



## The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

### Adventure XVIII – The Adventure of the Stockbroker’s Clerk

Some thoughts and questions as I re-read this week’s story:

In Watson’s house, Holmes chose the rocking chair, and he seems quite comfortable in it. Many members of our list recently discussed the Mormons, and I’m reminded that there was a rocking chair in STUD as well, at Ferrier’s house. I think that was the only other rocking chair in the entire canon. I don’t know about Ferrier, but I like to think Watson kept one because he and Mary were planning to start a family soon.

Rocking chairs are so convenient for mothers with infants, I can’t imagine a young mother without her rocking chair nearby.

Compare Watson’s rich narrative description of Hall Pycroft’s appearance with the bare-bones description he left us of Grant Munro in YELL. The difference, I think, is Holmes. Before we met Munro



we were treated to the virtuoso “reading” Holmes gave of Munro’s pipe. We, therefore, knew a great about Munro from Holmes and it wasn’t necessary for Watson to add much. But in STOC Holmes doesn’t “read” Pycroft out loud for us. It’s left to the good doctor to describe the client. From a reader’s perspective, who gives better information — Holmes in YELL, or Watson in STOC?

Pycroft modestly says his memory is “pretty fair,” then goes on to quote the stock report chapter and verse. How many companies were listed on the exchange (or printed in the paper) in London back in the late 1880’s? There must be hundreds of New York exchange listings printed in my newspaper. I can understand

somebody following a few key companies, but a photographic memory (or a computer) would be necessary to keep track of the volume reported there each day.

In Birmingham, Holmes, Watson, and Pycroft ascend five stories to get to the Franco-Midland office. Ascending five stories in Britain means they ended up where? — the 4th, 5th, or 6th floor? Is it the 4th? I asked my half-British husband and he accused me of trying to trick him with a nasty math problem. No help there!

The watchman's death was caused by the blow of a poker to the back of his head. Pokers put in appearances throughout the canon. In addition to this reference, I can think of pokers in ABBE, SPEC, SIXN, 3GAB off the top of my head, and there must be a number of others. Are they mentioned frequently because people used them more in those days before central heating? Or do many people keep pokers handy for defensive/offensive purposes? I have one, but can't remember the last time I looked at it, let alone used it.

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**June 14, 1997**