



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXVI – The Adventure of the Final Problem

Publishing History

26 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, December, 1893

In the US *McClure's Magazine*, December, 1893

Part of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* collection by

George Newnes, Ltd., London, 1894

Harper Bros., New York, 1894

British illustrator – Sidney Paget

American Illustrator – Harry C. Edwards

Chronology

Baring-Gould places the date of the story as Friday, April 24 to Monday, May 4, 1891 making it 31st of the 60. This means that Holmes is 37 and Watson 39.

Christopher Morley Says

“Readers were appalled by Holmes’s disappearance, but at any rate Watson told the story in the right tone of voice. None of the episodes surpass this in effective suspense and intimate suggestions of character.”



Dummies Short Summary

“This tale which introduces Professor James Moriarty, the *Napoleon of crime*, has a shocking conclusion that few readers can forget. It is with a *heavy heart* that Watson relates the death of Sherlock Holmes.”

How Many Words

At 7,203 words FINA has the 17th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 23 classified as a MURDER and one of 14 where the perpetrator was either killed, arrested, or otherwise satisfactorily handled.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

- 1927 – Arthur Conan Doyle named it 4th on his list of his 12 favorites.
- 1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it as #8 on their top 12 favorites.
- 1954 - The Baker Street Irregulars voted it as #12 on their top 12 favorites.
- 1959 – The Baker Street Irregulars did not list in their top 10.

What Else Happened That Year (1891)

- Nyasaland becomes British Protectorate.
- Behring Sea Arbitration Treaty signed.
- Anglo-Italian Agreement; spheres of influence defined in Northeast Africa.
- British South Africa Company granted use of port of Beira by Portugal.
- November 4, First half-tone newspaper picture published in *Daily Graphic*: that of George Lambert, Liberal parliamentary candidate.
- Independent Labour Party newspaper, *The Clarion*, published.
- All elementary education to be free.
- Factory Act: no child under 11 to work in factories.
- Germany develops first pension scheme.
- Massacre of Europeans following Arab revolt in Belgian Congo.
- Triple Alliance, Germany, Austria, Italy renewed to 1902.
- Formation of Young Turk Movement to secure liberal reforms. Committee established at Geneva.

- Bank failures in the U.S.A. and Australia.
- Building of Trans-Siberian Railway commenced.
- *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Arthur Conan Doyle.
- *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Hardy.
- *Lord Arthur Savile's Crime*, *Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oscar Wilde.
- Beginnings of wireless telegraphy based on work of Clark Maxwell and Hertz.
- Tesla further develops his high-tension induction coil--one million volts.
- Tuffier, of Paris, performs early lung operation for tuberculosis.
- W.L. Hudson, American, invents zipper. First practical design in 1913.

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

After Watson's marriage and subsequent start in private practice, the very intimate relations which had existed between Holes and Watson changed. Holmes still saw Watson from time to time, but these occasions grew more and more seldom, until in 1890 there were only three cases of which Watson kept any record.

Dramatis Personae

- **Professor Moriarty**, "the Napoleon of Crime."
- **Col. James Moriarty**, his brother.
- **Mycroft Holmes** "the British government"
- **Peter Steiler**, proprietor of the Englisher Hof at Meiringen.
- **Inspector Patterson**, in charge of rounding up the professor's gang.

Quotable Sherlock

- "I think that you know me well enough, Watson, to understand that I am by no means a nervous man. At the same time, it is stupidity rather than courage to refuse to recognize danger when it is close upon you."
- "You have probably never heard of Professor Moriarty?"
- "He is the Napoleon of crime, Watson. He is the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city. He is a genius, a philosopher, an abstract thinker. He has a brain of the first order. He sits motionless, like a spider in the center of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them."

- "You know my powers, my dear Watson, and yet at the end of three months I was forced to confess that I had at last met an antagonist who was my intellectual equal. My horror at his crimes was lost in my admiration at his skill."
- "My dear Watson, Professor Moriarty is not a man who lets the grass grow under his feet."
- "In the morning you will send for a hansom, desiring your man to take neither the first nor the second which may present itself."
- "I think that I may go so far as to say that I have not lived wholly in vain. If my record were closed tonight I could still survey it with equanimity. The air of London is the sweeter for my presence. In over a thousand cases I am not aware that I have ever used my powers upon the wrong side. Of late I have been tempted to look into the problems furnished by nature rather than those more superficial ones for which our artificial state of society is responsible."
- "I am pleased to think that I shall be able to free society from any further effects of his presence, though I fear that it is at a cost which will give pains to my friends, and especially, my dear Watson to you."
- "Danger is part of my trade."

Holmes' Fee

A fee is not applicable in this story. Holmes states that his services to the government of France and the royal house of Scandinavia had left him with enough money to retire comfortably. Plus, we have the obvious, Holmes is dead.

Disguises

Holmes poses as an Italian priest to get on the train to leave. He, of course, fools Watson

Unrecorded Cases

We do know that these 2 untold cases left Holmes in ££££££££

- Engaged by the French government in a matter of extreme importance
- Assisted the royal family of Scandinavia

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

A good story has more “telling” – see below

- 1923 *The Final Problem* with Eille Norwood in one of his 47 movies
- 1931 *The Fatal Hour* (*The Sleeping Cardinal* in Eng) as one of Arthur Wontner’s theater movies
- 1980 *Deadly Flight* with Vasily Livanov in the Russian TV *Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson* series
- 1985 *The Final Problem* with Jeremy Brett in his BBC *Sherlock Holmes* series
- 1999 *The Rise and Fall of Sherlock Holmes* as an episode in the *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century* (Animated TV series)
- 2012 *Reichenbach Fall* with Benedict Cumberbatch in his *Sherlock* TV series relies heavily on FINA

Annotated Sherlock

Not many terms alien to today’s language

- **“army coach”** a private tutor for entrance or promotional examinations for the officer corps.
- **“Alpine-stock”** walking stick

Weapons

- A variety of weapons. An “air gun?” We even have Holmes packing heat.
- **Air-Guns** - Which Holmes mentioned being afraid of to Watson.
- **Revolver** - Sherlock Holmes’ and is mentioned in 8 cases. To cover Prof. Moriarty.
- **Brickbat** - Which Holmes said was hurled at him from a rooftop in Vere Street by a henchman of Moriarty.
- **Bludgeon** - Which a ruffian, presumably under Moriarty’s hire, used to attack Holmes.
- **Large Boulder** - Which was presumably dislodged at Holmes and Watson by Moriarty and/of his henchman.
- **Threat** - Made on Holmes’ life by Prof. Moriarty, intimating fearful consequences if he did not drop his investigations.
- **Two-Horse Van** - Presumably under the hire of Prof. Moriarty, which almost ran down Sherlock Holmes.
- **Fire** - Set in Holmes’ rooms, also presumably the handiwork of Moriarty.

Frank Mentzel