



The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure L – The Problem of Thor Bridge

The contents of that despatch-box at Cox and Co sound like something out of the X-Files, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

Watson begins this story by telling us about his despatch-box hidden in the vaults of Cox and Co bank crammed full of records of curious cases. They seem to be of a mysterious nature, almost supernatural – perhaps linking in with Doyle’s growing interest in spiritualism. We hear of Mr James Phillimore who goes back into his house for an umbrella and disappears, the ship which sails into a patch of mist from which it never emerges, and poor Mr Persano who was found ‘Stark-staring mad with a matchbox in front of him which contained a remarkable worm, said to be unknown to science’. Enough there to keep Moulder and Scully busy for some time.

This particular story is of a more worldly nature and involves the usual formula of a passionate and fiery foreign woman, a Brazilian in fact, and a ruthless rich American. According to Doyle, most of our country estates seemed to have been owned by people, English or otherwise, who had made their fortunes abroad and though, “Oh, do you know what would be nice? Retiring to the British countryside and buying up a big old country pile. Then we will do some wrong-doing to keep ourselves occupied.”



In this case, the American bullies his wife and staff. The poor wife has lost the love of her husband, as well as her looks, and now has to watch him fawning all over the pretty young governess who has captured his heart. She contrives to kill herself and ensure that her rival is blamed for the crime. She ties a heavy stone to a revolver and dangles this over the bridge so that it will be pulled into the water the instant

she pulls the trigger. An identical gun with a cartridge missing has already been hidden in the young woman's wardrobe. A note in the governess's handwriting arranging to meet on the bridge further compounds the case against her and all is set for the vengeful wife to get exactly the result she wanted. But as with the Boscombe Valley Mystery, which I always confuse with this story for some reason, Holmes is able to save an innocent person despite all the evidence against them.

I really enjoyed re-visiting this story and I do think that the outcome is one of the best twists to any of the short stories. Things are very well-set up to make you think that the husband is guilty or perhaps the governess in some form of self defence so the actual truth is quite a revelation.

Holmes is on great form noticing the mark in the stone work of the bridge which turns out to be the key to the whole mystery. Observation at its best, the science of deduction clearly at work.

A well-deserved 9 out of 10.

Charlotte Anne Walters

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