



## Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

### The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes Adventure XXVI -- The Final Problem

#### SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson is married and is in practice. Holmes sneaks into his waiting room and closes the shutters because he is afraid of air guns. He tells Watson all about Moriarty and of his “treatise on the binomial theorem which had a European vogue.”

Holmes says that Moriarty is trying to kill him and that in three days he will be able to put the whole gang in jail. He invites Watson to go to Europe with him and Watson does so, leaving his practice to “an accommodating neighbor.”

Moriarty tries to kill Holmes by: running him down with a wagon, dropping a brick on him, attacking him with a bludgeon, burning his rooms.

Following Holmes’ instructions, Watson makes a circuitous route to Victoria station, riding in a brougham driven by Mycroft in disguise. They also take a sneaky route to Europe and are devious in their travel plans to throw any pursuers off their path.

Eventually Moriarty overtakes them at the Reichenbach Falls and the two men (Holmes and Moriarty, that is) fall to their death, ending the career – as Watson says – “of the best and wisest man whom I have ever known.”



#### SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

Holmes arrives at Dr. John Watson's residence one evening in a somewhat agitated state and with grazed and bleeding knuckles. Much to Watson's surprise and horror, Holmes had apparently escaped three

separate murder attempts that day after a visit from Professor Moriarty, who warned Holmes to withdraw from his pursuit of justice against him to avoid any regrettable outcome. First, just as Holmes was turning a street corner, a cab suddenly rushed toward him and he just managed to leap out of the way in time. Second, while Holmes was walking along the street, a brick fell from the roof of a house, just missing the detective. He then called the police to search the whole area but could not prove that it was anything other than an accident. Finally, on his way to Watson's house, Holmes was attacked by a thug armed with a cosh. Holmes managed to overcome his assailant and handed him to the police but admitted that there was virtually no hope of proving that the man was in the employ of the criminal mastermind.

Holmes has been tracking Moriarty and his agents for months and is on the brink of snaring them all and delivering them to the dock. Moriarty is the criminal genius behind a highly organised and extremely secret criminal force and Holmes will consider it the crowning achievement of his career if he can defeat Moriarty. Moriarty is out to thwart Holmes's plans and is well capable of doing so, for he is, as Holmes admits, the great detective's intellectual equal.

Holmes asks Watson to come to the continent with him, giving him unusual instructions designed to hide his tracks to the boat train at Victoria station. Holmes is not quite sure where they will go, which seems rather odd to Watson. Holmes, certain that he has been followed to his friend's house, then makes off by climbing over the back wall in the garden. The next day Watson follows Holmes's instructions to the letter and finds himself waiting in the reserved first-class coach for his friend, but only an elderly Italian priest is there. The cleric soon makes it apparent that he is, in fact, Holmes in disguise.

As the boat train pulls out of Victoria, Holmes spots Moriarty on the platform, making gestures in an unsuccessful attempt to stop the train. Holmes is forced to take action as Moriarty has obviously tracked Watson, despite extraordinary precautions. Holmes and Watson alight at Canterbury, making a change to their planned route. As they are waiting for another train to Newhaven a special one-coach train roars through Canterbury, as Holmes suspected it would. It contains the professor, who has hired the train in an effort to overtake Holmes. Holmes and Watson are forced to hide behind luggage.

Having made their way to Strasbourg via Brussels, the following Monday Holmes receives a message that most of Moriarty's gang have been arrested in England and recommends Watson return there now, as the detective will likely prove to be a very dangerous companion. Watson, however, decides to stay with his friend. Moriarty himself has slipped out of the grasp of the English police and is obviously with them on the continent.

Holmes and Watson's journey takes them to Switzerland where they stay at Meiringen. From there they fatefully decide to take a walk which will include a visit to the Reichenbach Falls, a local natural wonder.

Once there, a boy appears and hands Watson a letter, saying that there is a sick Englishwoman back at the hotel who wants an English doctor. Holmes realises at once it is a hoax although he does not say so. Watson goes to see about the patient, leaving Holmes by himself.

Upon returning to the Englischer Hof, Watson finds that the innkeeper has no knowledge of any sick Englishwoman. Realising at last that he has been deceived, he rushes back to the Reichenbach Falls but finds no one there, although he does see two sets of footprints going out onto the muddy dead end path with none returning. There is also a note from Holmes, explaining that he knew the report Watson was given to be a hoax and that he is about to fight Moriarty, who has graciously given him enough time to pen this last letter. Watson sees that towards the end of the path there are signs that a violent struggle has taken place and there are no returning footprints. It is all too clear Holmes and Moriarty have both fallen to their deaths down the gorge while locked in mortal combat. Saddened, Dr. Watson returns to England. The Moriarty gang are all convicted on the strength of evidence secured by Holmes. Watson ends his narrative by saying that Sherlock Holmes was the best and the wisest man he had ever known.