



The Great Boer War

Arthur Conan Doyle

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Arthur Conan Doyle made his reputation as a novelist, but far stranger than fiction is the creator of Sherlock Holmes' tale of the Boer War in South Africa. The then 40-year-old novelist wanted to see the war first hand as a soldier, but the Victorian army balked at having a popular author wielding a pen in its ranks. The army did accept him as a doctor and Doyle was knighted in 1902 for his work with a field hospital in Bloemfontein. Doyle's vivid account of the battles is in part thanks to the eye-witness accounts he got from his patients. Doyle has thoroughly mastered the details of the campaign, and presents them in a form that can be easily understood. Furthermore, his descriptions of the various engagements are masterpieces of graphic writing.

The Great Boer War Details

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Author : Arthur Conan Doyle

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From Reader Review The Great Boer War for online ebook

Spanishliz says

The edition I read was actually published before the end of The Great Boer war in 1902, but no need to list yet another edition.

???? ???? says

Very interesting book about the history of colonial south Africa and the rising and decline of Boer people. The most amazing is the absence of the local people in this conflict ion of imperial and colonial European powers.
It is a good book if you like the history.

Craig Herbertson says

Thoroughly interesting book written at a time when war was perceived as a glorious affair rather than a meaningless slaughter. Lots of things not mentioned though for political reasons

Scott says

A great read only because of the brilliant wordsmithing by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

The writing is incomparable to most modern writers in terms of wit, however, I needed to have google maps/google Boer War Maps open to understand the spatiality of the battles and their significance. Conan Doyle was clearly writing to an audience who understood clearly the names and places he recounted. And the reader also gets an appreciation for a great many other (racist, and/or sexist) statements that flow without question from the 19th Century.

The Boer War, told from the perspective of the British, is familiar to anyone who has served in Iraq or Afghanistan, as one finds a skilled enemy who does quite well against a world superpower. I found the British military frustrations with public opinion at home to be very familiar. Many of the strains upon lines of communication, of tribal loyalties, and of public works projects are also very familiar to our modern conflicts. One stark difference is that the Boers had no safe-haven or nation-state backer and eventually had to sue for peace.

Definitely worth a read, but you need to find your own maps!

john alan quinn says

Cracking read

The best factual book i have read in years. The detail is exceptional and the standard of the writing makes it an easy read.

Makomai says

Propaganda di guerra

Pubblicato nel 1900 (quindi a guerra in corso), il libro fu corretto ed aggiornato a piu' riprese, sino a raggiungere 19 edizioni in tre anni. Questa edizione definitiva del 1903 consiste di 80 pagine introduttive in cui vengono evocati gli eventi che condussero alla seconda guerra anglo-boera del 1899-1902, e di altre 663 pagine in cui si analizzano le battaglie.

E' quindi perlopiu' una cronaca di battaglie (Conan Doyle fu medico volontario nella guerra), e non un testo di storia.

La parte introduttiva e' semplicemente scandalosa nella sua partigianeria. Non che non ce lo si dovesse attendere da parte di un fiero britannico, ma dall'inventore di Sherlock Holmes mi aspettavo almeno un testo coerente e leggibile, quando invece e' sconnesso e scritto in un inglese atroce (c'e' persino un "most heavy" che mi ha fatto rabbrivire!).

La descrizione delle battaglie e' minuziosa, ma anch'essa molto di parte, anche se – a guerra vinta – Conan Doyle si permette il lusso di riconoscere il valore dei suoi avversari (il che oltretutto esalta ancor di piu' i meriti dei vincitori).

Il successo di pubblico di un'opera a difesa dell'immagine del Regno Unito, avventatosi in una guerra discussa per le sue motivazioni e per la sua condotta (tra l'altro, morirono piu' boeri nei campi di concentramento inglese che non in battaglia), contribuì certamente a fare del suo autore un baronetto del regno, ben piu' che le sue storie investigative.

Mike says

An attempt to give an objective evaluation of the war. Not entirely possible from CD's standpoint of class and the fact that he was a doctor for part of the war in Blomfontein but relatively interesting. Not as scholarly a work as Pakenham's 'The Boer War' but if you wish to know what battalion was engaged in a minor skirmish in the latter stages of the conflict then the chances are they get a mention in this work. CD interviewed hundreds of soldiers during and shortly after the war so even if slightly biased, the accounts have an attractive immediacy.

He tries to be even-handed in attributing soldierly qualities to Boer and Brit/Commonwealth participants. He tries to set the record straight by recording and explaining some of the actions and conducts that had been questioned by story- and scandal-seeking yellow press in England. The underdog does not always have the moral high ground as the media often suppose.

This is overall a little dry and not really reading for pleasure or escapism despite CD's skill as a story-teller.

Dan Nance says

Boring as hell

Thought it would never get to the point. No no no no no no no. I don't need more words

Rob Hunt says

I don't give up on books very often but this was one.

Nathan says

This is straight military history - written during and immediately afterwards. The first 3 chapters, which talk about the buildup to war, were interesting enough. I would have liked more about the pre-war history.

I'm not a fan of descriptions of the mechanics of war - When I read Gibbon's Decline & Fall of the Roman Empire, I chose the military abridged version - so I may or may not finish this book.

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I finished this, more due to perseverance than interest. There are about 40 pages dealing with attitudes and lessons learned that are of interest to the general reader. The other 400+ pages recount soldiers doing essentially the same things over and over. These actions were critical, indeed life and death, to those personally involved - but the litany of engagements does not hold the interest of the general reader.

Lenp says

I was hoping for more of a bird's eye view of the war. The detailed descriptions of each skirmish have become tedious, and I seem to have lost interest in continuing to read this book. Maybe I will come back to it in a while - I would like to read about the latter stages of the war.
