



## His Last Bow

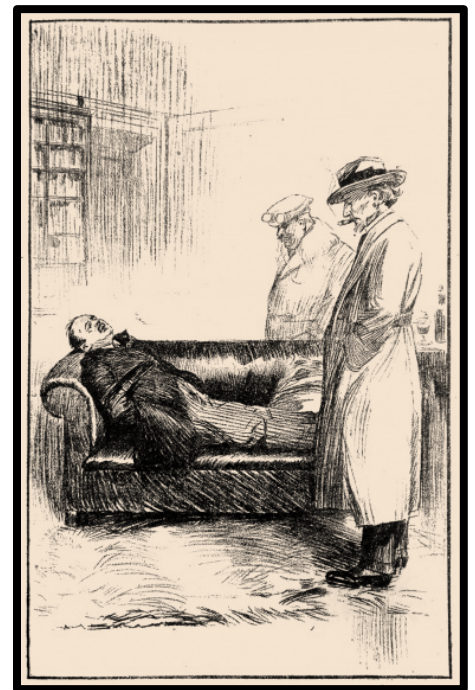
### Adventure XLVII – His Last Bow

It is the last minute before the dawning of World War I. Germany has been building its army, navy, and yes, its air force in preparation for invading France and Belgium. A hidden side of the German preparations is the infiltration of spies into England. For some time the British had known that something was wrong; that there was a well-hidden and active spy ring at work. Yet try as they might, they were unable to uncover the ringleader. Naturally enough, the nation's leaders turned to Sherlock Holmes, now retired and keeping bees on the Sussex Downs.

If anyone ever doubted Doyle's ability to set the stage, this story is one of the finest proofs that he was a master at doing just that. The story has a brooding theme, the theme of a world on the brink of the most destructive war it had yet seen. A sense of foreboding is created by small lights in the dark: the cigar-ends compared to the eyes of a malignant fiend; the headlights of the little Ford driven by Watson. The single room occupied by Martha, "the personification of Britannia," is the only remaining light in Von Bork's darkened house and becomes a symbol of Great Britain as the world's last ray of hope against the German war machine.

The entire adventure takes place in the dark of night, relieved only by the lights of towns and ships. There is a feeling that at any moment even those tiny lights will be snuffed out, and the stygian darkness will be complete.

I have often wondered how secure a prisoner would be with a strap around his upper arms? And assuming that Von Bork's upper arms were firmly bound to his sides, how was he able to clutch at his own throat on hearing Holmes' revelations? And with his legs strapped together,



how was it possible to “walk” Von Bork to Holmes’ and Watsons’ car? “Hopped” might be a better term. Oh, and one for Ford enthusiasts: Would it be safe to assume that the “spare seat” into which Von Bork was wedged was what came to be known as the “rumble seat?”

Why was Von Bork not arrested for espionage? Surely, he was not named as an official member of the German legation, else his motives for being in England for four years would have come under active suspicion. So why was he allowed to return to Germany? Above all, why was he released when it was obvious that he would alert his superiors that the information he had garnered was worthless?

How would a paymaster have access to secret documents, and why would he put his initials on a tracing? Why didn’t Von Bork send his dossiers to Germany as they were completed, instead of keeping them in his safe?

Holmes says, “As to you, Watson, you are joining us with your old service, as I understand...” Wasn’t Watson, at about sixty years of age, a bit old to resume active military service? And what did Holmes mean by “joining us?”

How was Von Bork able to infiltrate the wine cellars of the Schoenbrunn Palace and abscond with bottles of Franz Josef’s Imperial Tokay?

**Steve Clarkson**

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