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As the creator of Sherlock Holmes, "the world's most famous man who never was," Arthur Conan Doyle remains one of our favorite writers; his work is read with affection--and sometimes obsession--the world over. Doctor, writer, spiritualist: his life was no less fascinating than his fiction.

Conan Doyle grew up in relative poverty in Edinburgh, with the mental illness of his artistically gifted but alcoholic father casting a shadow over his early life. He struggled both as a young doctor and in his early attempts to sell short stories, having only limited success until Sherlock Holmes became a publishing phenomenon and propelled him to worldwide fame. While he enjoyed the celebrity Holmes brought him, he also felt that the stories damaged his literary reputation. Beyond his writing, Conan Doyle led a full life, participating in the Boer War, falling in love with another woman while his wife was dying of tuberculosis, campaigning against injustice, and converting to Spiritualism, a move that would bewilder his friends and fans.

During his lifetime Conan Doyle wrote more than fifteen hundred letters to members of his family, most notably his mother, revealing his innermost thoughts, fears and hopes; and Russell Miller is the first biographer to have been granted unlimited access to Conan Doyle's private correspondence. *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle* also makes use of the writer's personal papers, unseen for many years, and is the first book to draw fully on the Richard Lancelyn Green archive, the world's most comprehensive collection of Conan Doyle material.

The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle: A Biography Details

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From Reader Review The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle: A Biography for online ebook

Mark says

Adventures was the wrong word to put in the title of this book. As presented he wasn't much of a swashbuckling figure though he did appear to be something of a sportsman. His trips to Africa and the Arctic are given short shrift. When he was in the Boer War, he was a visiting physician and sometime correspondent for the papers back in Britain.

Shrug.

Wasn't what I was expecting from the book.

And discovering that Arthur Conan Doyle was embarrassed by Sherlock was a "letting the air out of the balloon" moment for me.

Jill Hutchinson says

Just finished this biography of the creator of the world's most well-known detective and found it as fascinating as Holmes' adventures. The author gives a detailed (but not boring) look at Doyle's life from his start as a physician to the end of his life when he was involved in the world of spiritualists. His romantic affair with Jean Leckie who would become his second wife is examined and the author arrives at the conclusion that it was chaste as long as Doyle's ailing first wife was still living. You make the call although I tend to agree based on Doyle's code of ethics and morality. It is irrelevant in the larger scheme of things.

Doyle's disgruntlement with the character of Sherlock Holmes causes him to kill him in the famous fall over Reichenbach Falls but public outcry forced him to bring him back from the dead. Doyle had the desire to be acclaimed as a serious author and attained that goal to an extent with his histories of the Boer War and other events of note. Those books today make rather tough going but Holmes will live forever.

If you are a fan, please read this biography.....I found it enjoyable and engrossing.

Kitty Moore says

Conan Doyle was a Perfect Victorian Gentleman, for better and for worse, and I think I would have liked him very much.

This biography is very good, if a little dense/overwhelming. I'm not sure if this is necessarily Miller's fault, Conan Doyle lived life to the absolute fullest and there's a lot of ground to cover.

Mike says

I have always been a fan of Sherlock and I knew of the antipathy of the author towards his star creation, so, of course, I have been curious about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and this book answered all the questions.

Unfortunately, it answered much more than I really wanted to know. It is exhaustive and exhausting. Still it is a biography I am glad I read. Doyle is a fascinating tragic figure.

He tries to live the adventurous life and has grandiose dreams. Here is a man who creates Challenger in the Lost World, Sherlock in a grand series of mystery stories and yet he loves his creation Sir Nigel and assesses almost forgotten novels as his prize creation.

He travels to South Africa where he is Watson in the Boer War and throughout his life he travels the world.

In the end, this man who can create the intellectual detective - Holmes - who possesses no patience with the frills of mysticism, finds himself the world's foremost advocate of spiritualism.

He is deceived in a way that will mark the final decades of his life, ruin friendship, and lose him both money and respect. He dies happy and rich so it does not destroy him, but he cannot see through the trickery. This pits him against Houdini, the great magician, who wants to expose the fraud and from friendship they grow to competitive opposites like Holmes and Moriarity.

Olafs B?rzi?š says

Gr?mata ir interesanta. Neesmu ?rk?rt?gi liels Šerloka Holmsa piekrit?js, lai gan plaukt? gu? Holmsa st?stu kr?jums ?das v?kos. Ta?u man ?oti pat?k biogr?fijas, un Sers Arturs Konans Doils jau sen bija manu noskat?to un k?roto sarakst?. Rasela Millera darbs ir visaptveroš, smalki aprakstot gan vi?a dz?vi no dzimšanas l?dz n?vei (ar? pirms un p?c), no ?rsta prakses l?dz v?l?kajai kaisl?bai ar spiritu?lismu. Gr?mat? ir min?ti, š?iet, visi vi?a iev?rojam?kie darbi, sniegti to satura ?ss kopsavilkums un notikumu atspogu?ojums, kad tie tapa. Protams, ir ar? labi aprakst?ta 19. gadsimta Lielbrit?nija, t?s dal?ba 1. Pasaules kar?, B?ru kar?, t?s tiesu sist?ma, kas reiz?m piesprieda aps?dz?tajiem n?v?gi k??dainus spriedumus. Biogr?fija ir laba, vien?gi tulkojums gan var?ja tikt r?p?g?k p?rbaud?ts, daudzviet izlaisti burti, neieliktas garumz?mes, aizmirstas p?di?as un ir atrodami t?di tulko?ja sti?i k? "artisti" un "antreprenieri". Ja ir v?lme izlas?t par vienu no v?stur? slaven?kajiem rakstniekiem, tad š? biogr?fija neliks vilties.

Hannah Garden says

WELL. Surely this is packed with fascinating things I was heretofore unaware of. On the other hand I dislike biographies. There's almost always this feeling like the author has to get one over on the subject--like has to show us that truly *he* (the biographer) is just ever so much wiser and more insightful than whoever the subject is. Which is wildly frustrating, right? because the biographer gets to work with all these private papers. In our private selves, we are none of us wise. That is why we keep those selves private. Because they are insane and terrified and obsessive and weak and lonesome and hopeful in this really idiot childlike way. But then some damn biographer comes along and peeves around in all your junk and then puts some shitty condescending spin on presenting your poor private crazy desperate self to this great blind yawping mammoth of an audience. YUCK. All of this is not to say that Conan Doyle did not appear frequently enough fairly publicly unhinged, but only that biographers almost always seem like dicks to me in this really cheap unnecessary way, and that this biographer did not turn out to be an exception (though he was not

horrible and I would recommend this book).

Douglas says

A well-done tome on the life of Arthur Conan Doyle. Ironically, one of the book's main emphasis' was that Doyle wrote many other works and genres of works OTHER than the Sherlock Holmes series. Nonetheless, from the very beginning of the book, I, like oh so many, was only trying to find out about the history, the situation, the origin of the Sherlock Holmes' stories, and felt that I was always biding my time when I was reading about his historical works, his science fiction works, and his involvement with Spiritualism. Before reading this book, I was very ignorant that Doyle had written anything else besides Sherlock Holmes!

And one further point--this book tells of Doyle's firm belief in fairies...I never knew this!

Caroline says

As with any great literary creation, there is always the tendency to conflate the character with his creator, to expect to find traces of the former in the latter. Sherlock Holmes and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle should be the primary example of the danger of this approach - since it is often hard to square Conan Doyle's creation, all cold, hard logic and rationalism, with Conan Doyle himself, with his bonhomie, affability and credulous belief in ghosts and mediums and fairies. One can only imagine what Sherlock Holmes would have made of the Cottingley Fairies saga, for example.

Conan Doyle had very much a love-hate relationship with his most famous creation; Holmes may have paid the bills, but Conan Doyle felt the public demand for more Holmes stories diverted attention from what he believed were his much-more deserving works: his historical novels and his later Spiritualism-inspired science fiction works. Those looking for great insight into Sherlock Holmes and his creation will not find it here, as perhaps befits a biography of Conan Doyle himself - Holmes has come to be more important to posterity than he ever was to his author.

But this is a thoroughly enjoyable book, portraying Conan Doyle 'warts and all' - his impoverished childhood in Edinburgh, his early years as a doctor, his adventures on an Arctic whaler, an African steamer and his role as an army surgeon in the Boer War, his emerging literary career, his friendships with many of the great names of the day - JM Barrie, Harry Houdini, Oscar Wilde and Douglas Haig, to name but a few.

Whilst it is hard to sympathise with his gullibility and unshakeable belief in messages from the hereafter; and his falling in love with another woman whilst his first wife was dying of TB, insisting that it was platonic and elevated and harming no-one, hardly casts him in an honourable light, it is never anything less than enjoyable to spend 500+ pages in the company of Russell Miller and Arthur Conan Doyle. This is biography at its best.

Lillian says

I very much enjoyed the second volume of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (the only one I've read), but it wasn't Conan Doyle's stories that drew me to this book; in all honesty, it was BBC's *Sherlock*, a thrilling edge-of-your-seat show if I ever did see one. I actually started watching *Sherlock* before I read the Holmes adventures, and that inspired me to try out the stories; imagine my delight as I discovered "Easter eggs" in *Sherlock*, there for no greater purpose than to bring joy to those who had read the books. Nearly every episode is based, at least slightly, on a real Sherlock Holmes story, which I find wonderful. But look at me, going on about a TV show: this is a book review, for a very particular book, and I haven't yet said a word about *The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle*. So here goes:

Firstly, I would like to confront my fellow reviewers. So many of the reviews for this book insist that Miller had an air of superiority over Doyle; that he scoffed at the stupidity of the other, and showed openly that he thought the creator of those great stories to be a fool. I disagree. It's quiet true that Miller clearly didn't believe in Conan Doyle's chosen religion of Spiritualism, but he never downright outed it, or really said anything against it at all. He merely gave the backstory of Conan Doyle's "proofs" where there was one to give, so as to avoid raising a false impression: a completely fair move, in my opinion. Miller did a very good job in the aspect of staying indifferent; he had more success, I think, than I would have had.

As far as writing style goes, I enjoyed Miller's in the main, but I do have a fault to find with it: he seems to think that a page is wasted if there isn't at least one quotation on it. This book is around 500 pages, and I swear there can't be more than twenty without quotations. It gets rather tiring, and though I truly enjoyed the book, I couldn't help being annoyed when Miller used descriptions of somebody else's at times when his own style of work would have been perfectly fitting.

The Adventures of Arthur Conan Doyle is a biography rich in detail: a virtue I crave. The quotations - though tiring when unnecessary - provide an insight into Doyle's world when properly used (his letters to his mother are excellent examples), and the reader can tell that Miller strove for accuracy. I know some of you don't care for too much detail or technicality - when I was reading reviews for *Apollo 13*, one of my favorite books, reviewers spent half of their post complaining about all the space lingo - but I do. And if you, like me, want a precise account full of detail, you've got to read this. You've just got to.

Charlotte says

Whew! I thought the book would never end. I was so glad when I found the Epilogue before I had reached 89% on my Kindle Fire.

I would have preferred that the author keep his opinions to himself and report only the facts of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's life and his interactions with others. I did find it amusing that the author more than once criticized Conan Doyle for going into too much detail in some of his books. I wanted to shout to the author, "It takes one to know one!" Mr. Miller seemed to get side-tracked very often.

There were a number of typos, punctuation errors, and spelling errors in the book even when one takes into account the Brit's way of spelling. I think there were several instances where the wrong word was chosen by the author, too, but my Kindle dictionary often just said, "No Definition Found".

It was obvious that the author did a great deal of research for this book, but I feel there was TMI for things that don't matter to the reader who wanted to know more about Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Nikki Stafford says

I'm currently working on a book on Sherlock, so I decided to learn more about the man behind him. A fascinating read, this was the first biography to have full access to Doyle's letters when they were finally released to the public about a decade ago after being embroiled in family disputes for many years. Most of ACD's early years are shaped through his letters to his mother, whom he called The Mam, and then he went to med school, met Joseph Bell (the real-life inspiration for Sherlock Holmes), married, had two kids, and started writing. He was paid a shockingly small amount of money for the first SH novel, and never received a dime of royalties for it, yet by the end of his life he was commanding thousands of pounds per 1,000 words to publish his stories and novels, even though they paled in comparison to the quality of the Holmes material. When his wife, Touie, contracted TB, he became enamoured of another woman, but vowed not to touch her until Touie's death (which took another 8 years to happen), and after she dies he becomes another man. He has nothing more to do with the children from his first marriage, as evidenced in letters written by daughter Mary to her younger brother Kingsley, and later in life gets bogged down in spiritualism and mysticism, hiring mediums and convincing people that WWI was fought basically to show us a window to the other side. Oh, and then there's the two-volume series he writes about fairies. Yeesh. All in all, though, he was a brilliant man who lived a brilliant life, and created the single most famous literary character of all time, one that still resonates today.

Ian says

A fascinating biography of ACD using a ton of material not previously made available, including huge numbers of letters he wrote to his mother. The story traces ACD's upbringing, his schooling at an impossibly strict Jesuit college, medical school and then medical practice. It was at this time - with patients "pouring in at the rate of two a week" that Doyle found time to hone his writing technique, and to develop several characters including the great Sherlock Holmes.

The latter part of the book deals with the most inexplicable part of Doyle's later life - his obsession with spiritualism. Given his medical background and the fact that he had abandoned the church quite early in his life, it seems strange that he would take so much ridicule on the chin as he led his lecture tours all over the world.

Glenys says

I enjoyed this readable account of an interesting life, a man who seems full of contradictions. Although creator of the paragon of forensic scrutiny of evidence, Sherlock Holmes, he turns out to be childlike, credulous in his defence of psychic mediums and belief in fairies. He was a man of honour and gallantry yet deluded himself that his dying wife was ignorant of, and unhurt by, his love affair with another woman. Like all good biographies this does justice to these complexities and tells us much about the age in which he lived as well as the life itself.

Ang says

I got this book because I wanted to more about the man who thought up Sherlock Holmes and who believed in fairies. I got that and so much more. Some good and bad. Miller is incredibly thorough in the book to the point that it starts to take away from the work itself. Also as a British author he uses words and spellings that might be hard on American readers. Finally there were also several grammatical errors in the book.

Ilze says

slavenu cilv?ku biogr?fijas nav ?rt?kais veids, k? iepaz?ties ar laikmeta garu/sabiedr?bas raksturojumu/v?sturiskaj?m perip?tij?m, gluži vienalga, k? m?s to saucam,- t?s j?lasa tikai t?d? gad?jum?, ja patieš?m esi ieinteres?ts izv?l?t?s personas dz?vesg?jum?. ja neesi ieineres?ts, gandr?z 500 lappušu gara apcere izv?ršas par mokošu s?zifa akmeni, no k? gr?ti atkrat?ties - ir komplic?ti v?rot un l?dzp?rdz?vot doila transform?cijai no š. holmsa demiurga l?dz personai, kas tic fej?m, ektoplazmai, spokiem un medijiem. kopum? jau ir okei - doils ir pietiekami daudzš?aut?aina un ekstravaganta persona, kas piln?gi attaisno tik izsme?ošas biogr?fijas esam?bu

*m?nuss korektorei - tekst? ir daudz p?rrakst?šan?s k??du, kas nepadara to baud?m?ku
