



Adventure XLVIII – The Valley of Fear

Publishing History

47 of the 60 stories

First published monthly in installments in *The Strand Magazine*, September 1914 to May 1915

Smith Elder & Co., London, 1915

George H. Doran, New York, 1915

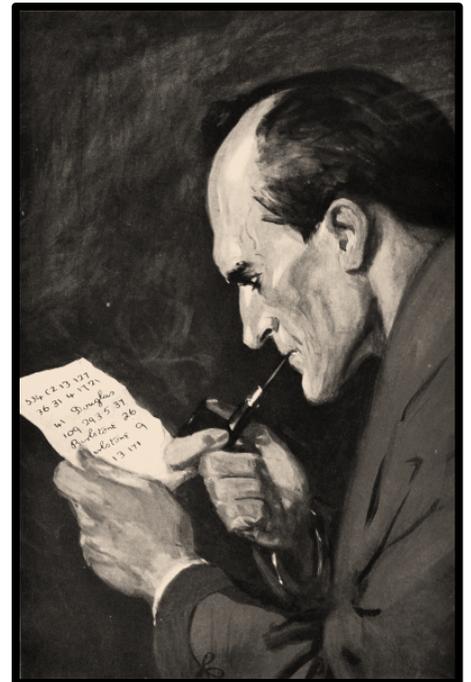
British Illustrator – Frank Wiles

Chronology

Baring-Gould places the dating of the story at Saturday, January 7 to Sunday, January 8, 1888 making it 16th of the 60. This means that Holmes is 34 and Watson 36.

Christopher Morley Says

“A fine and ingenious opening starts this long story at an excellent pace, but then Watson reverts to the ancient device of “*A Study in Scarlet*.” The long interpolation of the background story is a disappointment, and the epilogue is perfunctory and out of key. Scholars have attributed the mystical ending to the unidentified Other Hand that was active in some of the later narratives.”



Dummies Short Summary

“*The Valley of Fear* (1914) is undoubtedly the least popular and least read of the Sherlock Holmes novels, and that’s too bad, because the plotting, characterization, and sheer thrills, it’s second only to *The Hounds of the Baskervilles*.

The Valley of Fear is really two independent stories that only dovetail at the end of the book.

Story 1: The first story begins with what seems like a terrible murder in an English country home. The owner’s face has been blown off by a sawed-off shotgun.

Story 2: The second story is a flashback based on the true-life events involving the Molly Maguires, an Irish-American labor organization that used terror and violence to fight abusive mine owners in Pennsylvania. The story (both in real life and the novel) involves a Pinkerton detective going undercover to catch the bad guys. Some Sherlockians contend that this flashback is so well-written that *The Valley of Fear* should be considered to contain not one but *two* detective stories.”

How Many Words

At 57,881 words VALL has the 59th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 3 classified as a voluntary disappearance – but the villain was slain in self-defense and the missing person was subsequently lost overboard at sea. The others were MISS and NOBL.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

Most Sherlockian societies do not include the 4 long stories with the 56 short stories when rating the stories. This would not be high on anyone’s list.

1927 – Arthur Conan Doyle did not put it on his list of 12 favorites.

What Else Happened That Year (1888)

- Convention of Constantinople: Suez Canal declared open to ships of all nations and free from blockade.
- British East Africa Company founded.
- Jack the Ripper has murder spree in Whitechapel.
- Miners Federation of Great Britain formed; demand for minimum wage.
- Final report on Commission on Elementary Education Acts in England.

- Foundation of London General Omnibus Company.
- French Indochina formed.
- Slavery ends in Brazil.
- Benjamin Harrison elected President of United States; even though Cleveland received more popular votes, the electoral college gives the election to Harrison.
- Unemployment demonstration in Rome suppressed by the military.
- New York State establishes electric chair for method of death penalty.
- Van Gogh in Arles, Holland, paints Sunflowers, Portrait of Armand Roulin, La Mousme, and Drawbridge at Arles.
- Casey at the Bat is recited publicly for the first time.
- John Phillip Sousa composes the military march *Semper Fidelis* for the U.S. Marine Corp.
- Rimsky-Korsakov composes *Scheherazade*.
- Kipling publishes *Soldiers Three, and Plain Tales from the Hills*; 20 stories of India.
- Dunlop's pneumatic tyre developed, principle still unproven.
- Clinton Merriam establishes the National Geographical Society and they release their first magazine.
- Drinking straws are invented.
- George Eastman perfects the "Kodak" box camera, which uses photographic paper roll-film.
- Emile Berliner improves the gramophone.
- Nichola Tesla makes first AC motor.
- Incubators are first used for premature infants.
- William Burroughs patents the adding machine.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

They are both living at 221B.

Dramatis Personae

For all purposes, this is really 2 casts - - 1 for each story

- **Porlock**, an unfaithful agent of Moriarty who has turned informant
- **Moriarty**, author of “The Dynamics of an Asteroid.”
- **Billy**, the page
- **Inspector McDonald**, of the Yard.

- **Col. Sebastian Moran**, Moriarty's chief of staff.
- **White Mason**, local constable at Birlstone.
- **John Douglas**, aka **Birdie Edwards** aka **JACK Mcmurdo** aka **Steve Wilson**, the murdered man?
- **Mrs. Ivy Douglas**, his wife.
- **Ettie Edwards** nee **Shafter**, first wife of Douglas who died a natural death in California.
- **Cecil James Barker**, intimate friend of Douglas, who knew him in California.
- **Ames**, butler to the Douglasses
- **Mrs. Allen**, maid to the Douglasses
- **Ted Baldwin**, the (attempted) murderer. One of the Scowrers.
- **JOHN Mcginty**, Bodymaster of the Vermissa Valley Lodge of Freemen.
- **Scanlan**, friend of Douglas in Vermissa Valley.
- **Jonathan Wild**, a master 18th century criminal. The Moriarty of his time.

Quotable Sherlock

- (Watson) "What do you make of it Holmes?" "It is obviously an attempt to convey secret information." But what is the use of a cipher message without the cipher?"
- "When you have one of the first brains of Europe up against you, and all the powers
- "I wonder!" said he, leaning back and staring at the ceiling. "Perhaps there are points which have escaped your Machiavellian intellect. Let us consider the problem in the light of pure reason."
- "Mediocrity knows nothing higher than itself; but talent instantly recognizes genius."
- "Everything comes in circles – even Professor Moriarty . . . It's all been done before, and will be again."
- "Then, with your permission, we will leave it at that, Mr. Mac. The temptation to form premature theories upon insufficient data is the bane of our profession."
- "Dear me, Watson, is it possible that you have not penetrated the fact that the case hangs upon the missing dumb-bell?"
- "One dumb-bell, Watson! Consider an athlete with one dumb-bell! Picture to yourself the unilateral development, the imminent danger of a spinal curvature. Shocking, Watson, shocking!"
- "There should be no combination of events for which the wit of men cannot conceive an explanation."
- "Is it not? Is it not? Breadth of view, my dear Mr. Mac, is one of the essentials of our profession. The interplay of ideas and the oblique uses of knowledge are often of extraordinary interest."

- "Exactly. She does not shine as a wife even in her own account of what occurred. I am not a whole-souled admirer of womankind, as you are aware, Watson, but my experience of life has taught me that there are few wives having any regard for their husbands who would let any man's spoken word stand between them and that husband's dead body. Should I ever marry, Watson, I should hope to inspire my wife with some feeling which would prevent her from being walked off by a housekeeper when my corpse was lying within a few yards of her."
- ...“Watson insists that I am a dramatist in real life. Some touch of the artist wells up within me and calls for a well-staged performance. Surely our profession would be a drab and sordid one if we did not sometimes set the scene so as to glorify our results.”
- "Surely our profession, Mr. Mac, would be a drab and sordid one if we did not sometimes set the scene so as to glorify our results. The blunt accusation, the brutal tap upon the shoulder -- what can one make of such a denouement? But the quick inference, the subtle trap, the clever forecast of coming events, the triumphant vindication of bold theories -- are these not the pride and the justification of our life's work?"
- “When water is near and a weight is missing it is not a very far-fetched supposition that something has been sunk in the water.”

Holmes' Fee

No mention of a fee is stated. This case is another example of the Yard calling in Holmes. It was never explained in the stories, but we believe there was a retainer arrangement in place so Holmes could be paid. Holmes did not seem to be working for the victim's family, but Mrs. Douglas did tell Holmes and the police to make every possible effort and to spare no money.

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

- 1916 *The Valley of Fear* with H. A. Sainsbury of which all is lost
- 1986 *The Valley of Fear* with narration by Peter O'Toole in an animated TV movie
- 1999 *The Crime Magazine* as an episode of Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century (Animated TV series)

Fainting In The Canon

In VALL, both Jack McMurdo and Brother Morris almost faint.

Newspapers

Daily Herald - Fictional

Annotated Sherlock

- **“solatium”** In law, compensation for injury to the feelings, as distinguished from compensation for pecuniary loss or physical injury.
- **“apocrypha”** From the Greek: hidden things; secrets
- **“Mahartta”** a confederation of chieftains in India broken up by the British in 1818
- **“pollarded elms”** a pollarded tree is one that is shorn at the top so that it will produce a thick crop of slender shoots
- **“peine forte et dure”** French for heavy and harsh punishment

Weapons

This category needs its own page. Hang on – here they are:

- **Sawed-Off Shotgun** - Which Teddy Baldwin, avenging Scowrer, kept hidden in his coat, and which he used to try to kill Birdy Edwards (alias John Douglas and McMurdo) but ended up being the instrument of his own death.
- **Revolver** - Which Edwards, etc., kept with him at all times in fear of the Scowrer’s vengeance.
- **Large Navy Revolver** - Which McMurdo took with him to Vermissa.
- **“Wicked Revolver”** - Which Boss McGinty, body-master of the Scowrers of Vermissa, pulled on McMurdo.
- **Firearm** - Which McMurdo supposedly used to kill Janas Pinto in Chicago.
- **Pistol** - Which was given to Wilson, a young Scowrer, to kill Andrew Rae, an uncooperative miner in the district.
- **Firearm** - Which was used to kill Jim Carnaway, a Scowrer, when he went to kill Chester Wilcox.
- **Winchester Rifles** - Used by the Vermissa Police in defense of the *Vermissa Herald*, a newspaper opposing the activities of the Scowrers.
- **Winchester Rifles** - Which two members of the Vermissa Police aimed at McMurdo, prior to carrying him off to jail.
- **Pistol** - Which Captain Teddy Marvin, a former Chicago policeman, now of the Vermissa Police, used in arresting McMurdo.

- **Firearms** - OF Andrews and Laver, who were sent from a sister lodge of the Scowrers to kill Menzies and Dunn, two miners.
- **Pistols** - Which members of the Scowrers used to kill William Hales, a mine owner.
- **Pistol** - Which Hales could not get to in time to defend himself against the onslaught of the Scowrers.
- **Pistols** - Which Manners and Riley, young Scowrers, took with them when they went to kill Chester Wilcox.
- **Firearms** - Used by various and sundry Scowrers to kill policemen Hunt and Evans, Mrs. Larby, and others.
- **Firearms** - Which were distributed among the law-abiding citizens of Vermissa to be used against the Scowrers.
- **Rifles** - Used against the Scowrers by the police and citizens of Vermissa.
- **Pistol** - Which Teddy Baldwin was told to put down after the apprehension of the Scowrers.
- **Knife** - Which Teddy Baldwin used to attack John Douglas.
- **Hammer** - With which John Douglas defended himself from Teddy Baldwin.
- **Sticks** - Which members of the Scowrers headed by Baldwin used to beat up James Stanger, editor of the Vermissa Herald.
- **Iron Spanner** - Which Menzies, the mine engineer at Crowhill, used to attack a party of the Scowrers after which they had killed the mine's manager, Josiah H. Dunn, thus forfeiting his own life.
- **Hands** - Of Boss McGinty, with which he almost strangled Teddy Baldwin to death.
- **Fists** - Of members of the Scowrers, which McGinty wanted to employ to beat up Brother Morris.
- **Extortion** - Practiced by the Scowrers on the merchants and mine owners of the district.
- **Blasting Powder** - Which members of the Scowrers used to blow up Chester Wilcox's home.
- **The Atlantic Ocean** - Off St. Helena, where Birdy Edwards was drowned, supposedly by the agents of Prof. Moriarty.

Frank Mentzel