



The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XI -- The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb

First published in:

The Strand Magazine, March 1892

Time frame of story (known/surmised):

Summer of 1889 given. Not long after Dr. Watson's marriage.

Opening scene:

Guard from Paddington station brings patient to Watson. Man has arrived at station with his thumb cut off. After patching him up, Watson takes patient to see Holmes instead of police.

Client:

Victor Hatherley, a hydraulic engineer who had his thumb chopped off.

Crime:

Attempted murder, counterfeiting, assault, likely arson. A year earlier another hydraulic engineer, Mr. Jeremiah Hayling, had gone missing, too.

Villain:

Colonel Lysander Stark aided by a pretty German woman and Mr. Ferguson, who went by the name of Dr. Becher.



Motive:

Hired engineer to repair hydraulic press used in counterfeiting, then tried to kill him to hide existence of operation.

Logic used to solve:

Overall bogus-sounding story. Fresh horse used to pick up client after a stated 7-mile drive.

Policemen:

Inspector Bradstreet, of Scotland Yard, a plain-clothes man

Holmes' fees:

Evidently none received. Client was broke.

Transport:

Watson and Hatherly took a hansom from Watson's house to 221B.

Hatherley was driven in a hansom from the Eyford station to the house where he had his misadventure.

Food:

For breakfast at 221B Holmes & Watson plus Hatherley had a hearty meal of fresh rashers and eggs.

Drink:

Watson gave patient Hatherley brandy and water after hysterical outburst.

After breakfast Holmes gave Hatherley a glass of brandy and water.

Vices:

Holmes smoking plugs and dottles from day before as his before-breakfast pipe.

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Watson practicing medicine, living with wife. Watson continually visited Holmes and "occasionally even persuaded him to forgo his Bohemian habits so far as to come and visit us" (Watson and wife).

Other cases mentioned:

The problem of Colonel Warburton's madness.

Notable Quotables:

"You are all wrong." (Holmes to Watson, Hatherley, and Bradstreet)

Other interestings:

It is hard to understand the geometry of the thumb-chopper and Hatherley's grip on the window-sill, and the thumb found on the sill after the fire.

Dr. Lysander Starr, who was said to be Mayor of Topeka, Kansas, USA in 1890 (3GAR), has a name that is very similar to Colonel Lysander Stark in this story.

The hydraulic press was used to form an amalgam of mercury, tin, and nickel, which took the place of silver in the counterfeit sovereigns. The resulting material would have been very similar to the amalgam used in dental fillings in the past.

McMurdo's Camp