Since I am both a Sherlock Holmes aficionado and a reader of Word Ways, it is no surprise that I became interested in constructing anagrams based on the titles of the Holmes stories or on the names of well-known characters in them. For inspiration on literary anagrams, I turned to Howard Bergerson’s Palindromes and Anagrams (Dover, 1973), but did not find very many there. Some required only general knowledge, such as THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF NICHOLAS NICKLEBY / fine tale; find thou a novel by Charles Dickens. Some required more specific knowledge, such as THE SCARLET LETTER BY NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE / can tell thee Hester hath worn an ‘I’ bitterly. And some, unavoidably, had a characteristic vagueness, such as TWENTY THOUSAND LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA / huge water tale stuns; end had you tense.

Have any anagrams pertaining to Sherlock Holmes been previously published? The editor turned up only four in the pages of the National Puzzlers’ League newspaper, The Enigma, two of which I found were later published elsewhere:

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE’S "THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES / a rather nosy Sherlock hunts bad evil hole, routs fiend
Katmat’ (Mrs. John Matthews), July 1935
A SHERLOCK HOLMES / ha! he smells crook!
Patriotocrat’ (Webb C. Patterson), August 1940
THE NOVEL "A STUDY IN SCARLET" / ’n’ all shun a detective story
Blackstone’ (Paul E. Thompson), January 1968
SHERLOCK HOLMES / heh! smells crook!
Pete Roleum’ (Seth G. Landon), August 1974

I give below a collection of thirty-one anagrams based on the titles of Sherlock Holmes stories. Most stories begin with "The Adventures of”, a phrase which I decided to omit in order to avoid a certain sameness among the anagrams. It was necessary to relax the standards of appositeness usually required by the National Puzzlers’ League; however, Sherlockians are so obsessed with minutiae in the Canon that they require only the faintest of clues to assign an anagram to its proper story title. (When these were presented as a quiz, some perfect scores were obtained!) However, in deference to those readers unfamiliar with the stories, I have added short notes tracing the (sometimes tenuous) relationship between the anagram and the story title.
Reader of Word
ructing ana-
names of well-
(Dover, 1973),
ral knowledge,
ce, fine
red more specif-
IANIEL HAW-
And some,
ENTY THOU-
end had you

earlier previously
the National
found were

BASKER-
, routs fiend

Detective story

on the titles of
aventures of”,
sameness
ords of apposite-
ever, Sher-
y require only
ly title. (When
obtained!) stories, I

THE BLUE CARBUNCLE / clench true bauble
(a precious stone was held firmly in the crop of a goose)
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF LADY FRANCES CARFAX / ready; a flap
passed; extra coffin cache ran
(the ‘flap’ was a Holmesian error; the lady was smuggled in a coffin)
THE FIVE ORANGE PIPS / envelope gifts I harp
(alarming omens appear in the mail)
THE YELLOW FACE / fey, callow thee
(this describes a jaundiced child)
THE FINAL PROBLEM / th’ plan .. (ree .. limbo
(Holmes’ demise led to the ‘Great Hiatus’)
THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES / he seeks boot ‘n’ half-devil; hurt
(the ‘half-devil’ is the hound, guided by the scent of a missing boot)
CHARLES AUGUSTUS MILVERTON / hurt cruel soul, Miss; vantage
(victim attacks heartless blackmailer)
THE SIX NAPOLEONS / stone phony; lax?
(six identical busts of Napoleon are important in this case)
THE THREE STUDENTS / test sheet; thunder!
(one of three students has stolen a test)
THE ABBEY GRANGE / beat by gang here?
(a gang-beating alibi for murder doesn’t hold up)
THE SECOND STAIN / hide scant notes
(important documents are hidden beneath a stained rug)
THE CARDBOARD BOX / x’d ear; both; drab co
(delivery of two severed eare produces a morose atmosphere)
THE BRUCE-PARTINGTON PLANS / lt. sub pattern open; chagrin
(secret submarine plans are stolen creating a scandal)
THE ILLUSTRIOUS CLIENT / rue elicit lust list, hon'
(Kitty Winter - ‘hon’ - is vengeful over inclusion in a ‘lust diary’)
THE BLANCHED SOLDIER / heard, beheld lt. scion
(a man’s ashen soldier-son is discovered)
THE SUSSEX VAMPIRE / haste; vex Peru miss
(a man’s Peruvian wife is suspected to have vampire tendencies)
THE CREEPING MAN / he pant; me cringe
(professor takes on ghastly simian characteristics)
SHOSCOMBE OLD PLACE / pooch does smell cab
(a spaniel is attracted to a strange carriage)
THE RETIRED COLOURMAN / enamel their door; curt
(a short-tempered man paints a door to disguise odors)
A CASE OF IDENTITY / ‘is face in toy date
(Hoarser Angel is not the wooer he appears to be)
A SCANDAL IN BOHEMIA / o, a balancin’ maid, she
(this refers to the ingenious Irene Adler)
SIGN OF THE FOUR / south offering
(messages from the subcontinent of India)
THE DEVIL’S FOOT / I’ve fled th’ soot
(a smoky experiment forces eviction)
THE DYING DETECTIVE / it deceived thy gent
(Watson is fooled in this scheme)
THE BOSCOMBE VALLEY MYSTERY / molest M'Carthy; bye-bye; solve
(Charles McCarthy is killed)
A STUDY IN SCARLET / stain clue; try ads
('rache' stain is a clue, and the culprit responds to an advertisement)
HIS LAST BOW / whilst a SOB
(Holmes impersonates a disagreeable American)
THE ENGINEER'S THUMB / 'I'm gent!'; he's been hurt
(a man missing his thumb presents himself)
THE NAVAL TREATY / have tray; talent
(the case ends when Holmes reveals the stolen treaty on a tray)
THE NORWOOD BUILDER / bloodied 'urther now
(a bloody clue appears after the crime)
BLACK PETER / able trek, P. C.
(Peter Carey - P. C. - is an experienced seaman)

WHAT'S GNU?
This is the title of a 199-page paperback by Michelle Arnot, published by Vintage Books in 1981 for $5.95. A history of the crossword puzzle in the United States and England, it covers much the same ground as Roger Millington's Crossword Puzzles Their History and Their Cult (Word Ways, November 1977) and Helen Hovanec's The Puzzler's Paradise (Word Ways, November 1978). What's Gnu? gives somewhat more historical detail on the main line of crossword development (including double-crostics), but is less complete on related topics such as crossword prize contests (one page) or tournaments (two pages); derivative topics, such as crossnumber puzzles or word-search puzzles, get no mention at all. I miss the lively graphics of Hovanec's book, but like the selection of 50 crossword reproductions from 1914 to date. Perhaps it's time for puzzle historians to cover other topics, such as the United States puzzle scene from 1850 to 1914, a period in which many puzzle columns, magazines and clubs flourished, and during which rhymed puzzles of the type now found rarely (see the Enigma or the *Puzzler for examples) were all the rage.