THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES

Another Adventure of Sherlock Holmes

by A. Conan Doyle

My dear Robinson,

It was to your account of a West-Country legend that this tale owes its

inception. For this and for your help in the details all thanks.

Yours most truly,

A. Conan Doyle.

Hindhead,

Haslemere.

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Chapter 1.

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 least it is not difficult to find out a few particulars

about the man�s age and professional career.� From my small

medical shelf I took down the Medical Directory and turned up the

name. There were several Mortimers, but only one who could be our

visitor. I read his record aloud.

�Mortimer, James, M.R.C.S., 1882, Grimpen, Dartmoor, Devon.

House-surgeon, from 1882 to 1884, at Charing Cross Hospital.

Winner of the Jackson prize for Comparative Pathology, with

essay entitled �Is Disease a Reversion?� Corresponding member

of the Swedish Pathological Society. Author of �Some Freaks of

Atavism� (\_Lancet\_ 1882). �Do We Progress?� (\_Journal of

Psychology\_, March, 1883). Medical Officer for the parishes of

Grimpen, Thorsley, and High Barrow.�

�No mention of that local hunt, Watson,� said Holmes with a

mischievous smile, �but a country doctor, as you very astutely

observed. I think that I am fairly justified in my inferences. As

to the adjectives, I said, if I remember right, amiable,

unambitious, and absent-minded. It is my experience that it is

only an amiable man in this world who receives testimonials, only

an unambitious one who abandons a London career for the country,

and only an absent-minded one who leaves his stick and not his

visiting-card after waiting an hour in your room.�

�And the dog?�

�Has been in the habit of carrying this stick behind his master.

Being a heavy stick the dog has held it tightly by the middle,

and the marks of his teeth are very plainly visible. The dog�s

jaw, as shown in the space between these marks, is too broad in

my opinion for a terrier and not broad enough for a mastiff. It

may have been�yes, by Jove, it \_is\_ a curly-haired spaniel.�

He had risen and paced the room as he spoke. Now he halted in the

recess of the window. There was such a ring of conviction in his

voice that I glanced up in surprise.

�My dear fellow, how can you possibly be so sure of that?�

�For the very simple reason that I see the dog himself on our

very door-step, and there is the ring of its owner. Don�t move, I

beg you, Watson. He is a professional brother of yours, and your

presence may be of assistance to me. Now is the dramatic moment

of fate, Watson, when you hear a step upon the stair which is

walking into your life, and you know not whether for good or ill.

What does Dr. James Mortimer, the man of science, ask of Sherlock

Holmes, the specialist in crime? Come in!�

The appearance of our visitor was a surprise to me, since I had

expected a typical country practitioner. He was a very tall, thin

man, with a long nose like a beak, which jutted out between two

keen, grey eyes, set closely together and sparkling brightly from

behind a pair of gold-rimmed glasses. He was clad in a

professional but rather slovenly fashion, for his frock-coat was

dingy and his trousers frayed. Though young, his long back was

already bowed, and he walked with a forward thrust of his head

and a general air of peering benevolence. As he entered his eyes

fell upon the stick in Holmes�s hand, and he ran towards it with

an exclamation of joy. �I am so very glad,� said he. �I was not

sure whether I had left it here or in the Shipping Office. I

would not lose that stick for the world.�

�A presentation, I see,� said Holmes.

�Yes, sir.�

�From Charing Cross Hospital?�

�From one or two friends there on the occasion of my marriage.�

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

Dr. Mortimer blinked through his glasses in mild astonishment.

�Why was it bad?�

�Only that you have disarranged our little deductions. Your

marriage, you say?�

�Yes, sir. I married, and so left the hospital, and with it all

hopes of a consulting practice. It was necessary to make a home

of my own.�

�Come, come, we are not so far wrong, after all,� said Holmes.

�And now, Dr. James Mortimer��

�Mister, sir, Mister�a humble M.R.C.S.�

�And a man of precise mind, evidently.�

�A dabbler in science, Mr. Holmes, a picker up of shells on the

shores of the great unknown ocean. I presume that it is Mr.

Sherlock Holmes whom I am addressing and not��

�No, this is my friend Dr. Watson.�

�Glad to meet you, sir. I have heard your name mentioned in

connection with that of your friend. You interest me very much,

Mr. Holmes. I had hardly expected so dolichocephalic a skull or

such well-marked supra-orbital development. Would you have any

objection to my running my finger along your parietal fissure? A

cast of your skull, sir, until the original is available, would

be an ornament to any anthropological museum. It is not my

intention to be fulsome, but I confess that I covet your skull.�

Sherlock Holmes waved our strange visitor into a chair. �You are

an enthusiast in your line of thought, I perceive, sir, as I am

in mine,� said he. �I observe from your forefinger that you make

your own cigarettes. Have no hesitation in lighting one.�

The man drew out paper and tobacco and twirled the one up in the

other with surprising dexterity. He had long, quivering fingers

as agile and restless as the antenn� of an insect.

Holmes was silent, but his little darting glances showed me the

interest which he took in our curious companion. �I presume,

sir,� said he at last, �that it was not merely for the purpose of

examining my skull that you have done me the honour to call here

last night and again today?�

�No, sir, no; though I am happy to have had the opportunity of

doing that as well. I came to you, Mr. Holmes, because I

recognized that I am myself an unpractical man and because I am

suddenly confronted with a most serious and extraordinary

problem. Recognizing, as I do, that you are the second highest

expert in Europe��

�Indeed, sir! May I inquire who has the honour to be the first?�

asked Holmes with some asperity.

�To the man of precisely scientific mind the work of Monsieur

Bertillon must always appeal strongly.�

�Then had you not better consult him?�

�I said, sir, to the precisely scientific mind. But as a

practical man of affairs it is acknowledged that you stand alone.

I trust, sir, that I have not inadvertently��

�Just a little,� said Holmes. �I think, Dr. Mortimer, you would

do wisely if without more ado you would kindly tell me plainly

what the exact nature of the problem is in which you demand my

assistance.�

Chapter 2.

The Curse of the Baskervilles

�I have in my pocket a manuscript,� said Dr. James Mortimer.

�I observed it as you entered the room,� said Holmes.

�It is an old manuscript.�

�Early eighteenth century, unless it is a forgery.�

�How can you say that, sir?�

�You have presented an inch or two of it to my examination all

the time that you have been talking. It would be a poor expert

who could not give the date of a document within a decade or so.

You may possibly have read my little monograph upon the subject.

I put that at 1730.�

�The exact date is 1742.� Dr. Mortimer drew it from his

breast-pocket. �This family paper was committed to my care by Sir

Charles Baskerville, whose sudden and tragic death some three

months ago created so much excitement in Devonshire. I may say

that I was his personal friend as well as his medical attendant.

He was a strong-minded man, sir, shrewd, practical, and as

unimaginative as I am myself. Yet he took this document very

seriously, and his mind was prepared for just such an end as did

eventually overtake him.�

Holmes stretched out his hand for the manuscript and flattened it

upon his knee. �You will observe, Watson, the alternative use of

the long \_s\_ and the short. It is one of several indications

which enabled me to fix the date.�

I looked over his shoulder at the yellow paper and the faded

script. At the head was written: �Baskerville Hall,� and below in

large, scrawling figures: �1742.�

�It appears to be a statement of some sort.�

�Yes, it is a statement of a certain legend which runs in the

Baskerville family.�

�But I understand that it is something more modern and practical

upon which you wish to consult me?�

�Most modern. A most practical, pressing matter, which must be

decided within twenty-four hours. But the manuscript is short and

is intimately connected with the affair. With your permission I

will read it to you.�

Holmes leaned back in his chair, placed his finger-tips together,

and closed his eyes, with an air of resignation. Dr. Mortimer

turned the manuscript to the light and read in a high, cracking

voice the following curious, old-world narrative:

�Of the origin of the Hound of the Baskervilles there have been

many statements, yet as I come in a direct line from Hugo

Baskerville, and as I had the story from my father, who also

had it from his, I have set it down with all belief that it

occurred even as is here set forth. And I would have you

believe, my sons, that the same Justice which punishes sin may

also most graciously forgive it, and that no ban is so heavy

but that by prayer and repentance it may be removed. Learn

then from this story not to fear the fruits of the past, but

rather to be circumspect in the future, that those foul

passions whereby our family has suffered so grievously may not

again be loosed to our undoing.

�Know then that in the time of the Great Rebellion (the

history of which by the learned Lord Clarendon I most

earnestly commend to your attention) this Manor of

Baskerville was held by Hugo of that name, nor can it be

gainsaid that he was a most wild, profane, and godless man.

This, in truth, his neighbours might have pardoned, seeing

that saints have never flourished in those parts, but there

was in him a certain wanton and cruel humour which made his

name a by-word through the West. It chanced that this Hugo

came to love (if, indeed, so dark a passion may be known

under so bright a name) the daughter of a yeoman who held

lands near the Baskerville estate. But the young maiden,

being discreet and of good repute, would ever avoid him,

for she feared his evil name. So it came to pass that one

Michaelmas this Hugo, with five or six of his idle and

wicked companions, stole down upon the farm and carried off

the maiden, her father and brothers being from home, as he

well knew. When they had brought her to the Hall the

maiden was placed in an upper chamber, while Hugo and his

friends sat down to a long carouse, as was their nightly

custom. Now, the poor lass upstairs was like to have her

wits turned at the singing and shouting and terrible oaths

which came up to her from below, for they say that the

words used by Hugo Baskerville, when he was in wine, were

such as might blast the man who said them. At last in the

stress of her fear she did that which might have daunted

the bravest or most active man, for by the aid of the

growth of ivy which covered (and still covers) the south

wall she came down from under the eaves, and so homeward

across the moor, there being three leagues betwixt the Hall

and her father�s farm.

�It chanced that some little time later Hugo left his

guests to carry food and drink�with other worse things,

perchance�to his captive, and so found the cage empty and

the bird escaped. Then, as it would seem, he became as one

that hath a devil, for, rushing down the stairs into the

dining-hall, he sprang upon the great table, flagons and

trenchers flying before him, and he cried aloud before all

the company that he would that very night render his body

and soul to the Powers of Evil if he might but overtake the

wench. And while the revellers stood aghast at the fury of

the man, one more wicked or, it may be, more drunken than

the rest, cried out that they should put the hounds upon

her. Whereat Hugo ran from the house, crying to his grooms

that they should saddle his mare and unkennel the pack, and

giving the hounds a kerchief of the maid�s, he swung them

to the line, and so off full cry in the moonlight over the

moor.

�Now, for some space the revellers stood agape, unable to

understand all that had been done in such haste. But anon

their bemused wits awoke to the nature of the deed which

was like to be done upon the moorlands. Everything was now

in an uproar, some calling for their pistols, some for

their horses, and some for another flask of wine. But at

length some sense came back to their crazed minds, and the

whole of them, thirteen in number, took horse and started

in pursuit. The moon shone clear above them, and they rode

swiftly abreast, taking that course which the maid must

needs have taken if she were to reach her own home.

�They had gone a mile or two when they passed one of the

night shepherds upon the moorlands, and they cried to him

to know if he had seen the hunt. And the man, as the story

goes, was so crazed with fear that he could scarce speak,

but at last he said that he had indeed seen the unhappy

maiden, with the hounds upon her track. �But I have seen

more than that,� said he, �for Hugo Baskerville passed me

upon his black mare, and there ran mute behind him such a

hound of hell as God forbid should ever be at my heels.�

So the drunken squires cursed the shepherd and rode onward.

But soon their skins turned cold, for there came a

galloping across the moor, and the black mare, dabbled with

white froth, went past with trailing bridle and empty

saddle. Then the revellers rode close together, for a

great fear was on them, but they still followed over the

moor, though each, had he been alone, would have been right

glad to have turned his horse�s head. Riding slowly in

this fashion they came at last upon the hounds. These,

though known for their valour and their breed, were

whimpering in a cluster at the head of a deep dip or goyal,

as we call it, upon the moor, some slinking away and some,

with starting hackles and staring eyes, gazing down the

narrow valley before them.

�The company had come to a halt, more sober men, as you may

guess, than when they started. The most of them would by

no means advance, but three of them, the boldest, or it may

be the most drunken, rode forward down the goyal. Now, it

opened into a broad space in which stood two of those great

stones, still to be seen there, which were set by certain

forgotten peoples in the days of old. The moon was shining

bright upon the clearing, and there in the centre lay the

unhappy maid where she had fallen, dead of fear and of

fatigue. But it was not the sight of her body, nor yet was

it that of the body of Hugo Baskerville lying near her,

which raised the hair upon the heads of these three

dare-devil roysterers, but it was that, standing over Hugo,

and plucking at his throat, there stood a foul thing, a

great, black beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than

any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon. And even

as they looked the thing tore the throat out of Hugo

Baskerville, on which, as it turned its blazing eyes and

dripping jaws upon them, the three shrieked with fear and

rode for dear life, still screaming, across the moor. One,

it is said, died that very night of what he had seen, and

the other twain were but broken men for the rest of their

days.

�Such is the tale, my sons, of the coming of the hound

which is said to have plagued the family so sorely ever

since. If I have set it down it is because that which is

clearly known hath less terror than that which is but

hinted at and guessed. Nor can it be denied that many of

the family have been unhappy in their deaths, which have

been sudden, bloody, and mysterious. Yet may we shelter

ourselves in the infinite goodness of Providence, which

would not forever punish the innocent beyond that third or

fourth generation which is threatened in Holy Writ. To

that Providence, my sons, I hereby commend you, and I

counsel you by way of caution to forbear from crossing the

moor in those dark hours when the powers of evil are

exalted.

�[This from Hugo Baskerville to his sons Rodger and John,

with instructions that they say nothing thereof to their

sister Elizabeth.]�

When Dr. Mortimer had finished reading this singular narrative he

pushed his spectacles up on his forehead and stared across at Mr.

Sherlock Holmes. The latter yawned and tossed the end of his

cigarette into the fire.

�Well?� said he.

�Do you not find it interesting?�

�To a collector of fairy tales.�

Dr. Mortimer drew a folded newspaper out of his pocket.

�Now, Mr. Holmes, we will give you something a little more

recent. This is the \_Devon County Chronicle\_ of May 14th of this

year. It is a short account of the facts elicited at the death of

Sir Charles Baskerville which occurred a few days before that

date.�

My friend leaned a little forward and his expression became

intent. Our visitor readjusted his glasses and began:

�The recent sudden death of Sir Charles Baskerville, whose name

has been mentioned as the probable Liberal candidate for

Mid-Devon at the next election, has cast a gloom over the

county. Though Sir Charles had resided at Baskerville Hall for

a comparatively short period his amiability of character and

extreme generosity had won the affection and respect of all who

had been brought into contact with him. In these days of

\_nouveaux riches\_ it is refreshing to find a case where the

scion of an old county family which has fallen upon evil days

is able to make his own fortune and to bring it back with him

to restore the fallen grandeur of his line. Sir Charles, as is

well known, made large sums of money in South African

speculation. More wise than those who go on until the wheel

turns against them, he realised his gains and returned to

England with them. It is only two years since he took up his

residence at Baskerville Hall, and it is common talk how large

were those schemes of reconstruction and improvement which have

been interrupted by his death. Being himself childless, it was

his openly expressed desire that the whole countryside should,

within his own lifetime, profit by his good fortune, and many

will have personal reasons for bewailing his untimely end. His

generous donations to local and county charities have been

frequently chronicled in these columns.

�The circumstances connected with the death of Sir Charles

cannot be said to have been entirely cleared up by the

inquest, but at least enough has been done to dispose of

those rumours to which local superstition has given rise.

There is no reason whatever to suspect foul play, or to

imagine that death could be from any but natural causes.

Sir Charles was a widower, and a man who may be said to

have been in some ways of an eccentric habit of mind. In

spite of his considerable wealth he was simple in his

personal tastes, and his indoor servants at Baskerville

Hall consisted of a married couple named Barrymore, the

husband acting as butler and the wife as housekeeper. Their

evidence, corroborated by that of several friends, tends to

show that Sir Charles�s health has for some time been

impaired, and points especially to some affection of the

heart, manifesting itself in changes of colour,

breathlessness, and acute attacks of nervous depression.

Dr. James Mortimer, the friend and medical attendant of the

deceased, has given evidence to the same effect.

�The facts of the case are simple. Sir Charles Baskerville

was in the habit every night before going to bed of walking

down the famous yew alley of Baskerville Hall. The

evidence of the Barrymores shows that this had been his

custom. On the fourth of May Sir Charles had declared his

intention of starting next day for London, and had ordered

Barrymore to prepare his luggage. That night he went out

as usual for his nocturnal walk, in the course of which he

was in the habit of smoking a cigar. He never returned.

At twelve o�clock Barrymore, finding the hall door still

open, became alarmed, and, lighting a lantern, went in

search of his master. The day had been wet, and Sir

Charles�s footmarks were easily traced down the alley.

Halfway down this walk there is a gate which leads out on

to the moor. There were indications that Sir Charles had

stood for some little time here. He then proceeded down

the alley, and it was at the far end of it that his body

was discovered. One fact which has not been explained is

the statement of Barrymore that his master�s footprints

altered their character from the time that he passed the

moor-gate, and that he appeared from thence onward to have

been walking upon his toes. One Murphy, a gipsy

horse-dealer, was on the moor at no great distance at the

time, but he appears by his own confession to have been the

worse for drink. He declares that he heard cries but is

unable to state from what direction they came. No signs of

violence were to be discovered upon Sir Charles�s person,

and though the doctor�s evidence pointed to an almost

incredible facial distortion�so great that Dr. Mortimer

refused at first to believe that it was indeed his friend

and patient who lay before him�it was explained that that

is a symptom which is not unusual in cases of dyspn�a and

death from cardiac exhaustion. This explanation was borne

out by the post-mortem examination, which showed

long-standing organic disease, and the coroner�s jury

returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence.

It is well that this is so, for it is obviously of the

utmost importance that Sir Charles�s heir should settle at

the Hall and continue the good work which has been so sadly

interrupted. Had the prosaic finding of the coroner not

finally put an end to the romantic stories which have been

whispered in connection with the affair, it might have been

difficult to find a tenant for Baskerville Hall. It is

understood that the next of kin is Mr. Henry Baskerville,

if he be still alive, the son of Sir Charles Baskerville�s

younger brother. The young man when last heard of was in

America, and inquiries are being instituted with a view to

informing him of his good fortune.�

Dr. Mortimer refolded his paper and replaced it in his pocket.

�Those are the public facts, Mr. Holmes, in connection with the

death of Sir Charles Baskerville.�

�I must thank you,� said Sherlock Holmes, �for calling my

attention to a case which certainly presents some features of

interest. I had observed some newspaper comment at the time, but

I was exceedingly preoccupied by that little affair of the

Vatican cameos, and in my anxiety to oblige the Pope I lost touch

with several interesting English cases. This article, you say,

contains all the public facts?�

�It does.�

�Then let me have the private ones.� He leaned back, put his

finger-tips together, and assumed his most impassive and judicial

expression.

�In doing so,� said Dr. Mortimer, who had begun to show signs of

some strong emotion, �I am telling that which I have not confided

to anyone. My motive for withholding it from the coroner�s

inquiry is that a man of science shrinks from placing himself in

the public position of seeming to indorse a popular superstition.

I had the further motive that Baskerville Hall, as the paper

says, would certainly remain untenanted if anything were done to

increase its already rather grim reputation. For both these

reasons I thought that I was justified in telling rather less

than I knew, since no practical good could result from it, but

with you there is no reason why I should not be perfectly frank.

�The moor is very sparsely inhabited, and those who live near

each other are thrown very much together. For this reason I saw a

good deal of Sir Charles Baskerville. With the exception of Mr.

Frankland, of Lafter Hall, and Mr. Stapleton, the naturalist,

there are no other men of education within many miles. Sir

Charles was a retiring man, but the chance of his illness brought

us together, and a community of interests in science kept us so.

He had brought back much scientific information from South

Africa, and many a charming evening we have spent together

discussing the comparative anatomy of the Bushman and the

Hottentot.

�Within the last few months it became increasingly plain to me

that Sir Charles�s nervous system was strained to the breaking

point. He had taken this legend which I have read you exceedingly

to heart�so much so that, although he would walk in his own

grounds, nothing would induce him to go out upon the moor at

night. Incredible as it may appear to you, Mr. Holmes, he was

honestly convinced that a dreadful fate overhung his family, and

certainly the records which he was able to give of his ancestors

were not encouraging. The idea of some ghastly presence

constantly haunted him, and on more than one occasion he has

asked me whether I had on my medical journeys at night ever seen

any strange creature or heard the baying of a hound. The latter

question he put to me several times, and always with a voice

which vibrated with excitement.

�I can well remember driving up to his house in the evening some

three weeks before the fatal event. He chanced to be at his hall

door. I had descended from my gig and was standing in front of

him, when I saw his eyes fix themselves over my shoulder and

stare past me with an expression of the most dreadful horror. I

whisked round and had just time to catch a glimpse of something

which I took to be a large black calf passing at the head of the

drive. So excited and alarmed was he that I was compelled to go

down to the spot where the animal had been and look around for

it. It was gone, however, and the incident appeared to make the

worst impression upon his mind. I stayed with him all the

evening, and it was on that occasion, to explain the emotion

which he had shown, that he confided to my keeping that narrative

which I read to you when first I came. I mention this small

episode because it assumes some importance in view of the tragedy

which followed, but I was convinced at the time that the matter

was entirely trivial and that his excitement had no

justification.

�It was at my advice that Sir Charles was about to go to London.

His heart was, I knew, affected, and the constant anxiety in

which he lived, however chimerical the cause of it might be, was

evidently having a serious effect upon his health. I thought that

a few months among the distractions of town would send him back a

new man. Mr. Stapleton, a mutual friend who was much concerned at

his state of health, was of the same opinion. At the last instant

came this terrible catastrophe.

�On the night of Sir Charles�s death Barrymore the butler, who

made the discovery, sent Perkins the groom on horseback to me,

and as I was sitting up late I was able to reach Baskerville Hall

within an hour of the event. I checked and corroborated all the

facts which were mentioned at the inquest. I followed the

footsteps down the yew alley, I saw the spot at the moor-gate

where he seemed to have waited, I remarked the change in the

shape of the prints after that point, I noted that there were no

other footsteps save those of Barrymore on the soft gravel, and

finally I carefully examined the body, which had not been touched

until my arrival. Sir Charles lay on his face, his arms out, his

fingers dug into the ground, and his features convulsed with some

strong emotion to such an extent that I could hardly have sworn

to his identity. There was certainly no physical injury of any

kind. But one false statement was made by Barrymore at the

inquest. He said that there were no traces upon the ground round

the body. He did not observe any. But I did�some little distance

off, but fresh and clear.�

�Footprints?�

�Footprints.�

�A man�s or a woman�s?�

Dr. Mortimer looked strangely at us for an instant, and his voice

sank almost to a whisper as he answered.

�Mr. Holmes, they were the footprints of a gigantic hound!�