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THE VALLEY OF FEAR

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle



A Sherlock Holmes Detective Novel

THE VALLEY OF
FEAR

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE



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About this book



THE VALLEY OF FEAR, was Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's last detective-novel and, in the opinion of his biographer Mr. John Dickson Carr, his best. It is in two parts. The first tells how Sherlock Holmes tackles the mystery of a strange crime at the moated Birlstone Manor. A man is found murdered in the study. There are obvious clues, such as a candle and a blood-mark. But there are other clues which Watson does not perceive, though Holmes instantly realises their importance—the fact, for instance, that one of a pair of dumb-bells is missing. Holmes tantalises Watson by insisting on the significance of the missing dumb-bell—and of Watson's umbrella; and the reader is given every vital clue to the solution. Then the plot switches to a mining valley in America in order to recount an earlier history of lawlessness and murder which led up to the crime in England. "This part of the story," wrote Sir Arthur to the Editor of the *Strand Magazine* (who was pressing him for information about it), "will contain one surprise which I hope will be a real staggerer to the most confirmed reader." In the subsequent events Holmes recognises the touch of that criminal genius Professor Moriarty.

Conan Doyle sold his first Sherlock Holmes story outright for £25 after two book-publishers had rejected it. Neither it nor its successor attracted much attention; and the author plunged into the writing of stirring historical romances. Then he wrote six Sherlock Holmes short-stories for the *Strand Magazine*; their popularity was so great that the Editor implored him to continue the series. Conan Doyle was unwilling to do so, and suggested what seemed to him an impossibly high fee in the hope that he would not be bothered again; but the Editor accepted—and when that series was completed pressed him to go on, even agreeing to a far larger sum in payment. So Sherlock Holmes became, in Mr. Dickson Carr's words, "the most famous character in the English language." And even when he had been killed off, public clamour forced his creator to resurrect him.

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