



y good fortune, our solicitor-actor would

be available for several days, to play the part of a genial if rather befuddled elderly farmer who, indeed, happened to bear a resemblance to one Sherlock Holmes.

With him in place, the Americans could batter

themselves against our doors until they were convinced that their information was faulty, at which time they might go back to the Plains or prairies whence they had come.

Behind our drawn curtains, Holmes returned to his experiment and I to my manuscripts. Before padlocking the trunk, however, I went through the house and collected an armful of treasured memorabilia that called to mind our cases and adventures over the years. They were, with certain exceptions, items of little commercial value—a friend's trademark monocle, one of Holmes' more disreputable pipes, some newspaper clippings—but were they to be spotted by any sharp-witted Sherlockian (if that be not an oxymoron) they could not only give lie to our ruse, they would be themselves vulnerable to the predations of the horde outside: Sherlockians are inveterate collectors.

I arranged them atop  
my memoirs, and  
padlocked the lid.  
When I had more  
leisure, I should write  
a letter of explanation  
to the recipient of the  
trunk, but today, I had  
much to do.

