

‘Don’t hurry me, Watson. Just listen. I am coming to that.

‘Last Monday, 3 June, Charles McCarthy went to the town of Ross with his servant. This was in the morning. While he was there, he told his servant to hurry because he had an important meeting with someone at three o’clock that afternoon. They drove back quickly to his house at Hatherley. Just before three o’clock, McCarthy left the farmhouse and walked down alone to Boscombe Pool. He never came back.

‘It is a quarter of a mile from Hatherley Farm to Boscombe Pool and two different people saw him as he walked that way. One was an old woman but we do not know her name. The other was a manservant of Mr Turner, called William Crowder. Both people say that McCarthy was alone. The servant also says that, a few minutes after he saw McCarthy go past, he also saw his son, Mr James McCarthy, going the same way. He had a gun under his arm. The son could see his father and was following him. But Crowder, the servant, thought nothing of this until he heard of McCarthy’s death later that evening.’

‘You explain it all so clearly,’ I said.

‘I have told you to listen, dear doctor. When I have finished, you can say what you like. I shall continue.

‘Another person saw the two McCarthys after William Crowder. The land around Boscombe Pool is full of trees with a little grass in the open parts beside the water. A girl of fourteen, Patience Moran, was picking flowers among the trees that afternoon. She saw Mr McCarthy and his son close to the lake. They both seemed to be very angry. She heard Mr McCarthy using strong language to his son. She saw the young man lift up his arm. He seemed ready to hit his father. She felt so frightened that she ran away. When she got home, she told her mother about the quarrel. “When I saw them, they seemed to be going to have a fight,” she said. Just as she was speaking, young



*Patience Moran saw Mr McCarthy and his son close to the lake.
They both seemed to be very angry.*

Mr McCarthy came running up to their house. "I have just found my father by the pool," he shouted. "He is dead. We must get help." He looked very excited, without either his hat or his gun. His right hand was red with blood. Immediately, Patience's parents went with him to the pool, where they found his father's dead body lying on the grass. There were many wounds in his head, made by something thick and heavy like the wooden part of the young man's gun. They found this gun lying on the grass not far from the dead man. The police soon came and immediately held the young man for questioning, then locked him up. His case will come up in a few weeks' time.'

'Everything points to the fact that the young man is guilty, does it not?' I said.

'The facts are not always what they seem,' answered Holmes. 'We think that they all point to the same thing but, if we look at them in another way, they can tell quite a different story. It is true that the case against the young man is very serious and maybe he is in fact guilty. But there are several people who believe that he is innocent. One of these is Miss Turner, the daughter of McCarthy's neighbour. She has asked Detective Lestrade to take on the case and now Lestrade, since he cannot really say no, has asked me to help him. That is why we are hurrying along in a train instead of having a quiet breakfast at home.'

'I am afraid that the case is so clear that no one will thank you for showing what happened,' I said.

'We shall see,' my friend answered. 'We both know that Lestrade is not as clever as he thinks and I am sure that I shall notice some things which he has missed. But there is something more to tell you. When the police came to Hatherley Farm and took young McCarthy prisoner, he said, "I am deeply sorry but I am not surprised. I was expecting this."'



James McCarthy came running up to the Moran family's house and said, 'I have just found my father by the pool. He is dead.'

‘Of course, that shows that he is guilty,’ I said.

‘In no way. In fact, he has repeated many times that he is innocent.’

‘But that is hard to believe, don’t you think?’

‘Of course not. He cannot be so stupid that he does not realize the danger which he is in. So he cannot be surprised that he is a prisoner. Clearly he is sorry that his father is dead and that they had a quarrel. His feelings are quite natural, I think.’

‘So what story does this young man have to tell?’

‘You can read it here in this newspaper,’ said Holmes. He gave it to me and pointed to the right page. This is what I read:

Mr James McCarthy, the son of the dead man, gave the following story: ‘I was away from home for three days because I had business in Bristol. I came back only last Monday in the morning. My father was not at home when I arrived. A servant told me that he was in Ross on business. After some time, I heard the wheels of his carriage coming back. I looked out of the window and saw him walking quickly away from the house. I did not know where he was going. I then took my gun and went for a walk. I wanted to shoot some birds in the trees on the other side of Boscombe Pool. On my way, I passed William Crowder, as he has told you. But he is wrong when he says that I was following my father. I had no idea that he was in front of me. When I was about a hundred yards from the pool, I heard someone call “Cooee!” My father and I often used this call. I hurried towards the pool and found him standing there. He seemed very surprised to see me and also quite angry. He asked, “What are you doing here?” I explained, we began to talk and more angry words followed. I became angry too. I felt ready to hit him but instead I decided to leave. I know that my father

gets angry very quickly, sometimes about things that are not important.

I then went back towards Hatherley Farm. After only one hundred and fifty yards, I heard a terrible scream, so I ran back to the pool again. I found my father on the ground. He was dying. There were terrible wounds on his head. I dropped my gun and held him in my arms but he died almost immediately. I stayed beside him for some minutes and then I made my way to the nearest house to ask for help. I saw no one near my father when I returned with Mr and Mrs Moran. I have no idea how he got those wounds. He was a cold man and not much liked in the neighbourhood; but I do not think that he had any enemies. That is all I know about this business.'

Questioner: Did your father say anything to you before he died?

McCarthy: His voice was very weak. He spoke a few words but I only understood something about a rat.

Questioner: What did that mean to you?

McCarthy: It meant nothing. I do not think he knew what he was saying.

Questioner: What were you talking about with your father that made him so angry?

McCarthy: I prefer not to answer.

Questioner: I must ask you to tell us.

McCarthy: It is not possible for me to tell you. Please understand that it has nothing to do with his murder.

Questioner: That is for us to decide. If you do not answer, you must realize that the case against you will be worse.

McCarthy: I do not want to speak about it.

Questioner: Is it true that the call of 'Cooee' was a call which you and your father used between you?

McCarthy: Yes, it is.



A young woman hurried into the room. 'I have driven here to tell you this: I know that James did not do it.'

has to please a young woman and this one knows what she wants. She has heard of you and she decided to ask you to come. I told her again and again that there is nothing that you can do which I have not already done but... Look, here is her carriage at the door!

As he was speaking, a young woman hurried into the room: She was one of the prettiest girls that I have ever seen in my life. Her eyes were shining, her lips open, ready to speak, and her face was pink with excitement.

She looked at each of us carefully, and then turned to my friend. 'Oh Mr Sherlock Holmes,' she said. She seemed to know immediately who he was. 'I am so glad that you have come. I have driven here to tell you this: I know that James did not do it. I know it and I want you to know it too. Please be

quite sure of that fact before you start your work. I have known him since we were both little children and I know his weaknesses better than anyone. But he is too soft-hearted to hurt a fly. Anyone who really knows him must believe that he is innocent.'

'I hope that we can show that to be true, Miss Turner,' said Sherlock Holmes. 'Believe me, I shall do everything possible.'

'But you have read the facts. You have studied the problem. You must see something wrong in what people are thinking. Some way of escape. Do you not believe that he is innocent?'

'I think that probably he is.'

'There, now!' she said, throwing back her head and turning to Lestrade. 'Do you hear that? He gives me hope.'

Lestrade looked unhappy. He clearly thought that Holmes was mistaken. 'I am afraid that my friend here is only guessing,' he said.

'But he is right! I know that he is right. James and his father had many quarrels about me. Mr McCarthy wanted us to get married. I have always loved James and he loves me but we are like brother and sister. He is still young and knows very little about life and... and... I mean, naturally he did not wish to marry just yet. So there were quarrels. I am sure that this was one of them.'

'And your father?' asked Holmes. 'Did he also want you to marry James?'

'No, he was against it too. Only Mr McCarthy wanted it.' Holmes was watching her carefully and we saw that her face suddenly became a deeper pink.

'Thank you for this information,' Holmes said. 'Can I come and visit your father tomorrow?'

'I am afraid that the doctor will say no.'

'The doctor?'

'Yes, haven't you heard? My poor father has not been strong

for many years but with his sadness about this murder he has become very ill. He is in bed and Dr Willows says that his case is serious. Mr McCarthy was the only person left who knew Father in the old days in Australia – when he was in Victoria.'

'Ha! In Victoria? That is important.'

'Yes, at the mines.'

'Of course. I understand that those were the goldmines where Mr Turner made his money.'

'That is right.'

'Thank you, Miss Turner. You have been a very great help to me.'

'You will tell me tomorrow if you have any news? I expect that you will go to the prison to see James. Oh Mr Holmes, if you do go, please tell him this: I know he is innocent.'

'I will, Miss Turner.'

'I must go home now because my father needs me. He is unhappy if I leave him. Goodbye and God help you in your work.' She hurried from the room and we heard her carriage moving away down the street.

'I am surprised at you, Holmes,' said Lestrade, after keeping silent for a few minutes. 'Why do you give her hope when she is sure to lose it only too soon? I am not soft-hearted, as you know, but I think you are being unkind.'

'I believe that there is a way of saving James McCarthy,' said Holmes. 'Have you an order to see him in the prison?'

'Yes, but only for you and me.'

'Then I shall change my plans and go out. We have still got time to take a train to Hereford and see him tonight?'

'Plenty of time.'

'Then let us go. Watson, I am afraid that you will be bored but I shall only be away for an hour or two.'

I walked with them to the station and then came back alone