalled it, would have been seventy-five miles. "We both find it very healthy exercise," he wrote. "I don't know when we have been in such good condition."

On one instance at least, Louise became too tired to continue. Arthur sent her home on a train and continued without her.

The cycling may have been an effort to force fresh air deep into Louise's tubercular lungs. Climbing, horseback riding, sailing, and cycling were all considered preventative and curative exercises since each allegedly forced air into the lungs. Hobart Amory Hare discussed the benefits of such exercises to consumptives in his *A System of Practical Therapeutics* (1891).

[W]here the character of the country permits it, ascents proportionate to the age and strength of the individual should be prescribed. These ascents should be made with slow and measured steps, in order to avoid fatigue to the respiratory organs; and there should be occasional rests by the way. To expand the lungs as much as possible, especially while climbing, the elbows should be made to approach each other behind the back, and a walking-stick be supported between them; or the arms may be folded behind the back, with or without a stick being thrust through. Even without this the head and trunk should be kept erect and the shoulders well thrown back. Whether walking on a level or climbing the patient must be instructed to breathe deeply and slowly. He must take a long breath, hold it as long as possible without causing distress, and let it out slowly. [...]

Walking or other exercise – let it be repeated – whether for prophylaxis or for cure, should

never be permitted to pass the point of gentle and pleasant fatigue. A wealthy patient in the city or country may have his carriage follow him while he walks. Riding on pony-, donkey-, or horse-back, on tricycle or bicycle, is also a good form of exercise. "One brisk ride is (sometimes) worth a dozen lazy walks;" and Sydenham, echoed by Rush, declares a journey on horseback to be a sure cure for consumption.

Early in 1892, Arthur wrote to his mother that he intended to have his small family spend the next winter on the Riviera. That region had long been believed to be an ideal wintering ground for consumptives. The tubercular Dr. James Henry Bennet described, in *Winter and Spring on the Shores of the Mediterranean* (1875), how he went there "to die in a quiet corner [...] like a wounded denizen of the forest." Dr. Bennet survived and spread the word.

With the assistance of sunshine, a dry, bracing atmosphere, a mild temperature [...] I have found pulmonary consumption in this favoured region, especially in its earlier stages, by no means the intractable disease that I formerly found it in London and Paris. After fifteen winters passed at Mentone, I am surrounded by a phalanx of cured or arrested consumption cases.

When arguing for the Riviera, Arthur explained, "We shall work better & be better in the Riviera than here." The use of the plural *we*, as in "we shall work better", is particularly tantalizing. Certainly Arthur was referring to his writing; was he referring also to Louise's?

Later that year, in an interview for *The Strand*, Arthur pontificated about climatological health benefits, but not of the temperate Riviera. He spoke instead of the freezing Arctic.

What a climate it is in those regions! We don't understand it here. I don't mean its coldness – I refer to its sanitary properties. I believe, in years to come, it will be the world's sanatorium. Here, thousands of miles from the smoke, where the air is the finest in the world, the invalid and weakly ones will go when all other places have failed to give them the air they want, and revive and live again under the marvellous invigorating properties of the Arctic atmosphere.

Still later that year, Arthur did explore for therapeutic air, but in neither the Riviera nor the Arctic. Instead he traveled to Norway in the company of family and friends, and apparently in the absence of Louise. She is never mentioned among the travelers, and she was at that time pregnant with Kingsley. Arthur learned to ski while in Norway, and boasted later that he introduced the sport to Switzerland.

While in Norway, Arthur visited St. George's Leprosy Hospital in Bergen, on the southwest coast of the country. Leprosy and tuberculosis are similar diseases in several respects. Leprosy is a chronic infection caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*. Tuberculosis is a chronic infection caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria are quite similar in appearance, in their ability to hide inside their host for decades, and in the nature of their symptoms when they burst forth. Classic symptoms of leprosy include granulomas (nodules) of the skin, eyes, nerves, and respiratory tract. Tuberculosis is most commonly associated with masses (tubercles) formed within the lung, but the scrofulous form exhibits grotesque masses on the neck.

Bergen is of interest also because it was renowned for the quality of its cod liver oil, known also (not surprisingly) as Bergen oil. In 1848, physicians at the Hospital for Consumption and Diseases of the Chest in Chelsea tested cod liver oil as a treatment for tuberculosis. They gave 542 phthisic patients cod liver oil three times a day. (Phthisis, pronounced *thigh sis*, was the medical term for pulmonary tuberculosis.) Another 535 phthisic patients were used as a control group. Of those provided cod liver oil, 18% had all or nearly all of their symptoms disappear while 19% deteriorated or died. The comparative numbers for the control group were 6% and 33%. The study suggested that cod-liver oil increased the chances of improvement by a factor of three and cut the chance of further deterioration by nearly half.

Beyond its leprosy hospital and its high-grade cod liver oil, Bergen might have been of interest because the city was the disembarkation point for anyone traveling between London and the Tonsaassen Sanatorium. The hospital for consumptives was located 2000 feet above sea level in the mountains of Norway. Richard Douglas Powell, the person who would later offer Louise her terrible prognosis, described the sanatorium in his 1899 *Sanatoria for Consumptives*.

There are verandahs or balconies on every floor. The furniture is simple. The lighting is by electricity. Ventilation by open windows, day and night, summer and winter. There are said to be good water-closets and baths. The waste water is carried into a brook. In winter the sewage is covered with earth.

The establishment is open throughout the year. It was built in 1881, and has been a winter station since 1885. No advanced cases are admitted. Treatment is by open air, in the verandahs or balconies, or in the pavilions in the woods. Patients who are fit for it take plenty of exercise. There is a very complete apparatus for hydrotherapy, with vapour baths, needle baths, ferruginous, hot and cold baths, etc. Patients in summer have friction with water at 15° to 20° C, or douches. In winter, dry friction and partial ablutions are substituted. Five or six meals are provided daily, with alcohol in great moderation. Cod-liver oil and specifics are little used. The sputa are put into a cask with [a solution] of ferrous sulphate, and after a month are burnt. Patients bring their own bedcovers and pillows. Mattresses are disinfected by brushing with [corrosive sublimate] followed by solution of washing soda. Rooms are rubbed with bread and then washed with soap and water. There is one nurse.

In 1893, Louise and Arthur considered visiting, perhaps moving to, the South Pacific. Robert Louis Stevenson had moved there already after finding that the cold, clean air of Switzerland's Davos Platz did not cure his tuberculosis. Stevenson mentioned the impending visit in a letter to Arthur.

Delighted to hear I have a chance of seeing you and Mrs. Doyle; Mrs. Stevenson bids me say (what is too true) that our rations are often spare. Are you Great Eaters? Please reply.

As to ways and means, here is what you will have to do. Leave San Francisco by the down mail, get off at Samoa [...] We are in the midst of war here; rather a nasty business, with the head-taking; and there seem signs of other trouble. But I believe you need make no change in your design to visit us. All should be well over; and if it were not, why! you need not leave the

steamer.

Louise did not follow Stevenson to Samoa, but she did follow him to Davos Platz. By September of that year, 1893, her tuberculosis became too obvious to ignore. In his autobiography, Arthur claimed the turning point came after they had recently returned from an early trip to Switzerland.

I now come to the great misfortune which darkened and deflected our lives. I have said that my wife and I had taken a tour in Switzerland. I do not know whether she had overtaxed herself in this excursion, or whether we encountered microbes in some inn bedroom, but the fact remains that within a few weeks of our return she complained of pain in her side and cough. I had no suspicion of anything serious, but sent for the nearest good physician. To my surprise and alarm he told me when he descended from the bedroom that the lungs were very gravely affected, that there was every sign of rapid consumption and that he thought the case a most serious one with little hope, considering her record and family history, of a permanent cure. With two children, aged four and one, and a wife who was in such deadly danger, the situation was a difficult one. I confirmed the diagnosis by having Sir Douglas Powell down to see her, and I then set all my energy to work to save the situation. The home was abandoned, the newly bought furniture was sold, and we made for Davos in the High Alps where there seemed the best chance of killing this accursed microbe which was rapidly eating out her vitals.

Almost nothing here withstands scrutiny. One deception is his claim that he “set all his energy” to save her. They had returned from Switzerland near the beginning of September, meaning that her terminal diagnosis must have been in that month. Yet, instead of making for Davos, Arthur set off on a lecture tour throughout England and Scotland. Through October, November, and early December, he gave somewhere between 18 and 21 lectures. Also during that period he attended several meetings of the Upper Norwood Literary and Scientific Society, joined the British Society for Psychical Research, and hung out at the all-male Reform Club in London.

Arthur’s most poignant lie, however, is the plural pronoun in his claim “we made for Davos in the High Alps.” According to a residence list provided in the *Davoser Blätter*, Louise and her sister Emily were residents of the Curhaus Davos as of 2 November. Arthur was not with them. He was still in England, only then beginning his lecture tour, and having no intention of cutting it short. “My wife has fallen ill,” he wrote to his lecture agent Gerald Christy, “and has had to go to Davos. Of course, I shall let no private matter – however urgent – interfere with my engagements.”

He signed his unfaithful letter “Yours faithfully, A Conan Doyle.”

Arthur joined Louise in Davos by Christmas. During her remaining thirteen years, however, Arthur was far from her, both physically and emotionally. In 1894, he absented himself from Switzerland and Louise for nine months. In 1895, he indulged Louise with his company somewhat more, returning to England perhaps only twice that year.

Arthur longed for England. After two years in the Alps, the disintegrating couple wintered in Egypt, then returned to England. Within a year, they settled into an expensive, expansive, custom-designed mansion called Undershaw, located in the village of Hindhead, forty miles southwest of London.

Arthur rationalized the move by declaring that the slightly elevated English air would be better for Louise than the cold, high-altitude cold air of Switzerland, or the balmy, sea-level hot air of Cairo. "If we could have ordered Nature to construct a spot for us we could not have hit upon anything more perfect," he wrote his mother.

The 10,000 square-foot, fourteen-bedroom house included a generator for electric lighting, a dining room large enough to seat thirty, a billiards room, a grand staircase with shallow steps to ease Louie's ascent, and doors that swung in both directions to ease her coming and going. Arthur's wood-paneled drawing room featured weapons, stuffed birds, walrus tusks, and trophies. No room in the house, however, was large enough for a grand piano. Louise settled for an upright.

Arthur and Louise moved into Undershaw in October of 1897. The very next month, Arthur had the temerity to allow Jean, his second wife in waiting, to dine there with his family.

For all practical purposes, Arthur then abandoned Louise for Jean.

The year 1906 began for Arthur and Louise as had the previous eight. Arthur absented himself from Undershaw as Louise wasted away. In January he again ran for office, this time to represent Harwick, 380 miles to the north. Again he lost. In March, his *Brigadier Gerard* opened as a comedy in four acts at the Imperial Theatre in London. In April, he dined at a Pilgrim's banquet at the Savoy Hotel, dined with Lord Milner at the Hotel Cecil, and then met with the Jewish Territorial Organization. Each event was in London, conveniently close to Jean's flat.

At the end of May, it was Arthur's much younger brother, Innes, not Arthur himself, who escorted Louise and Mary to London to see Arthur's *Brigadier Gerard* play. That outing seems to have been the last time Louise left Undershaw, other than to be buried. She deteriorated even more quickly after that outing. The infection spread beyond her larynx to her brain. She suffered bouts of delirium. She became paralyzed on her left side.

On 8 June, Arthur was at the Grand Hotel, in London. On the 11th, he presided at the Authors' Club, in London. On the 15th, he unveiled a memorial table to Henry Fielding at Widcombe Lodge in Bath. On the 30th, he attended the Golf Club Exhibition near home.

Louise died barely four days later, at 3 AM, on 4 July 1906. Arthur was at her side, weeping.

Arthur deluded himself until the very end that Louise was unaware of his relationship with Jean. As was usually the case, he thought too highly of his cleverness and too little of everyone else's. Of course Louise knew of his love for Jean; everyone knew. He told his siblings of the affair and they told their spouses. He told even Innes, who was particularly close and kind to Louise. Arthur frequently left Louise behind, provided baubles when he returned, then schemed to leave yet again. He told his mother that he disposed of Jean's letters by burning them or burying them, presumably at Undershaw. Jean lodged near the scenes of Arthur's frequent diversions, and she appeared in public with him. She was so bold as to visit Undershaw, walk and ride there with Arthur, and dine with the family.



As the end neared, Louise called 17-year-old Mary to her bedside. Mary told Pierre Nordon of that conversation.

Finally the sand began to run out, and it became clear she would not remain with us much longer. Some two months before the end she called me in for a talk. She told me that some wives sought to hold their husbands to their memory after they had gone – that she considered this very wrong, as the only consideration should be the loved-one's happiness. To this end she wanted me not to be shocked or surprised if my father married again, but to know that it was with her understanding and blessing.

Georgina Doyle offered inside information about that sorrowful discussion between a dying mother and her teenage daughter. She reported that Mary told John (Georgina's husband) that Louise mentioned Jean Leckie by name.