

PRESTWICK HOUSE LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



UNABRIDGED WITH GLOSSARY AND NOTES

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



Prestwick House

LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS™

P.O. Box 658 Clayton, Delaware 19938 • www.prestwickhouse.com

SENIOR EDITOR: Paul Moliken

EDITORS: Lisa M. Miller and Joan Langham

COVER DESIGN: Kelly Valentine Vasami

PRODUCTION: Jerry Clark



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LITERARY TOUCHSTONE CLASSICS™

P.O. BOX 658 • CLAYTON, DELAWARE 19938

TEL: 1.800.932.4593

FAX: 1.888.718.9333

WEB: www.prestwickhouse.com

This Prestwick House edition is an unabridged republication with slight emendations of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, published in 1901 by P.F. Collier & Son, New York.

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ISBN 978-1-58049-386-4

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

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Notes

What is a literary classic and why are these classic works important to the world?

A literary classic is a work of the highest excellence that has something important to say about life and/or the human condition and says it with great artistry. A classic, through its enduring presence, has withstood the test of time and is not bound by time, place, or customs. It speaks to us today as forcefully as it spoke to people one hundred or more years ago, and as forcefully as it will speak to people of future generations. For this reason, a classic is said to have universality.

Arthur Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on May 22, 1859. After his father was institutionalized because of alcoholism, Doyle's mother encouraged the young boy to explore literature, which he did. However, the young man seemed destined for a career as a doctor, not an author; he went to Edinburgh University, graduated, and even began to practice medicine, specializing in eye care.

Doyle married Louise Hawkins in 1885 and sometime later, began writing seriously. His first story dealing with Sherlock Holmes, *A Study in Scarlet*, was published in the *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in 1886. The detective and his exploits quickly became extremely popular with the British, but after four years of writing just this one type of story, Doyle had had enough of the genre and killed Holmes off in a story called *The Final Problem*. Fans protested, even going so far as to wear black armbands and canceling subscriptions to *The Strand*, which had published many Holmes stories. Doyle bowed to the public pressure to resurrect his detective, which he did in 1903 in a story titled *The Adventure of the Empty House*. King Edward VII awarded Doyle the title of Sir in 1903, not only for authoring the Sherlock Holmes books, but also for writing a pamphlet on the Boer War, *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*.

Before his death of heart failure on July 7, 1930, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle had become one of the highest paid authors in the world, and Sherlock Holmes had achieved the status of the world's most well-known detective.

Pointers

R E A D I N G P O I N T E R S

Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights

To make the reading of this novel more enjoyable, readers should consider the following:

1. How Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's use of supernatural elements contradicts with Sherlock Holmes's belief in logical, realistic solutions.
2. The manner in which Doyle uses goodness and purity and how he intertwines it with evil
 - using love from a relative to escape the law
 - manipulating good characters and leading them to their destruction or insanity.
3. Doyle's borrowing of Gothic characteristics of literature, including:
 - the mystery of the hound has many characters wondering whether it is a supernatural creature.
 - the ancient family curse is another occult element that has characters questioning their beliefs.
 - the setting is dark and gloomy around Baskerville Hall.
5. A popular literary device that Doyle incorporates is the use of a character, event, or other element in the story that detracts from the central issue, which leads to a false assumption.
6. Pay close attention to Sherlock's scientific method:
 - observation
 - speculation
 - deduction
 - inference
 - hypothesis
 - conclusion

7. The portrayal of social classes is apparent in Doyle's writing. Even though his parents struggled financially, Doyle's relatives were well off, and he tended to portray members of the lower class as gullible because they fully believe in the Baskerville curse.
8. Doyle's use of character:
 - Dr. Watson is not only the narrator, but he is a foil as well, serving as an opposite to the main character. Watson strengthens Holmes's character by emphasizing their contrasts.
 - Watson is the more developed and rounded character of the two.
 - Holmes relies on intellect, rather than strength.
 - The characters around Holmes and Watson are primarily one-dimensional and static.



C H A P T E R I

MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES

MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES, who was usually very late in the mornings, save upon those not infrequent occasions when he was up all night, was seated at the breakfast table. I stood upon the hearth-rug and picked up the stick which our visitor had left behind him the night before. It was a fine, thick piece of wood, bulbous-headed, of the sort which is known as a "Penang lawyer." Just under the head was a broad silver band, nearly an inch across. "To James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H.," was engraved upon it, with the date "1884." It was just such a stick as the old-fashioned family practitioner used to carry—dignified, solid, and reassuring.

"Well, Watson, what do you make of it?"

Holmes was sitting with his back to me, and I had given him no sign of my occupation.

"How did you know what I was doing? I believe you have eyes in the back of your head."

"I have, at least, a well-polished silver-plated coffee-pot in front of me," said he. "But, tell me, Watson, what do you make of our visitor's stick? Since we have been so unfortunate as to miss him and have no notion of his errand, this accidental souvenir becomes of importance. Let me hear you reconstruct the man by an examination of it."

"I think," said I, following as far as I could the methods of my companion, "that Dr. Mortimer is a successful elderly medical man, well-esteemed,

since those who know him give him this mark of their appreciation.”

“Good!” said Holmes. “Excellent!”

“I think also that the probability is in favour of his being a country practitioner who does a great deal of his visiting on foot.”

“Why so?”

“Because this stick, though originally a very handsome one, has been so knocked about that I can hardly imagine a town practitioner carrying it. The thick iron ferrule is worn down, so it is evident that he has done a great amount of walking with it.”

“Perfectly sound!” said Holmes.

“And then again, there is the ‘friends of the C.C.H.’ I should guess that to be the Something Hunt, the local hunt to whose members he has possibly given some surgical assistance, and which has made him a small presentation in return.”

“Really, Watson, you excel yourself,” said Holmes, pushing back his chair and lighting a cigarette. “I am bound to say that in all the accounts which you have been so good as to give of my own small achievements you have habitually underrated your own abilities. It may be that you are not yourself luminous, but you are a conductor of light. Some people without possessing genius have a remarkable power of stimulating it. I confess, my dear fellow, that I am very much in your debt.”

He had never said as much before, and I must admit that his words gave me keen pleasure, for I had often been piqued by his indifference to my admiration and to the attempts which I had made to give publicity to his methods. I was proud too to think that I had so far mastered his system as to apply it in a way which earned his approval. He now took the stick from my hands and examined it for a few minutes with his naked eyes. Then with an expression of interest he laid down his cigarette and, carrying the cane to the window, he looked over it again with a convex lens.

“Interesting, though elementary,” said he, as he returned to his favourite corner of the settee. “There are certainly one or two indications upon the stick. It gives us the basis for several deductions.”

“Has anything escaped me?” I asked, with some self-importance. “I trust that there is nothing of consequence which I have overlooked?”

“I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your conclusions were erroneous. When I said that you stimulated me I meant, to be frank, that in noting your fallacies I was occasionally guided towards the truth. Not that you are entirely wrong in this instance. The man is certainly a country practitioner. And he walks a good deal.”

“Then I was right.”

“To that extent.”

“But that was all.”

“No, no, my dear Watson, not all—by no means all. I would suggest, for example, that a presentation to a doctor is more likely to come from a hospital than from a hunt, and that when the initials ‘C.C.’ are placed before that hospital the words ‘Charing Cross’ very naturally suggest themselves.”

“You may be right.”

“The probability lies in that direction. And if we take this as a working hypothesis we have a fresh basis from which to start our construction of this unknown visitor.”

“Well, then, supposing that ‘C.C.H.’ does stand for ‘Charing Cross Hospital,’ what further inferences may we draw?”

“Do none suggest themselves? You know my methods. Apply them!”

“I can only think of the obvious conclusion that the man has practised in town before going to the country.”

“I think that we might venture a little farther than this. Look at it in this light. On what occasion would it be most probable that such a presentation would be made? When would his friends unite to give him a pledge of their good will? Obviously at the moment when Dr. Mortimer withdrew from the service of the hospital in order to start a practice for himself. We know there has been a presentation. We believe there has been a change from a town hospital to a country practice. Is it, then, stretching our inference too far to say that the presentation was on the occasion of the change?”

“It certainly seems probable.”

“Now, you will observe that he could not have been on the *staff* of the hospital, since only a man well-established in a London practice could hold such a position, and such a one would not drift into the country. What was he, then? If he was in the hospital and yet not on the staff he could only have been a house-surgeon or a house-physician—little more than a senior student. And he left five years ago—the date is on the stick. So your grave, middle-aged family practitioner vanishes into thin air, my dear Watson, and there emerges a young fellow under thirty, amiable, unambitious, absent-minded, and the possessor of a favourite dog, which I should describe roughly as being larger than a terrier and smaller than a mastiff.”

I laughed incredulously as Sherlock Holmes leaned back in his settee and blew little wavering rings of smoke up to the ceiling.

“As to the latter part, I have no means of checking you,” said I, “but at

Glossary

CHAPTER I

Monsieur Bertillon – Alphonse Bertillon (1853-1914), was a French criminologist who discovered a means of identifying people by using detailed body measurements and physical descriptions. This system was used until the development of fingerprinting.

CHAPTER II

the Great Rebellion – (1640-1660), the English Revolution, which was a series of civil wars fought between the Parliamentarians (those who supported Parliament) and the Royalists (supporters of the system of having royalty govern England)

Lord Clarendon – Edward Hyde (1609-1674), the first Earl of Clarendon, was chief adviser of Charles I during the English civil wars. He eventually came to advise Charles II, who appointed Edward Lord Chancellor.

Michaelmas – the Christian feast on September 29 that honors the Archangel Michael

“...the infinite goodness...Holy Writ.” – This statement is a reference to Deuteronomy 5:9, in which God states that if one family member is guilty of sin, then the entire family is also guilty; therefore, the father of that family would suffer the consequences, and his punishment would affect his children.

Vatican – the Pope’s home in Vatican City

CHAPTER III

Devonshire – a southwest English county

Foulmire – a village in Buckinghamshire, England

CHAPTER IV

Esquimaux – an Eskimo

dime novel – a dramatically written paperback novel, usually a romance or adventure

CHAPTER V

Trafalgar Square – an area in Westminster, London, where a memorial to Admiral Horatio Nelson was erected; the square was named for Lord Nelson’s victory during the Battle of Trafalgar (1805).

Vocabulary

CHAPTER I

amiable – likeable

anthropological – related to the study of humans

asperity – severity; harshness

astutely – keenly, shrewdly

benevolence – kindness

bulbous-headed – round-tipped

convex – outwardly curved

dabbler – a casual worker; someone with a non-professional interest

dexterity – skill

dolichocephalic – long

erroneous – wrong

fallacies – incorrect assumptions

ferrule – the metal end or tip of a cane

frock-coat – a long, double-breasted coat

fulsome – offensive

hypothesis – a theory

incredulously – skeptically, unbelievably

inferences – conclusions

luminous – brilliant

mastiff – a large breed of dog

piqued – offended

reversion – a reversal to a previous condition

settee – a small couch

slovenly – sloppy

supra-orbital – above the eyes; the forehead

CHAPTER II

agape – open-mouthed

aghast – horrified

amiability – friendliness; warmth

anon – quickly, suddenly; shortly thereafter

cameos – carvings of profiles made in gemstone or shell

carouse – drunken merrymaking

chimerical – imagined

circumspect – careful, watchful

corroborated – verified, authenticated

daunted – stopped, hindered; discouraged