



The Hounds of the Internet

"A singular set of people, Watson."

from the table, except for Mr. Dakin, who dates Watson's marriage differently and places this adventure in 1888, our chronologists agree on 1889 as the correct year.

In 1889, Sherlock Holmes was 35 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 37.

Main Characters:

Victor Hatherley, young, penurious hydraulic engineer, Sherlock Holmes' client. Colonel Lysander Stark, a German, head of the counterfeit ring. Mr. Furgeson, Stark's number one man. Elise, a young German woman who helps Hatherley to escape. Inspector Bradstreet, Scotland Yarder.

Notable Quotes:

Of all the problems which have been submitted to my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, for solution during the years of our intimacy,

there were only two which I was the means of introducing to his notice—that of Mr. Hatherley's thumb, and that of Colonel Warburton's madness. Of these the latter may have afforded a finer field for an acute and original observer, but the other was so strange in its inception and so dramatic in its details that it may be the more worthy of being placed upon record, even if it gave my friend fewer openings for those deductive methods of reasoning by which he achieved such remarkable results.

An Inquiry into:

"The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb"

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The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in March 1892. It is part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

According to Watson, the case took place in "The summer of '89, not too long after my marriage." As may be seen

The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb

Chronologist	Date of the Adventure
Canon	Summer 1889
Baring-Gould	Saturday, September 7, 1889
Bell	August 1888
Blakeney	July 1889
Brend	July 1889
Christ	Saturday, September 7, 1889
Dakin	Saturday, September 7, 1889
Folsom	Early August 1889
Hall	July 1889
Keefauver	Sunday, June 30, 1889
Klinger	1889
Zeisler	Sunday, September 8, 1889

Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist's results for their research framework.

“If it is anything in the nature of a problem which you desire to see solved, I should strongly recommend you to come to my friend, Mr. Sherlock Holmes, before you go to the official police.”

Sherlock Holmes was, as I expected, lounging about his sitting-room in his dressing-gown, reading the agony column of *The Times* and smoking his before-breakfast pipe, which was composed of all the plugs and dottles left from his smokes of the day before, all carefully dried and collected on the corner of the mantelpiece.



Another of Watson's Practices

According to the Great Detective's Boswell, he “had returned to civil practice and had finally abandoned Holmes in his Baker Street rooms,” and his “. . . practice had steadily increased.” When he referred to his “civil practice,” Watson of course meant that he was working as a civilian, rather than a military, physician. Considering the fact that whenever the Good Doctor decided to return to medicine he would soon acquire a flourishing practice underlines the fact that he was not—as some have libelously suggested—a “mediocre physician.”

However, that being said, Watson's examination of Victor Hatherley's wound strikes me as peculiar



due to two reasons. The first is a remarkable lack of precision; he tells us that the thumb “had been hacked or torn right out from the roots.” This does not sound like the observation of an experienced physician, particularly a former Army surgeon with battle experience. Even for a squeamish layman the difference between a wound resulting from something being torn out would differ considerably from one resulting from a cut, even if inflicted with a dull instrument, which was not the case because later he states that the injury resulted from some “very heavy and sharp instrument.” Secondly,

it is puzzling that left unmentioned is which of Hatherley's hands was wounded.

Curious also is how lightly he treated Hatherley's injury: “I sponged the wound, cleaned it, dressed it, and finally covered it over with cotton wadding and carbolised bandages.” Losing a finger by having it chopped off by a cleaver by any standard qualifies as a severe injury. While it may be that by the time our medico attended to it, it probably had ceased bleeding as heavily as it had a few hours before, one would think that such a wound would have merited considerably more than just a daub of antiseptic and a bandage it. No stitches or painkiller? It *had* to sting!

Then again, there are credible accounts that immediately after having had his right arm amputated, Horatio (later Lord) Nelson returned to duty aboard his ship. Compared to this, the loss of a mere digit ought not to be nearly as disabling as it seems.

This seems to have been the case with Victor Hatherley.

While the details of his escape after his close encounter with Colonel Stark's cleaver are scarce—deduced from just traces in the mould—it may be assumed that Elise and Ferguson somehow managed to manhandle the unconscious Hatherley sufficiently to spirit him away from the Colonel's murderous reach. It seems that they then abandoned him in what they correctly surmised was a safe place. Strangely enough, they do not seem to have attempted to do anything about his wound.

So, according to Hatherley, although they took him away from the immediate danger that threatened his life, they essentially abandoned him to leisurely bleed. When he came to he said he still bled abundantly enough to require a tourniquet.

Then, ignoring any chance of obtaining at least a modicum of first aid or medical care, or apprising the local authorities about the murderous attack upon his person and well as the strange goings-on in his attacker's house—and by this time weakened by loss of blood—he instead chose to board the train to London. He then fortuitously runs into the Paddington Station guard who takes him to Watson's surgery where he indulges in a short bout of hysterical laughter, is given some brandy, and receives such minimal medical attention that it almost borders on malpractice. From there off he goes with Watson to Baker Street to see Holmes.



But his journeys continue! After relating his dreadful story to our two friends, he heads for Scotland Yard, returns to Paddington Station and travels back to Eyford, later returning to London, while maintaining a very British and completely stony stiff upper lip throughout the whole enterprise.

Perhaps this is why Watson concluded that no further treatment was needed.

A Dearth of IQ

From my perspective, I have always found it difficult to commiserate with Hatherley; his foolishness is far too irritating.



Let us consider the facts. He completely disregarded the fact that from the very beginning of the whole affair he felt uneasy. To begin with, he did not trust Colonel Stark; in reality, the man's very appearance disturbed him. He realized that something was not on the up and up when he was offered an outrageous fee of 50 guineas (\approx \$20,000), which he recognized was at least ten times what he would have charged for such an undertaking. He then finds himself in what he thinks is an isolated country house that—from his own description—could double as a haunted house. At that time one of its residents stealthily comes to him and, wringing her hands together in stress and fear, urges him, "For the love of Heaven get away from here before it is too late!"

What does Hatherley do? He shrugs off the fact he is being warned that he is facing a possibly deadly situation and, thinking of the 50 guineas, refuses to budge.

But it goes on! Already having been warned that he is in some sort of unspeakable danger, when he suspects that it is highly unlikely that such a large and powerful hydraulic press would be used for the purpose alleged, he returns into the chamber where the machine's business end resides to conduct an investigation.

Then, when discovered by Stark, he righteously reveals that he knows he was lied to, and demands that he disclose what the press is really being used for.

The next day, badly injured and having barely escaped with his life, Hatherley decides to postpone his reporting Stark's murderous attack until he returns to London, instead of to the local constabulary. His excuse that he was too weak to go to the local police is irrational. Had he told the porter at the station what had happened and shown him his hand, someone had been found to fetch the police as well as a local physician.

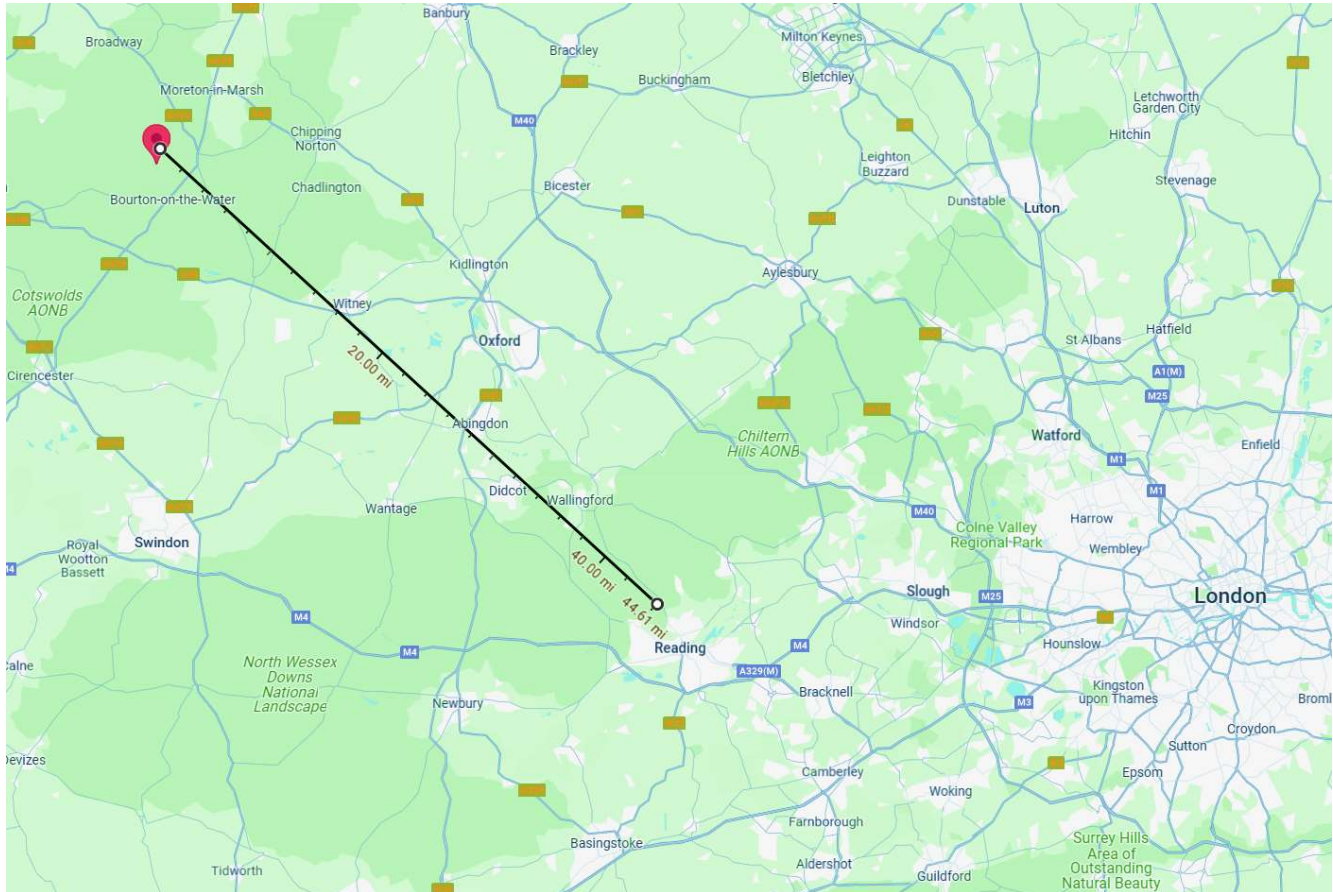
This last of his absurd decisions gave the coiners sufficient time to escape by wasting hours before the wheels of justice began to turn.

As the states says, "One egg short of an omelet."

Location, Location, Location!

Those Canon scholars who have profoundly (and unsuccessfully) delved into the often nebulous geography of the Sacred Writings have been perennially confused regarding the position of Eyford and the counterfeiters' house.

Watson wrote that Eyford was within seven miles of Reading and that the house itself was within ten

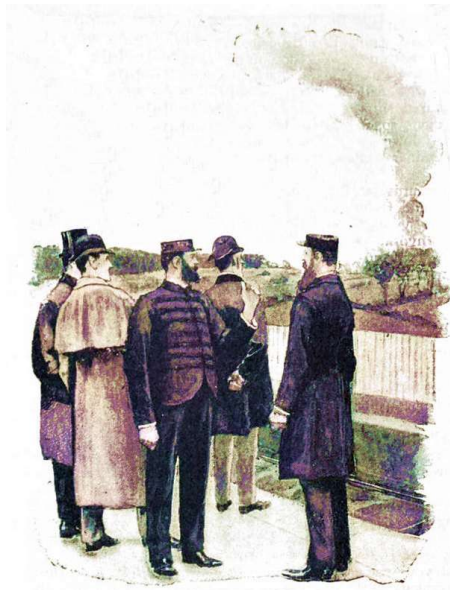


miles of Reading. To add to this confusion we are also told that the drive from Eyford was closer to 12, rather than seven miles.

A look at the map makes things even more confusing.

As if more difficulties in locating the spot were necessary, when Inspector Bradstreet attempted to locate the counterfeiters' lair, he drew a circle with a ten-mile radius stretching from the train station.

An Unlikely Conclusion



Holmes concludes that the fire that burned down the house resulted from the crushing of the oil lamp that was flattened after Hatherley's close escape from the hydraulic press. It seems questionable that such a fire could have been started by an oil lamp utterly crushed by such a piston. Logically, the piston itself when it pressed on to the machine's floor plate would have deprived the fire of air.

Before realizing that Hatherley had escaped Colonel Start would have had to raise the piston for a look, or avail himself of the panel through which Elise allowed Hatherley to leave. In either situation, had there been a fire it could have been easily extinguished right at the moment. Considering that the malefactors escaped carrying with them a number of bulky boxes they would have had to have time to remove them from the house. It is unlikely they could have done that while the house was in flames.

A more plausible solution is, of course, that when they left the house they set it on fire to cover their tracks.

Holmes' Mild-Mannered Attitude

In view of Hatherley's doings and his reaction towards everything that happened, Holmes' attitude at the end is quite reasonable. To express it in the most charitably possible way, his client acted foolishly. He did not bother to set in motion the wheels of justice in time to do anything about the felons, enabling them to escape with their (in the slang used back then) boodle. He even deferred getting any medical attention for no good reason. It therefore is unsurprising that the Great Detective (who most likely charged no fee) limited himself—very probably sardonically—to telling him that he should content himself with the fact that he not only gained experience from the incident, but that from now on he would be “excellent company” for the remainder of his existence.



The sad truth is, however, that the only winners in this whole sorry affair were the crooks themselves. Yes, they lost an excellent hideout and center of operations, including the massive hydraulic press crucial to enable them to carry on with their felonious activities. However, the fact remains they escaped with crates of counterfeit half-crowns (each worth \approx \$47.00 in today's currency), which would have been sufficient to allow them to reestablish themselves and restart operations at some other convenient place. Even worse, they also got away with the murder of Jeremiah Hayling, Hatherley's professional predecessor, to whom Holmes referred earlier.

The Dubious Reward

Apart from Watson, who obtained new material for yet another of his many contributions to *The Strand*, this is a case in which there are no real winners. As already mentioned, it is a certainty that in view of what happened and Hatherley's penurious situation, Holmes did not collect a fee, not even the

price of the train tickets. Inspector Bradstreet also came up short when he missed capturing the crooks. Although they managed to escape unscathed, the criminals themselves lost their hideout and equipment.

Inarguably, of all those concerned in the case, it was Hatherley who came out holding the sticky end of the wicket. Not only did he not receive the promised 50 guineas, but came to within a hairsbreadth of emulating the unpleasant death of a crushed bug.

On top of everything else, the loss of a thumb left him less able to carry on with a very much a hands-on profession.

Holmes' prediction that the now nine-fingered engineer's unfortunate experience would surely bestow upon him a reputation of being excellent company for the rest of his life sounds more consolatory than anything else. How many times would he be able to repeat his tale before being avoided for being an utter bore? ("Oh, gawd, here comes Victor with the tale of his chopped-off thumb again!")



What else happened in 1889:

Empire



Great Seal of the United Kingdom is affixed to the charter of the British South Africa Company. Company is assigned trading and other rights over a vast territory, with the express reservation to the Crown to take over at any time the works and buildings of the Company.

Transvaal claimed to be "encircled" by Rhodes' concessions in East Africa. Rhodesia established.

◀ At Cairo, Henry Stanley ends his three-year African expedition. He is knighted upon his return to England. Writes *In Darkest Africa*.

Colonel Woodehouse defeats Dervish horde in Sudan. General Grenfell, commanding British troops on the Nile attacks and defeats Dervish troops, with 500 killed and wounded, and as many taken prisoner.

The Canadian Pacific Railway is completed from coast to coast.

Britain

Great London Dockers' Strike; the "Dockers' Tanner"; growth of unskilled workers' unions; New Unionism; Gasworkers' Union formed. Strike is finally arbitrated in the workers' favor by the popular Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning.

Parnell vindicated as all charges are revealed as false. *The London Times* apologizes.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

Technical Education Act: County Councils to levy 1d for technical and manual education.

Establishment of the telephone company.

John Bright, orator and politician, leading spirit in the Anti-Corn Law League, dies.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

Metropolitan Board of Works replaced by London County Council.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

General Booth publishes *Survey of London Life and Labour*.

Early use of photographs in newspaper: *Illustrated London News* runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews competition.

Woolwich Ferry starts.

White Hart Inn, Borough High Street, one of the last coaching inns, demolished.

Act to prevent cruelty to children.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

World

Japan's Meiji constitution. Arinori Mori, minister of education assassinated by Shinto fanatic.

Wall Street Journal begins publishing.

Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia. Yohannes IV (Kasa) Emperor of Ethiopia dies in battle.

Moulin Rouge opens in Paris.

North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S.A. states.



U.S.A. Senate, in secret session, passes resolution declaring against European control of the Panama Canal.

Congress of French Revolutionary Labor Party at Bordeaux.

◀ President Harrison, of the U.S.A., closes Bering Sea to all nations; issues proclamation prohibiting the killing of fur animals within Alaska without a special government permit.

Crown Prince Archduke Rudolph of Austria-Hungary and Baroness Maria Vetsera are found dead at the hunting lodge of Mayerling, outside Vienna, allegedly a murder-suicide. (In 1983, former Austrian empress Zita claimed it was an assassination by two conspirators when Rudolf refused to take part in a plot to oust his father Emperor Franz Josef.)

Treaty of Acciali: Ethiopia made Italian protectorate.

Ivory Coast is declared a protectorate of France.

Part of Oklahoma Indian lands open to homesteading.

Portuguese under Pinto try to extend influence in Zambesi Valley; Anglo-Portuguese dispute.

End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed and Dom Pedro, the emperor, exiled.

Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.

Uprising in the island of Crete. Turkish authorities expelled and public archives destroyed. Turkey calls up 80,000 reservists, but promises to inquire into legitimate grievances.

Russian jurors to be nominated by government.

King Ferdinand II of Portugal dies at age 73.

Stanley's expedition reaches Bagamoyo in Indian Ocean.

Aristocratic "Land Captains" replace elected JPs in Russia.

Father Damien, worker among lepers in Molokai, Hawaii, dies of the disease.

Influenza reaches Europe and America from Siberia.

Jefferson Davis dies in Mississippi.

Paris Exhibition: proof of industrial development in France. Continental monarchies abstain from all official representation. English and American ambassadors attend. Eiffel Tower built for the event is dedicated in a ceremony presided over by Gustave Eiffel, the designer, and attended by French Prime Minister Pierre Tirard. At 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, the Eiffel Tower becomes highest structure on Earth.



◀ General Boulanger, former French War Minister leaves country, addresses manifesto to his party that he left the country to avoid arrest, French Chambers authorize the Senate to try Boulanger and others in absentia, for high treason. The general and his staff are found guilty and condemned to life imprisonment.

Lectures at Dorpat University to be in Russian; German forbidden in schools.

Brunner-Mond Salt Union formed; combine of 64 firms.

Private tolls abolished on French Canals.

New York World's Nellie Bly (Liz Cochrane) begins world trip to beat Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg (*Around the World in 80 Days*). Takes 72 days.

The Pemberton Medicine Company (later the Coca-Cola Company), is incorporated in Atlanta, Georgia.



Work on Panama Canal stopped; French company bankrupt, U.S.A. takes over, finishes canal.

◀ Johnstown flood kills more than 6,000, losses climb to \$40,000,000.

Civil war in Haiti ends. General Légitime defeated by General Hippolyte, who becomes president.

Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.

Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 storeys high.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad establishes the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a reform sect of Islam.

Conference at Berlin guarantees an autonomous government to the Samoan Islands under the joint control of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany.

Art

Sir James Barrie's *A Window in Thrums*, sketches of Scottish village life.

Robert Browning publishes *Asolando*, a poem. Dies later in the year.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes *A Sign of Four*.

Jerome K. Jerome publishes stories, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, *Three Men in a Boat*.

Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Master of Ballantrae*.

William Butler Yeats publishes *The Wanderings of Oisín*.

Paul Bourget publishes *Le Disciple*, a psychological novel.

Gerhart J. Hauptmann publishes *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, German realistic play.

Sudermann publishes *Die Ehre*, a German play.



Dvorak presents *Symphony No. 4 in G Major*.

Gilbert and Sullivan present *The Gondoliers*.

Renoir paints *Girls Picking Flowers*.

◀ Seurat paints *The Side Show*.

Van Gogh paints *Man with a Pipe* (self-portrait), *The Olive Grove*, and *Starry Night*.

Cézanne paints *Harlequin*.

Tchaikovsky introduces *The Sleeping Princess* ballet.

Richard Strauss introduces *Tod und Verklärung*, tone poem.

Science and Technology

First ship-to-shore wireless message is received in the U.S., at San Francisco.

The first General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) defines the length of a meter as the distance between two lines on a standard bar of an alloy of platinum with ten percent iridium, measured at the melting point of ice.



Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.

Astronomical Society of Pacific holds first meeting in San Francisco, California.

◀ Hollerith's punched-card system widely used in industry.

Ferdinand von Zeppelin patents his "Navigable Balloon."

The first jukebox makes its debut at the Palais Royale Saloon in San Francisco, California. For a nickel, one can listen to a few minutes of music through a tube of an Edison tinfoil phonograph.

In Potsdam, Germany, Ernst von Rebeur-Paschwitz makes the first known recordings of a distant earthquake, taken place in Tokyo, Japan, an hour earlier.

The brassiere is invented.

First dishwashing machine marketed in Chicago.

Mering and Minkowski show that the pancreas prevents diabetes.

Daniel Stover and William Hance patent bicycle with back pedal brake.

William Gray patents coin-operated telephone.

First linotype machine in use.

Thomas Edison shows his first motion picture.

Aspirin patented in Germany by Bayer Laboratories, first introduced in powder form.

Panhard and Levassor begin using Daimler's engines in French cars, using modern layout.

Next week's case: NOBL.

Respectfully submitted,

Murray, the Courageous Orderly

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands
of the murderous Ghazis had it not
been for the devotion and courage
shown by Murray, my orderly..."

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at CourageousMurray@aol.com.

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