

It is an ex-Classic. It has ceased to be...

{% blockquote Percy Bysshe Shelly, Ozymandias (1818) %}

... And on the pedestal these words appear: 'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings: Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!' Nothing beside remains. Round the decay Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare The lone and level sands stretch far away.

{% endblockquote %}

As mentioned in the [About page](#) the name of the blog comes from a passage in *The Sign of the Four* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle:

{% blockquote Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, The Sign of the Four (1890) %} "Winwood Reade is good upon the subject," said Holmes. "He remarks that, while the individual man is an insoluble puzzle, in the aggregate he becomes a mathematical certainty. You can, for example, never foretell what any one man will do, but you can say with precision what an average number will be up to. Individuals vary, but percentages remain constant. So says the statistician." {% endblockquote %}

Sherlock Holmes is referring to Winwood Reade's *The Martyrdom of Man*. Apparently it was one of the most prominent books of the day - offering a secular, [Freethinking](#) perspective on history.

The [full text](#) is freely available at the wonderful [exclassics.com](#) along with other forgotten relics such as:

- [The Memoirs of Jozef Borowlaski, The Last Court Dwarf](#) - apparently he was sort of like a real-life Tyrion Lannister.
- [The History of King Richard the Third, by Thomas More](#) - learn just *how* he ended up [beneath a Leicester car park](#)!
- [English as She is Spoke, by Pedro Carolino and Jose da Fonseca](#) - a Portuguese/English phrase book written by authors who knew no English and thus constructed the book by taking a Portuguese/French phrasebook and translating the French word for word into English using a dictionary. What could possibly go wrong? Well, here's an example: {% blockquote %} **Very dissatisfied customer (brandishing pistol):** Here is a horse who have a bad looks. Give me another; I will not that. He not sall know

to march, he is pury, he is foundered. Don't you are ashamed to give me a jade as like? he is undshoed, he is with nails up; it want to lead to the farrier.

Terrified horse dealer: Your pistols are its loads? {% endblockquote %} One can only presume they went on to produce a [Hungarian phrasebook](#) and [translate video games](#).

- *The Book of Household Management* by Mrs. Isabella Beeton - experience the Delia Smith of the Victorian era. Who can resist such delicious treats as *Very Plain Bread Pudding* or *Useful Soup for Benevolent Purposes*!? She also makes the rather unlikely claim that: {% blockquote %} The shepherds of Egypt had a singular manner of cooking eggs without the aid of fire. They placed them in a sling, which they turned so rapidly that the friction of the air heated them to the exact point required for use. {% endblockquote %} Perhaps I'll make a post calculating just how fast one would have to spin the sling...