

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

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**The Adventures of Sherlock
Holmes**

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

THE ENGINEER'S THUMB DATE OF THE ADVENTURE*

(Victor Hatherley lost his thumb)

CLUES:

1. Watson says, "It was in the summer of '89, not long after my own marriage ... " (274)
2. Watson was married in late 1888 or early 1889
3. Watson says, "My practice had steadily increased ... " (274)
4. Hatherley's trip from Eyford to Reading to London would have taken about 1 1/2 hours.
5. When Hatherley arrived in London, "It was a little past six ... " (284)
6. When Hatherley was led by Elise to the room from which he jumped to the ground, he said "... the moon was shining brightly... " (283)
7. Hatherley said that when he awoke, "... the moon had sunk ... " (284)
8. The only nights in August and September of 1889 when the moon was full or near full and also set before 4 am the following day were August 10, September 7, and September 8
9. When Hatherley awoke "... a bright morning was breaking ... " (284)
10. On the morning of August 11, the sun rose at about 4:40 am
11. Colonel Lysander Stark probably didn't want Hatherley to be missed until two days after the incident.
12. September 8, 1889 was on Sunday
13. Hatherley lost his thumb at about 2 am on the day after his trip from London to Eyford

*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.

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1, 2, and 3 imply it was late summer (August or early September) of 1889
- B. 4 and 5 imply Hatherley left Eyford about 4:30 am
- C. B implies that Hatherley awoke about 4 am.
- D. C, 6, 7, and 8 imply Hatherley's trip to Eyford was one of August 10, September 7, or September 8 of 1889
- E. 9 and 10 imply Hatherley's trip from London to Eyford was not August 10, 1889
- F. D and E imply Hatherley's trip from London to Eyford was September 7 or September 8 of 1889
- G. 11 implies that Hatherley's trip from London to Eyford was probably on Saturday
- H. G and 12 imply that Hatherley's trip from London to Eyford was not on Sunday, September 8, 1889
- I. F and H imply that Hatherley's trip from London to Eyford was on Saturday, September 7, 1889
- J. I and 13 imply that Hatherley lost his thumb on Sunday, September 8, 1889 at about 2 am

**Victor Hatherley lost his thumb on
Sunday, September 8, 1889**

THE ENGINEER'S THUMB VOCABULARY WORDS

acute (274) – **keenly perceptive; discerning**

en bloc (274) – **as a unit; all together**

Bohemian (274) – **behavior of a person who disregards conventional standards**

tout (274) – **someone who provides information**

mottled (274) – **marked with spots of different colors**

knock you up (274) – **awaken you, telephone you**

carafe (275) – **bottle used for serving water**

carbolize (275) – **treat with carbolic acid, a very strong antiseptic**

hansom (276) – **two-wheeled, one horse carriage seating two with the driver mounted behind and reins going over the roof of the hood; invented by J. A. Hansom, a Yorkshire architect who patented the cab in 1834**

agony column (276) – **personal advertisement in newspaper**

plugs and dottles (276) – **small pieces of tobacco pressed into a cake or stick and small pieces of tobacco left unsmoked in a pipe**

rashers (276) – **thin slices of fried or broiled bacon**

emaciation (277) – **extreme thinness appearing to be a result of starvation**

guinea (277, 278, 280, 281, 287) – **one pound plus a shilling**

munificent (278) – **very liberal in giving, lavish**

shake-down (278) – **a place to sleep**

fuller's earth (278) – **highly adsorbent claylike substance in talcum powders, as a filter, and as a catalyst**

porter (279, 284) – **attendant who carries travelers' baggage**

wicket gate (279) – **small gate**

lurched (280) – **rolled or pitched suddenly or erratically**

flagged (280) – **declined in interest**

- harmonium (280) – **small reed organ driven by air bellows**
- treatises (280) – **systematic, usually extensive written discourses on a subject**
- aperture (280) – **opening, such as a hole, gap, or slit**
- monomaniac (281) – **person with a pathological obsession with one idea or subject**
- entreaties (281) – **earnest requests**
- chinchilla beard (281) – **pearly grey beard**
- draught (281) – **current of air in an enclosed area**
- labyrinth (281) – **intricate structure of interconnecting passages through which it is difficult to find one's way**
- morose (281, 286) – **sullenly melancholy; gloomy**
- regurgitation (282) – **something that is surged or poured back (often food)**
- cadaverous (282) – **suggestive of death; corpse-like**
- baleful (282) – **portending evil; ominous**
- highroad (284) – **main road**
- ordnance map (285) – **exceptionally large-scale map that shows everything in great detail including buildings, houses, etc.**
- inexorable (285) – **not capable of being persuaded by pleading; relentless**
- amalgam (285) – **alloy of mercury with other metals**
- half-crown (285) – **coin worth two and one-half shillings; one-eighth of a pound**
- parish (286) – **small ecclesiastical area served by one Anglican church**
- waistcoat (286) – **vest**
- whitewashed (286) – **covered with a mixture of lime and water to whiten it**
- out-house (286) – **building separated from the main building**
- mould (286) – **fungi that often cause disintegration of organic matter**

THE ENGINEER'S THUMB OPEN QUESTIONS

1. Why did Lysander Stark aim for Hatherley's hand rather than for his head?

Perhaps he did aim for his head and simply missed or perhaps Hatherley's head was out of range by the time Stark got to the window.

2. When hanging from a window sill, your fingers would be on the sill itself with the thumb below the sill. How then did Stark cut off Hatherley's thumb which would be below the window sill?

In the British version of the text, Hatherley says, "I was hanging with my fingers in the window-slot ... " which is the groove on the inner side into which the window sash fits. If this were so, his thumb would be on the sill.

3. Why would Stark allow Elise and Ferguson to carry Hatherley to safety? Having taken a swipe at Hatherley with his cleaver, he would naturally run down to where Hatherley lay to finish the job.

Perhaps Stark thought that Hatherley would bleed to death after his thumb had been severed and didn't bother to keep track of him, Elise, or Ferguson.

4. The firemen found the severed thumb lying on the window sill. Why hadn't it rolled off and fallen into the garden?

If Hatherley's thumb were really on the window sill (see 2 on the previous page) the force of the blow might have propelled it towards the inside of the house.

5. When Elise was begging Stark to spare Hatherley's life, why did the two converse in English? After all, German was their native language.

Perhaps Elise wanted Hatherley to understand just how dangerous his position was.

THE ENGINEER'S THUMB SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. Victor Hatherley was told that the hydraulic press that he was hired to repair was used to compress

- a. an amalgam
- b. fuller's-earth
- c. gold
- d. none of the above

2. The press was actually used to compress

- a. an amalgam
- b. fuller's-earth
- c. gold
- d. none of the above

3. Despite losing his thumb, Victor Hatherley was able to return to London in

- a. a hansom cab
- b. an automobile
- c. a train
- 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 ENGINEER'S THUMB INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. What was the name of the Scotland Yard inspector in the case?
 - a. Bradstreet
 - b. Eyford
 - c. Lestrade
 - d. none of the above

2. What was Colonel Lysander Stark making with the hydraulic press?
 - a. fuller's-earth
 - b. Half-crowns
 - c. silver plate
 - d. none of the above

3. What nationality was Colonel Lysander Stark?
 - a. British
 - b. French
 - c. German
 - d. none of the above

4. What was Mr. Ferguson's position?
 - a. assistant to the Scotland Yard inspector
 - b. secretary and manager for Colonel Stark
 - c. station master at Reading
 - d. none of the above

[#]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 ENGINEER'S THUMB ADVANCED QUIZ &

1. What was the name of the engineer who disappeared before Victor Hatherley was hired to repair the hydraulic press?
 - a. Alan Bradstreet
 - b. Jeremiah Hayling
 - c. Victor Becher
 - d. none of the above

2. Where did Colonel Stark place the lamp?
 - a. on a table beside the hydraulic press
 - b. on the floor of the hydraulic press
 - c. on the harmonium beside the door
 - d. none of the above

3. With what firm did Victor Hatherley serve his apprenticeship?
 - a. Martin & Coxon
 - b. Hayling & Pointer
 - c. Venner & Matheson
 - d. none of the above

4. Where did Victor Hatherley lay his cap in Watson's rooms?
 - a. on top of Watson's books
 - b. on the settee in the waiting room
 - c. on the chair by the front door
 - 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 ADVENTURES

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
A Scandal in Bohemia				
Simple	a	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	c
Advanced	b	a	b	b
The Red-Headed League				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	a	b
Advanced	b	c	b	a
A Case of Identity				
Simple	b	b	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	b
Advanced	c	b	d	c
The Boscombe Valley Mystery				
Simple	a	b	b	xx
Intermediate	c	b	b	b
Advanced	b	a	c	a
The Five Orange Pips				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	b	c
Advanced	c	a	b	a
The Man with the Twisted Lip				
Simple	b	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	c	b	a
Advanced	b	a	c	b
The Blue Carbuncle				
Simple	a	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	b	a	a
Advanced	b	b	c	c
The Speckled Band				
Simple	c	c	b	xx
Intermediate	c	a	a	b
Advanced	a	c	c	c

The Adventures

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
The Engineer's Thumb				
Simple	b	a	c	xx
Intermediate	a	b	c	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a
The Noble Bachelor				
Simple	b	b	c	xx
Intermediate	a	b	b	c
Advanced	a	a	c	c
The Beryl Coronet				
Simple	b	b	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	a
Advanced	b	c	b	c
The Copper Beeches				
Simple	a	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	a	c	b
Advanced	a	b	c	c