



*An Inquiry into:
"The Stock-Broker's Clerk"*

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"The Stock-Broker's Clerk" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* in March 1893. It is part of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.

As shown on the table, most of our chronologists think that the case took place in 1889. If the case did indeed

take place in 1889, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 35 years old and John H. Watson 37.

Main Characters:

Hall Pycroft, young stockbroker's clerk. "Arthur Pinner," financial agent based in London. "Harry Pinner," supposed owner of a newly established hardware distribution company based in Birmingham. The Beddingtons, criminal brothers recently released after serving a five-year prison sentence. Sergeant Tuson and Constable Pollock, officials who captured the Beddington brother posing as Pycroft.

Notable Quotes:

Like all Holmes's reasoning the thing seemed simplicity itself when it was once explained.

"I am afraid that I rather give myself away when I explain. Results without causes are much more impressive."

<i>The Stock-Broker's Clerk</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>A Saturday in June</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Saturday, June 15, 1889</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Early June 1888</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>Saturday, June 1, 1889</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>June 1888</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Saturday, June 15, 1889</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>Saturday, June 15, 1889</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Saturday, June 1, 1889</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>June 1888</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Saturday, June 1, 1889</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1889</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Saturday, June 15, 1889</i>

Please note that Canon chronologists may differ on pivotal dates and comparative periods between cases, thus a simple majority is not necessarily correct. Most Canon scholars settle on a single chronologist's results for their research framework.

Back on the Medical Saddle—Almost

At the beginning of this case, an enthusiastic Watson tells us that he had bought Farquhar's declining practice, because he "had confidence in my own youth and energy, [and he] was convinced that in a very few years the concern would be as flourishing as ever."

This is an interesting declaration, considering that—going by Baring-Gould's chronology—about a year after SIGN, Watson seems to have experienced a truly remarkable improvement. He obviously no longer feels that his health has been "irretrievably ruined" by the wounds and experiences he underwent in Afghanistan.

I find it unlikely that a gentleman such as Doctor Watson would have exaggerated his infirmities. The mystery becomes, then, what caused such a dramatic improvement? Certainly, being plunged



into a savage war and coming out of it severely wounded, only to be thrust into a bout of enteric fever just as it appears that he is on the mend is more than enough to push one into the gray realm of battle fatigue (or PTSD, as it is called today). Added to this the fact that he found himself without occupation and lacking in conviviality, a situation which would have done little to

raise his spirits—in fact, he seems to get his first spark of interest in rejoining the human race when Stamford introduces his to Holmes.

Undoubtedly, his marriage to Mary Morstan was responsible to a great extent for his ability to face the future with a good degree of optimism.

A question that always flutters in the back of my mind is, where did our impecunious doctor get the wherewithal to buy Farquhar's practice—declining or not?

Going by what Watson tells us, the practice originally brought in £1,200 (≈\$450,000 today) annually; however, it had de-

clined to the point at which earned a measly £300

(≈\$113,000). During Queen Victoria's time, the price of a practice typically ran to one-and-a-half



Courtesy of ITV Granada

times the yearly earnings that it brought its original owner. Going by this standard, then Watson would have had to raise some £450 (≈\$170,000). Where did that sum come from? It could not have been from his literary efforts because he was not yet that well known.

One can understand Mary Watson wanting her husband to have a good start back into his profession. Because of this, it would not have been unlikely that she would have been willing to sacrifice the pearls that she received from Thaddeus Sholto. These were described to us as being nothing short of extraordinary. I once calculated that, based upon the price of first-rate pearls today, each of Mary's pearls would have been worth about £13 (≈\$5,000) each, for a total of £80 (≈\$30,000) for all six. The mystery then is, of course, where did the additional £370 come from?

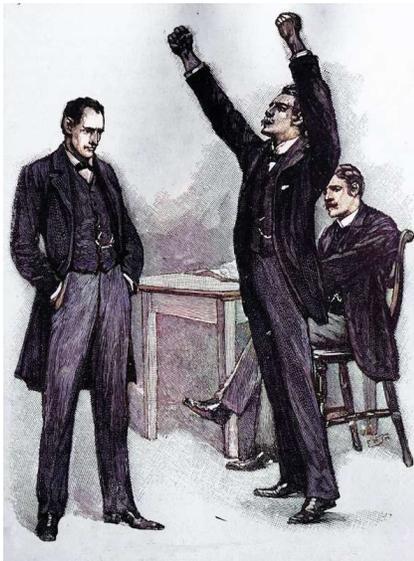
If the balance had come from Holmes, it would be easy to understand why our medico was always so ready to disregard his patients whenever the Great Detective asked him to join him in a case, and Mary's understanding each time this took place. Later on, this might also have been a result of Watson's increasing (and profitable) literary output.

It certainly did not occur to Watson that his accounts of Holmes' cases would not only be a source of income greater than what his medical practices brought in, but that it eventually they would be the subject of profound and greater scholarly research and discussion than the study of hieroglyphs before Champollion. Small wonder, then that he so modestly left out details that we today would dearly liked to have answered.

But then, we could not have engaged in all this marvelous theorizing and surmising.

Mr. Hall Pycroft

Of all the Canonical victims deceived by some evil-doer's tale, Pycroft is the one most deserving of sympathy. He was no imbecile nor was he motivated by greed or any other lowly passion—as any young man worth his salt, his only ambition was to climb the ladder in his chosen profession. Although the make-work scheme was similar to that engineered by the Red-Headed League, in this case preparing a list from a Paris directory, he at no moment comes even close to the nadir of intelligence displayed by Jabez Wilson as he diligently copied the *Encyclopædia Britannica* in longhand. If any sin can be attributed to him, it would be that he was young and inexperienced; a failing that time usually heals.



One would hope that Holmes intervened on his behalf at Mawson & Williams's to get them to offer him the job taken over by one of the larcenous Beddingtons. Otherwise, it does not appear that he could have long lasted in London. While it is true he got £100 (≈\$380,000), considering living expenses and such in Imperial London his prospects looked grim. In today's Washington D.C. or

New York City, for example, the price of an ample closet-sized apartment runs to \$4,500 and more per month.

The Careless Stockbrokers

It always strikes me as unusual that once Pycroft sent his application and reference letters to Mawson & Williams, he got a reply by return mail telling him to report for work on the following Monday. Nothing that I have read or researched about the Victorian Age indicates that people applying for a position might be hired sight unseen. In this case it seems even less possible, considering that this was a firm that daily handled very large sums in valuable securities to which the new hire would have ac-

cess. It seems Pycroft was hired with less care than that exercised by the lady of the house in hiring a new maid. In fact, Pinner seems to have given him the interview that Mawson & Williams did not!

This brings us to one of those Canonical conundrums that make us wish our biographer had been a bit more explicit.

How in heaven's name did Pinner know so much about Pycroft? Not only did he know that he existed, but he also had his name, address, profession, knew about the places where he had worked, and, most important of all, where he had been hired to work next. Parker, whom Pinner mentioned, might have been able to give, but not all that information.

What else happened in 1889:

Empire

The Canadian Pacific Railway is completed from coast to coast.



Transvaal claimed to be “encircled” by Rhodes’ concessions in East Africa. Rhodesia established.

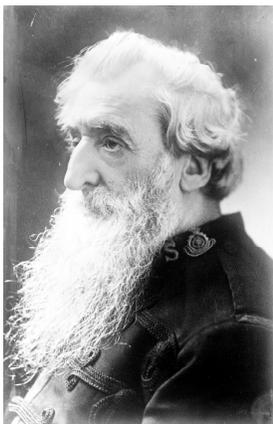
◀ Great Seal of the United Kingdom is affixed to the charter of the British South Africa Company. Company is assigned trading and other rights over a vast territory, with the express reservation to the Crown to take over at any time the works and buildings of the Company.

At Cairo, Henry Stanley ends his three-year African expedition. He is knighted upon his return to England. Writes *In Darkest Africa*.

Colonel Woodehouse defeats Dervish horde in Sudan. General Grenfell, commanding British troops on the Nile attacks and defeats Dervish troops, with 500 killed and wounded, and as many taken prisoner.

Britain

Great London Dockers’ Strike; the “Dockers’ Tanner”; growth of unskilled workers’ unions; New Unionism; Gasworkers’ Union formed. Strike is finally arbitrated in the workers’ favor by the popular Catholic Cardinal Henry Manning.



Parnell vindicated as all charges are revealed as false. *The London Times* apologizes.

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, opens.

Technical Education Act: County Councils to levy 1d for technical and manual education.

Establishment of the telephone company.

◀ General Booth publishes *Survey of London Life and Labour*.

John Bright, orator and politician, leading spirit in the Anti-Corn Law League, dies.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

Metropolitan Board of Works replaced by London County Council.

Early use of photographs in newspaper: *Illustrated London News* runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews competition.

Woolwich Ferry starts.

White Hart Inn, Borough High Street, one of the last coaching inns, demolished.

Act to prevent cruelty to children.

Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.

World

Wall Street Journal begins publishing.

Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia. Yohannes IV (Kasa) Emperor of Ethiopia dies in battle.

Moulin Rouge opens in Paris.

North and South Dakota, Montana and Washington admitted as U.S.A. states.



U.S.A. Senate, in secret session, passes resolution declaring against European control of the Panama Canal.

Congress of French Revolutionary Labor Party at Bordeaux.

◀ Japan's Meiji constitution. Arinori Mori, minister of education assassinated by Shinto fanatic.

President Harrison, of the U.S.A., closes Bering Sea to all nations; issues proclamation prohibiting the killing of fur animals within Alaska without a special government permit.

Crown Prince Archduke Rudolph of Austria-Hungary and Baroness Maria Vetsera are found dead at the hunting lodge of Mayerling, outside Vienna, allegedly a murder-suicide. (In 1983, former Austrian empress Zita claimed it was an assassination by two conspirators when Rudolf refused to take part in a plot to oust his father Emperor Franz Josef.)

Treaty of Acciali: Ethiopia made Italian protectorate.

Ivory Coast is declared a protectorate of France.

Part of Oklahoma Indian lands open to homesteading.

Portuguese under Pinto try to extend influence in Zambesi Valley; Anglo-Portuguese dispute.



End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed and Dom Pedro, the emperor, exiled.

Abdication of King Milan of Serbia; accession of Alexander.

Uprising in the island of Crete. Turkish authorities expelled and public archives destroyed. Turkey calls up 80,000 reservists, but promises to inquire into legitimate grievances.

Russian jurors to be nominated by government.

◀ King Ferdinand II of Portugal dies at age 73.

Stanley's expedition reaches Bagamoyo in Indian Ocean.

Aristocratic "Land Captains" replace elected JPs in Russia.

Father Damien, worker among lepers in Molokai, Hawaii, dies of the disease.

Influenza reaches Europe and America from Siberia.

General Boulanger, former French War Minister leaves country, addresses manifesto to his party that he left the country to avoid arrest, French Chambers authorize the Senate to try Boulanger and

others in absentia, for high treason. The general and his staff are found guilty and condemned to life imprisonment.

Jefferson Davis dies in Mississippi.

Paris Exhibition: proof of industrial development in France. Continental monarchies abstain from all official representation. English and American ambassadors attend. Eiffel Tower built for the event is dedicated in a ceremony presided over by Gustave Eiffel, the designer, and attended by French Prime Minister Pierre Tirard. At 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, the Eiffel Tower becomes highest structure on Earth.

Lectures at Dorpat University to be in Russian; German forbidden in schools.

Brunner-Mond Salt Union formed; combine of 64 firms.



Private tolls abolished on French Canals.

New York World's Nellie Bly (Liz Cochrane) begins world trip to beat Jules Verne's Phileas Fogg (*Around the World in 80 Days*). Takes 72 days.

◀ Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 storeys high.

The Pemberton Medicine Company (later the Coca-Cola Company), is incorporated in Atlanta, Georgia.

Work on Panama Canal stopped; French company bankrupt, U.S.A. takes over, finishes canal.

Johnstown flood kills more than 6,000, losses climb to \$40,000,000.

Civil war in Haiti ends. General Légitime defeated by General HIPPOLYTE, who becomes president.

Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad establishes the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, a reform sect of Islam.

Conference at Berlin guarantees an autonomous government to the Samoan Islands under the joint control of the United States, Great Britain, and Germany.

Art



Sir James Barrie's *A Window in Thrums*, sketches of Scottish village life.

Robert Browning publishes *Asolando*, a poem. Dies later in the year.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle publishes *A Sign of Four*.

◀ Dvorak presents *Symphony No. 4 in G Major*.

Jerome K. Jerome publishes stories, *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow*, *Three Men in a Boat*.

Mark Twain publishes *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*.

Robert Louis Stevenson publishes *Master of Ballantrae*.

William Butler Yeats publishes *The Wanderings of Oisín*.

Paul Bourget publishes *Le Disciple*, a psychological novel.

Gerhart J. Hauptmann publishes *Vor Sonnenaufgang*, German realistic play.

Sudermann publishes *Die Ehre*, a German play.

Gilbert and Sullivan present *The Gondoliers*.

Renoir paints *Girls Picking Flowers*.

Seurat paints *The Side Show*.

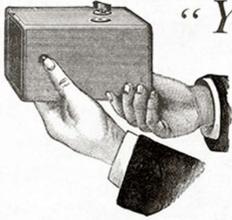
Van Gogh paints *Man with a Pipe* (self-portrait), *The Olive Grove*, and *Starry Night*.

Cézanne paints *Harlequin*.

Tchaikovsky introduces *The Sleeping Princess* ballet.

Richard Strauss introduces *Tod und Verklärung*, tone poem.

Science and Technology



The Kodak Camera

*“You press the button,
we do the rest.”*

OR YOU CAN DO IT YOURSELF.

The only camera that anybody can use without instructions. As convenient to carry as an ordinary field glass World-wide success.

*The Kodak is for sale by all Photo stock dealers.
Send for the Primer, free.*

The Eastman Dry Plate & Film Co.

Price, \$25.00 — Loaded for 100 Pictures. ROCHESTER, N. Y.
Re-loading, \$2.00.

Hollerith's punched-card system widely used in industry.

First ship-to-shore wireless message is received in the U.S., at San Francisco.

◀ Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.

The first General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) defines the length of a meter as the distance between two lines on a standard bar of an alloy of platinum with ten percent iridium, measured at the melting point of ice.

Astronomical Society of Pacific holds first meeting

in San Francisco, California.

Ferdinand von Zeppelin patents his “Navigable Balloon.”



The first jukebox makes its debut at the Palais Royale Saloon in San Francisco, California. For a nickel, one can listen to a few minutes of music through a tube of an Edison tinfoil phonograph.

◀ In Potsdam, Germany, Ernst von Rebeur-Paschwitz makes the first known recordings of a distant earthquake, taken place in Tokyo, Japan, an hour earlier.

The brassiere is invented.

First dishwashing machine marketed in Chicago.

Mering and Minkowski show that the pancreas prevents diabetes.

Daniel Stover and William Hance patent bicycle with back pedal brake.

William Gray patents coin-operated telephone.

First linotype machine in use.

Thomas Edison shows his first motion picture.

Aspirin patented in Germany by Bayer Laboratories, first introduced in powder form.

Panhard and Levassor begin using Daimler's engines in French cars, using modern layout.

Next week's case: GLOR.

Respectfully submitted,

Murray, the Courageous Orderly

(a.k.a. Alexander E. Braun)

"I should have fallen into the hands
of the murderous Ghazis had it not
been for the devotion and courage
shown by Murray, my orderly..."

If you would like to join the Hounds of the Internet, email us at CourageousMurray@aol.com.

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