



Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes Adventure VI -- The Boscombe Valley Mystery

SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson is married. Anstruther covers for him.

In his youth, Turner went to Australia to search for gold. He became a highwayman. He was known as "Black Jack of Ballarat." He and his gang attacked a gold convoy and made off with the gold, but all except three members of the gang were killed. McCarthy was a driver of one of the convoy's wagons. Turner could have killed him but spared him.

Turner returned to England and bought a country estate. He married and had a daughter. His wife died when Alice was just a small girl. McCarthy also returned to England. He married and had a son. His wife also died.

McCarthy found Turner and was blackmailing him. Turner granted his every wish until he asked that their children be married. This was too much.

Turner arranged a meeting at the pool between he and McCarthy. As he was approaching the pool, he made the call that he used in Australia of "Cooee." He found the two McCartheys arguing. Charles wanted his son to propose marriage to Alice, but John couldn't because he was secretly married to a barmaid in Bristol. After James left, Turner killed McCarthy. Almost immediately, he heard James returning and hid behind a tree. When James knelt beside his dying father, Turner sneaked back into the clearing to retrieve his coat, then he left.



Holmes comes on the scene and after carefully tracing the footsteps, declares, "It has been a case of considerable interest." He then proceeds to give a detailed description of the murderer to Lestrade, however

"that imbecile Lestrade" remained skeptical to the end. Holmes gives his findings to James' attorney which secures his release.

John Turner died from his diabetes seven months after the murder.

When his barmaid-wife read in the paper that her "husband" was in jail for murder, she wrote him a letter saying that she had previously married a Bristol dock-worker so their marriage was void,

At the conclusion of the story, Alice and James are courting.

SUMMARY (ACD Encyclopedia)

Holmes and Watson go to Boscombe to help Lestrade on the murder of the old McCarthy. All testimonials criminalize the son, James McCarthy, but his fiancée, Miss Turner is convinced of his innocence. By carefully observing the crime scene, Holmes finds different footprints and a stone he claims to be the murder weapon and he gives a very accurate description of the murderer.

He also visited the young McCarthy in prison to hear his version. With all these elements Holmes concludes that the murderer is the old Turner, the father of Miss Turner. He sent him a convocation note. Turner tells his story. In Australia, it was known as Black Jack of Ballarat and he was attacking convoys.

One day he attacked the convoy of McCarthy but let him alive. Back in England, rich and decided to pull over and do good, he married and gave birth to a daughter. But he met McCarthy who recognized him and began blackmail.

Gradually, he had to give all his fortune, but when McCarthy insisted that his son marries his daughter, it was too much and he killed him. Having Turner's confession written, Holmes decides not to report it because the old man is dying.

The young James McCarthy was acquitted thanks to Sherlock Holmes objections and the confession wasn't needed. The old Turner died seven months later and the two young ignored all of the past of their parents.

SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

Inspector Lestrade asks for Holmes's help after Charles McCarthy is murdered, and his son, James, is implicated. McCarthy, and another local landowner, John Turner, are both Australian expatriates, and Lestrade was originally engaged by Turner's daughter, Alice, who believes James is innocent. Holmes interviews James, and then inspects the scene of the murder, deducing a third man was present. Realizing Holmes has solved the

case, Turner confesses to the crime, revealing that McCarthy was blackmailing him due to Turner's criminal past. Holmes does not reveal the crime but secures James's release because of the presence of a third person at the crime scene.

Lestrade summons Holmes to a community in Herefordshire, where a local landowner has been murdered outdoors. The deceased's estranged son is strongly implicated. Holmes quickly determines that a mysterious third man may be responsible for the crime, unravelling a thread involving a secret criminal past, thwarted love, and blackmail.

Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson take a train to Boscombe Valley, in Herefordshire. Enroute, Holmes reads the news and briefs Watson on their new case.

John Turner, a widower and a major landowner who has a daughter named Alice, lives there with a fellow expatriate from Australia, Charles McCarthy, a widower who has a son named James. Charles has been found dead near Boscombe Pool; it was reported that he was there to meet someone. Two witnesses testify that they saw Charles walking into the woods followed by James, who was carrying a gun. Patience Moran, daughter of a lodgekeeper, says that she saw Charles and James arguing and that, when James raised his hand as if to hit his father, she ran to her mother, and while she was telling her mother what she saw James rushed to their house seeking help. The Moran's followed James back to the Pool, where they found his father dead. James was arrested and charged with murder. Alice Turner believes that James is innocent and has contacted Lestrade, a Scotland Yard detective who in turn has asked Holmes' help.

James confirms the testimonies of the witnesses but explains that he was going into the woods to hunt, not to follow his father. He later heard his father calling "Cooee" and found his father standing by the pool, surprised to see him. They argued heatedly, and James decided to return to Hatherley Farm. Shortly after that he heard his father cry out and returned to find his father lying on the ground. James insists that he tried to help him, but his father died in his arms. James refuses to give the cause of their argument, despite the coroner's warning that it could be damaging to his case if he does not reveal it. James also remembers that his father's last words were something about "a rat", but James is uncertain of their meaning in the situation. He also thinks he saw a cloak on the ground, which vanished while he was helping his father.

Alice meets Holmes, Watson and Lestrade in the hotel, and she hopes that Holmes has found a way to prove James's innocence. She also believes that she was the subject of the argument between the McCarthys - Charles wanted his son to marry her, but James had refused. Alice had taken James's side out of respect for him, and her father was also against the union. Holmes asks Alice if he could meet her father, but she says his

health worsened after the death of Charles, whom he had known since they were in Victoria. Holmes decides to see James.

Holmes mistakenly surmises that James knows who killed his father and is protecting someone. It emerges that Alice is right about the cause of the argument between James and Charles. What she does not know is that James actually loves her but could not follow his father's demand because he had married a barmaid before Alice had returned from boarding school. This burdened him, but he could not tell his father about his marriage because he would have been kicked out of the house and left unable to support himself. When his wife heard of his troubles, however, she confessed that she was already married before they met, and therefore their marriage is invalid.

Holmes, Watson and Lestrade go to Hatherley Farm, and examine Charles's and James's boots. They then head to Boscombe Pool, following the track from the courtyard. After examining the ground, Holmes finds evidence of the presence of another man, besides Charles and James, whom he believes to be the murderer. Holmes deduces that the killer is left-handed (because Charles was struck neatly on the left side of his head from behind, where a right-handed man would have struck him on the other side), and that the stranger is tall, has a limp, and smokes cigars. Lestrade is not convinced.

At the hotel Holmes explains to Watson that "Cooee" is an Australian cry and that the apparent reference to "a rat", overheard by James, in fact comprised the last syllables of "Ballarat", a place in Australia. The person Charles was meeting was, therefore, someone he knew from Australia. John Turner, Alice's father, then comes to their room (coincidentally being announced by a hotel employee right as Watson is about to name him as the killer, after correctly interpreting the hints, Holmes has offered him), entering with a limp, and, realizing that Holmes has deduced the crime, confesses.

In his confession, John explains that he was a member of the Ballarat Gang, a group of bushrangers in Australia. They robbed a gold convoy in which Charles was the wagon driver, and John spared his life, despite knowing that Charles could later identify him. The loot made the surviving gang members rich, and they moved to England. Resolved to change, John parted ways with his friends. He bought land and got married, and then Alice was born. Sometime later, Charles tracked down John and threatened to blackmail him unless he and his son were provided for. In response, John gave Charles Hatherley Farm and money, hoping this would satisfy him. However, this was not enough, and Charles eventually demanded the marriage of James and Alice. Although he liked James, John did not want Charles' "cursed blood" mixed with his family's, so he resisted the union. After much pressure, John agreed to meet Charles secretly at the Pool to resolve the matter. Seeing Charles and James there arguing, John hid, intending to wait until James left. However, he

became angry when he heard the nature of the argument and killed Charles to preserve his freedom and spare his daughter. James heard his father's death cry and returned, but John was able to hide in the woods. He had to return later to retrieve the cloak that he had dropped in his haste.

John signs his statement, and Holmes vows to keep it secret unless it is needed to free James. In the end, Holmes's objections are sufficient to acquit James, and John dies seven months after the meeting with Holmes and Watson. Meanwhile, Watson surmises that James and Alice will likely marry and live in happiness without ever discovering the true history of their fathers.