



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXVI -- The Adventure of the Final Problem

This story is of such importance, that I feel overwhelmed by the enormity of the task, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

Well, where to start? I suppose it's best to start with Moriarty himself as he appears for the first time in this story. And with this I have a bit of a problem. It just feels a bit hurried, like Conan Doyle had decided to finish off Sherlock Holmes and needed to quickly invent a villain suitable for such a task.

Why haven't we heard of him before? If Moriarty was truly working away in the background for all those years doing his villainy, why is this the first time Holmes mentions him? And the other problem, which readers of my previous blogs will know, is that I find the description of Moriarty's inclination towards criminality very simplistic. To say, as Holmes does, that he has, 'Hereditary tendencies of the most diabolical kind' and 'A criminal strain ran in his blood', is very naive. Surely someone who has studied criminality in as much detail as Holmes would know that such things are not hereditary. So what really did turn the brilliant maths professor to crime? Well, I have tried to answer this very comprehensively in my novel and it is based around the idea that he is an autistic savant.

There is much evidence to support this in the original text, such as his, 'Phenomenal mathematical ability', the way that 'He does little himself' and stays withdrawn from society instead paying and facilitating others to do the criminal acts for him. Even the curiously oscillating head could be seen as a sort of twitch, or compulsion. I have tried to flesh-out and give much more detail to this fascinating man and create a back-story to fill in the blanks left by the Final Problem.



As to the rest of the story, it does all feel a little hurried to me but is still gripping, clever and actually rather emotional. The devotion which Watson shows is touching, and I remember how well David Burke portrayed this in the Granada adaptation. I must also mention how fantastic I thought the characterisation of Moriarty was in BBC's Sherlock – making him into a playful, flirty, camp but deadly villain was a stroke of absolute genius in my opinion. I do hope to send the creators a copy of my book and will post up a blog with their feedback if they are kind enough to submit any and happy for me to do so.

I admit that during the writing of Barefoot, I pictured Moriarty as being a curious mix of Eric Porter, who played the character so well in the Granada version, and Mr Burns from the Simpsons (though obviously not yellow) with his bird-like features and domed forehead. That particular combination seemed to work quite well for me.

My own novel includes The Final Problem in great detail and I have tried to stick to the movements of the original as much as possible, just adding in my own characters and weaving it into my own narrative. Holmes is working with the French Government and the adventure starts in Narbonne, the very place which Holmes writes to Watson from in the original. I hope this section of my book is a good example of where the astute Holmes fans will spot many original references such as getting the continental express from Victoria and disembarking at Canterbury, to the argument in the Strasbourg sale-a-manger when Holmes warns of the dangers ahead and expresses his desire to travel on alone. But, but by adding a new take on the proceedings and a back-story which explains so much, I hope new readers will enjoy it too whilst Holmes fans will appreciate the detail included and the way this has been adapted into something new whilst retaining elements of the original.

I spent so many hours slaving over this and my Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes has so many notes, underlining, highlighting and drawings on the pages of The Final Problem that they are now almost impossible to read. But, re-read it I have, and I must admit that it remains very enjoyable (especially as we know it isn't really the end) and absorbing. Though how it must have felt to those reading it when it was first published and there was no hope at that point of a return, I can only imagine.

8.5 out of 10. Despite all the good points and obvious significance it still felt a bit rushed and underdeveloped.

Charlotte Anne Walters

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