



The Hounds of the Internet

"A singular set of people, Watson."

1889. The disagreements spring from Holmes' quote about "Monday last" being June 3. Within Canonical range, 1889 is the only year where that is true.

If the case took place in 1889, as the majority states, then Holmes was 35 years old and Watson 37.

Main Characters:

Charles McCarthy, murder victim, a tenant farmer from Australia. James McCarthy, son of the murdered Charles and the main suspect for his death. John Turner, wealthy widowed landowner, formerly from Australia, McCarthy's landlord, and father of Alice. Alice Turner, John's daughter. Inspector Giles Lestrade, Scotland Yard detective.

Notable Quotes:

"It makes a considerable difference to me, having someone with me on whom I can thoroughly rely. Local aid is always either worthless or else biased."

"It seems, from what I gather, to be one of those simple cases which are so extremely difficult."

"Singularity is almost invariably a clue. The more featureless and commonplace a crime is, the more difficult it is to bring it home."

"Circumstantial evidence is a very tricky thing. It may seem to point very straight to one thing, but if you shift your own point of view a little, you may find it pointing in an equally uncompromising manner to something entirely different."

"There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact."

An Inquiry into: "The Boscombe Valley Mystery"

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"The Boscombe Valley Mystery" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in October 1891. It is part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

As the table shows, except for Dakin and Zeisler most of our chronologists agree that this case took place in June

<i>The Boscombe Valley Mystery</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>Early one June in the late 1880s</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Saturday, June 8, 1889</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Early June 1889</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>A Thursday or Friday in June 1889</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>Early June 1889</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Friday, June 7, 1889</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>Monday, June 23, 1890</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Thursday, June 6, 1889</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>At or close to June 6, 1889</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Saturday, June 8, 1889</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1889</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Friday, June 27, 1890</i>

Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist's results for their research framework.

“God help us! Why does fate play such tricks with poor, helpless worms? I never hear of such a case as this that I do not think of Baxter’s words, and say, ‘There, but for the grace of God, goes Sherlock Holmes.’”



Trying to Understand Mary

As our case opens Mary, Watson’s wife, urges him to abandon his patients and join Holmes who is off to the country on one of his cases. This has always struck me as being slightly odd. Unquestionably, just like Watson, Mary Morstan may indeed have been grateful to Holmes for having solved her case and through this, meeting her future husband. However, one would think that it would go against the grain of a good wife to see her husband abandon his work (i.e., their livelihood) to go off on an adventure that might cost him his life, much less urge him to do so. After all, it wasn’t exactly rose

petals that Tonga was shooting though his blowpipe.



Although the Good Doctor grumbles that he has a heavy caseload of patients. It is her reply I find disconcerting: “Oh, Anstruther would do your work for you. You have been looking a little pale lately. I think that the change would do you good, and you are always so interested in Mr. Sherlock Holmes’ cases.”

Watson might indeed have been overworked and although it would appear atypical for a good wife to urge her husband to abandon his work to go chasing out on an adventure might also be somewhat

counteracted by the expectation that this would result in yet another story for *The Strand*. Some have suggested that perhaps Watson was making a better living out of his stories than through his practice. Considering that the Good Doctor’s fee for each story averaged £500 (≈\$190,000) plus reprint rights, it could be that she viewed the matter as the killing of two birds with one stone: Watson got his rest, and ended earning far more than if he had been tending to a long line of sore throats.

A brief digression regarding doctors’ fees might be useful at this point.

Because gentlemen (in theory) did not work for money, a physician’s fee was wrapped in paper and quietly put down on a table near his hand.

Watson was nearly at the societal top of his profession. As a surgeon he merited the title of “doctor” in front of his name, which was important for several reasons. For example, physicians were considered gentlemen; their wives could be presented at court. Those of apothecaries or surgeons could

not, because those medical men were trained by apprenticeship and did manual labor. Watson, therefore, was a professional whose status was far above that of a tradesman.

As a gentleman physician Watson would have received a fee of 1g (≈\$390) per visit. A consultant (what we today call a specialist) was paid between 3g (≈\$1,200) and 5g (≈\$2,000). A successful practice among the socially prominent could make a man very rich; a doctor with a fashionable practice might earn £1000 to £2000 (≈\$380,000-\$750,000) a year; however the ordinary general practitioner had an income similar to that of other middle-class workers, 5s (≈\$95) per visit, although most doctors charged only 2s 6d (≈\$50).

It is interesting to note that at the time patients rarely made appointments--they would just show up at the doctor's surgery during his working hours, which were usually displayed on the brass plate at the entrance to his surgery.

Because it is obvious that Watson had a thriving practice it does appear unusual that Mary would urge him to neglect his patients. This is why some Canon scholars have suggested the disturbing possibility that Mary might have wanted her husband safely out of town for purposes of her own.

I am firmly convinced that those who have speculated that things were not going well between Watson and his wife are wrong. The scholarly Ian McQueen makes a point of this in his book, *Sherlock Holmes Detected*:

At the start of "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" . . . all is sweetness and harmony. Watson asks Mary for her opinion about his going with Holmes, she thinks the change would do him good as he has been looking rather pale lately, and he alludes to *The Sign of Four*, in which he gained a wife. Are these outward expressions of conjugal bliss to be taken at their face value? Is it possible that Watson is behaving so politely in this exchange because of some recent quarrel in which Mary has let him know that his conduct leaves a lot to be desired? Mary may have approved so readily of the Boscombe Valley trip not so much on account of Watson's pallid looks, but in order that she might have a day or two of peace and quiet without him. When she remarks "you are always so interested in Mr. Sherlock Holmes' cases," could she have meant it sarcastically, implying that her husband took more interest in Holmes' doings than in hers? If so, the doctor's rejoinder, "I should be ungrateful if I were not, seeing what I gained through one of them" takes on a new meaning. Possibly he hoped that the adventure in the west of England might put him in touch with some rather more congenial female company.

It is a fact of life that relationships do not perpetually run on greased rails, even in heavenly realms (witness the goings-on between the residents of Mount Olympus); therefore, it is not surprising that even in the best of marriages there may be some occasional friction. However, this does not make the relationship itself a failure.



Getting back to Mary, aside from the fact we see her here urging Watson to call on Anstruther, to join an adventure that might put his life in jeopardy, in TWIS, she appeared to have no objection over the Good Doctor leaving the nighttime comfort and safety of their cozy home to go rescue her friend's addicted husband from an opium den. Of course, by then she knew perfectly well that John H. Watson, former Army medical officer and adventurer, could take care of himself.

Regardless of all of the above, it is well to remember that we are looking at all this solely from Watson's perspective because, after all, he wrote the stories. Mary may have, indeed, strongly objected at his putting himself in harm's way and he did not see fit to include it. Then again, he might have been desperate for break from sore throats and timorous patients; it should be unnecessary to point that regardless of it all he was most definitely a man of action.

Lestrade the Moonlighter

According to Holmes, Inspector Lestrade—whom he also affectionately referred to as “that imbecile,” was “retained” by those believing in James McCarthy's innocence.

While Scotland Yard would often assist the provincial police if officially requested to do so, officers had to do it as part of their duty; i.e., no remuneration other than their regular salary. However, at the time someone like Lestrade could rent himself out, so to speak, if he did it on his own time and it did not conflict with his regular duties.



A brief glance into Scotland Yard's salary list of the time shows that Lestrade—“the pick of a bad lot,” thanks to Holmes was considered a top detective although not yet a chief inspector—would have earned a weekly salary of £2 18s. Yearly, this would amount to about £150, or ≈\$56,300 in today's currency.

Not much seems to have changed in the way of salary or career path. Police detectives still start off as patrol officers and can achieve the rank of detective after three or more years of experience. The

median starting salary for police detectives is about \$55,000. Average salary for police detectives in 2008 was about \$64,000. Detectives earn more in large metropolitan areas such as New York and Los Angeles. Median salaries in those areas run from \$70,000 to \$88,000. But this did not seem to have been the case in 19th century England.

Although we know next to nothing about Giles Lestrade's private life—whether he was married or not—we do know that Imperial London was not an inexpensive place to live in; how well could you do in New York City today, on a \$56,300 salary? So it would have been understandable why our friend might be prepared to go outside of that Great Cesspool and make a few extra quid by moonlighted in the provinces.

Ignoring the Crime Scene

Although it was important for Holmes to meet McCarthy, it was not urgent; nothing was going to change because he was locked up in a jail cell and therefore eminently available.

What truly is bizarre is Holmes' seeming disinterest in investigating the scene of the crime as soon as possible. After all his bitter complaints (starting with SCAN), that a crime scene was trampled before he got to it, it seems highly unlikely that he would so cavalierly shrug off immediately visiting the murder scene simply because it did not appear it would rain! He had to have realized that such a bloody event involving the murder of a well-known local resident, (aside from the police) would attract many of the townspeople desirous of seeing the place of the terrible occurrence, stomping all over it. There was no such thing as crime scene tape back then, and in this case the crime was committed in an open, readily reachable place so his excuse for postponing it because there was no rain coming appears somewhat atypical.

It is almost miraculous that there were enough clues left at the crime scene for him to solve the murder.

How Stupid Is Imbecile?

By this time, our friend Lestrade had to have thought highly of Holmes' abilities; why else would he have called upon him to help with the case?

Then, to paraphrase Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*, "Watson, I've a feeling we're not in Boscombe Valley anymore." Consider, Holmes arrives, interrogates the accused, thoroughly investigates the murder scene, and then proceeds to provide our Scotland Yarder not only an account of what happened plus the murder weapon, but also an extremely detailed description of the murderer.

What Lestrade then does is positively incredible—he shrugs off the Great Detective's deductions and although he is well acquainted with Turner's infirmities not only does he not make the connection but does not even bother to run the description of the murderer provided him by Holmes past some of the local folk. In such a small community old Mr. Turner, a long-time resident, would have been immediately identified as fitting that description. "Imbecile" seems far too mild an epithet.

Small wonder Holmes decided to deal with old man Turner in his own way!

Justice Holmes

This is probably the Jewel in the Crown of Watson's accounts in which Holmes, having assuaged his conscience by providing the official police with the necessary clues to catch the law-breaker, placed greater trust in his own personal sense of justice rather than the law. In this case, he lets a multiple murderer go free.

It is impossible not to sympathize with Old Turner's years-long Calvary, tortured by elder McCarthy. One might be able to justify *that* murder; but what about the others? During his confession of his past wild life in Australia Turner told Holmes not only that he stole, but that he killed troopers guarding the gold shipments; should this have been overlooked?



What about those troopers guarding the gold shipment that he and his gang killed, before he was able to accumulate sufficient loot to retire as a respectable landowner? Justice most definitely was not served in their case.

At the center of all this is, of course, the fact that it was highly improbable that old McCarthy would have survived long enough to stand trial, and even less likely that he would have been alive to discharge whatever sentence was passed on him. Into the mix was also Holmes' decision to avoid the scandal that would have ensued, which would have blasted two young innocent lives. *Fiat justitia!*



What else happened in 1889:

Empire



Great Seal of the United Kingdom is affixed to the charter of the British South Africa Company. Company is assigned trading and other rights over a vast territory, with the express reservation to the Crown to take over at any time the works and buildings of the Company.

Transvaal claimed to be “encircled” by Rhodes’ concessions in East Africa. Rhodesia established.

◀ At Cairo, Henry Stanley ends his three-year African expedition. He is knighted upon his return to England. Writes *In Darkest Africa*.

Colonel Woodehouse defeats Dervish horde in Sudan. General Grenfell, commanding British troops on the Nile attacks and defeats Dervish troops, with 500 killed and wounded, and as many taken prisoner.

The Canadian Pacific Railway is completed from coast to coast.

Britain

Great London Dockers’ Strike; the “Dockers’ Tanner”; growth of unskilled workers’ unions; New Unionism; Gasworkers’ Union formed. Strike is finally arbitrated in the workers’ favor by the popular Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning.

Parnell vindicated as all charges are revealed as false. *The London Times* apologizes.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

Technical Education Act: County Councils to levy 1d for technical and manual education.

Establishment of the telephone company.

John Bright, orator and politician, leading spirit in the Anti-Corn Law League, dies.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

Metropolitan Board of Works replaced by London County Council.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

General Booth publishes *Survey of London Life and Labour*.

Early used of photographs in newspaper: *Illustrated London News* runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews competition.

Woolwich Ferry starts.

White Hart Inn, Borough High Street, one of the last coaching inns, demolished.

Act to prevent cruelty to children.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

World

Japan's Meiji constitution. Arinori Mori, minister of education assassinated by Shinto fanatic.

Wall Street Journal begins publishing.

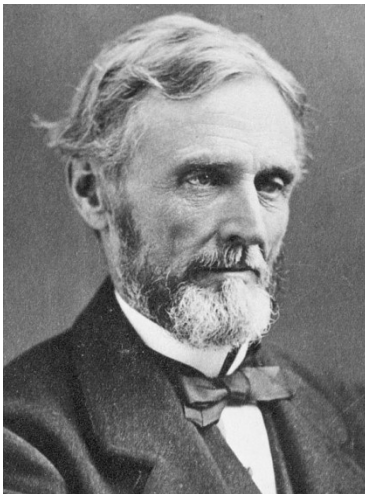
Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia. Yohannes IV (Kasa) Emperor of Ethiopia dies in battle.

Moulin Rouge opens in Paris.

North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S.A. states.

U.S.A. Senate, in secret session, passes resolution declaring against European control of the Panama Canal.

Congress of French Revolutionary Labor Party at Bordeaux.



President Harrison, of the U.S.A., closes Bering Sea to all nations; issues proclamation prohibiting the killing of fur animals within Alaska without a special government permit.

◀ Jefferson Davis dies in Mississippi.

Crown Prince Archduke Rudolph of Austria-Hungary and Baroness Maria Vetsera are found dead at the hunting lodge of Mayerling, outside Vienna, allegedly a murder-suicide. (In 1983, former Austrian empress Zita claimed it was an assassination by two conspirators when Rudolph refused to take part in a plot to oust his father Emperor Franz Josef.)

Treaty of Acciali: Ethiopia made Italian protectorate.

Ivory Coast is declared a protectorate of France.

Part of Oklahoma Indian lands open to homesteading.

Portuguese under Pinto try to extend influence in Zambesi Valley; Anglo-Portuguese dispute.

End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed and Dom Pedro, the emperor, exiled.

Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.

Uprising in the island of Crete. Turkish authorities expelled and public archives destroyed. Turkey calls up 80,000 reservists, but promises to inquire into legitimate grievances.

Russian jurors to be nominated by government.

King Ferdinand II of Portugal dies at age 73.

Stanley's expedition reaches Bagamoyo in Indian Ocean.

Aristocratic "Land Captains" replace elected JPs in Russia.

Father Damien, worker among lepers in Molokai, Hawaii, dies of the disease.

Influenza reaches Europe and America from Siberia.

General Boulanger, former French War Minister leaves country, addresses manifesto to his party that he left the country to avoid arrest, French Chambers authorize the Senate to try Boulanger and others in absentia, for high treason. The general and his staff are found guilty and condemned to life imprisonment.



Paris Exhibition: proof of industrial development in France. Continental monarchies abstain from all official representation. English and American ambassadors attend. Eiffel Tower built for the event is dedicated in a ceremony presided over by Gustave Eiffel, the designer, and attended by French Prime Minister Pierre Tirard. At 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, the Eiffel Tower becomes highest structure on Earth.

◀ Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 storeys high.

Lectures at Dorpat University to be in Russian; German forbidden in schools.

Brunner-Mond Salt Union formed; combine of 64 firms.

Private tolls abolished on French Canals.

New York World's Nellie Bly (Liz Cochrane) begins world trip to beat Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg (*Around the World in 80 Days*). Takes 72 days.

The Pemberton Medicine Company (later the Coca-Cola Company), is incorporated in Atlanta, Georgia.

Work on Panama Canal stopped; French company bankrupt, U.S.A. takes over, finishes canal.

Johnstown flood kills more than 6,000, losses climb to \$40,000,000.

Civil war in Haiti ends. General Légitime defeated by General Hippolyte, who becomes president.

Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad establishes the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a reform sect of Islam.

Conference at Berlin guarantees an autonomous government to the Samoan Islands under the joint control of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany.

Art

Sir James Barrie's *A Window in Thrums*, sketches of Scottish village life.

Robert Browning publishes *Asolando*, a poem. Dies later in the year.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes *A Sign of Four*.

Jerome K. Jerome publishes stories, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, *Three Men in a Boat*.

Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Master of Ballantrae*.

William Butler Yeats publishes *The Wanderings of Oisín*.

Paul Bourget publishes *Le Disciple*, a psychological novel.

Gerhart J. Hauptmann publishes *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, German realistic play.

Sudermann publishes *Die Ehre*, a German play.

Dvorak presents *Symphony No. 4 in G Major*.

Gilbert and Sullivan present *The Gondoliers*.

Renoir paints *Girls Picking Flowers*.

Seurat paints *The Side Show*.

Van Gogh paints *Man with a Pipe* (self-portrait), *The Olive Grove*, and *Starry Night*.

Cézanne paints *Harlequin*.

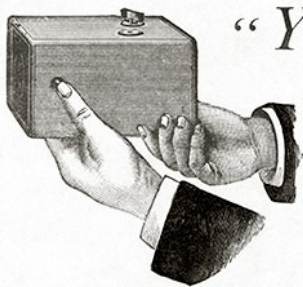
Tchaikovsky introduces *The Sleeping Princess* ballet.

Richard Strauss introduces *Tod und Verklärung*, tone poem.

Science and Technology

Hollerith's punched-card system widely used in industry.

First ship-to-shore wireless message is received in the U.S., at San Francisco.



The Kodak Camera

*“You press the button,
we do the rest.”*

OR YOU CAN DO IT YOURSELF.

The only camera that anybody can use without instructions. As convenient to carry as an ordinary field glass World-wide success.

*The Kodak is for sale by all Photo stock dealers.
Send for the Primer, free.*

The Eastman Dry Plate & Film Co.

Price, \$25.00 — Loaded for 100 Pictures. ROCHESTER, N. Y.
Re-loading, \$2.00.

The first General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) defines the length of a meter as the distance between two lines on a standard bar of an alloy of platinum with ten percent iridium, measured at the melting point of ice.

◀ Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.

Astronomical Society of Pacific holds first meeting in San Francisco, California.

Ferdinand von Zeppelin patents his “Navigable Balloon.”

The first jukebox makes its debut at

the Palais Royale Saloon in San Francisco, California. For a nickel, one can listen to a few minutes of music through a tube of an Edison tinfoil phonograph.

In Potsdam, Germany, Ernst von Rebeur-Paschwitz makes the first known recordings of a distant earthquake, taken place in Tokyo, Japan, an hour earlier.

The brassiere is invented.

First dishwashing machine marketed in Chicago.

Mering and Minkowski show that the pancreas prevents diabetes.

Daniel Stover and William Hance patent bicycle with back pedal brake.

William Gray patents coin-operated telephone.

First linotype machine in use.

Thomas Edison shows his first motion picture.

Aspirin patented in Germany by Bayer Laboratories, first introduced in powder form.

Panhard and Levassor begin using Daimler's engines in French cars, using modern layout.

Next week's case: FIVE.

Respectfully submitted,

Murray, the Courageous Orderly

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands
of the murderous Ghazis had it not
been for the devotion and courage
shown by Murray, my orderly..."

All Sherlock Holmes photos have been published by courtesy of ITV Granada.

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at CourageousMurray@aol.com.

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