

The Letter

By

John P. Seiler

(Author's note: Besides being avid pipe collectors and pipe smokers, Bill Kotyk and I are both Sherlock Holmes collectors. I found the following handwritten script letter tucked away in an old collection of Sherlock Holmes stories published in the 1920s. The cover of the tome was embossed "JHW". I can only infer that the letter is genuine.)

The bell was ringing incessantly. "Cowdon! Cowdon! Come in here immediately."

"Yes professor" he said as he entered the dimly lit room.

The professor was smoking a Comoy, a Group 4 size straight billiard with his favorite Carreras' Craven Mixture.

"I will have a letter for you to arrange to be hand delivered later today. You will inform the recipient that a man will stop tomorrow at the same time for a reply."

The professor went back to reading both the envelop and letter which he was writing as Cowdon left the room to make the arrangements.

London

November 14, 1894

Dear Doctor Watson,

It is with a bit of consternation that I take my pen to write to you. I will be referring to the story in the Strand Magazine within which you have chronicled the events of May, 1891 under the title of "The Final Problem". Sherlock Holmes has said that you tend to "romanticize" your stories, but I would say that you go to great lengths and stretch the truth of events to make Sherlock look good. As of now, you know that I am alive and retired from my criminal life and plan to stay that way. I will point out specific instances of your tendency to exaggerate.

You properly summarize my academic career. However, I did not resign my chair at the University under a cloud, but left voluntarily as their Department of Physics was being undone due to a lack of funding.

The appellation "Napoleon of Crime" and organizer of 'half the evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city' is just plain ridiculous. Although I had a couple of plots planned and hatching, to be the

center of a web of intrigue is just not true. It does make great reading. It does seem to present a low opinion of Scotland Yard and increase the stature of Sherlock.

Sherlock did not throw an impenetrable net around me and force me to leave England, rather, if you look at my activities over the past half dozen years, you would find that May was the normal time that I take my Spring vacation, and usually on the continent.

I really must object to your physical description of me as "... 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." You go on to state that my head "oscillates from side to side in a curiously reptilian fashion." Such balderdash! I am rather short and stout more rugby player than the nemesis you make me out to be. "Oscillating head?" How can that be when I have to wear glasses so thick to see that it takes an effort just to keep them on my head?

The meeting you describe with Sherlock Holmes was purely a figment of your imagination. I personally never met Sherlock Holmes. It does show the great creativity of your mind.

The incidents on Bentinck and Welbeck streets were just the type of common accidents that happen every day in London. If you will go back and look, at the time of the supposed incident on Vere Street, roofers and bricklayers were working on re-pointing the brick on the chimney and replacing the roof. With respect to the man that attacked Sherlock who was in police custody before he visited you, you will find that he was the brother of a criminal that Sherlock's testimony had sent to prison.

The hilarious journey to Victoria Station was total drama setup by Sherlock to impress you and totally uncalled for. Sherlock's disguise as the "aged ecclesiastic" was pure drama in its best form.

With respect to your rooms in Baker Street being 'torched', once again another tall tale was told. I ask you that when you returned, did you see any sign of the rooms being burned. Of course you did not find any sign of a fire because there was no fire in the rooms. Please note that Sherlock did not have a copy of the Morning paper to show you the supposed article that he mentioned on the Baker Street fire.

You did not see me on the platform as I was already on the continent.

Sherlock mentions that the brougham driver was his brother Mycroft. As you know well, Mycroft only traveled daily between his office, his rooms, and the Diogenes Club. I doubt he could even drive a brougham.

I am sorry for the hop-skip-jump trip you had across England and the continent to get to Switzerland. It was pure Sherlock drama, the sign of a sick mind, or one last possibility I will present to you at the end of this letter.

You finally reached Meiringen and stayed Englischer Hof. It is a most pleasant hotel.

I am not going to continue in this line of debating each point. To summarize your story, Sherlock and I met on the Reichenbach falls, we talked, he left you such a sad message, we tussled, I fell into the falls,

Sherlock got away after his little bout with Colonel Moran, and he went on to the far east at the behest of British Intelligence. About the only thing I can say is the man he pushed into the falls, who fit your description, was not I. As there were no witnesses, it could have been anyone since a body was never found. Or maybe no one fell into Reichenbach falls. Additionally, if you check the public records, Colonel Moran was in England on that date and participated in the Wimbledon Club Shoot. He took first place.

I believe Doctor Watson that you have been had. I suggest that the whole purpose of this non-existent exercise was to cover Sherlock's move of operation under the name of "Sigerson" as an intelligence officer of the British Crown to the Far East. He more or less admitted as much when he returned earlier this year.

In conclusion I must say that your story has ruined any chance of a public career that I might have. As such, I shall remain retired. I find your writings to be most inaccurate and a travesty of the truth.

Yours,

James Moriarty

His pipe had gone out. He placed the letter into the envelope addressed to "John H. Watson, MD, Kensington"

Cowdon had the lettered hand delivered to the addressee. His man showed up the next day for a reply, but there was none.

At the bottom of the letter was a small penciled note that was hard to read "Moriarty was right – Mycroft".