

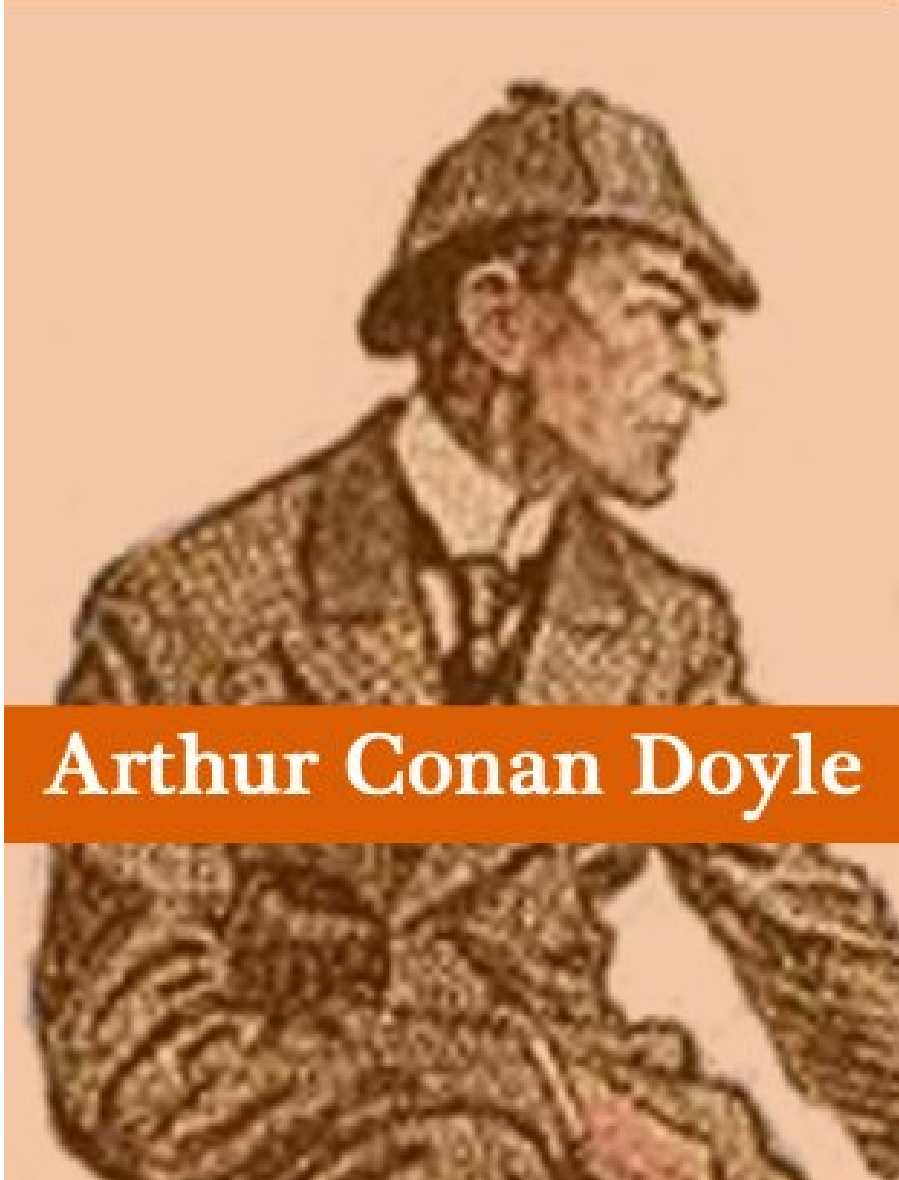
THE SIGN OF THE FOUR (ANNOTATED) BY ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE



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THE SIGN OF THE FOUR



Arthur Conan Doyle

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Review

Perhaps the greatest of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries is this: that when we talk of him we invariably fall into the fancy of his existence -- T. S. Eliot

From the Publisher

"Barker adapts character voices adroitly, showing an especially uncanny ear for stuffed-shirt aristocrats."

From the Back Cover

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A secret pact between four convicts and two prison guards over the division of buried treasure can only lead to one thing: murder and another case for Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson.

The Sign of the Four is the second Sherlock Holmes novel and in many ways presents a more human side to the great detective. For instance the reader finds out about his drug habit and we discover that Holmes is not as omnipotent as we might imagine. And for the fortunate Dr Watson there is the opportunity to meet a person who will change his life forever.

This edition includes "An Introduction to Sherlock Holmes" by J. S. Williams.

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Most helpful customer reviews

45 of 47 people found the following review helpful.

Oh my gosh....AMAZING

By A Customer

What starts out as a small meeting with an unknown man turns into a murder mystery for Sherlock Holmes. I don't like to spoil endings, but let me say this: if you think the book is boring at first, don't stop reading: there is a TON of action towards the end.

48 of 51 people found the following review helpful.

Mixed quality-- But some excellent stories can be found.

By Patrick J. Callahan

I purchased this book in part on the strength of three 5-star reviews on this site. This is a very handsome hardcover volume at a surprisingly reasonable price.

There are three classifications of stories in the book. First, stories primarily written by Adrian Conan Doyle, with some input from JD Carr. Second, two stories written almost entirely by Mr. Carr, possibly with some slight input from Doyle. Third, six stories written solely by Mr. Adrian Doyle.

Since I have read a number of mysteries by Carr, and expected much, I was most disappointed to find his two stories the weakest in the book. In one instance, after reading the first page I was able to anticipate the entire plot. In the other case, I simply found the story flat, uninteresting, and narrowly derivative of similar stories in the original Holmes canon.

To the contrary, some of the stories by Mr. Doyle cannot be praised enough. One that's typical, "The Adventure of Foulkes Rath," seems up to the work of Arthur Conan Doyle himself. All in all, Adrian Doyle admirably captures the style and brooding Gothic tone that so typifies many of the best stories in the original Holmes canon. Moreover, Adrian Doyle's stories have a kind of life and warmth that brings the Edwardian world alive for the reader.

I would give the book five stars were it not for a few tales that seem off the pace, and decidedly inferior to the others. Alas-- and surprisingly-- these are from JD Carr's pen. Perhaps Carr tried too diligently to write an impeccably logical mystery, where nothing in the denouement was not well provided for in the early story. The effect, unfortunately, was to create a mechanical kind of plot, which made it all too easy for the reader to anticipate too accurately the entire unfolding of the story.

So in this interesting and generally worthwhile book of tales, we might have the amateur outwitting the old master.

All in all, a worthwhile purchase -- and handsome book with great bedtime reading at a very reasonable price.

36 of 38 people found the following review helpful.

The best post-ACD collection of Holmes short stories.

By John S. Ryan

Patrick Callahan's excellent review is right on the money, but I'm giving this little book four stars anyway just because, when it's good, it's very good. Some of the stories contained herein -- based on Watson's occasional references to unrecorded (not "unsolved", as the current edition's subtitle incorrectly has it) cases -- surpass some of the elder Doyle's later works. Highly recommended, especially as an antidote to the surfeit of "pastiche" that can't seem to get any of the details right.

Adrian Conan Doyle (with or without John Dickson Carr) tells a straight no-frills tale very much in the spirit of the Sherlockian canon; Holmes doesn't wind up getting married, Watson doesn't turn out to be the real Holmes, et cetera, et cetera. And there are no attempts to link Holmes to fabulous ripped-from-the-headlines figures like Dracula or Jack the Ripper -- these are perfectly ordinary cases of the kind in which Holmes himself was known to delight for their own sake owing to their touch of the outré and the singular features they presented to the reasoner. Solid stuff despite the weaknesses of a few of the tales.

If you want a couple of novel-length pastiches to go with it, I recommend Nicholas Meyer's first two: The Seven Per Cent Solution and The West End Horror.

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