



His Last Bow Adventure XLVII – His Last Bow

Well, this one is certainly very different, but then, there was a war on, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

Written in the third person, this unusual tale is set during the First World War and sees a sixty-year-old Holmes come out of retirement to trap a brilliant German spy. It takes him two years and involves taking on the persona of a cocky Irish-American with colourful dialogue and a goatee beard.

The story has a very different feel to the ones set in an earlier time. Here we have mention of a 100 horse-power Benz car, the electric light switch, spark plugs, coppers (as in policemen), dough (as in money) and various other Americanisms. The world is changing and I think Conan Doyle wanted his writing to reflect this.

I suppose this is where I have a problem with the story. It seems a bit like Doyle felt he needed to do something war-related and put this together rather hurriedly. Perhaps I am being too harsh but when you pull the plot apart some things just don't make sense.



Holmes has been supplying Von Bork (the spy) with incorrect information for two years, surely someone must have noticed by now that the info is false? And would the German really tell him so freely the pass-code for the safe?

The stereotypes are alive and well too – the sporty German, cocky American and the 'Thickset chauffeur' in the form of a very solid, English, Watson. There is naturally that hint of propaganda too, the way the German is so dismissive of the English for example.

He describes his house-keeper as having 'Complete self-absorption and general air of comfortable somnolence', underestimating her completely as she is actually working for Holmes and part of the plot to trap Von Bork.

English spirit and resolve triumph over German cunning but still the spirit of fair play remains. Holmes doesn't physically hurt the German, much to the relief of the housekeeper who says that despite everything he has been a good master to her. Holmes even offers him a cigar. The Brits are certainly made out to be the gracious heroes in true propaganda style.

The ending is somewhat sad as Holmes and Watson say goodbye, not sure when they will see each other again due to the winds of war blowing across England bringing change and danger, 'A good many of us may wither before its blast.' I am left desperate to know what happens to them next.

7 out of 10.

Charlotte Anne Walters

November 02, 2011