

*The* Hound *of the*  
Baskervilles  
*Sir Arthur Conan Doyle*

TIMELESS CLASSICS



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## Holmes Has a Visitor

Mr. Sherlock Holmes, who usually got up very late in the morning, was sitting at the breakfast table. I was standing in front of the fireplace, looking at a walking stick. A visitor had left it outside our door last night. Engraved on a silver band around the stick were the words: “*To James Mortimer, M.R.C.S., from his friends of the C.C.H.*”

Without looking up, Holmes said, “Well, Watson, what do you make of it?”

Holmes was sitting with his back to me. “How did you know what I was doing?” I asked. “I believe you have eyes in the back of your head.”

Holmes smiled and said, “This silver-plated coffeepot in front of me makes an excellent mirror. But what do you make of the stick? Since we missed our visitor last night, let me hear what his stick can tell us about him.”

“He seems to be an elderly, successful doctor,” I said. “This handsome gift from his friends shows he is well liked.”

“Good!” *said* Holmes, lighting a cigarette.

“I believe he lives in the country,” I went on. “‘C.C.H.’ is probably a hunting club. I would also guess he walks a great deal. This stick has been very much knocked about.”

“*Excellent!*” *said* Holmes. “Since you have been so kind as to write accounts of my detective work, you should have given yourself more credit. I owe much to you.”

Holmes had never given me such praise before. I was pleased indeed.

He took the stick from my hands and examined it with a magnifying glass. “Interesting,” he said.

“Has anything escaped me?” I asked.

“I am afraid, my dear Watson, that most of your ideas were wrong. However, the man is a country doctor. But I believe this gift came to him from a hospital, not a club. ‘C.C.H.’ is probably Charing Cross Hospital.”

“You may be right,” I said.

Holmes said, “It seems likely. I would guess the stick was presented when our doctor left the

hospital to start his own practice. He is absent-minded—or he would not have left the stick at our door—and he has a medium-sized dog.”

I laughed. Holmes leaned back and blew wispy rings of smoke at the ceiling.

I took my medical directory from the shelf and looked up the name. James Mortimer had indeed worked at Charing Cross Hospital before moving to Devonshire. I showed this listing to Holmes, who smiled in satisfaction.

“No mention of a hunting club,” said Holmes, “but he is a country doctor, as you guessed.”

“Why do you believe he has a medium-sized dog?” I asked.

Holmes rose and stood by the window. “The tooth marks on the stick are too far apart for a terrier’s jaw, and not broad enough for a mastiff. It may have been . . . yes, by Jove, it *was* a spaniel.”

“But my dear fellow, how can you possibly be so sure?” I chuckled.

“For the very simple reason that I see the dog himself at our doorstep,” said Holmes.

Just then the doorbell rang and Dr. Mortimer entered. He was very tall and thin, with a long nose like a beak. Two big gray eyes sparkled from behind a pair of glasses. When he saw the stick



in Holmes' hand, he ran toward it. "You have it! I would not lose that stick for the world," he cried.

"A gift, I see," said Holmes.

"Yes, sir."

"From Charing Cross Hospital?"

"Yes," said Dr. Mortimer, "it was given to me when I got married."

"Dear, dear, that's bad!" said Holmes, shaking his head.

"Why is that bad?" asked Dr. Mortimer.

"Only that you have upset our little deductions," said Holmes. "You say you got married?"

"Yes," said Dr. Mortimer. "That's why I left

the hospital.”

“Aha!” cried Holmes. “Then we are not so wrong after all.”

“I have wanted to meet you for some time,” said Dr. Mortimer. “I have heard that you are the second most renowned expert in Europe—”

“Indeed, sir!” said Holmes sharply. “May I ask who has the honor of being the *first*?”

“To the scientific mind,” Dr. Mortimer said, “Monsieur Bertillon would be the first.”

Annoyed, Holmes snapped coldly, “Then perhaps you had better go to *him*.”

“I said to the *scientific* mind,” Dr. Mortimer repeated with emphasis. “But as a *practical* man, you, of course, stand alone. I hope I have not—”

“Just a little,” Holmes admitted. “I think, Dr. Mortimer, that you should now tell me the exact nature of your problem.”

## Dr. Mortimer's Story

“I have in my pocket a manuscript dated 1742,” Dr. Mortimer explained. “It was given to me by Sir Charles Baskerville. I was his friend as well as his personal doctor. Sir Charles died very suddenly three months ago. He was a strong-minded man, sir. He had as little imagination as I do. Yet he took this manuscript very seriously. It has to do with a legend which runs in the Baskerville family.”

Looking confused, Holmes said, “But you wanted to see me about something more *modern*—is that correct?”

“Most modern,” said Dr. Mortimer. “This matter must be decided within the next twenty-four hours. It has to do with this manuscript. It was written by Hugo Baskerville to his sons Rodger and John. With your permission, I will read it.”

In a high, cracking voice, Dr. Mortimer said, “In 1649, the Manor of Baskerville was held by a young



man who was also named Hugo. It must be said that *this* Hugo was a wild, godless fellow.

“Hugo came to love the daughter of a farmer. Fearing his evil name, she would have nothing to do with him. So it came to pass that one night, when the girl’s father and brother were away, Hugo and his friends stole down to the farm and carried her off. They brought her to the Hall and placed her—*imprisoned* her, actually—in an upper room. Then Hugo and his friends gathered downstairs for a wild evening of food and drink.

“The poor lass probably had her wits turned with the wild singing and swearing she heard from below. At last, pure fear must have driven her to escape. She climbed down the ivy on the west wall. Then she ran across the moor toward her home.

“Some little time later, Hugo went upstairs to find the cage empty and the bird escaped. He was in a fury. He called to his grooms to saddle his horse and set loose his hounds. He gave the dogs the girl’s handkerchief to sniff, and they set off in full cry over the moor with Hugo close behind. Thirteen of his wicked friends followed after him.

“After a few miles, the hunting party stopped



cold. They saw Hugo’s black mare running wild, her saddle empty. They rode on slowly until they came to a deep dip in the land. At the head of the dip were Hugo’s dogs, gathered together, whimpering.

“Three of Hugo’s friends—the boldest, or perhaps the most drunken—rode down into the dip. In the moonlight they saw the maiden lying on the ground, *dead*—no doubt from fear and exhaustion. Close by lay the body of Hugo Baskerville. A great black beast stood over him, tearing out his throat. The thing was shaped like a hound—but larger than any hound the eye has ever seen! As it turned its blazing eyes toward the three men, they