



The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XVIII -- The Adventure of the Stockbroker's Clerk

I do have a personal reason for enjoying this story, writes Charlotte Anne Walters.

The action mainly takes place in Birmingham, Corporation Street to be precise. I have worked in Birmingham for more than ten years, many of which were in a large department store on Corporation Street. I now have an office not far from there and pass both Corporation Street and New Street (which is also mentioned) most days. Holmes fans from outside of London do envy those in the capital who have such significant locations right on their doorstep and I had quite forgotten that I had two of my own which I pass regularly. I will never look at them quite the same again and shall exhibit a knowing smile on my way to work tomorrow morning.

The story begins with Holmes visiting Watson at his home. We have further proof that the first Mrs Watson was indeed Mary from the Sign of Four when Holmes enquires, rather thoughtfully, – ‘I trust that Mrs Watson has entirely recovered from all the little excitements connected with our adventure of The Sign of Four’. I must make the point again that I was very disappointed that Guy Ritchie disregarded this fact in his film and am so surprised that other Sherlockians didn't seem to mind.

Holmes asks Watson to accompany him straight away to Birmingham with his client, Mr Hall Pycroft, and Watson readily agrees to drop everything and go. This involves asking his neighbour, who is also a doctor, to take over his patients while he is gone. Poor Watson, he really isn't a very good businessman is he? Sending your clients to your competitor while you go off to have an adventure with your friend isn't really a sensible idea now is it?



Surely his patients would be quite disgruntled by this new arrangement? And if they get treated well by the other doctor, they might not return.

In my novel, I have used Watson's lack of business acumen to great affect and looked at how the doctor's business and finances were affected by Holmes, particularly by their trip to Switzerland in The Final Problem.

Mr Hall Pycroft gained a good job at a stockbrokers in London but gets enticed away by a better offer in Birmingham – which ultimately turns out to be a ruse so that an imposter (his new boss's brother) can take up the original position and stage a robbery. Confused, I was too to be honest. Upon hearing that the robbery had been foiled by a very conscientious policeman who notices someone coming out of the stockbrokers after the time they normally shut, the brother tries to kill himself. What a different age it was, when it was unusual to see an employee leaving a building after normal office hours and how quaint that the bobby-on-the-beat would know what time the business shut and have time to follow up his hunch.

Now we work all hours; I regularly leave my office building after it has shut or long before it opens and rarely ever see a policeman/woman, let alone get stopped by one. When we had the riots recently, looters were able to smash shop windows and help themselves to expensive stock without any interference from the police, ok that was Birmingham not London, but I believe the events in the capital were much the same.

The story is fine, nothing remarkable about it really except the local connection and it is another one where Holmes doesn't really do anything to bring about the conclusion.

6 out of 10.

Charlotte Anne Walters

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