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THE STRAND MAGAZINE

SOUTHAMPTON
STREET

**Sherlock
Holmes,**

**Consulting
Detective**

OFFICES



No. 12
of 12

A SHERLOCK HOLMES ADVENTURE: *THE FINAL PROBLEM*

April
14
2006



A Brief Farewell to our Readers And Some Thoughts about 2007

We hope that you've enjoyed reading these adventures as much as we've enjoyed sending them to you – to all 13,000 of you! And we assume that you are as grieved by Sherlock Holmes's passing as were Conan Doyle's readers in 1893. Victorian readers had to wait into the new century for the author to capitulate to his public and bring the detective back to life in "The Adventure of the Empty House." You will have to wait only nine months. In January of 2007, we will bring Sherlock Holmes back to life and begin a new series of his adventures. Join us and meet the elusive Mycroft Holmes, venture further into the mind and affections of Sherlock Holmes, as well as into the holdings of Stanford's Special Collections.

We are grateful to all of you for your enthusiasm for the project, as well as for your patience with the sometimes erratic delivery of your weekly copies. We are especially indebted to those of you who have contributed to this project. Your generosity has made it possible for us to send Sherlock Holmes to homes and

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classrooms across the country, where a new generation of Holmes enthusiasts is taking shape.

Look for an email from us in November, inviting you to subscribe again to the 2007 project, or just go to our website after November 2006, and sign up again.

Best Regards from

Stanford's Sherlock Holmes Team

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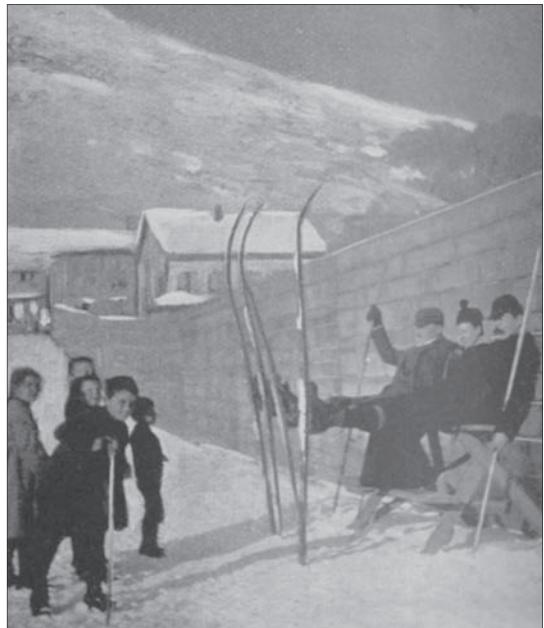
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and we will mail you another copy immediately.



Conan Doyle and his first wife Louise in the Alps, at around the time Conan Doyle "killed" Sherlock Holmes. From *The Strand Magazine* (1894).



The Swiss boys staring at Conan Doyle and his friends might never have seen skis before. Skiing was a Scandinavian sport that Conan Doyle helped introduce to Switzerland.

The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

By A. CONAN DOYLE.

XXIV.—THE ADVENTURE OF THE FINAL PROBLEM.

IT is with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write these the last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes was distinguished. In an incoherent and, as I deeply feel, an entirely inadequate fashion, I have endeavoured to give some account of my strange experiences in his company from the chance which first brought us together at the period of the "Study in Scarlet," up to the time of his interference in the matter of the "Naval Treaty"—an interference which had the unquestionable effect of preventing a serious international complication. It was my intention to have stopped there, and to have said nothing of that event which has created a void in my life which the lapse of two years has done little to fill. My hand has been forced, however, by the recent letters in which Colonel James Moriarty defends the memory of his brother, and I have no choice but to lay the facts before the public exactly as they occurred. I alone know the absolute truth of the matter, and I am satisfied that the time has come when no good purpose is to be served by its suppression. As far as I know, there have been only three accounts in the public Press: that in the *Journal de Genève* upon May 6th, 1891, the Reuter's despatch in the English papers upon May 7th, and finally the recent letters to which I have alluded. Of these the first and second were extremely condensed, while the last is, as I shall now show, an absolute perversion of the facts. It lies with me to tell for the first time what really took place between Professor Moriarty and Mr. Sherlock Holmes.

It may be remembered that after my marriage, and my subsequent start in private practice, the very intimate relations which had existed between Holmes and myself became to some extent modified. He still came to me from time to time when he desired a companion in his investigations, but these occasions grew more and more seldom, until I find that in the year 1890 there were only three cases of which I retain any record. During the winter of that year and the early spring of 1891, I saw in the papers that he had been engaged by the French Government upon a matter of supreme importance, and I received two notes from Holmes, dated

from Narbonne and from Nîmes, from which I gathered that his stay in France was likely to be a long one. It was with some surprise, therefore, that I saw him walk into my consulting-room upon the evening of the 24th of April. It struck me that he was looking even paler and thinner than usual.

"Yes, I have been using myself up rather too freely," he remarked, in answer to my look rather than to my words; "I have been a little pressed of late. Have you any objection to my closing your shutters?"

The only light in the room came from the lamp upon the table at which I had been reading. Holmes edged his way round the wall, and flinging the shutters together, he bolted them securely.

"You are afraid of something?" I asked.

"Well, I am."

"Of what?"

"Of air-guns."

"My dear Holmes, what do you mean?"

"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 recognise danger when it is close upon you. Might I trouble you for a match?" He drew in the smoke of his cigarette as if the soothing influence was grateful to him.

"I must apologize for calling so late," said he, "and I must further beg you to be so unconventional as to allow me to leave your house presently by scrambling over your back garden wall."

"But what does it all mean?" I asked.

He held out his hand, and I saw in the light of the lamp that two of his knuckles were burst and bleeding.

"It's not an airy nothing, you see," said he, smiling. "On the contrary, it is solid enough for a man to break his hand over. Is Mrs. Watson in?"

"She is away upon a visit."

"Indeed! You are alone?"

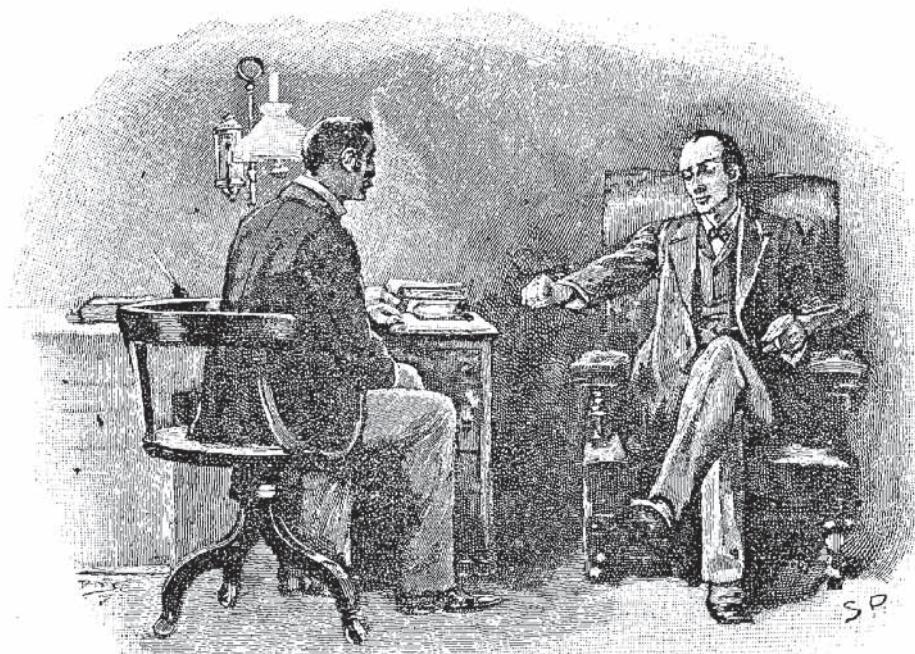
"Quite."

"Then it makes it the easier for me to propose that you should come away with me for a week on to the Continent."

"Where?"

"Oh, anywhere. It's all the same to me."

There was something very strange in all this. It was not Holmes's nature to take an



"TWO OF HIS KNUCKLES WERE BURST AND BLEEDING."

aimless holiday, and something about his pale, worn face told me that his nerves were at their highest tension. He saw the question in my eyes, and, putting his finger-tips together and his elbows upon his knees, he explained the situation.

"You have probably never heard of Professor Moriarty?" said he.

"Never."

"Aye, there's the genius and the wonder of the thing!" he cried. "The man pervades London, and no one has heard of him. That's what puts him on a pinnacle in the records of crime. I tell you, Watson, in all seriousness, that if I could beat that man, if I could free society of him, I should feel that my own career had reached its summit, and I should be prepared to turn to some more placid line in life. Between ourselves, the recent cases in which I have been of assistance to the Royal Family of Scandinavia, and to the French Republic, have left me in such a position that I could continue to live in the quiet fashion which is most congenial to me, and to concentrate my attention upon my chemical researches. But I could not rest, Watson, I could not sit quiet in my chair, if I thought that such a man as Professor Moriarty were walking the streets of London unchallenged."

"What has he done, then?"

"His career has been an extraordinary one. He is a man of good birth and excel-

lent education, endowed by Nature with a phenomenal mathematical faculty. At the age of twenty-one he wrote a treatise upon the Binomial Theorem, which has had a European vogue. On the strength of it, he won the Mathematical Chair at one of our smaller Universities and had, to all appearance, a most brilliant career before him. But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran in his blood, which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers. Dark rumours gathered round him in the University town, and eventually he was compelled to resign his Chair and to come down to London, where he set up as an Army coach. So much is known to the world, but what I am telling you now is what I have myself discovered.

"As you are aware, Watson, there is no one who knows the higher criminal world of London so well as I do. For years past I have continually been conscious of some power behind the malefactor, some deep organizing power which for ever stands in the way of the law, and throws its shield over the wrong-doer. Again and again in cases of the most varying sorts—forgery cases, robberies, murders—I have felt the presence of this force, and I have deduced its action in many of those undiscovered crimes in which I have not been personally



SIDNEY PAGE
1893

THE DEATH OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.

ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.

consulted. For years I have endeavoured to break through the veil which shrouded it, and at last the time came when I seized my thread and followed it, until it led me, after a thousand cunning windings, to ex-Professor Moriarty of mathematical celebrity.

"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 centre of its web, but that web has a thousand radiations, and he knows well every quiver of each of them. He does little himself. He only plans. But his agents are numerous and splendidly organized. Is there a crime to be done, a paper to be abstracted, we will say, a house to be rifled, a man to be removed—the word is passed to the Professor, the matter is organized and carried out. The agent may be caught. In that case money is found for his bail or his defence. But the central power which uses the agent is never caught—never so much as suspected. This was the organization which I deduced, Watson, and which I devoted my whole energy to exposing and breaking up.

"But the Professor was fenced round with safeguards so cunningly devised that, do what I would, it seemed impossible to get evidence which could convict in a court of law. 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. But at last he made a trip—only a little, little trip—but it was more than he could afford, when I was so close upon him. I had my chance, and, starting from that point, I have woven my net round him until now it is all ready to close. In three days, that is to say on Monday next, matters will be ripe, and the Professor, with all the principal members of his gang, will be in the hands of the police. Then will come the greatest criminal trial of the century, the clearing up of over forty mysteries and the rope for all of them—but if we move at all prematurely, you understand, they may slip out of our hands even at the last moment.

"Now, if I could have done this without the knowledge of Professor Moriarty, all would have been well. But he was too wily for that. He saw every step which I took to draw my toils round him. Again and again he strove to break away, but I as often headed him off. I tell you, my friend, that if a detailed account of that silent contest could be written, it would take its place as the most brilliant bit of thrust-and-parry work in the history of detection. Never have I risen to such a height, and never have I been so hard pressed by an opponent. He cut deep, and yet I just undercut him. This morning the last steps were taken, and three days only were wanted to com-

plete the business. I was sitting in my room thinking the matter over, when the door opened and Professor Moriarty stood before me.



"PROFESSOR MORIARTY STOOD BEFORE ME."

"My nerves are fairly proof, Watson, but I must confess to a start when I saw the very man who had been so much in my thoughts standing there on my threshold. His appearance was quite familiar to me. He is extremely tall and thin, his forehead domes out in a white curve, and his two eyes are deeply sunken in his head. He is clean shaven, pale, and ascetic-looking, retaining something of the professor in his features. His shoulders are rounded from much study, and his face protrudes forward, and is for ever slowly oscillating from side to side in a curiously reptilian fashion. He peered at me with great curiosity in his puckered eyes.

"You have less frontal development than I should have expected," said he at last. "It is a dangerous habit to finger loaded firearms in the pocket of one's dressing-gown."

"The fact is that upon his entrance I had instantly recognised the extreme personal danger in which I lay. The only conceivable escape for him lay in silencing my tongue. In an instant I had slipped the revolver from the drawer into my pocket, and was covering him through the cloth. At his remark I drew the weapon out and laid it cocked upon the table. He still smiled and blinked, but there was something about his eyes which made me feel very glad that I had it there.

"You evidently don't know me," said he.

"On the contrary," I answered, "I think it is fairly evident that I do. Pray take a chair. I can spare you five minutes if you have anything to say."

"All that I have to say has already crossed your mind," said he.

"Then possibly my answer has crossed yours," I replied.

"You stand fast?"

"Absolutely."

"He clapped his hand into his pocket, and I raised the pistol from the table. But he merely drew out a memorandum-book in which he had scribbled some dates.

"You crossed my path on the 4th of January," said he. "On the 23rd you incommoded me; by the middle of February I was seriously inconvenienced by you; at the end of March I was absolutely hampered in my plans; and now, at the close of April, I find myself placed in such a position through your continual persecution that I am in positive danger of losing my liberty. The situation is becoming an impossible one."

"Have you any suggestion to make?" I asked.

"You must drop it, Mr. Holmes," said

he, swaying his face about. "You really must, you know."

"After Monday," said I.

"Tut, tut!" said he. "I am quite sure that a man of your intelligence will see that there can be but one outcome to this affair. It is necessary that you should withdraw. You have worked things in such a fashion that we have only one resource left. It has been an intellectual treat to me to see the way in which you have grappled with this affair, and I say, unaffectedly, that it would be a grief to me to be forced to take any extreme measure. You smile, sir, but I assure you that it really would."

"Danger is part of my trade," I remarked.

"This is not danger," said he. "It is inevitable destruction. You stand in the way not merely of an individual, but of a mighty organization, the full extent of which you, with all your cleverness, have been unable to realize. You must stand clear, Mr. Holmes, or be trodden under foot."

"I am afraid," said I, rising, "that in the pleasure of this conversation I am neglecting business of importance which awaits me elsewhere."

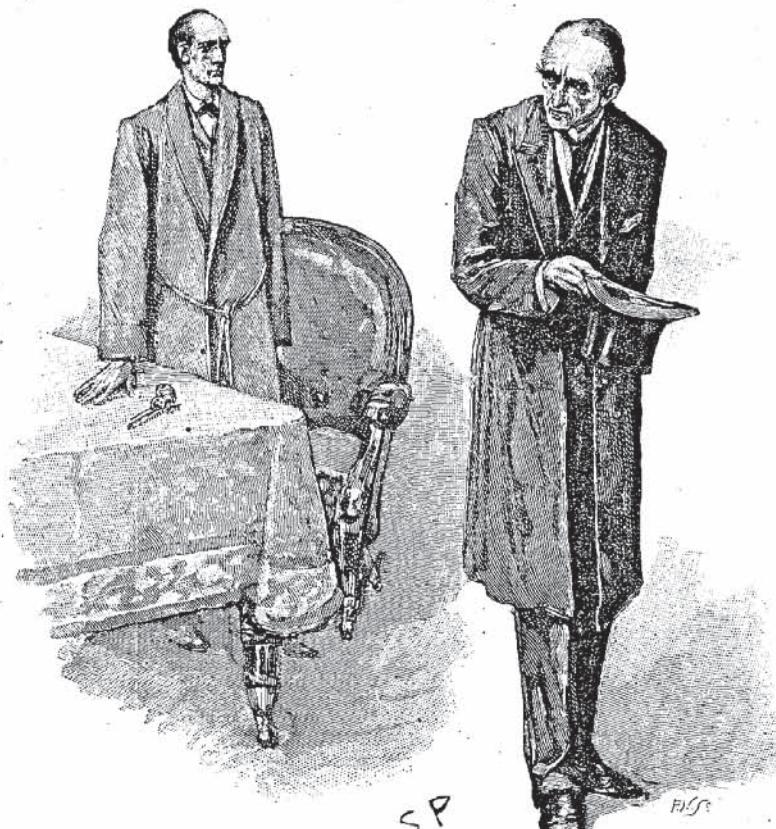
He rose also and looked at me in silence, shaking his head sadly.

"Well, well," said he at last. "It seems a pity, but I have done what I could. I know every move of your game. You can do nothing before Monday. It has been a duel between you and me, Mr. Holmes. You hope to place me in the dock. I tell you that I will never stand in the dock. You hope to beat me. I tell you that you will never beat me. If you are clever enough to bring destruction upon me, rest assured that I shall do as much to you."

"You have paid me several compliments, Mr. Moriarty," said I. "Let me pay you one in return when I say that if I were assured of the former eventuality I would, in the interests of the public, cheerfully accept the latter."

"I can promise you the one but not the other," he snarled, and so turned his rounded back upon me and went peering and blinking out of the room.

"That was my singular interview with Professor Moriarty. I confess that it left an unpleasant effect upon my mind. His soft, precise fashion of speech leaves a conviction of sincerity which a mere bully could not produce. Of course, you will say: 'Why not take police precautions against him?' The reason is that I am well convinced that it is from his agents the blow would fall. I



"HE TURNED HIS ROUNDED BACK UPON ME."

have the best of proofs that it would be so."

"You have already been assaulted?"

"My dear Watson, Professor Moriarty is not a man who lets the grass grow under his feet. I went out about midday to transact some business in Oxford Street. As I passed the corner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welbeck Street crossing a two-horse van furiously driven whizzed round and was on me like a flash. I sprang for the footpath and saved myself by the fraction of a second. The van dashed round by Marylebone Lane and was gone in an instant. I kept to the pavement after that, Watson, but as I walked down Vere Street a brick came down from the roof of one of the houses, and was shattered to fragments at my feet. I called the police and had the place examined. There were slates and bricks piled upon the roof preparatory to some repairs, and they would have me believe that the wind had toppled over one of these. Of course I knew better, but I could prove nothing. I took a cab after that and reached my brother's rooms in Pall Mall, where I spent

the day. Now I have come round to you, and on my way I was attacked by a rough with a bludgeon. I knocked him down, and the police have him in custody; but I can tell you with the most absolute confidence that no possible connection will ever be traced between the gentleman upon whose front teeth I have barked my knuckles and the retiring mathematical coach, who is, I daresay, working out problems upon a black-board ten miles away. You will not wonder, Watson, that my first act on entering your rooms was to close your shutters, and that I have been compelled to ask your permission to leave the house by some less conspicuous exit than the front door."

I had often admired my friend's courage, but never more than now, as he sat quietly checking off a series of incidents which must have combined to make up a day of horror.

"You will spend the night here?" I said.

"No, my friend, you might find me a dangerous guest. I have my plans laid, and all will be well. Matters have gone so far now that they can move without my help as far as the arrest goes, though my presence is necessary for a conviction. It is obvious, therefore, that I cannot do better than get away for the few days which remain before the police are at liberty to act. It would be a great pleasure to me, therefore, if you could come on to the Continent with me."

"The practice is quiet," said I, "and I have an accommodating neighbour. I should be glad to come."

"And to start to-morrow morning?"

"If necessary."

"Oh, yes, it is most necessary. Then these are your instructions, and I beg, my dear Watson, that you will obey them to the letter, for you are now playing a double-handed game with me against the cleverest

rogue and the most powerful syndicate of criminals in Europe. Now listen! You will dispatch whatever luggage you intend to take by a trusty messenger unaddressed to Victoria to-night. In the morning you will send for a hansom, desiring your man to take neither the first nor the second which may present itself. Into this hansom you will jump, and you will drive to the Strand end of the Lowther Arcade, handing the address to the cabman upon a slip of paper, with a request that he will not throw it away. Have your fare ready, and the instant that your cab stops, dash through the Arcade, timing yourself to reach the other side at a quarter-past nine. You will find a small brougham waiting close to the curb, driven by a fellow with a heavy black cloak tipped at the collar with red. Into this you will step, and you will reach Victoria in time for the Continental express."

"Where shall I meet you?"

"At the station. The second first-class carriage from the front will be reserved for us."

"The carriage is our rendezvous, then?"

"Yes."

It was in vain that I asked Holmes to remain for the evening. It was evident to me that he thought he might bring trouble to the roof he was under, and that that was the motive which impelled him to go. With a few hurried words as to our plans for the morrow he rose and came out with me into the garden, clambering over the wall which leads into Mortimer Street, and immediately whistling for a hansom, in which I heard him drive away.

In the morning I obeyed Holmes's injunctions to the letter. A hansom was procured with such precautions as would prevent its being one which was placed ready for us, and I drove immediately after breakfast to the Lowther Arcade, through which I hurried at the top of my speed. A brougham was waiting with a very massive driver wrapped in a dark cloak, who, the instant that I had stepped in, whipped up the horse and rattled off to Victoria Station. On my alighting there he turned the carriage, and dashed away again without so much as a look in my direction.

So far all had gone admirably. My luggage was waiting for me, and I had no difficulty in finding the carriage which Holmes had indicated, the less so as it was the only one in the train which was marked "Engaged." My only source of anxiety now was the non-appearance of Holmes. The station clock

marked only seven minutes from the time when we were due to start. In vain I searched among the groups of travellers and leave-takers for the lithe figure of my friend. There was no sign of him. I spent a few minutes in assisting a venerable Italian priest, who was endeavouring to make a porter understand, in his broken English, that his luggage was to be booked through to Paris. Then, having taken another look round, I returned to my carriage, where I found that the porter, in spite of the ticket, had given me my decrepit Italian friend as a travelling companion. It was useless for me to explain to him that his presence was an intrusion, for my Italian was even more limited than his English, so I shrugged my shoulders resignedly, and continued to look out anxiously for my friend. A chill of fear had come over me, as I thought that his absence might mean that some blow had fallen during the night. Already the doors had all been shut and the whistle blown, when—

"My dear Watson," said a voice, "you have not even condescended to say good morning."

I turned in uncontrollable astonishment. The aged ecclesiastic had turned his face towards me. For an instant the wrinkles were smoothed away, the nose drew away from the chin, the lower lip ceased to protrude and the mouth to mumble, the dull eyes regained their fire, the drooping figure expanded. The next the whole frame collapsed again, and Holmes had gone as quickly as he had come.

"Good heavens!" I cried. "How you startled me!"

"Every precaution is still necessary," he whispered. "I have reason to think that they are hot upon our trail. Ah, there is Moriarty himself."

The train had already begun to move as Holmes spoke. Glancing back I saw a tall man pushing his way furiously through the crowd and waving his hand as if he desired to have the train stopped. It was too late, however, for we were rapidly gathering momentum, and an instant later had shot clear of the station.

"With all our precautions, you see that we have cut it rather fine," said Holmes, laughing. He rose, and throwing off the black cassock and hat which had formed his disguise, he packed them away in a hand-bag.

"Have you seen the morning paper, Watson?"

"No."



"MY DECREPIT ITALIAN FRIEND."

"You haven't seen about Baker Street, then?"

"Baker Street?"

"They set fire to our rooms last night. No great harm was done."

"Good heavens, Holmes! This is intolerable."

"They must have lost my track completely after their bludgeon-man was arrested. Otherwise they could not have imagined that I had returned to my rooms. They have evidently taken the precaution of watching you, however, and that is what has brought Moriarty to Victoria. You could not have made any slip in coming?"

"I did exactly what you advised."

"Did you find your brougham?"
Vol. vi—73.

"Yes, it was waiting."

"Did you recognise your coachman?"

"No."

"It was my brother Mycroft. It is an advantage to get about in such a case without taking a mercenary into your confidence. But we must plan what we are to do about Moriarty now."

"As this is an express, and as the boat runs in connection with it, I should think we have shaken him off very effectively."

"My dear Watson, you evidently did not realize my meaning when I said that this man may be taken as being quite on the same intellectual plane as myself. You do not imagine

I should allow myself to be baffled by so slight an obstacle. Why, then, should you think so meanly of him?"

"What will he do?"

"What I should do."

"What would you do, then?"

"Engage a special."

"But it must be late."

"By no means. This train stops at Canterbury; and there is always at least a quarter of an hour's delay at the boat. He will catch us there."

"One would think that we were the criminals. Let us have him arrested on his arrival."

"It would be to ruin the work of three

months. We should get the big fish, but the smaller would dart right and left out of the net. On Monday we should have them all. No, an arrest is inadmissible."

"What then?"

"We shall get out at Canterbury."

"And then?"

"Well, then we must make a cross-country journey to Newhaven, and so over to Dieppe. Moriarty will again do what I should do. He will get on to Paris, mark down our luggage, and wait for two days at the dépôt. In the meantime we shall treat ourselves to a couple of carpet bags, encourage the manufacturers of the countries through which we travel, and make our way at our leisure into Switzerland, via Luxembourg and Basle."

At Canterbury, therefore, we alighted, only to find that we should have to wait an hour before we could get a train to Newhaven.

I was still looking rather ruefully after the rapidly disappearing luggage van which contained my wardrobe, when Holmes pulled my sleeve and pointed up the line.

"Already, you see," said he.

Far away, from among the Kentish woods there rose a thin spray of smoke. A minute later a carriage and engine could be seen flying along the open curve which leads to the station. We had hardly time to take our place behind a pile of luggage when it passed with a rattle and a roar, beating a blast of hot air into our faces.

"There he goes," said Holmes, as we watched the carriage swing and rock over the points. "There are limits, you see, to our friend's intelligence. It would have been a *coup-de-maître* had he deduced what I would deduce and acted accordingly."

"And what would he have done had he overtaken us?"

"There cannot be the least doubt that he would have made a murderous attack upon me. It is, however, a game at which two

may play. The question now is whether we should take a premature lunch here, or run our chance of starving before we reach the buffet at Newhaven."

We made our way to Brussels that night and spent two days there, moving on upon the third day as far as Strasburg. On the Monday morning Holmes had telegraphed to the London police, and in the evening we found a reply waiting for us at our hotel. Holmes tore it open, and then with a bitter curse hurled it into the grate.



"IT PASSED WITH A RATTLE AND A ROAR."

"I might have known it!" he groaned.
"He has escaped!"

"Moriarty?"

"They have secured the whole gang with the exception of him. He has given them the slip. Of course, when I had left the country there was no one to cope with him. But I did think that I had put the game in their hands. I think that you had better return to England, Watson."

"Why?"

ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.

"Because you will find me a dangerous companion now. This man's occupation is gone. He is lost if he returns to London. If I read his character right he will devote his whole energies to revenging himself upon me. He said as much in our short interview, and I fancy that he meant it. I should certainly recommend you to return to your practice."

It was hardly an appeal to be successful with one who was an old campaigner as well as an old friend. We sat in the Strasburg *salle-à-manger* arguing the question for half an hour, but the same night we had resumed our journey and were well on our way to Geneva.

For a charming week we wandered up the Valley of the Rhone, and then, branching off at Leuk, we made our way over the Gemmi Pass, still deep in snow, and so, by way of Interlaken, to Meiringen. It was a lovely trip, the dainty green of the spring below, the virgin-white of the winter above; but it was clear to me that never for one instant did Holmes forget the shadow which lay across him. In the homely Alpine villages or in the lonely mountain passes, I could still tell by his quick glancing eyes and his sharp scrutiny of every face that passed us, that he was well convinced that, walk where we would, we could not walk ourselves clear of the danger which was dogging our footsteps.

Once, I remember, as we passed over the Gemmi, and walked along the border of the melancholy Daubensee, a large rock which had been dislodged from the ridge upon our right clattered down and roared into the lake behind us. In an instant Holmes had raced up on to the ridge, and, standing upon a lofty pinnacle, craned his neck in every direction. It was in vain that our guide assured him that a fall of stones was a common chance in the spring-time at that spot. He said nothing, but he smiled at me with the air of a man who sees the fulfilment of that which he had expected.

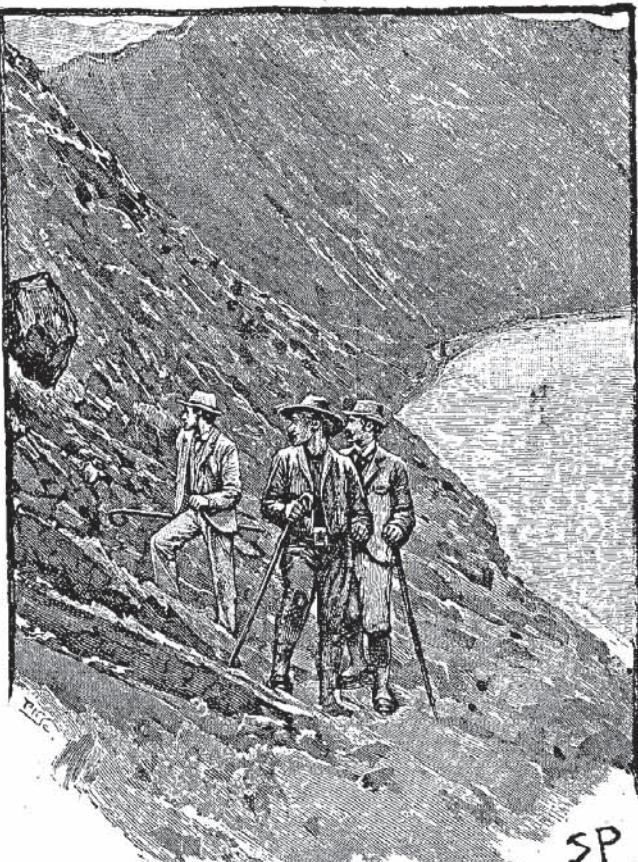
And yet for all his watchfulness he was never depressed. On the contrary, I can never recollect having seen him in such exuberant spirits. Again and again he recurred to the fact that if he could be assured that society was freed from

Professor Moriarty he would cheerfully bring his own career to a conclusion.

"I think that I may go so far as to say, Watson, that I have not lived wholly in vain," he remarked. "If my record were closed to-night 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. Your memoirs will draw to an end, Watson, upon the day that I crown my career by the capture or extinction of the most dangerous and capable criminal in Europe."

I shall be brief, and yet exact, in the little which remains for me to tell. It is not a subject on which I would willingly dwell, and yet I am conscious that a duty devolves upon me to omit no detail.

It was upon the 3rd of May that we reached the little village of Meiringen, where we put up at the Englischer Hof, then kept



"A LARGE ROCK CLATTERED DOWN."

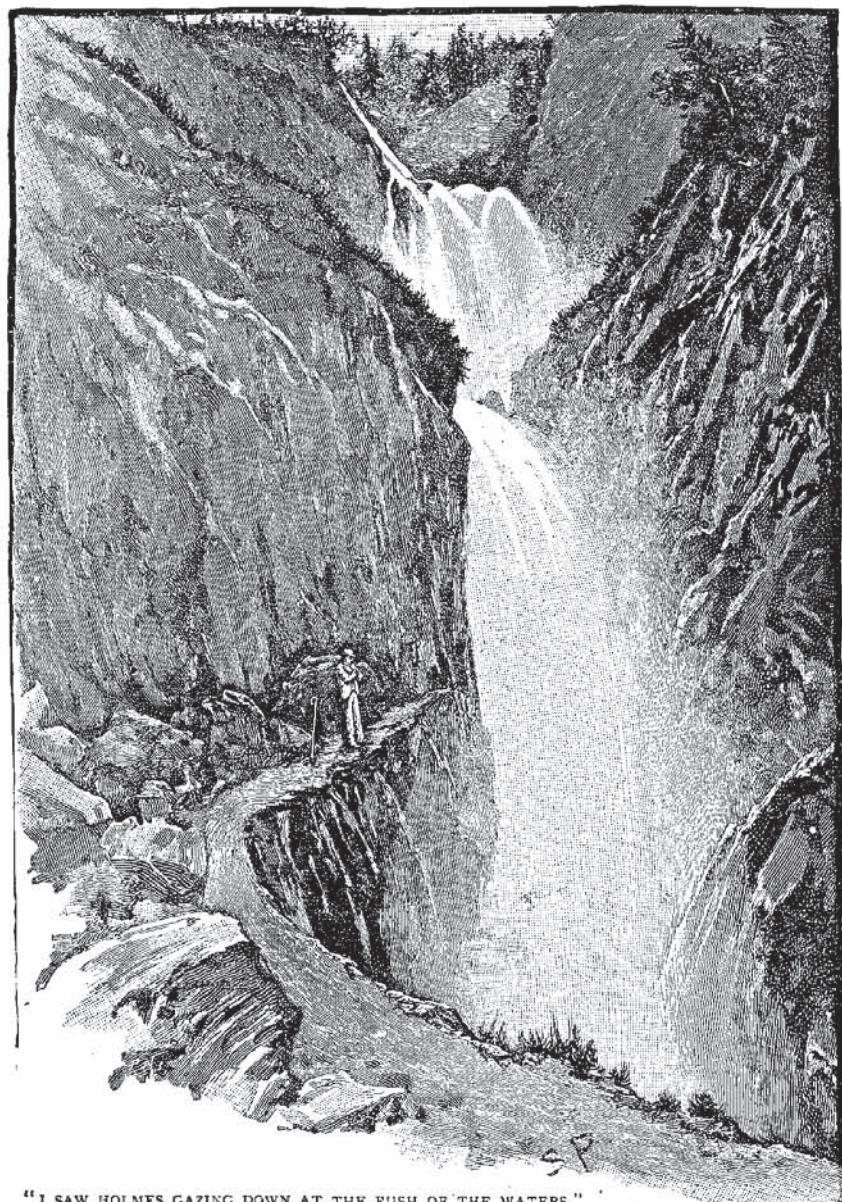
SP..

by Peter Steiler the elder. Our landlord was an intelligent man, and spoke excellent English, having served for three years as waiter at the Grosvenor Hotel in London. At his advice, upon the afternoon of the 4th we set off together with the intention of crossing the hills and spending the night at the hamlet of Rosenlau. We had strict injunctions, however, on no account to pass the falls of Reichenbach, which are about half-way up the hill, without making a small détour to see them.

It is, indeed, a fearful place. The torrent, swollen by the melting snow, plunges into a tremendous abyss, from which the spray rolls up like the smoke from a burning house. The shaft into which the river hurls itself is an immense chasm, lined by glistening, coal-black rock, and narrowing into a creaming, boiling pit of incalculable depth, which brims over and shoots the stream onward over its jagged lip. The long sweep of green water roaring for ever down, and the thick flickering curtain of spray hissing for ever upwards, turn a man giddy with their constant whirl and clamour. We stood near the edge peering down at the gleam of the breaking water far below us against the black rocks, and listening to the half-human shout which came booming up with the spray out of the abyss.

The path has been cut half-way round the fall to afford a complete view, but it ends abruptly, and the

traveller has to return as he came. We had turned to do so, when we saw a Swiss lad come running along it with a letter in his hand. It bore the mark of the hotel which we had just left, and was addressed to me by the landlord. It appeared that within a very few minutes of our leaving, an English lady had arrived who was in the last stage of consumption. She had wintered at Davos Platz, and was journeying now to join her friends at Lucerne, when a sudden hemorrhage had overtaken her. It was thought that she could hardly live a few hours, but it would be a great consolation to her to see an English doctor, and, if I would only return,



"I SAW HOLMES GAZING DOWN AT THE RUSH OF THE WATERS."

ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES.

etc., etc. The good Steiler assured me in a postscript that he would himself look upon my compliance as a very great favour, since the lady absolutely refused to see a Swiss physician, and he could not but feel that he was incurring a great responsibility.

The appeal was one which could not be ignored. It was impossible to refuse the request of a fellow-countrywoman dying in a strange land. Yet I had my scruples about leaving Holmes. It was finally agreed, however, that he should retain the young Swiss messenger with him as guide and companion while I returned to Meiringen. My friend would stay some little time at the fall, he said, and would then walk slowly over the hill to Rosenlau, where I was to rejoin him in the evening. As I turned away I saw Holmes, with his back against a rock and his arms folded, gazing down at the rush of the waters. It was the last that I was ever destined to see of him in this world.

When I was near the bottom of the descent I looked back. It was impossible, from that position, to see the fall, but I could see the curving path which winds over the shoulder of the hill and leads to it. Along this a man was, I remember, walking very rapidly.

I could see his black figure clearly outlined against the green behind him. I noted him, and the energy with which he walked, but he passed from my mind again as I hurried on upon my errand.

It may have been a little over an hour before I reached Meiringen. Old Steiler was standing at the porch of his hotel.

"Well," said I, as I came hurrying up, "I trust that she is no worse?"

A look of surprise passed over his face, and at the first quiver of his eyebrows my heart turned to lead in my breast.

"You did not write this?" I said, pulling the letter from my pocket. "There is no sick Englishwoman in the hotel?"

"Certainly not," he cried. "But it has the hotel mark upon it! Ha, it must have been written by that tall Englishman who came in after you had gone. He said—"

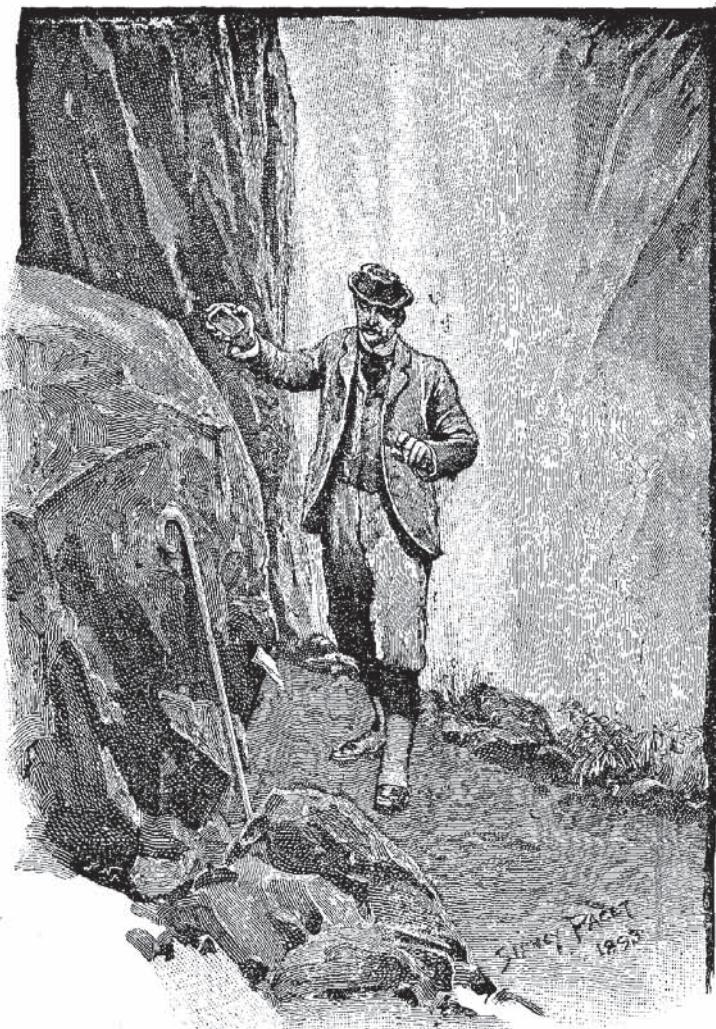
But I waited for none of the landlord's explanations. In a tingle of fear I was already running down the village street, and making for the path which I had so lately descended. It had taken me an hour to come down. For all my efforts two more had passed before I found myself at the fall of Reichenbach once more. There was Holmes's Alpine-stock still leaning against the rock by which I had left him. But there

was no sign of him, and it was in vain that I shouted. My only answer was my own voice reverberating in a rolling echo from the cliffs around me.

It was the sight of that Alpine-stock which turned me cold and sick. He had not gone to Rosenlau, then. He had remained on that three-foot path, with sheer wall on one side and sheer drop upon the other, until his enemy had overtaken him. The young Swiss had gone too. He had probably been in the pay of Moriarty, and had left the two men together. And then what had happened? Who was to tell us what had happened then?

I stood for a minute or two to collect myself, for I was dazed with the horror of the thing. Then I began to think of Holmes's own methods and to try to practise them in reading this tragedy. It was, alas, only too easy to do. During our conversation we had not gone to the end of the path, and the Alpine-stock marked the place where we had stood. The blackish soil is kept for ever soft by the incessant drift of spray, and a bird would leave its tread upon it. Two lines of footmarks were clearly marked along the further end of the path, both leading away from me. There were none returning. A few yards from the end the soil was all ploughed up into a patch of mud, and the brambles and ferns which fringed the chasm were torn and bedraggled. I lay upon my face and peered over with the spray spouting up all around me. It had darkened since I left, and now I could only see here and there the glistening of moisture upon the black walls, and far away down at the end of the shaft the gleam of the broken water. I shouted; but only that same half-human cry of the fall was borne back to my ears.

But it was destined that I should after all have a last word of greeting from my friend and comrade. I have said that his Alpine-stock had been left leaning against a rock which jutted on to the path. From the top of this boulder the gleam of something bright caught my eye, and, raising my hand, I found that it came from the silver cigarette case which he used to carry. As I took it up a small square of paper upon which it had lain fluttered down on to the ground. Unfolding it I found that it consisted of three pages torn from his note-book and addressed to me. It was characteristic of the man that the direction was as precise, and the writing as firm and clear, as though it had been written in his study.



"A SMALL SQUARE OF PAPER FLUTTERED DOWN."

"My dear Watson," he said, "I write these few lines through the courtesy of Mr. Moriarty, who awaits my convenience for the final discussion of those questions which lie between us. He has been giving me a sketch of the methods by which he avoided the English police and kept himself informed of our movements. They certainly confirm the very high opinion which I had formed of his abilities. 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 pain to my friends, and especially, my dear Watson, to you. I have already explained to you, however, that my career had in any case reached its crisis, and that no possible conclusion to it could be more congenial to me than this. Indeed, if I may make a full confession to you, I was quite convinced

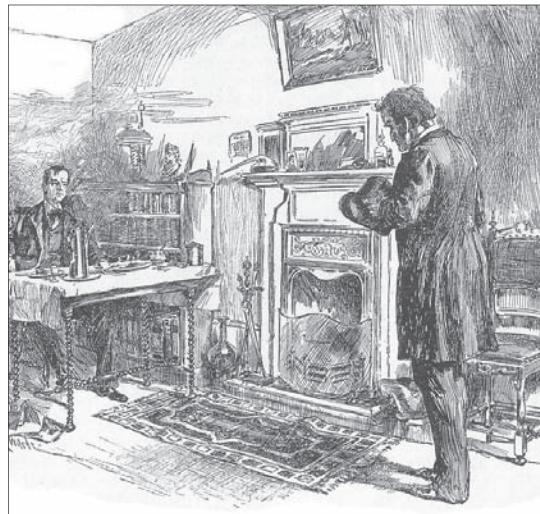
that the letter from Meiringen was a hoax, and I allowed you to depart on that errand under the persuasion that some development of this sort would follow. Tell Inspector Patterson that the papers which he needs to convict the gang are in pigeon-hole M., done up in a blue envelope and inscribed 'Moriarty.' I made every disposition of my property before leaving England, and handed it to my brother Mycroft. Pray give my greetings to Mrs. Watson, and believe me to be, my dear fellow,

"Very sincerely yours,
"SHERLOCK HOLMES."

A few words may suffice to tell the little that remains. An examination by experts leaves little doubt that a personal contest between the two men ended, as it could hardly fail to end in such a situation, in their reeling over, locked in each other's arms. Any attempt at recovering the bodies was absolutely hopeless, and there, deep down in that dreadful caldron 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. The Swiss youth was never found again, and there can be no doubt that he was one of the numerous agents whom Moriarty kept in his employ. As to the gang, it will be within the memory of the public how completely the evidence which Holmes had accumulated exposed their organization, and how heavily the hand of the dead man weighed upon them. Of their terrible chief few details came out during the proceedings, and if I have now been compelled to make a clear statement of his career, it is due to those injudicious champions who have endeavoured to clear his memory by attacks upon him whom I shall ever regard as the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known.



"He saw the question in my eyes, and, putting his finger-tips together and his elbows upon his knees, he explained the situation." From *McClure's Magazine*, vol. II, no. 1, January 1894. Illustrated by Harry Edwards. (2)



"Never have I risen to such a height, and never have I been so hard pressed by an opponent." Compare this Moriarty to Sidney's Paget's—Edwards's is heavier, less reptilian, and more like a stereotypical villain from a melodrama. (4)

It is with a heavy heart that I take up my pen to write these the last words in which I shall ever record the singular gifts by which my friend Mr. Sherlock Holmes was distinguished. (1)

The "Final Problem" appeared in *The Strand Magazine* in December, 1893, although the events narrated therein are supposed to take place in 1891. *The Strand's* reading public was outraged by what they considered the premature death of a beloved character. Over 20,000 people cancelled their subscriptions, and the magazine nearly went under. Forever after, *The Strand's* staff referred to Holmes's death as "the dreadful event."

At his "death" in "The Final Problem," Holmes is younger than most people think, perhaps because Sidney Paget's drawings give him an air of maturity. In "His Last Bow," which takes place in 1914 (and is told in the third person, not by Watson), Conan Doyle puts Holmes's age at about 60. Holmes could have been born in or around 1854. In "The Final Problem," therefore, he is not yet 40.

... "Study in Scarlet," up to the time of his interference in the matter of the "Naval Treaty".... (1)

A Study in Scarlet was the first Holmes and Watson story, a novelette published in *Beeton's Christmas Annual* in late 1887. "The Naval Treaty," published in *The Strand* in October and November, 1893, predated "The Final Problem" by a month.

As far as I know, there have been only three accounts in the public press: that in the Journal de Genève on May 6th, 1891, the Reuter's dispatch in the English

papers on May 7th, and finally the recent letters to which I have alluded. (1)

Reuters, opened in London in 1851 by a German immigrant named Paul Julius Reuter, began by reporting stock market quotations between European countries by telegraph. Where no telegraph lines had yet been strung, Reuter used carrier pigeons. Later, Reuters developed into a news dispatch service that used telegraph and radio to transmit the news from overseas to British newspapers.

...and I received two notes from Holmes, dated from Narbonne and from Nîmes.... (1)

Narbonne and Nîmes are French cities, both located in the south.

"Of air-guns." (1)

Because they use compressed air to shoot projectiles, air guns are much quieter than guns using powder. Some Victorian gentlemen carried air guns disguised as canes. Holmes's reasons for fearing air guns becomes clearer in "The Empty House."

"At the age of twenty-one he wrote a treatise upon the Binomial Theorem, which has had a European vogue...." (2)

Discovered by Euclid, and developed by Pascal and Newton, the binomial theorem expresses the expansion of a binomial (two variables added together) raised to a power.

"But the man had hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind. A criminal strain ran in his blood,

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

which, instead of being modified, was increased and rendered infinitely more dangerous by his extraordinary mental powers.” (2)

Here, Conan Doyle refers to 19th-century scientist Cesare Lombroso’s theory of the “born” or “atavistic” criminal. Moriarty is an exception among atavistic criminals who appear in literature, however; instead of having limited mental powers commensurate with his increased animal appetites, he possesses both criminal intent and extraordinary intelligence. Many readers have noticed that Moriarty is an evil twin of Holmes, who turns his powers to crime instead of justice.

“...and the rope for all of them....” (4)

In other words, they will all be hanged.

“I was sitting in my room thinking the matter over, when the door opened and Professor Moriarty stood before me.” (4)

Moriarty only appears in two Holmes stories: “The Final Problem” and the last of the four Holmes novels, *The Valley of Fear*. (Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock’s brother, only appears in three, although he is mentioned in several others.) Nevertheless, readers have remained fascinated with Sherlock Holmes’s dark opposite. Writers of pastiches of Conan Doyle’s work have taken great liberties with Moriarty’s character. Was he indeed “the Napoleon of crime,” or was he an innocent scapegoat for some dark obsession of Holmes’s? Modern reworkings of the Conan Doyle canon, such as Nicholas Meyer’s *The Seven Percent Solution*, often concentrate on Holmes’s unique psychology, in which Moriarty figures prominently.

“His shoulders are rounded from much study, and his face protrudes forward, and is for ever slowly oscillating from side to side in a curiously reptilian fashion.” (5)

Holmes describes Moriarty in reptilian terms, as if his lack of humanity can be discerned in his physical makeup.

“You have less frontal development than I should have expected,’ said he at last.” (5)

In the 18th-century pseudo-science, phrenology, frontal development was believed to indicate great intelligence. This idea, like other phrenological beliefs, eventually found its way into the anthropology of the time, which used racial characteristics as an indicator of evolutionary advancement. Moriarty’s remark is meant as an insult to Holmes’s brain capacity; Moriarty’s own skull “domes out in a white curve,” as Holmes himself notes.

“You hope to place me in the dock. I tell you that I will never stand in the dock.” (5)

At British trials, the accused stands on a small platform surrounded by a railing—the dock.

“...I went out about midday to transact some business in Oxford Street. As I passed the corner which leads from Bentinck Street on to the Welbeck Street crossing a two-horse van furiously driven whizzed round and was on me like a flash.” (6)

These are the names of actual London streets. Holmes is just a few blocks from the foot of Baker Street when he is attacked.

“...but as I walked down Vere Street....” (6)

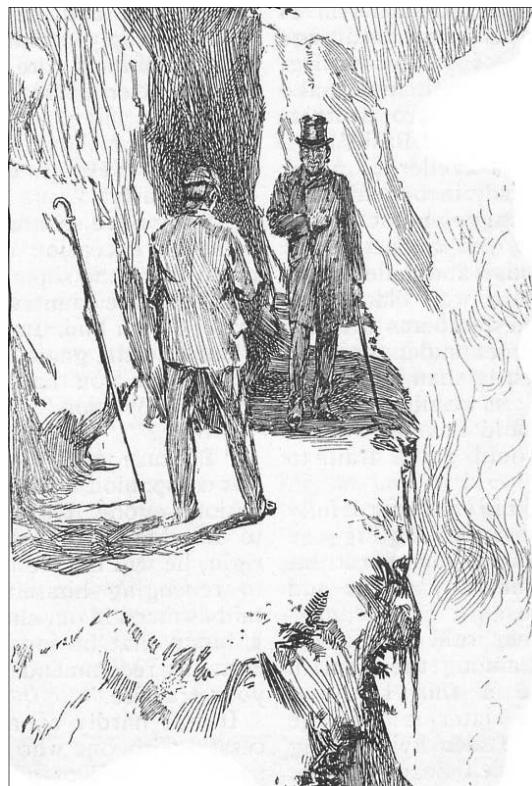
Vere Street turns into New Bond Street on the south side of Oxford Street.

“I took a cab after that and reached my brother’s rooms in Pall Mall, where I spent the day.” (6)

Sherlock hides out at his brother Mycroft Holmes’s lodgings, across the street from his club, the Diogenes, where speaking to another member can be cause for expulsion. Both Mycroft’s apartment and the Diogenes are located near many other prestigious clubs, somewhere along Pall Mall.

“...and you will drive to the Strand end of the Lowther Arcade....” (7)

The Lowther Arcade is a small, covered shopping



“My dear Watson,’ he said, ‘I write these few lines through the courtesy of Mr. Moriarty, who awaits my convenience for the final discussion of those questions which lie between us.” (13)

bazaar, specializing in toys, located between two buildings across The Strand from Charing Cross Station. The roof is studded with glass domes that provide natural light in the daytime.

Dear Lowther Arcade! Oftimes have we wandered agape among thy enchanted palaces.... I have heard that thou art vulgar, but I cannot see how, unless it be that tattered children haunt thy portals, those awful yet smiling entrances to so much joy. To the Arcade there are two entrances, and with much to be sung in laudation of that which opens from the Strand yet I on the whole prefer the other as truly romantic, because it is there the tattered ones congregate....

The passage above is from J.M. Barrie (1860-1937), *The Little White Bird* (1902), an early version of *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*, which Barrie later wrote into his famous play, *Peter Pan*. Barrie and Conan Doyle were close friends.

...clambering over the wall which leads into Mortimer Street.... (7)

If Watson's rooms backed on Mortimer Street,



"An examination by experts leaves little doubt that a personal contest between the two men ended, as it could hardly fail to end in such a situation, in their reeling over, locked in each other's arms." (13)

then he lived in an area near several hospitals, located quite close to the place where Holmes was attacked.

"It was my brother Mycroft." (8)

Mycroft Holmes, known both for his brilliant mind and his sedentary habits, apparently made an exception to his usual aversion to action in order to accommodate Watson. Besides this story, he appears in two others, "The Greek Interpreter" and "The Bruce-Partington Plans," and is mentioned in two more. Mycroft is deeply involved behind the scenes in the British government.

"This train stops at Canterbury; and there is always at least a quarter of an hour's delay at the boat." (8)

Canterbury is located on the way to Dover, a port at the end of a rail line on the south coast of England. From Dover, one could take the steamboat (today the ferry or hovercraft) across the English Channel to Calais, France.

"Well, then we must make a cross-country journey to Newhaven, and so over to Dieppe." (9)

Instead of boarding the steamboat across the English Channel to France at Dover, they will travel overland to Newhaven and from there take the ferry to Dieppe, France. Today, although a train tunnel has been bored underneath the English Channel, several different ferry routes are available to France, some longer than others. Newhaven-Dieppe is one of the longest

"...a coup-de-maitre...." (9)

A master stroke.

We sat in the Strasburg salle-à-manger arguing the question for half an hour.... (10)

Strasburg (or Strasbourg) is a city on the border between France and Germany. After enjoying a century of independence, it passed back and forth between France and Germany until the end of World War II. In Holmes's time it belonged to Germany, but was returned to France after World War I. During World War II, it reverted to German control, but today is part of France.

The *salle-à-manger* is the dining room at the train station.

For a charming week we wandered up the valley of the Rhone, and then, branching off at Leuk, we made our way over the Gemmi Pass, still deep in snow, and so, by way of Interlaken, to Meiringen. (10)

Leuk is a city located in the valley of the Rhone River, which flows down out of the Alps into France, and on to the Mediterranean Sea. Leuk is surrounded by picturesque mountains that rise abruptly from the valley floor. Nearby Leukerbad, at a much higher al-



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Conan Doyle playing in the snow at around the time he "killed" Sherlock Holmes. From *The Strand Magazine* (1894).

title in *The Strand Magazine*, "An Alpine Pass on Ski" (1894), in which he freely, and humorously, admitted his ineptness at the sport.

Once, I remember, as we passed over the Gemmi, and walked along the border of the melancholy Daubensee.... (10)

The Gemmi Pass leads past the Daubensee, a small, high-altitude lake (over 7,000 feet above sea level).

It was on the third of May that we reached the little village of Meiringen, where we put up at the Englischer Hof, then kept by Peter Steiler the elder. (10-11)

Meiringen—in legend, the birthplace of meringue—was known for being especially accommodating to English visitors in Conan Doyle's time. He stayed there several times. Today, there is a Sherlock Holmes museum in Meiringen—advertised as the most authentic in the world—where it is possible to buy a combined ticket to visit the museum and tour the Reichenbach Falls.

Our landlord was an intelligent man and spoke excellent English, having served for three years as waiter at the Grosvenor Hotel in London. (11)

A venerable London hotel located near Buckingham Palace.

...with the intention of crossing the hills and spending the night at the hamlet of Rosenlaui.... (11)

Rosenlaui is a tiny village in a rugged gorge of the same name, and serves as a welcome resting place for travelers between strenuous hikes.

We had strict injunctions, however, on no account to pass the falls of Reichenbach, which are about half-way up the hills, without making a small detour to

see them. (11)

Reichenbach Falls, one of the highest waterfalls in the Alps, consists of five separate cascades down the side of a mountain. Today—an even bigger tourist attraction because of its association with Holmes—it can be visited by cable railway. In the terminal is a plaque commemorating Holmes's "death" at the falls.

She had wintered at Davos Platz and was journeying now to join her friends at Lucerne, when a sudden hemorrhage had overtaken her. (11)

Tuberculosis and its deadly effects were much on Conan Doyle's mind because of his wife's precarious condition. The scenario described here must have been his worst nightmare.

There was Holmes's Alpine-stock still leaning against the rock by which I had left him. (12)

Holmes's sturdy walking-stick still leans against the rock—a poignant reminder of his absence. The Alpine-stock, the silver cigarette case, the little scrap of paper—these have become icons of Holmes's disappearance (the deerstalker cap has slipped into films and illustrations of "The Final Problem," although it does not appear in the original text).



"As I turned away I saw Holmes, with his back against a rock and his arms folded, gazing down at the rush of the waters. It was the last that I was ever destined to see of him in this world." (12)

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