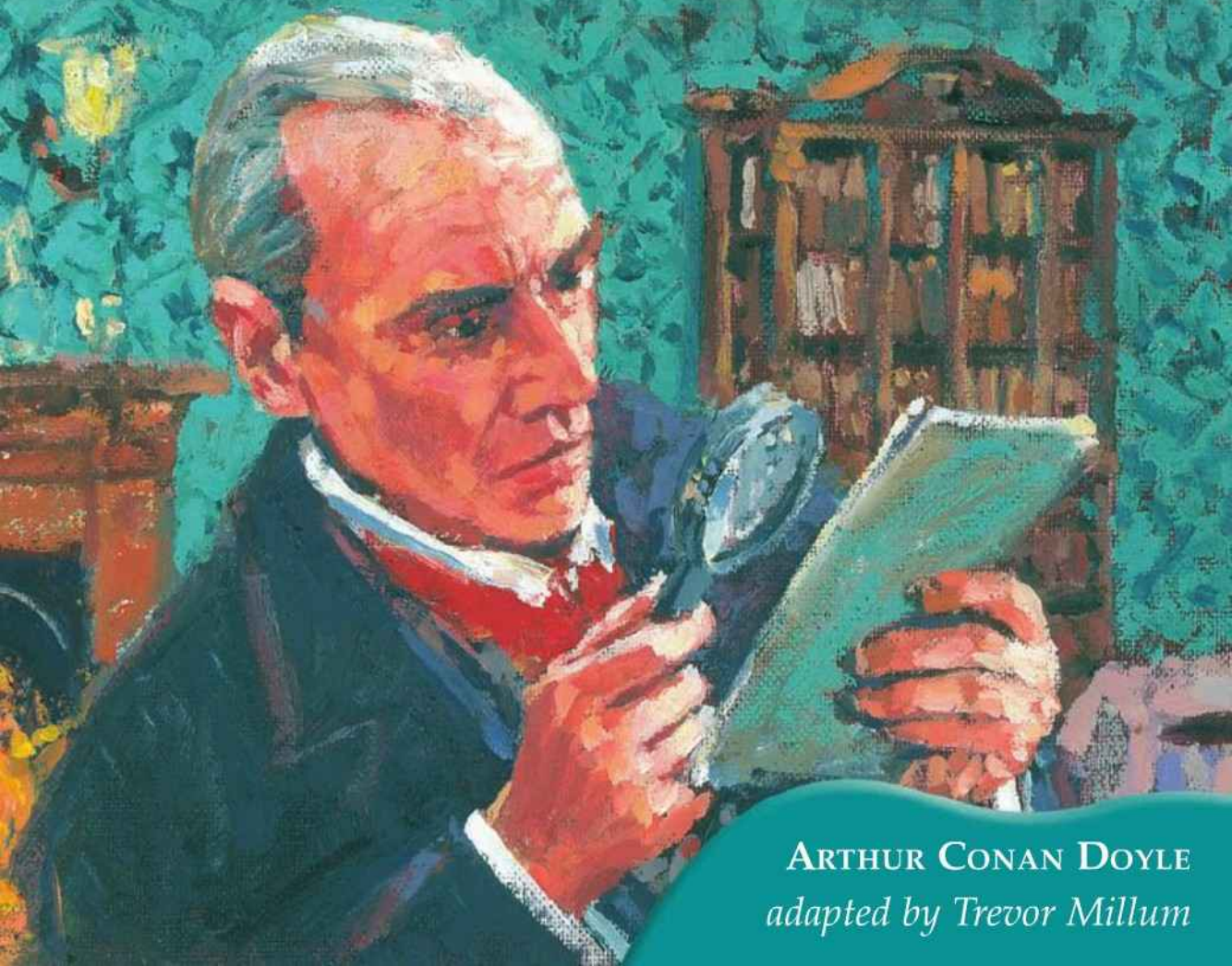




Classics

OXFORD

Stories of SHERLOCK HOLMES



ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
adapted by Trevor Millum



About this book

- In *The Boscombe Valley Mystery*, Turner kills his blackmailer McCarthy to prevent McCarthy's son marrying his daughter and claiming all of his property. In *The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*, Holmes foils Mr Ryder's plans to steal a precious jewel and frame a plumber for the crime. *The Adventure of Silver Blaze* tells of how a trainer tries to injure his horse in order to win a bet, but is killed when the horse fights back! In *The Adventure of the Copper Beeches* a selfish father traps his daughter so he will not lose her money. His plan is foiled when his daughter's love rescues her.

Talking points

- Before your child begins, share ideas about Sherlock Holmes.
- Give your child a dictionary so they can look up unfamiliar terms like 'carbuncle' (page 25) and 'crop' (page 28).
- Ask your child to pause after page 32 and explain how Holmes deduces that Henry Baker isn't the thief.
- Encourage your child to read the story at their own pace.

Read aloud

- Read pages 45–51 together. Do you believe that Simpson kidnapped Silver Blaze? Explain your reasoning.

After reading

- Holmes doesn't hand any of the criminals over to the police. Talk about whether you think he does the right thing in each case.
- Re-read pages 26–28 where Holmes uses clues from the bowler hat to identify its owner. Give your child an assortment of unfamiliar family objects and challenge them to use Holmes' methods to guess who they belong to!

TREETOPS CLASSICS



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About the Author

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

1859–1930

Arthur Conan Doyle was trained as a doctor, but wanted to be a writer. He wrote his first Sherlock Holmes story in 1887, and it was a huge success. His readers demanded more stories.

By 1893, the writer had decided that he didn't want to be known only as 'the Holmes man'. So he wrote a story in which Holmes died. When it was published, some people in London wore black clothes, as if a relative of theirs had died! And they never stopped asking for more Holmes stories, so Conan Doyle had to bring his detective back to life.



The Boscombe Valley Mystery

CHAPTER I

An Ordinary Crime?

My name is Dr Watson and I have the good fortune to be the friend and companion of Sherlock Holmes. I try to keep a record of the cases he has solved. I have been with him many times when he has solved cases with just a few clues and his powerful brain.

One such case was the Boscombe Valley Mystery. I knew nothing about it until I got a telegram early one morning at home. It was from Holmes, asking me to go with him to the West of England. My wants are few and simple so I very swiftly packed a case, said farewell to my wife and was at Paddington in less than an hour.

Holmes was pacing up and down the platform. He was instantly recognizable: tall and gaunt – and dressed in his long grey cloak and deerstalker hat. ‘It is really very good of you to come, Watson. I need someone I can rely on.’

We had the carriage to ourselves and Holmes spent the time reading through a huge pile of newspapers. Now and then he stopped to make notes and to think. Finally,

he rolled the papers into a ball and threw them onto the luggage rack.

‘Have you heard anything of the case?’ he asked.

‘Not a word. I’ve not seen a paper for days.’

‘Hmm,’ said Holmes. ‘It’s one of those simple cases which are so extremely difficult.’

‘What do you mean?’

‘The more ordinary a crime seems to be, the more difficult it is to see the solution. It is the unusual which makes things easy!’

‘What kind of crime are we dealing with?’

‘Murder, Watson. A serious case has already been made against the son of the murdered man. It happened in Boscombe Valley, near Hereford. The owner of much land in that area is a Mr John Turner. He came back from Australia a few years ago and settled here.’

‘Made his fortune, did he?’

‘Enough to buy several farms. One he let out to another Australian, Mr Charles McCarthy. McCarthy has a son of eighteen, called James.’

‘Are there no wives?’ I asked.

‘Neither of the wives is still living, but Turner has one daughter of similar age to James.’

‘And the murder?’

‘It seems that last Monday, McCarthy left his house at Hatherley at about three in the afternoon. He walked down to Boscombe Pool, a small lake at the end of

Boscombe Valley. He told his servant that he had an appointment at three o'clock. He never came back alive.

'McCarthy was seen walking towards the pool by two people. Both say he was walking alone. The gamekeeper also says that a few minutes later James McCarthy went the same way, carrying a gun. He thought the son was following his father.'

'And was the father shot?' I asked.

'Oh no,' replied Holmes. 'Please wait. There was another witness. Patience Moran, daughter of the lodge-keeper on the Boscombe Estate, was picking flowers in the woods. She says that she saw James and his father having a violent quarrel. She heard Charles McCarthy using strong language to his son and she saw the son raise his hand as if to strike his father.'

Holmes continued, 'She ran away and told her mother. Almost as soon as she had finished telling her story, James McCarthy ran up and said he had found his father dead. They followed him and found the body by the side of the pool. The head had been beaten in by blows from some heavy and blunt weapon.'

'Such as the butt-end of a gun?' I asked.

'Exactly. Anyway, Watson, James McCarthy has been arrested and charged with his father's murder. It looks exceedingly grave against the young man.'

'Has he said anything?'

'Indeed he has. And it makes an interesting case.'

According to James McCarthy, he had been away in Bristol for three days. He came back to find his father out. He set out to do some rabbit shooting at the other side of Boscombe Pool. About a hundred yards from the pool he heard a cry of "Cooee!" which was the usual signal between him and his father.

'His father was surprised to see him. For some reason, an argument took place and James walked off.



He had not gone far when he heard a dreadful cry.

'According to his story, he returned and found his

father dying. He held him in his arms but he could do nothing. He then ran off to the lodge-keeper's for help.'

'Is there nothing else to go on?' I asked.

'Two things which may turn out to be important,' said Holmes. 'James heard his father speak before he died. He said he spoke about a rat.'

'A rat!'

'Precisely, my dear Watson. And the other matter was the subject of the quarrel.'

'Which was?'

'James McCarthy refused to tell the coroner what they quarrelled about.'

'Refused?'

'Quite so.' Holmes looked up at me, raised his eyebrows and smiled. 'You see why I am interested, Watson. This is not such a simple case as they would have us believe.'

CHAPTER 2



A Blow from Behind

We arrived at the Hereford Arms in Ross at half past four. We were sipping our tea when the door burst open and in rushed one of the loveliest young women I have ever seen.

'Oh, Mr Sherlock Holmes!' she cried. 'I am so glad you have come. I know that James didn't do it. We have

known each other since we were children. He is too tender-hearted to hurt a fly.'

'You may rely on my doing all that I can,' replied Holmes, deducing correctly that the lady was Mr Turner's daughter, Alice.

'James never did it,' she repeated. 'And about his quarrel with his father – I am sure he refused to speak of it because it concerned me.'

'In what way?'

'Mr McCarthy wanted James to marry me. We have always loved one another like brother and sister – but James is so young – and he is not willing to commit himself to such a step ...' She blushed and I deduced that she would not object to marrying him, however.

'Thank you,' said Holmes. 'And may I see your father tomorrow?'

'I am afraid the doctor won't allow it.'

'The doctor?'

'Have you not heard? Poor Father has not been strong for years but this has made him quite ill. He was such a strong man once – when he was in Australia. Mr McCarthy was the only man who knew him in those days.'

'Really?' said Holmes. 'That is interesting. Thank you, Miss Turner, you have been a great help.'

She smiled gratefully at him. 'I must go home now. Father misses me so, if I leave him.' She hurried from the room as impulsively as she had entered.

Holmes decided to set off for Hereford immediately to see James McCarthy, and while he was away I pondered the details of the murder. The local paper had the full inquest report which included the surgeon's description of the injuries. The bones on the left hand side of the skull, at the back, had been shattered by a heavy blow.

This gave me pause for thought. Such a blow must have been struck from behind, which is not what you would expect in a face-to-face argument. Then there was the matter of the man's dying words. 'A rat ...' What could it mean?

Holmes returned late without much more information. He had found out, though, the truth about James' feelings towards Miss Turner. 'He is madly in love with her,' remarked Holmes.

'Then why argue with his father about the match?'

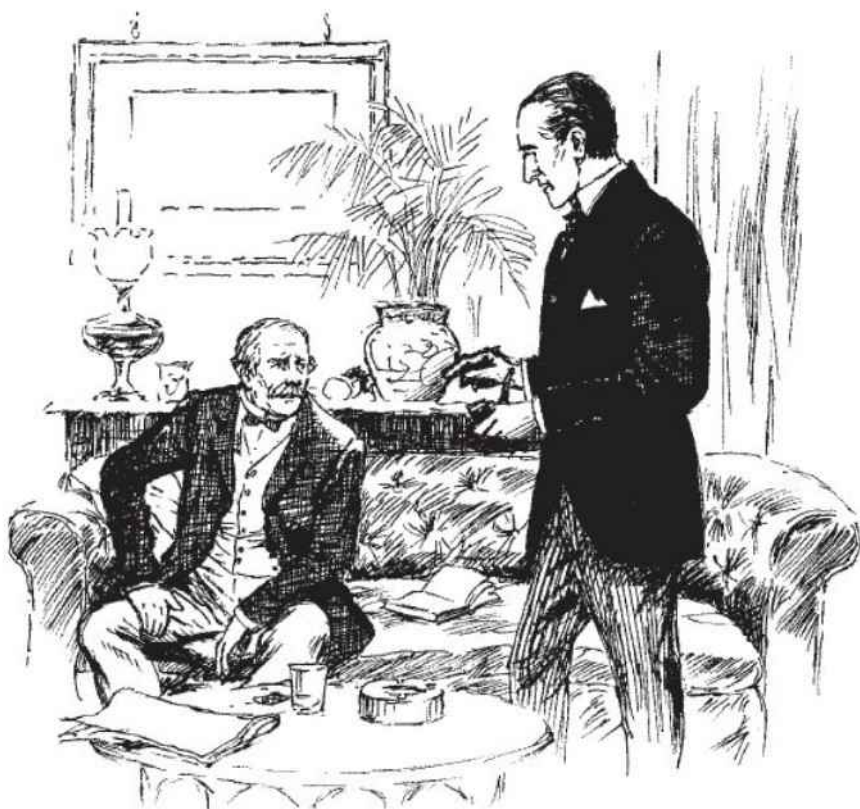
'Because, Watson, he is already married.'

'Great heavens, Holmes! He is hardly more than a boy!'

'And he was even more of a boy when he got himself into the clutches of a barmaid in Bristol. He married her secretly over a year ago when Miss Turner was away at boarding school.'

'So he is being scolded for not doing what he would love to do! How maddening!'

'Quite so. However, good may come of this evil. It seems that the barmaid found out he was in serious trouble. She has thrown him over. She has written to



say that she has a husband already in the Bermuda Dockyard!’

‘So there is no tie between them?’

‘Happily so – but a small comfort for being in prison on a murder charge.’

‘But if he is innocent, who has done it?’

‘Let me draw your attention to two things, Watson. First, the murdered man had an appointment with someone. That person could not have been his son. His son was away and he didn’t know when he was returning.’

‘Of course. And the second thing?’

‘The murdered man was heard to cry “Cooee!” before he knew his son was anywhere near. The case depends upon such things!’

Holmes closed his eyes and would say no more.

CHAPTER 3



The Scene of the Crime

The following morning we set off for Hatherley Farm and the Boscombe Pool. As the carriage bounced down the country lanes, Holmes turned to me.

‘One other interesting fact, Watson. Mr McCarthy lived at Hatherley Farm rent free.’

‘How very generous of Mr Turner,’ I replied. ‘But then, they were friends from Australia.’

‘Does it not seem odd, though? McCarthy, who had so little of his own, talked of marrying his son to Turner’s daughter. He talked of it in a very confident way – but I have discovered that Turner himself was against it.’

It did seem odd but I could deduce nothing from it. We soon arrived at the farm, a comfortable-looking two-storey building. The maid, at Holmes’ request, showed us the boots McCarthy had been wearing. She also found a pair of his son’s boots.

Holmes measured them all very carefully and then set off to the pool. It was damp marshy ground and there were marks of many feet on the path and on the short grass beside it. 'How simple it would have been,' exclaimed Holmes, 'if I had been here before they came like a herd of buffalo. Many of the important tracks have been obscured.'

He peered at the ground, then cried, 'Aha! Here are three separate tracks of the same feet.'

He took out a lens and lay down to get a better view, all of the time talking to himself. 'These are young McCarthy's feet. Twice he was walking and once he ran swiftly. The soles are deeply marked but the heels hardly visible. That bears out his story. Here are the father's feet as he paced up and down. Ha! What have we here? Tip-toes. Tip-toes! Square, too. Quite unusual boots. Now, where did they come from?'

Holmes paced up and down, sometimes losing and sometimes finding the track. He stopped in the edge of the wood and under the shadow of a great beech tree he lay down again. He stayed there a long time, turning over leaves and dry twigs. A jagged stone was lying among the moss; he picked it up and examined it carefully. Then he got up and followed a pathway through the woods which led to the main road, where he stopped.

He showed me the stone. 'This may interest you,' he said. 'If I am not mistaken, the murder was done with it.'



He did not sound as if he expected to be mistaken but I had to ask, 'How can you tell? There are no marks on it.'

'The grass was growing under it so it had only been there a few days. It matches the injuries and there is no sign of another weapon.'

'And the murderer?'

'The murderer is a tall man, left-handed. He limps with the right leg and wears thick-soled shooting boots. He smokes Indian cigars, uses a cigar holder and carries a blunt penknife. There are several other indications, but these may be enough to aid us in our search.'

Holmes was silent for a long time and we did not speak again until we were back at the Hereford Arms.

CHAPTER 4

A Rat!

After lunch, Holmes sat with his tapering fingers together, staring into space. Then he turned to me.

‘I don’t know quite what to do, Watson. I should value your advice. Let me explain.’

‘Pray do so.’

‘Let us presume that what young James said was true.’

‘In what respect?’

‘About two things in particular. One I mentioned earlier – that his father called “Cooee” *before* seeing him. The other was McCarthy’s dying words about a rat.’

‘What of this Cooee, then?’

‘It could not have been meant for his son. As far as McCarthy knew, his son was in Bristol. The Cooee was meant to call the person he was meeting. But Cooee is an Australian greeting. Hence he was expecting to meet someone from Australia.’

I nodded. ‘And the rat?’

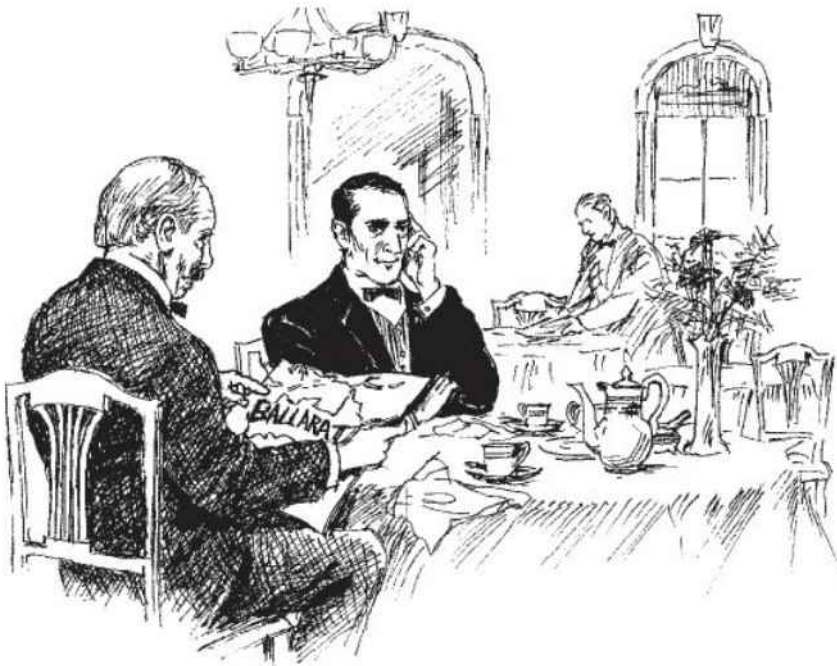
Holmes took out a folded paper from his pocket. ‘This is a map of the colony of Victoria in Australia. I had it

sent over this morning.' He put his hand over part of the map. 'What do you read?'

'ARAT,' I said.

'And now?' He raised his hand. I could see the whole word. 'BALLARAT.'

'Quite so. That was the word that McCarthy spoke. His son heard the last part only. He was trying to say the name of his murderer. "So-and-so of Ballarat."'



'That's wonderful!'

'It's obvious. Now, you see, I have narrowed down the field. A tall Australian who is at home in the district. At home enough to find his way through the back of the estate.'

‘His height you deduced from the length of his stride – and his boots. But what about his lameness?’

‘The mark of his right foot was always less clear than his left. He put less weight on it. Why? Because he limped.’

‘But his left-handedness?’

‘You noticed the injury as reported at the inquest. A blow struck from behind yet from the left side. Surely a left-handed man? He stood behind the tree during the argument between James and his father. He even smoked there – I found the ash of a cigar. As you know, I am an expert on tobacco ash. I then discovered the cigar stump in the moss where he had thrown it.’

‘And the cigar holder?’

‘The cigar had not been in his mouth, therefore he had used a holder. The tip had been cut off, not bitten. It was not a clean cut – so I deduced a blunt penknife.’

‘I see where this all points. The murderer must be –’

‘Mr John Turner!’ cried a voice. It was the hotel waiter, opening the door. He showed a visitor into the room.

The man who entered was a strange and impressive figure.

He had a slow limping step but his craggy face and huge arms and legs gave an impression of strength of body and character. His face was white and his lips tinged with blue. As a doctor I could see that he was a very ill man.

‘Pray take a seat,’ said Holmes. ‘You got my note?’

‘The lodge-keeper brought it. You said you wished to see me here to avoid scandal.’

‘I thought people would talk if I came to the Hall.’

‘And why did you wish to see me?’ the man asked, wearily.

‘I know all about McCarthy,’ said Holmes.

The old man sunk his face in his hands. ‘God help me!’ he cried. ‘But I would have spoken out. I would not have let that young man come to harm.’

‘I am glad to hear it,’ said Holmes gravely.

‘I would have spoken of it already. But my dear daughter: it will break her heart when she sees me arrested.’

‘It may not come to that,’ said Holmes.

‘What?’

‘I am no police officer. Your daughter invited me here and I am acting in her interests. Young McCarthy must be got off, however.’

‘I am a dying man,’ said Turner. ‘The doctor says I have but a month. Yet I would sooner die under my own roof than in jail.’

‘Just tell us the truth while I jot down the facts. You will sign it with Watson as witness. If the case goes against young McCarthy I shall use your confession. You may be assured I shall not use it unless it is absolutely needed.’

‘It’s as well,’ said the old man. ‘I doubt I shall live until the trial. But I would still like to spare Alice the shock. I will tell you all. It will not take long.’

CHAPTER 5

A Riddle Answered

‘This man McCarthy was a devil. His grip has been upon me these twenty years. He has blasted my life.

‘It began in the sixties at the gold diggings. I was young and hot-blooded but I had no luck with my search for gold. I took to drink and made bad friends. I became a highway robber. There were six of us and we had a wild free life. Black Jack of Ballarat was the name I took.

‘One day a gold convoy came from Ballarat to Melbourne. We attacked it and in the fight three of our boys were killed before we got the swag. I put my pistol to the head of the driver – it was this man McCarthy. I wish to the Lord I had shot him then...

‘We got away with the gold and became wealthy men. Later, I made my way to England. I wanted to settle down and do some good with my money, to make up for the way I had earned it. I married and, though my wife died young, she left me my darling daughter Alice.

‘I did my best to lead a good life and to make up for my past. All was going well until McCarthy laid his grip upon me!

‘I had gone to London on business. There in Regent Street I met him. He had hardly a coat on his back or a boot to his foot.

“Well, here we are, Jack!” he said. “We’ll be as good as family to you, me and my son. You can have the keeping of us. And if you don’t, it’s a fine law-abiding country – and there’s always the police...”

‘Well, they came down here and there was no shaking them off. They lived rent free at Hatherley on my best land. There was no rest. No peace. No forgetfulness. Turn where I would, there was his cunning, grinning face at my elbow. It grew worse as Alice grew up. He saw that I was more afraid of her knowing my past than I was about the police. Whatever he wanted, I gave without question. Land, money, houses – until at last he asked what I could not give. He asked for Alice.

‘His son had grown up. It seemed a great stroke to him to marry his son to my girl. I was ill and when I died his family would take the whole property.

‘But I was firm. I would not do it. I did not dislike the lad but the McCarthy blood was in him and that was enough. McCarthy threatened me. I braved him to do his worst. Finally, we were to meet at the pool midway between our houses to talk it out.

‘I went down there and heard him talking with his son. I smoked a cigar and waited in the trees till he was alone. But as I listened, all that was dark and bitter in me seemed to come uppermost. He was urging his son to marry Alice with no regard for what she might feel. It drove me mad to think that I and all that I held most dear should be in the power of such a man! I had to silence his foul tongue! I did it, Mr Holmes. I struck him down like a venomous beast. That is the truth, gentlemen, of what occurred.’

‘It is not for me to judge you,’ said Holmes as Turner signed the statement. ‘You know that you are to answer for your deeds at a higher court than ours.’

‘Farewell, then,’ said the old man. ‘Your own death-beds, when they come, will be the easier for the thought of the peace which you have given to mine.’ He stumbled slowly from the room.

‘God help us,’ said Holmes after a long silence. ‘Why does fate play such tricks with poor helpless worms?’

James McCarthy was acquitted at the trial, mainly because of the evidence presented by Holmes to the Defence. Old Turner lived another seven months. There is now every chance that James and Alice may yet live happily together – in ignorance of the cloud which rests upon their past.





Stories of **SHERLOCK HOLMES**

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

*Specially adapted for TreeTops
by Trevor Millum*

Sherlock Holmes, aided by the faithful Dr Watson, must use all his skill and cunning to solve four very different mysteries, involving 'a rat', a large blue jewel, a famous racehorse – and a young woman who is in more danger than she realizes...

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