

# Nashville Scholars of the Three Pipe Problem

## Investiture

February 20, 2016

Nevil St. Clair presents a character study of duplicities while demonstrating the meaning of this word as being “deceitfulness in speech or conduct, as by speaking or acting in two different ways to different people concerning the same matter; double-dealing.”

By day, St. Clair was a country businessman, but by night he took on the role of a very different character. Dr. Watson describes him in the following manner as we read from “The Man with the Twisted Lip”:

“I have watched the fellow more than once before ever I thought of making his professional acquaintance, and I have been surprised at the harvest which he has reaped in a short time. His appearance, you see, is so remarkable that no one can pass him without observing him. A shock of orange hair, a pale face disfigured by a horrible scar, which, by its contraction, has turned up the outer edge of his upper lip, a bulldog chin, and a pair of very penetrating dark eyes, which present a singular contrast to the color of his hair, all mark him out from amid the common crowd of mendicants and so, too, does his wit, for he is ever ready with a reply to any piece of chaff which may be thrown at him by the passers-by.”

Why was this man living two lives. St. Clair describes it this way:

“After doing a bit of amateur begging, I wrote my articles and thought little more of the matter until, sometime later, I backed a bill for a friend and had a writ served upon me for twenty-five pounds. I was at my wit's end where to get the money, but a sudden idea came to me. I begged a fortnight's grace from the creditor, asked for a holiday from my employers, and spent the time begging in the City under my disguise. In ten days I had the money and had paid the debt. Well, you can imagine how hard it was to settle down to arduous work at two pounds a week when I knew that I could earn as much in a day by smearing my face with a little paint, laying my cap on the ground and sitting still. It was a long fight between my pride and the money, but the dollars won at last.”

Truly a unique individual if ever one existed.

We have among us today an equally interesting individual. While he does not live the life described by Watson, but he does live a life in a multifaceted manner filled with adventures and a myriad of interests. Today, we welcome Michael Harper into our midst as Neville St. Clair with a mandate of keeping green the Master's memory.