

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



The Casebook of Sherlock
Holmes
Adventure L -- The
Problem of Thor Bridge

THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE DATE OF THE ADVENTURE*

(Date when Holmes used Watson's revolver to solve the mystery)

CLUES:

1. The letter from Neil Gibson was dated "October 3rd" (1056)
2. In his letter Gibson says, "... I'll come at eleven to-morrow .." (1056)
3. Holmes says, "Their (the hard-boiled eggs) condition may not be unconnected with the copy of the *Family Herald* which I observed yesterday upon the hall-table" (1055)
4. The *Family Herald* was a weekly that came out on Wednesday
5. In his letter Gibson says, "If ever in your life you showed your powers, put them now into this case." (1056)
6. Holmes returned in "The Adventures of the Empty House" in 1894
7. In "The Adventure of the Golden Pince-Nez" Watson lists the notable cases for the year 1894. (607) "The Problem of Thor Bridge" is clearly a notable case and was not one of those listed.
8. Holmes retired from active practice in 1903. (1071, 1080)
9. October 1 occurred on the following days of the week

| | | | |
|------|----------|------|-----------|
| 1895 | Tuesday | 1900 | Monday |
| 1896 | Thursday | 1901 | Tuesday |
| 1897 | Friday | 1902 | Wednesday |
| 1898 | Saturday | 1903 | Thursday |
| 1899 | Sunday | | |

*The story may contain other clues to the date of the adventure. However, use only the clues shown here. Your only goal should be to use logical reasoning to find a date based on the clues shown here.

10. Watson says, “ ... instead of reaching Winchester that day we went down to Thor Place ... “ (1062)
11. Watson says, “We were compelled to spend the night at Winchester ...” (1065)
12. The day after Holmes and Watson spent the night, Holmes used Watson’s revolver to locate the missing revolver that was used by Mrs. Gibson.

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1 and 2 imply that Neil Gibson visited Holmes on October 4.
- B. 3 and 4 imply yesterday was Wednesday
- C. A and B imply October 4 was Thursday
- D. 5 implies the case was after Holmes had received considerable notoriety.
- E. D and 6 imply it was 1894 or later
- F. E and 7 imply it was 1895 or later
- G. F and 8 imply it was one of the years 1895 to 1903
- H. C, F and 9 imply it was 1900
- I. A, C and G imply that Gibson visited Holmes on Thursday, October 4, 1900
- J. 10, 11 and 12 imply Holmes used Watson’s revolver to locate the missing revolver on day following Gibson’s visit.
- K. I and J imply Holmes used Watson’s revolver to solve the mystery on Friday, October 5, 1900.

**Holmes used Watson’s revolver to solve the mystery on
Friday, October 5, 1900**

THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE VOCABULARY WORDS

- cutter (1054) – **small, single-masted sailing ship**
consternation (1055) – **state of paralyzing dismay**
surfeit (1055) – **disgust caused by an over supply**
plane tree (1055) – **sycamore tree**
magnate (1055) – **powerful or influential person**
assizes (1056, 1063) – **trial sessions, civil or criminal, held periodically in specific locations by a judge or court which moves from place to place**
balustrade (1057, 1069) – **the rail and the row of posts that support it**
reed-girt (1057) – **surrounded by reeds**
wisp (1057) – **thin, frail, or slight**
execrations (1058) – **curses**
gaunt (1058) – **thin and bony; angular**
craggy (1058) – **rugged and uneven**
rapacity (1058) – **act of taking by force; plundering**
perfunctory (1058, 1065) – **done routinely and with little interest or care**
tinge (1059) – **trace**
sallow (1059) – **sickly yellowish hue**
languidly (1059) – **lacking in energy or vitality; weakly; slowly**
imperturbable (1059) – **unshakably calm and collected**
chastened (1060) – **subdued**
marshals (1060) – **arranges or places in methodical order**
ardent (1060) – **passionate**
equanimity (1061) – **in a state of being calm and even-tempered; composed**
cadaverous (1062) – **emaciated; gaunt**
preserves (1063) – **private areas stocked with game or fish**
half-timbered (1063) – **made half of wood**

Tudor (1063) – **style of architecture characterized by flat arches and shallow moldings**

Georgian (1063) – **style of architecture that prevailed during the reign of the four Georges (1714 – 1830) following the style of the Italian Andrea Palladio (see also “The Adventure of the Abbey Grange”); called colonial style in the United States**

parapet (1064, 1069) – **low protective wall or railing along the edge of the bridge**

sixpence (1064) – **coin worth six pennies, that is, one-half a shilling or 1/40th of a pound**

neurotic (1064) – **prone to excessive anxiety and emotional upset**

barrister (1065, 1068) – **lawyer admitted to plead at the bar in the superior courts**

impetuous (1065) – **impulsive and passionate**

innate (1065) – **inborn; inherent**

toils (1066) – **entrapment**

wan (1066) – **unnaturally pale**

inculcate (1067) – **incriminate**

ramshackle (1069) – **so poorly kept up that disintegration is likely; rickety**

trap (1069) – **any two-wheeled, open carriage**

lurched (1069) – **staggered**

taut (1069) – **pulled or drawn tight so there is no slack**

grappling-hook (1069) – **iron shaft with claws at one end, usually thrown by a rope and used for grasping and holding**

vindictive (1069) – **seeking revenge**

ingenious (1070) – **clever**

mere (1070) – **small lake or pond**

THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE SOME OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Watson says that he was, “ ... Late Indian Army ...” (1054). However, in *A Study in Scarlet* he says, “I was duly attached to the Fifth Northumberland Fusiliers ...” and “ ... I served at the fatal battle of Maiwand ...”.(15) Maiwand is in Afghanistan. What could Watson have meant by saying he was “ ... Late Indian Army ...” (1054)?

Watson must have meant that he was sent to a regiment originally stationed in India but which had advanced to Afghanistan before he arrived in Bombay which is in India.

2. Watson says, “ ... in others (adventures of Sherlock Holmes) I was either not present or played so small a part that they could only be told as by a third person.” (1055). Name two stories that fit this description?

“The Adventure of the Mazarin Stone” and “His Last Bow”

3. Holmes says, “My professional charges are upon a fixed scale, ...” (1058) Holmes accepted £12,000 from the Duke of Holderness in “The Adventure of the Priory School”. (555) On the other hand, in “The Adventure of the Speckled Band” Holmes told Helen Stoner that “ ... my profession is its own reward; but you are at liberty to defray whatever expenses I may be put to ...” (259). On what then was the fixed scale based?

Holmes’s fees apparently were based on (a) the client’s ability to pay or (b) Holmes’s own impression of the character and worthiness of the client.

4. Holmes says that Neil Gibson's wife took a similar gun to the one with which she committed suicide and "... concealed (it) in Miss Dunbar's wardrobe after discharging one barrel ..." (1070). What is wrong with that statement?

A pistol has but one barrel. Holmes meant she discharged one chamber or one cylinder or one cartridge.

THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. The name of the governess employed by Neil Gibson was
 - a. Eleanor Carruthers
 - b. Grace Dunbar
 - c. Mary Sutherland
 - d. none of the above

2. Neil Gibson's wife was killed by
 - a. a pistol shot
 - b. poison
 - c. strangulation
 - d. none of the above

3. Holmes used something that belonged to Watson to solve the mystery. It was
 - a. his hat
 - b. his pistol
 - c. his stethoscope
 - d. none of the above

* The Simple Quiz is designed to determine if the student has read the story. Anyone who has read the story through should have no trouble in completing this quiz. The Intermediate and Advanced Quizzes are more challenging.

THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. Neil Gibson's wife was a native of
 - a. Brazil
 - b. Central America
 - c. Spain
 - d. none of the above

2. The police officer with whom Holmes cooperated was
 - a. Sergeant Coventry
 - b. Inspector Baynes
 - c. Gregory
 - d. none of the above

3. Holmes visited Grace Dunbar in prison in
 - a. Hampshire
 - b. Thor
 - c. Winchester
 - d. none of the above

4. Watson says, "The Gold King paused for a moment as one who marshals his thought". What does 'marshals' mean?
 - a. collects
 - b. controls
 - c. places in methodical order
 - d. worries over

[#] The Intermediate Quiz is designed to test whether the student has read the story with reasonable attention to detail. The Simple Quiz is an easier test while the Advanced Quiz is much more challenging.

THE PROBLEM OF THOR BRIDGE ADVANCED QUIZ[&]

1. Complete the blank in the following sentence. Watson likened Neil Gibson to “ _____ keyed to base uses instead of high ones”.
 - a. Abraham Lincoln
 - b. George Washington
 - c. Henry Ward Beecher
 - d. none of the above

2. How many yards of string did Holmes ask for when he was conducting his experiment at Thor Bridge?
 - a. five
 - b. ten
 - c. twenty
 - d. none of the above

3. Who was the employee of Neil Gibson who visited Holmes at 221B Baker Street?
 - a. Marlow Bates
 - b. Joyce Cummings
 - c. Grice Patterson
 - d. none of the above

4. What was the name of the barrister who was defending Grace Dunbar?
 - a. Marlow Bates
 - b. Joyce Cummings
 - c. Grice Patterson
 - d. none of the above

[&] The Advanced Quiz is designed for aficionados of the Canon. The questions are quite challenging. The Intermediate and Simple Quizzes are designed for the more casual reader of the stories.

ANSWERS TO QUIZZES FOR THE CASEBOOK

| QUESTION | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|----|
| Illustrious Client | | | | |
| Simple | c | a | b | xx |
| Intermediate | b | c | b | a |
| Advanced | c | a | b | c |
| Blanched Soldier | | | | |
| Simple | a | a | b | xx |
| Intermediate | b | c | b | a |
| Advanced | b | a | b | c |
| Mazarin Stone | | | | |
| Simple | c | a | c | xx |
| Intermediate | c | c | b | a |
| Advanced | a | b | b | c |
| Three Gables | | | | |
| Simple | b | b | c | xx |
| Intermediate | b | b | c | b |
| Advanced | b | c | a | b |
| Sussex Vampire | | | | |
| Simple | b | c | b | xx |
| Intermediate | b | b | c | c |
| Advanced | a | b | c | c |
| Three Garridebs | | | | |
| Simple | a | a | b | xx |
| Intermediate | b | b | a | a |
| Advanced | b | a | a | c |

| QUESTION | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
|----------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Thor Bridge | | | | |
| Simple | b | a | b | xx |
| Intermediate | a | a | c | c |
| Advanced | a | b | a | b |
| Creeping Man | | | | |
| Simple | b | b | c | xx |
| Intermediate | c | a | c | b |
| Advanced | d | a | b | c |
| Lion's Mane | | | | |
| Simple | b | c | b | xx |
| Intermediate | b | b | c | a |
| Advanced | c | a | a | a |
| Veiled Lodger | | | | |
| Simple | a | a | c | xx |
| Intermediate | c | b | b | c |
| Advanced | c | b | b | a |
| Shoscombe Old Place | | | | |
| Simple | c | a | c | xx |
| Intermediate | b | c | a | a |
| Advanced | b | a | a | a |
| Retired Colourman | | | | |
| Simple | a | a | a | xx |
| Intermediate | a | c | b | b |
| Advanced | b | c | a | b |