



Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street: A Life of the World's First Consulting Detective

William S. Baring-Gould

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From the Dust Jacket:

Although millions know of Sherlock Holmes through the chronicles of his exploits written by Dr. Watson, it is only now that, owing to his recent death, the full biography and facts of his life can be brought before the public. This volume brings together for the first time every known fact that can be fully authenticated about the life of one of the world's most extraordinary men, and reveals much more about him that has not been heretofore generally known. From twenty years' research into every possible source, the author has written as definitive an account as could ever be assembled. Sherlock Holmes was born on January 6th, 1854, the third and last son of Siger and Violet Holmes, of North Riding, Yorkshire. He traveled widely on the continent as a boy, where he learned six languages. Displaying most unusual talents at an early age, he attended an English boarding school, and in 1872 entered Oxford. He soon decided to train himself to become a consulting detective, and before long he was starting to take cases. Except for a period when he was an actor, he pursued his chosen career thereafter and of course became famous after Dr. Watson started to write about him. This book reveals far more than Watson ever could, including the whole story of his running battle with the infamous Professor Moriarty, his dangerous brush with Jack with Ripper, his long association and love for Irene Adler, the question of his own son, and the story of his retirement, the writing of his great book, and the circumstances of his death. In short, this book contains everything that can be told about Holmes. It is a marvelous reconstruction from very scattered sources, and the amazing but always scrupulously accurate story of a great man.

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Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street: A Life of the World's First Consulting Detective Details

Date : Published August 7th 1995 by Wings Books / Random House Value Publishing (first published 1962)
ISBN : 9780517038178
Author : William S. Baring-Gould
Format : Hardcover 336 pages
Genre : Mystery, Fiction, Crime

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From Reader Review Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street: A Life of the World's First Consulting Detective for online ebook

C.O. Bonham says

For a biography of a fictional person it really wasn't very interesting. The narrative is largely just paraphrasing of Doyle's adventures with a lot of speculation thrown in.

If you do decide to read this do try to find a copy of "Profile By Gaslight: an irregular reader about the private life of Sherlock Holmes" Edited by: Edgar W. Smith Published by: Simon & Schuster NY 1944. "Profile By Gaslight" is referenced a lot in Baring-Gould's foot notes and is on it's own a much more interesting read.

Liz says

This is a pastiche biography of Sherlock Holmes which maps out a chronology of all of his adventures and includes Baring-Gould's headcanons about Holmes. I mostly read this for research purposes. Since this book was so influential among Sherlockians, I figured it was required reading. Props to this guy for doing the hard work of putting together a timeline, but the reading was a bit of a slog at times, since it was more or less a summary of the canon. Baring-Gould's headcanons also wildly diverge from my own. I was getting kinda choked up at the death scene until it ended with Holmes's last words being "Irene, Irene" and I just rolled my eyes and sighed heavily. like...are you for real... Apparently so.

So yeah, 2 stars since it was just okay.

Corey says

A 'biography' of a fictional character has a certain meta feel to it, and this measures up, with footnotes and references to other fictional characters and novels, and a deep comprehension of the writings of Dr. Watson. To any fan of Sherlock Holmes this book will be both indispensable and delightful. Oh, and Baring-Gould even solves the mystery of Jack the Ripper.

Rena Sherwood says

Once you read all of the novels and short stories about Sherlock Holmes written by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, you want more. One of the first names you'll come across whether reading a pastiche or Sherlockian "studies" is William S. Baring-Gould, a sort of Patron Saint of Sherlockians. He wrote a lot but is best known for his annotated Sherlock Holmes stories and this book.

Which is a shame since this book sucks. Yes, it's influential and was the first to try and write a straight

"biography" of Sherlock Holmes (Playing the Game by pretending that he actually lived all the way) but half of this book is direct quotes from the Sir Arthur Conan Doyle stories. That gets old fast. It's like hearing a *Star Wars* fan quote long passages of dialogue and expect to be applauded for it.

There are some flashes of originality but they are bizarre in the extreme. Okay, it's a nice thought that Holmes may have lived to be over 100 and his last thought was of Irene Adler but HONESTLY.

And what's with the name William Scott Sherlock Holmes? I can understand Baring-Gould trying to put a little of himself into the myth of his hero, but where the hell did the Scott part come from? Usually when there is an un-Canonical "fact" added to the Holmes legend, it's based on something in the Conan Doyle stories. Here these "facts" just come from out of the blue.

M.R. Graham says

A fascinating piece of scholarship, expertly blending fact with surmise. Baring-Gould does an excellent job of untangling Watson's obfuscations, reading between the lines, and catching odd clues left by the Detective's biographer.

Unfortunately, the conclusion left something to be desired. One would think that so respected a Holmesian scholar would have noted that, to date, The Times has yet to publish an obituary for Sherlock Holmes. I credit The Times' editorial staff with both the resources and the integrity to ensure such publication in the event of the Detective's death; since no such notice has been yet been posted, it seems unlikely that Mr. Holmes has yet shuffled off this mortal coil. For so egregious an oversight, I must deduct two stars from an otherwise stellar biography.

Anthony says

What an incredibly fun read. Yes, it's dry and clinical in spots, but what biography isn't? Baring-Gould clearly did his research, drawing from Conan Doyle's published stories of the Great Detective and building on concepts introduced by other Holmesian scholars. He here constructs a fully detailed and authentic biography not just of Sherlock Holmes but of his brother Mycroft and their parents. (Given somewhat short shrift is oldest Holmes brother Sherrinford, a country squire.) Baring-Gould's work clearly laid the groundwork for so many of the "fictional biographies" that came later, including Baring-Gould's own Nero Wolfe of West Thirty-Fourth Street (which I intend to read in the next few days) but perhaps most notably the great Philip Jose Farmer's *Tarzan Alive!* and *Doc Savage: His Apocalyptic Life* (both of which I intend to finally reread in 2016).

I see occasional comments that the book feels out of date given how much further Holmes scholarship has been committed since this book was published in 1962. I felt totally drawn into the book, and any "missing" fact of Holmes' life that I feel I know from some later source (such as Laurie R. King's novels of Holmes' "retirement" to Sussex) didn't detract from the depth of work Baring-Gould did with the materials available to him over 50 years ago.

I particularly enjoyed the author's conception of Holmes' childhood, including his early encounter with Professor James Moriarty; his description of Holmes' discovery of the true identity of Jack the Ripper (many authors have told such tales; Baring-Gould's feels the least fantastic, most plausible of the ones I've read); and of Holmes' relation to the aforementioned Nero Wolfe.

The Holmes Chronology at the back of the book was also a fun read.

Nina says

This is the second attempt at a Sherlock Holmes biography that I've read, and I ended up being slightly bored by both of them. I guess the problem is that at some point both authors can't do much else than retell the canon stories. Baring-Gould did this to the point where he paraphrased or just quoted loooooong passages from the canon, which was not necessary and didn't even fit with the style of the rest of the book. Why would you have extensive dialogue in a (fictional) biography? But maybe that's just me nitpicking. What I really enjoyed were the chapters where he allowed his imagination to run free. I *loved* the description of Holmes's family and his early life, as well as the account of the Ripper killings.

Paul Beech says

I felt strangely uncomfortable reading this book. About two thirds of the text is simply lifted from the original stories, including whole reams of speech - not in any inventive way, but simply cut-up and/or paraphrased. What's left after that are chunks of pure speculation and invention dressed-up as real fact, with very little evidence put forward to back-up the author's claims. He even feels the need to invent stories and dialogue, splicing them into the original texts without once stating that they are his own creations. And nowhere is it said explicitly that Holmes is purely fictional: the whole book is written straight, with no tinge of humour, with no knowing wink. This is extremely problematic, particularly as some people may not be aware that Holmes is a fictional character, and even if they do, how are they to know (unless they can recite the original stories backwards) which bits are from Conan Doyle's own pen and which are fabrications? This is especially troubling as Baring-Gould has Holmes involved in the investigation into the Ripper murders, and even includes original reports from The Times newspaper to add to the authenticity. Most of his speculations concerning Holmes's early life and final days are at best made-up of wild guesses based on no firm evidence, and at worst pure fantasy. A book to avoid, even if you are among the most dedicated Sherlockian scholars.

Ana says

All the respect for the hardcore Sherlock Holmes fans that love this book. But I personally don't understand its existence. I couldn't get through it. And I tried. Multiple times.

The Cannibal says

Voici le genre d'étude consacrée à la vie et à la carrière de Sherlock Holmes réservée exclusivement aux

malades, aux fans, aux dingues, aux mordus du détective de Baker Street.

En effet, cette biographie de Sherlock Holmes est à réserver pour les fins connaisseurs du canon holmésien et exclusivement pour eux !

N'allez pas croire que je sois devenue une égoïste pur jus, mais, premièrement, nous sommes face à une édition qui est devenue très rare dû au fait qu'une partie du stock de l'éditeur Buchet-Chastel ait brûlé, et vous savez que ce qui est rare est cher...

La même version éditée chez Engrace ne se trouve pas partout, faut fouiner dans les bouquinerie dévouées au genre policier...

Ça, ce n'était que la raison la moins grave pour laquelle je déconseille aux gens de l'acheter ! La seconde raison est, à mon sens, la plus importante et la plus grave...

Là où c'est le pire, c'est que sur cette étude, il faudrait ajouter un bandeau-titre sur la couverture, avec, noté dessus en gras et en rouge « ATTENTION – Ceci n'est en aucun cas une biographie de référence sur Sherlock Holmes » comme pourrait vous le laisser croire le 4ème de couverture ».

Baring-Gould connaît son canon holmésien, il a, sans aucun doute, d'excellentes références sur Sherlock Holmes, il l'a étudié en long et en large (et en travers)...

Mais dans cette « biographie » de mes couilles (et je ne m'excuserai pas sur le fait que je ne possède pas de couilles) l'auteur mélange tout, sans distinction : les faits attestés (canoniques), les hypothèses plus ou moins plausibles, sans parler des trucs les plus farfelus péchés ailleurs que dans les écrits de Conan Doyle (généralement dans la multitude de pastiche consacrés à Holmes).

Et quand il y a des blancs, des trous, des non-dits, c'est pas grave, l'auteur bouche les trous, invente des faits, des noms, des écoles fréquentées par Holmes, jouant avec le canon et les hypothèses non avérées qu'il balance comme véridiques et canoniques.

Alors, s'il faut déjà bien tout à l'holmésien du dimanche pour démêler le vrai du faux, un néophyte qui lirait cet ouvrage, se retrouverait avec des connaissances faussées dès le départ.

La faute aussi au 4ème de couverture qui ne nous prévient pas de ce mélange entre la réalité canonique et la fiction, et vous, pauvre lecteur, sans vous douter de la moindre vilénie, vous serez tout content d'apprendre les noms des parents de Sherlock, le nom de son autre frère, l'endroit où il fit ses études...

Bref, TOUT ce qui chez les holmésiens est sujet à suppositions, supputations, déductions (jamais certaines) ou discussions sans fin, se retrouvent, ici, écrit comme si c'était parole d'évangile...

Le lecteur non-averti qui, durant sa lecture, n'aurait pas les récits canoniques sous la main pour vérifier les dires, penserait avoir devant lui la carrière officielle de Sherlock Holmes à partir des écrits de Conan Doyle alors qu'on y mêle, à foison, des éléments non-canoniques, sans vous prévenir que telle ou telle chose provient en fait d'hypothèses hypothétiques, de déductions, mais dont on ne saura jamais le fin fond.

Le danger étant, qu'à la fin, sur le long terme, on considère ce qui est dans cette fausse biographie comme véritable et non pas comme des inventions de l'esprit d'un auteur qui a voulu faire passer toutes les études holmésiennes comme faisant partie de la réalité canonique.

Ce problème est devenu réalité puisque certaines de ces inventions de l'esprit ont fini par être considérées comme appartenant réellement au canon et on les retrouve, noires sur blanc, dans de nombreux pastiches ou études holmésiennes, avec, en prime, leur source notée dans la biographie (Moi, Sherlock Holmes de Baring-Gould). Bravo ! (ironie)

Anybref, vu le prix de l'ouvrage qui est rare, vu que l'on est face à une fausse biographie, vu que le néophyte ne saura pas trier le bon grain de l'ivraie, et vu qu'on remplit des pages et des pages avec des véritables extraits canoniques, je n'ai qu'un mot à vous dire...

PASSEZ VOTRE CHEMIN !!!

Sauf si, comme moi, vous être collectionneuse dans l'âme et à l'affut du moindre ouvrage consacré à votre détective préféré ou si, comme moi aussi, vous voulez juste informer les pauvres lecteurs/lectrices innocents qui seraient prêt à tomber dans les filets racoleurs de cet ouvrage.

R. C. says

How can a story that's basically a clever compilation of "facts" from many other stories be so fascinating? My favorite part was reading the info on Holmes' dad that was actually lifted directly from The Lost World's description of Professor Challenger. Uh-huh, origin of Holmes' neuroticism, check. Can I add to this review hearts and flutters and stars for the "biographer"? *~*~<3~*~* Mr. Baring-Gould *~*~<3~*~*

Kathy Petersen says

I've been reading the entire Holmes collection chronologically by publication date; Baring-Gould has written this biography using the chronology of the cases themselves. This makes me want to start over -- but I won't since B-G has provided sufficient detail to remind me of the tale he briefly, and without spoilers, describes. He also reveals some hitherto unknown facets of Holmes' life after Reichenbach and before the adventure of the empty house. (Rex Stout would neither confirm nor deny...)

Tim says

Late last night, I finished this singular title from Holmesian studies: Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street by the late W.S. Baring-Gould, a Holmesian scholar of note. (First published, 1962; this vintage paperback edition is from 1963, the second printing.)

This might be the pinnacle of scholarly literature concentrating on "The Game" of treating Holmes and Watson as real people (according to Wikipedia, Ronald Knox, the English theologian, gets credit for inventing "The Game"). It's a complete biography of Holmes, using the canon (extensively) and weaving in interstitial details from the fertile minds of Baring-Gould and other writers.

It's actually kind of a disturbing read, since it does portray the death of the World's Greatest Consulting Detective (1957), even going so far as having his last words be "Irene. Irene!".

Extensive research reveals much, for example, about Holmes in Tibet (for which I recommend Jamyang Norbu's *The Mandala of Sherlock Holmes: The Adventures of the Great Detective in Tibet*; the original edition has the wonderful Mark Tansey version of the "fatal" incident at Reichenbach Falls (or a very good pastiche of that)).

Ron Chicaferro says

If you're a fan of the world's first consulting detective then you might want to read this wonderful book, *Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street* by William S. Baring-Gould. The book was published in 1962 so it may be hard to find but it is the most definitive of the Holmes books. Baring-Gould spent 20 years researching all the aspects of the Conan-Doyle stories to either prove or disprove many of the aspects of the Holmes stories that have been adopted by other authors. It's a fascinating look into a character that, by the end of the book, you'll swear really lived.

Iceman says

Sherlock Holmes é um ícone da literatura e, atrevo-me a dizer, do meio da investigação criminal.

Figura criada em 1887 por Sir Conan Doyle, o sucesso foi imediato. Para além de elevar a arte de detective particular a patamares nunca alcançados, Doyle conseguiu criar uma vedeta internacional e o mais curioso é que essa personagem nunca existiu.

Mesmo mais de 100 anos depois do fim das suas aventuras, é impossível não nos deixarmos entusiasmar e impressionar pelos casos criados e pelo carisma da personagem, facto que quanto a mim, é um dos principais razões do sucesso.

No entanto o fascínio de milhões de leitores fez com que a obra de Conan Doyle começasse a ser analisada ao pormenor. Esquecendo-se, ou talvez não, tratar-se de uma figura ficcional muitos começaram a apontar falhas nas histórias, vícios secretos e até segredos que não abonavam muito a favor de Holmes, alterando até um pouco a imagem imaculada de Holmes.

Em "A Biografia de Sherlock Holmes", W.S. Baring-Gould simplesmente preenche, ou procura fazê-lo, todas as lacunas deixadas em aberto por Sir Conan Doyle.

Toda a biografia, embora obviamente ficcional, procura mostrar-se real, chegando ao ponto de mostrar imagens dos personagens como se de figuras reais se tratassem.

Iniciando-se no nascimento de Sherlock Holmes, é aqui narrado a sua infância, a sua família e como ele chega a detective particular. A vida de Sherlock Holmes é desvendada como a de um simples homem que nasce com um dom e uma enorme capacidade de observação.

Sendo eu um admirador de Sherlock Holmes (confesso que li mais de uma vez todas as suas aventuras e tenho em DVD a célebre série da BBC com Jeremy Brett como protagonista no papel de Sherlock Holmes), fiquei fascinado com a imensa capacidade e simplicidade com que Baring-Gould escreve esta biografia.

Passo a explicar:

Fundamentalmente esta biografia parece ter sido escrita pelo próprio Conan Doyle. O estilo é o mesmo, até a forma como o detective faz as suas observações são semelhantes, denotando uma imensa pesquisa e análise à obra de Conan Doyle por parte de Baring-Gould. Depois o escritor para escrever esta biografia, para criar todo um passado de Holmes e até alguns factos futuros, faz algo que é óbvio mas que nunca ninguém o tinha efectuado, simplesmente ele utiliza as próprias informações que Conan Doyle ia atirando sobre Holmes e até Watson em cada uma das suas aventuras.

Conan Doyle em cada aventura desvendava novas facetas. Algumas inesperadas, mas ia preenchendo ou dando dicas sobre a família de Holmes, os seus amigos, as suas manias, etc. Baring-Gould colecta todos esses factos e preenche-os, dá-lhes conteúdo, é como uma ponta de novelo que começa a desenrolar, explora os factos criados pelo próprio Conan Doyle. Brilhante!

Brilhante também, e penso que é o primeiro escritor a fazê-lo, coloca Sherlock Holmes a investigar e a descobrir a identidade de Jack “O Estripador”, célebre assassino que aterrorizou as ruas de Londres em 1889, precisamente na época em que a reputação de Sherlock Holmes estava em alta. E a descoberta da identidade, pese embora não tenha achado que tivesse sido muito complicada, tem o condão de surpreender pela identidade do assassino e curioso como nunca foi avançada essa hipótese, embora faça todo o sentido.

Em suma, é um livro muito interessante, uma espécie de esticar das aventuras originais de Holmes onde todos se irão deleitar com a sua enorme capacidade na arte da lógica dedutiva, assim como em conhecer factos nunca conhecidos e que surpreenderão.
