



Adventure XXVII -- The Hound of the Baskervilles

Remember the first time you read *The Hound of the Baskervilles*? Remember how, even if you had seen one of the filmed versions first, the words on the printed page did so much more than pictures to evoke the wild setting, the eccentric and complex characters, and most of all, the eerie sense that the explanation of the mystery might lie in the realm of the supernatural after all? This is the story from which I think it might be said that Sherlock Holmes achieved his everlasting reputation as the greatest detective of fact or fiction. It is a story so thrilling, so well constructed, and so well written that it is our first choice to give to our non-Sherlockian friends, saying, "Read this, and believe!"

It is also the story from which we Hounds get our name, and after all these years, is there anything new under the sun for us to talk about? Yes, I think so. The mix of Hounds is ever-changing, bringing us a new set of minds and backgrounds and interests. And even if some of the basic themes we discuss may recur from year to year, there is always more to learn and discover. As always, please consider my comments and questions to be nothing more than a few suggested starting-points for discussion. Or maybe you should think of them as old boots, passed under the Hounds' noses in the fervent hope that they will pick up the scent and join the pursuit in full cry — in search of the quarry of their own choosing.



Questions

Stapleton is such a great villain! What was he really like? Was he an emotional man who kept himself under strict control, or was he a cold and calculating man whose outbursts of temper were nothing more than play-acting? Or was he both at once? Does his butterfly collecting strike you as an innocent paradox in his

otherwise evil character, or does he manage to make even this innocent hobby seem like something creepy? Which is worse: a plotting criminal like Stapleton, or a lunatic like Selden?

Beryl Garcia was obviously attracted to Baskerville men. However, her husband and Sir Henry were as unlike one another as it is possible for two men to be. Weren't they? Can you think of any characteristics that the Baskerville first cousins had in common?

What do you think would have happened to Beryl Stapleton if Holmes hadn't been there to thwart her husband's plans? And what about Laura Lyons?

A few moor questions: Why didn't Holmes turn Selden in to the police? Couldn't he have done so while still keeping his presence in the area a secret from everyone except the authorities? It's possible that a police hunt on the moor might have delayed the solution of the Baskerville problem, but even so, was Holmes right to leave a homicidal maniac on the loose?

The setting of HOUN not only creates a terrific atmosphere, but also somewhat precludes the interference of the outside world in the events of the story. Could it be said that the Hound is something like a "locked room" mystery, even though it is set in the open air?

In my introduction, I mentioned the film versions of the Hound — and I may live to regret it. I myself prefer the Rathbone Hound version above all others for overall enjoyment, but I love Christopher Ravenscroft as Stapleton in the Tom Baker version. Without doing a poll, would any other Hounds care to comment on their favorite Hound moments, and to weigh the merits of even those versions that didn't quite come up to the mark?

Rosemary Michaud