

THE NEW ANNOTATED

SHERLOCK HOLMES

VOLUME I



THE ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

THE MEMOIRS OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Edited with a Foreword and Notes by LESLIE S. KLINGER

with additional research by PATRICIA J. CHUI

Introduction by JOHN LE CARRÉ

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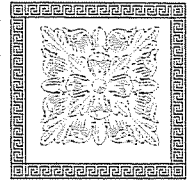
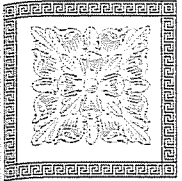
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THE FINAL PROBLEM¹

To paraphrase Watson, it was with heavy hearts that Strand Magazine readers began the tale Watson recorded as "The Final Problem," which purported to include Watson's "last words" about Sherlock Holmes. The story stunned the British public, cost the Strand Magazine twenty thousand subscribers, and led to an outbreak of black armbands. Watson kept his silence until 1901, eight years after publication of "The Final Problem," when he published The Hound of the Baskervilles, another reminiscence of Holmes. The modern reader knows that Holmes did not die, as Watson evidently believed at the close of this account, but instead returned to London in 1894. For obscure reasons, Holmes refused to allow Watson to disclose this information to his readers until 1903, when Watson was permitted to reveal the true conclusion of the events of "The Final Problem" in connection with his report of "The Adventure of the Empty House," the first story of the volume entitled The Return of Sherlock Holmes. But "The Final Problem" is a fine drama in its own right, with the tense and thrilling encounters between Holmes and Professor Moriarty (copied by William Gillette with great success in his play Sherlock Holmes and aped in countless films thereafter). Moriarty, who has achieved near-legendary status as the arch-nemesis of Holmes, appears only in "The Final Problem," "The Empty House," and The Valley of Fear, and so the information about him in this tale has been carefully mined by scholars.

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.² 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

1 "The Final Problem" was published in the *Strand Magazine* in December 1893, in the *Strand Magazine* (New York) Christmas Number 1893, and in a number of American newspapers in late November and early December 1893.

2 Christopher Morley, in *Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: A Textbook of Friendship*, the first annotated collection of Sherlock Holmes stories, writes: "Devoted readers have rarely had such a shock as the opening words of this story when it first appeared . . ."