



His Last Bow

Adventure XLVII – His Last Bow

Publishing History

48 of the 60 stories

First published in *The Strand Magazine*, September, 1917 - - - Subtitle in Strand was: “*The War Service of Sherlock Holmes*”

In the US *Collier's Weekly*, September 22, 1917

Part of *His Last Bow* collection by

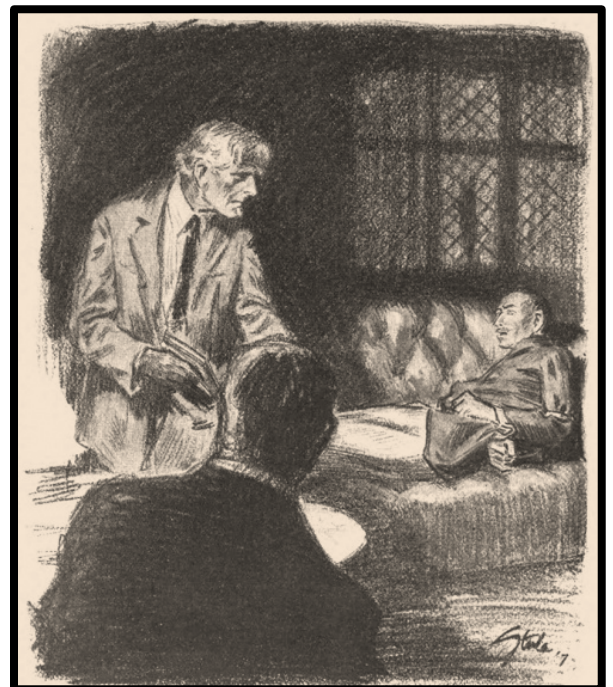
John Murray, London, 1917

George H. Doran, New York, 1927

British illustrator – A. Gilbert

Chronology

Baring-Gould places the date of the story at Sunday, August 1, 1914 making it 60th of the 60. This means that Holmes is 60 and Watson 62.



Christopher Morley Says

“This story produces a curious effect because it is not told as usual by the faithful Watson, but by some unidentified narrator who had evidently had access to official records – perhaps Mycroft Holmes. The date is just before the outbreak of the war in August 1914, and we learn how Sherlock prepared himself by two years of impersonation (as “Mr. Altamont, of Chicago,” who looked like a caricature of Uncle Sam) to come to his country’s aid in the hour of crisis.”

Dummies Short Summary

Set in 1914 on the eve of World War I, this case of espionage and spying is, chronologically, the very last adventure that Holmes and Watson work on together. (Stories that Doyle wrote after *His Last Bow* were set in a time period before it.)

How Many Words

At 6,126 words LAST has the 7th most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 is NAVL – 12,701)

Classifying This Case

This case is one of 4 classified as a theft of classified documents. The others were BRUC, NAVA, and SECO.

The Best Of Sherlock Holmes

- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 23rd of the 56 short stories.
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 21st of the 56 short stories.

What Else Happened That Year (1914)

- 1914 marks the beginning of World War I. Even though LAST is leading up to the war, its entries will be pared down to save space. Events will be chronological in this posting.
- Jan 07 First steamboat through the Panama Canal
- Jan 14 Henry Ford introduces the assembly line to produce Model-Ts
- Feb 07 Charlie Chaplin debuts *The Kid*
- Feb 16 First airplane flight from Los Angeles to San Francisco
- Mar 07 Prince Wilhelm von Weid become King of Albania
- Mar 14 Serbia and Turkey sign peace treaty
- Mar 27 First successful blood transfusion
- Apr 07 U.S. and Columbia sign treaty over the Canal Zone
- Apr 09 First full color film, *World, Flesh, and the Devil*, in London
- Apr 29 W. H. Carrier patents the air conditioner
- May 01 China's Pres. Yuan Shiki wins dictatorial qualification
- May 06 British House of Lords rejects women suffrage

- Jun 06 First air flight out of sight of land. Scotland to Norway
- Jun 28 Austria invades Serbia
- Jul 20 Armed resistance against British rule begins in Ulster
- Aug 01 Emperor Wilhelm II declares war on his nephew tsar Nicholas II
- Aug 03 Great Britain declares war on Germany
- Aug 05 First traffic light installed in Cleveland
- Aug 16 Zapata and Pancho Villa overrun Mexico
- Oct 13 Garrett Morgan invents and patents the gas mask
- Nov 20 U.S. starts requiring photos on passports
- Dec 21 Tillies Punctured Romance – the first six-reel feature movie
- Dec 24 German planes drop bombs over Dover England

Holmes And Watson – Personal Information

Not stated. Holmes is 60 years old, and came out of retirement to become a double agent for Britain. He had been keeping bees, presumably upon the Sussex Downs which was a plan he stated earlier. We have no mention of Watson.

Dramatis Personae

- **Von Bork**, a top level German secret agent, posing as a sportsman visiting in Britain.
- **Baron Von Hurling**, another top German agent.
- **Altamont**, Von Bork's right-hand man.
- **Martha**, Von Bork's housekeeper.
- **Jack James**, captured agent of Von Bork.
- **Hollis**, *ibid.*
- **Steiner**, *ibid.*

Quotable Sherlock

- "Might I trouble you to open the window, for chloroform vapour does not help the palate."
- "Though unmusical, German is the most expressive of all languages."
- "The Englishman is a patient creature, but at present his temper is a little inflamed, and it would be as well not to try him to far."

- “Stand with me here upon the terrace, for it may be the last quiet talk we shall ever have.”
- “It would brighten by declining years to see a German cruiser navigating the Solent according to the minefield plans which I have furnished.”
- “Here is the fruit of my leisured ease, the magnum opus of my latter years!”
- I have check for five hundred pounds which should be cashed early, for the drawer is quite capable of stopping it, if he can.”
- “Good old Watson! You are the one fixed point in a changing age. There’s an east wind coming all the same, such a wind as never blew on England yet. It will be cold and bitter, Watson, and a good many of us may wither before its blast. But it’s God’s own wind none the less, and a cleaner, better, stronger land will lie in the sunshine when the storm has cleared.”

Holmes’ Fee

Not mentioned. Obviously the British government paid Holmes. Also, Holmes as Altamont also got the final payment of £500 from Von Bork for the “sparking-plugs”.

Disguises

Still the master of Disguise..

Holmes poses as an Irish American spy in *His Last Bow*.

Unrecorded Cases

- Holmes life was saved by Count Von und Zu Grafenstein (who was Von Bork’s uncle) when the Nihlist Klopman tried to murder him.

Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen

- 1923 *His Last Bow* with Eille Norwood was Holmes in a story based less than 10 years before the movie. The National Film and Television Archive at the BFI has viewing copies of this film but it has not been released.
- 2001 *The Secret Safe* as an episode in the *Sherlock Holmes in the 22nd Century* (Animated TV series).

Fainting In The Cano

In this tale, no one faints, almost faints, pretends to faint, or even mentions fainting.

Newspapers

None mentioned

Annotated Sherlock

The closer we get to today, the less we need an interpreter . .

- **“your four-in-hand”** A four horse team driven by one person.

Holmes The Author

After all these years, *Holmes published Practical Handbook of Bee Culture, with Some Observations upon the Segregation of the Queen.* Copies of it are very rare today.

Weapons

- **Chloroform** - Which Holmes (alias Altamont) used to subdue Van Bork, the German spymaster.
- **Hands** - Of Sherlock Holmes used on Von Bork, in grasping him around the neck in order to administer the chloroform.
- **Activities** - Of the German spy-ring headed by Van Bork.
- **Government Papers** - Stolen by Van Bork and his fellow spies.
- **Naval Signals** - British, which Altamont (Holmes) was supposedly bringing to Van Bork. But he was brought something infinitely more valuable - a copy of Holmes' book on beekeeping.
- **Military Weapons** - Of the Germans, mentioned by Von Bork
- **Military Weapons** - Of the British, mentioned by Holmes.

Check Fact

Once again, the LAST S H story is written, Comes WWI with Doyle chomping at the bit to help someday, this looks to be a fact.

1921 and war over - - - dollar signs and pound signs lure him back something politely critical.

Frank Mentzel