



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure VI – The Boscombe Valley Mystery

Publishing History

6 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, October, 1891

Part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* collection by

George Newnes, Ltd., London, 1892

In the US by Harper Bros., New York, 1892

The British illustrator was Sidney Paget

CHRONOLOGY

Baring Gould places the date of the story as Saturday, June 8 to Sunday, June 9, 1889 which makes it the 22nd of the 60 stories. This means that Holmes is 35 and Watson 37.

Christopher Morley Says

“Air and scenery perfect” was the allure that Holmes used to tempt Watson to accompany him to the countryside in the West of England where murder had been committed. The crime had its origin in far-off Australia, and Watson (Who had been in the country) might have been quicker in recognizing some of the clues.”

Dummies Short Summary

“It’s murder! Here Holmes uses his powerful forensic crime-scene investigation skills.”



How Many Words

At 9,681 words BOSCO has the 45th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 is NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 23 classified as a MURDER where the perpetrator was either killed, arrested, or otherwise satisfactorily handled. And one of 4 where Holmes let the perpetrator go free. The others were ABBE, DEVI, and VEIL.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

BOSCO doesn't get great reviews but Holmes (judge and jury) is at his best.

- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 28th of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 35th of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1889)

The 1880's in England and the world were so very busy

- British South Africa Company Charter awarded.
- Great London Dock Strike; the "Dockers' Tanner"; growth of unskilled workers unions.
- New Unionism; Gasworkers' Union formed.
- March 30, Early use of photographs in newspaper: Illustrated London News runs photos of Cambridge and Oxford boat crews.
- Act to prevent cruelty to children.
- Establishment of a telephone company.
- Japan's Meiji constitution.
- Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia.
- The Moulin Rouge first opens its doors.
- North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S. states.
- End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed.
- Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.
- Work on Panama Canal stopped; French company bankrupt.
- Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.
- Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 stories high.

- Conan Doyle publishes *A Sign of Four*.
- Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.
- Sudermann publishes *Die Ehre*, a German play.
- Renoir paints *Girls Picking Flowers*.
- Van Gogh paints *Man with a Pipe* (self-portrait).
- Eiffel Tower completed, 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, become highest structure on earth.
- Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.
- First linotype machine in use.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Holmes is at 221B and Watson married and in practice, living with his wife.

Dramatis Personae

G'day mate. A small cast. No he is not that Charlie McCarthy.

- **John Turner**, wealthy landowner in Boscombe valley. Made his money in Australia.
- **Alice Turner**, his 18 year old daughter.
- **CHARLES Mccarthy**, the murder victim. A tenant farmer on Turner's best farm. Knew Turner in Australia.
- **JAMES Mccarthy**, his son. In jail and accused of the murder.
- **William Crowder**, a gamekeeper. Saw the two McCarthy's pass within a few minutes of each other just before the murder
- **Patience Moran**, 14 year old daughter of the lodge-keeper. She saw the two McCarthy's arguing just before the murder.

Quotable Sherlock

- "It is really very good of you to come, Watson," said he. "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."
- "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.”
- “You know my method. It is founded upon the observation of trifles.”

Holmes’ Fee

Not even a hint of one in the story but Alice is going to inherit a bundle someday soon. James McCarthy is the client. Between the two of them, Sherlock should end up with a nice payday.

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

BOSC has only been on the screen three times. Not enough “action” for the average movie goer.

- 1922 *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* with Ellie Norwood as one of his 47 20 minute movies. The National Film and Television Archive at the BFI has viewing copies of this film but it has not been released.
- 1968 *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* with Peter Cushing as an episode of his *Sherlock Holmes* TV series.
- 1991 *The Boscombe Valley Mystery* with Jeremy Brett as the 30th episode of his 43 part *Sherlock Holmes* TV series.

Annotated Sherlock

- “**métier**” French: trade, profession.
- “**Nous verrons.**” French: “We shall see.”
- “**assizes**” Assize courts were the superior courts in each county which held sessions to determine civil and criminal cases twice a year. Were abolished in 1972.

Holmes The Author

One of Holmes’ most famous monographs, *Upon the Distinction between the Ashes of Various Tobaccos* , is mentioned. Over 140 different types of tobacco ash are included.

Weapons

This tale has only two things that could be considered weapons. One, however, is the murder weapon.

Perhaps we need a campaign on “rock control.”

- **Rock** - Lying beside Boscombe pool, which John Turner used to murder Charles McCarthy
- **Threat** - Of informing to the police, used by Charles McCarthy on John Turner, because of Turner’s past associations with the Ballarat Gang.

Frank Mentzel