



Conan Doyle and the Parson's Son: The George Edalji Case. (reviewer Tonia Montgomery 2007)

This is a thorough description of life in England for one of Indian descent at the dawning of the twentieth century. Author Gordon Weaver demonstrates how easily people in power can be swayed by popular opinion.

George Edalji, son of an Indian clergyman and an Englishwoman, was accused and convicted of mutilating livestock and writing threatening letters. At a time when livestock was part of one's livelihood, these were serious charges. As an outsider in an isolated and completely English community, George Edalji was identified early on as the most obvious suspect. Though the evidence was scanty, the police appeared determined to show he was the guilty party. Fortunately for Edalji, the case garnered national attention and caught the attention of the great Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Weaver chronicles the struggles of Edalji's supporters as they sought legal exoneration for his crimes. He demonstrates his exhaustive research on this subject, drawing in both local and national resources. While his is not a book for casual reading, Weaver certainly has an enjoyable writing style - clear, precise, and easily understood. I expected the legal terminology to be daunting but found Weaver's explanations informative. This is an invaluable resource for those interested in historical legal proceedings or the evolution of civil rights. It has little to do with Mr. Conan Doyle's most famous character, Sherlock Holmes.

[Joplin Independent by Jack L. Kennedy 22 September 2006](#)

Conan Doyle and the Parson's Son: The George Edalji Case by Gordon Weaver

Sometimes, the best reality shows are in print, not on television.

Conan Doyle and the Parson's Son: the George Edalji Case has all of the lure of an action drama, with some of the syrup of the Real World thrown in. Add elements of intrigue and a famed mystery writer, with a nod to the science of CSI, and you have Gordon Weaver's book, the first non-fiction account of the George Edalji case and the background detail leading up to Conan Doyle's intervention.

The twisted tale begins in the 1870s, when George Edalji's father came from his native India to be vicar of a small Church of England parish in rural South Staffordshire. He was outspoken, concerned about injustice--and married to a British lady.

The Weaver book begins in the 19th century but has elements that are chillingly modern and in today's news: inept police work, social and cultural divides, allegations of incest, debates over the role of the media, cattle mutilation, fights for better working conditions, racism and stereotypes. The book's fabric is both political and sociological, history and mystery.

Here's the Cliff's Notes' plot summary: The Rev. Edalji's passion stirs up the populace. His outspoken nature--and marriage to a Brit, although the island nation liked to think it was tolerant--made him a handy target. When a rash of cattle mutilations erupts, anonymous letters follow to the newspapers and rumors circulate in the countryside, accusing the reverend's son of the crimes and his father of almost cult-like activities. There are threats upon Rev. Edalji's life. Local police, said to be in league with "the establishment," immediately tag the parson's son. He was tried in 1903 and sentenced to seven years in prison.

Despite the reluctance of the Home Office to take the parson's son's view and Doyle's defense seriously, Edalji does get a measure of justice in the end. A young Winston Churchill, friend of Doyle's, even enters the controversy after he becomes Home Secretary about 1910.

The book can be compelling, however. Just set aside plenty of time, and you might enjoy seeing a real Sherlockian saga unfold.

[Commonwealth Lawyer April 2007 Vol 16 No 1](#)

CONAN DOYLE AND THE PARSON'S SON by Gordon Weaver, Vanguard Press,

Cambridge (UK), 2006, pp 371, £9.99
(pbk), ISBN:
1-843862-41-7.

That miscarriages of justice are not a feature of modern times is amply illustrated by this fascinating book. It tells the story of George Edalji, a Staffordshire solicitor of Parsi extraction, who was charged and convicted of maiming a horse in 1903 and sentenced to seven years' penal servitude. What is particularly interesting about the story is that the disturbing facts of Edalji's case — the racist campaign against him by local residents, the fabrication of evidence, and the lackadaisical attitude of the police — attracted the attention of Arthur Conan Doyle who, in a real life imitation of his fictional detective, delved deep into the matter and helped Edalji secure a pardon. Gordon Weaver, had chanced upon newspaper clippings of the case in a public library and carried out further researches, and has written an eminently readable book.

Readers' Reviews (www.library.org.nz)

Conan Doyle and the Parson's son: the George Edalji case by Gordon Weaver

This book is almost overwhelming and compulsory reading, for anyone who is concerned about the current, apparent loss of confidence in the Police system we have inherited from the United Kingdom.

Apparently, this is nothing new. Weaver's book is an extremely well researched and documented expose of perhaps the first police "stitch - up" in modern history. Move over the Birmingham 6. The details are almost irrelevant in one way. It's the sobering and disheartening presentation of an extreme case of race and religious prejudice being acted out by a group of people considered to be the world's finest at the time that is so absorbing. As an experienced researcher, Weaver's information is precise and inescapable. Even in the late 19th C Sherlock Holmes, investigated and agreed with the conclusions reached in this book. Be thankful you're not a Police Officer at the beck and call of politicians – it's a hard life in that place. Definitely recommended.

16 November 2006