



## The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure XXVI – The Final Problem

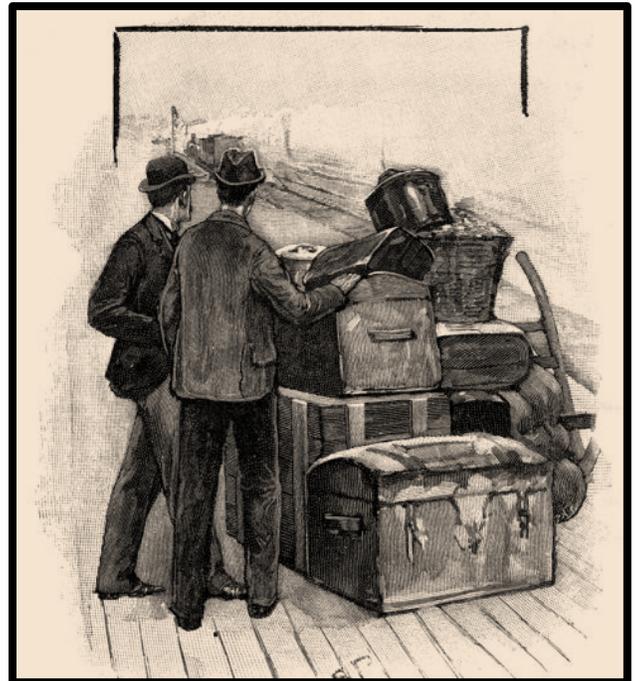
“...there, deep down in that dreadful cauldron of swirling water and seething foam, will lie for all time the most dangerous criminal and the foremost champion of the law of their generation.”

Sherlock Holmes — dead? Battered on the rocks and pulled under by the torrent of the Reichenbach Falls? Small comfort, indeed, that he took with him that consummate captain of crime, the malevolent Moriarty. How did things come to this evil pass? How was Moriarty able to wreak vengeance upon his nemesis, Sherlock Holmes? Even the brave and faithful Dr. Watson was unable to save Holmes from his dreadful doom.

It's a good thing this Adventure didn't turn out to be the last one because if it were I'd be wearing a black armband right about now, as did many of the Victorian aficionados of the Great Detective. I will be forever grateful to the Literary Agent for persuading Dr. Watson to continue his chronicles of Holmes' cases.

When Holmes furtively visits Watson's digs and goes around closing all the shutters on the windows, he admits to a paranoia about air-guns. This paranoia also extended to the belief that Watson's house was being watched, and perforce Holmes would exit the premises by the expedient

of “scrambling over [Watson's] back wall.” Given that Moriarty was as formidable as Holmes depicted him to be, and that Moriarty's only penalty for failure by his minions was death, how could Holmes expect Watson's back wall to be unwatched? Incredible as it seems, though, the ploy worked because Holmes later says “They must have lost my track completely after their bludgeonman was arrested.” Is it credible that Moriarty would



not have had a “shadow” following the bludgeonman in the event that Holmes escaped the rough’s tender ministrations? Did Holmes overestimate Moriarty?

We don’t officially “know” it from the text of this Adventure, but Moriarty had at his disposal one of the world’s finest heavy-game shots. Horse-drawn vans, bricks, bludgeon-wielding roughs, boulders...does anyone else find it puzzling that no one tried using a firearm to put a quietus on Holmes?

In his tête-à-tête with Holmes, Moriarty whips out a notebook, consults it, and says ““You crossed my path on the fourth of January.”” The context of his further remarks makes it clear that he is referring to January of that year. Yet Holmes told Watson that he had been trying to penetrate Moriarty’s organization for years. How was it possible, then, that Moriarty, that great spider with a web spun all over London and beyond, only became aware of Holmes and the threat he posed a mere four months before the downfall of his organization?

Following Holmes’ instructions to the letter, Watson writes, “A hansom was procured with such precautions as would prevent its being one which was placed ready for us.” “Us?” Who accompanied Watson on his trip to the Lowther Arcade?

Here’s one for the thespians among the List Members: When he arrived at Victoria, Watson encountered a venerable Italian priest who proved to be Holmes in disguise. I can understand a black hat and cassock, but how does one contort one’s face so that one’s nose is drawn closer to one’s chin, and cause one’s nose to resume its normal location in a mere instant? And how does one make one’s eyes either dull or fiery at will?

Lastly, why would an innkeeper allow a consumptive to stay in his establishment if tuberculosis is so contagious? Would someone with active tuberculosis even have been allowed to enter other countries?

**Steve Clarkson**

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