



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes Adventure XI -- The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb

This is a curious story really, gripping but very different to the usual formula, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

On the one hand, as a stand-alone short story about a hydraulic engineer who inadvertently goes off to fix a press used in coin forging and gets his thumb cut off by a cruel German baddie, it's a really absorbing little story. The part where the poor young man is trapped inside the actual press with it coming down on top of him is as exciting as an action sequence from Indiana Jones. But on the other hand, as a Holmes adventure, it gives little opportunity to see the detection and observation that makes up the usual formula we know and love.

There is, of course, Holmes' observation that the horse which pulled the carriage from the station to the mystery forging house taking the young engineer to his work was described as 'Fresh and glossy' and therefore hadn't travelled far to reach it. This explained much about the location of the forging press but was irrelevant really as the column of smoke billowing from its ruins gave away its location anyway. Holmes was also the one who linked the incident to a previous disappearance of a hydraulic engineer but this too didn't lead to any particular resolution, except for suggesting the German had form in his murdering ways.

But that's it really; Holmes has very little impact beyond these two points. But does that matter when the story is as neat and concise as this one? And what of the ending? The villains escape but the crushing of the engineer's oil lamp in the press has caused the whole forging operation to be swallowed by



flames. I suppose this is a closure of sorts but I was left wanting more – more deduction and more comeuppance.

**Pacey and gripping, but more just 'short story' rather than
'Sherlock Holmes short story' – 7 out of 10.**

Charlotte Anne Walters

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