



Arthur Conan Doyle Encyclopedia

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

SUMMARY (Diogenes Club)

Watson is living at Baker Street. Billy the page is on duty.

Gibson and his wife are middle aged. Although Maria was a raving beauty when she was younger, her physical charms are fading.

Grace is hired to be governess. She is an absolutely stunning young woman and Gibson falls head over heels in love with her. Grace spurns Gibson's physical advances and maintains their relationship platonic.

Maria is insanely jealous and tries to force Grace to leave. Grace does not do so for three reasons: (1) other people are depending on her for financial aid and she is extremely well paid, (2) she feels she can induce Neil into great works of philanthropy and (3) he promises he will never approach her again.

Maria suicides and attempts to make it look like Grace murdered her. Holmes sets things straight.

We are told nothing further, but it seems likely that Gibson and Dunbar would marry.



SUMMARY (Wikipedia)

Neil Gibson, the Gold King and former senator from "some Western state", approaches Sherlock Holmes to investigate the murder of his wife Maria in order to clear his children's governess, Grace Dunbar, of the crime. It soon emerges that Mr. Gibson's marriage had been unhappy and he treated his wife very badly. He had fallen in love with her when he met her in Brazil, but soon realised they had nothing in common. He

became attracted to Miss Dunbar; since he could not marry her, he had attempted to please her in other ways, such as trying to help people less fortunate than himself.

Maria Gibson was found lying in a pool of blood on Thor Bridge with a bullet through the head and note from the governess, agreeing to a meeting at that location, in her hand. A recently discharged revolver with one shot fired is found in Miss Dunbar's wardrobe. Holmes agrees to look at the situation in spite of the damning evidence.

From the outset, Holmes observes some rather odd things about the case. How could Miss Dunbar so coolly and rationally have planned and carried out the murder and then carelessly tossed the murder weapon into her wardrobe? What was the strange chip on the underside of the bridge's stone balustrade? Why was Mrs. Gibson clutching the note from Miss Dunbar when she died? If the murder weapon was one of a matched pair of pistols, why couldn't the other one be found in Mr. Gibson's collection?

Holmes uses his powers of deduction to solve the crime, and demonstrates, using Watson's revolver, how it was perpetrated: Mrs. Gibson, outraged and jealous of Miss Dunbar's relationship with her husband, resolved to end her own life and frame her rival for the crime. After arranging a meeting with Miss Dunbar, requesting her to leave her response in a note, Mrs. Gibson tied a rock on a piece of string to the end of a revolver, and shot herself, the rock pulling the revolver over the side of the bridge; the revolver found in Miss Dunbar's wardrobe was the other pistol of the pair, which had been fired off in the woods earlier, and the chip in the bridge was caused by the pistol hitting the stonework as it was pulled off by the rock. Holmes's reconstruction reproduces the damage to the balustrade of the bridge. He asks the police to drag the lake for the revolvers of Watson and Gibson.