



## **SUMMARY (ACD Encyclopedia)**

The Woodhouse & Coxon company has closed down and Mr Hall Pycroft is now looking for a job in the City. After a couple of weeks of research, the great Mawson & William's company accepts his application and hires him. A few days before joining the company, Mr Pycroft is visited by a man called Arthur Pinner who offers him a position in his firm, the Franco-Midland Hardware Company Ltd. He suggests that Mr Pycroft does not go to Mawson & William's in exchange of which he will receive three times his usual salary along with a £100 immediate advance.

However, he must agree not to hand his resignation to Mawson & William's and to sign a document certifying that he is to become the new Sales Manager at Franco-Midland. When Mr Pycroft arrives at the company's temporary premises, in Birmingham — two empty rooms except for a table and two chairs — he is received by Mr Pinner's brother.

At first, his job consists in looking up every single Parisian hardware store in the phonebook after which he must look for all the furniture stores. When he comes back, he notices that the Pinner's brothers have the exact same gold filling, a rather peculiar observation that he decides to share with Sherlock Holmes.

The detective, who has decided to meet the strange characters, goes to Birmingham with Watson. Mr Pinner whose behavior is kind of unusual seems shocked, livid and panicky. He disappears for a while in the other room, from which odd noises start to occur.

Holmes dashes into the room and finds Mr Pinner nearly hanged. The poor lad had just read in the news that his brother had been arrested for burglary and murder. He had taken Pycroft's place to rob Mawson & William's.

## **SUMMARY (Wikipedia)**

A young clerk, Hall Pycroft, consults Holmes with his suspicions concerning a company that has offered him a very well-paid job. Holmes, Watson and Pycroft travel by train to Birmingham, where the job is initially to be based, and Pycroft explains that he was recently made redundant from a stockbroking house. He eventually secured a new post with another group of stockbrokers, Mawson and Williams, in Lombard Street in the City. Before taking up the job, he was approached by Arthur Pinner, who offered him a managership with a newly established hardware distribution company, to be based in France.

Pycroft is sent to Birmingham to meet Pinner's brother and company co-founder, Harry Pinner. He is offered a very well-paid post with £100 in advance, and is asked to sign a document accepting the post, and is also asked not to send a letter of resignation to his current employers. He immediately commences his duties, but he is concerned about the unprofessional aspects of the business and their sparse offices, as well as the

suspicious fact that the two Pinner have a distinctive gold filling in their teeth in the same place, suggesting that they might be the same man.

When the trio arrive at the office, on Corporation Street, Birmingham, with Holmes and Watson presented as fellow job-seekers, Pinner is reading a London newspaper and is clearly in shock. As they leave, he attempts suicide, but Watson is able to revive him. Holmes concludes that the story of the brothers is a fabrication and that there is only one 'Pinner'; lacking enough men to make their attempt to deceive Pycroft convincing, Pinner had attempted to pose as his brother to make up the numbers in the hope that Pycroft would dismiss the similarities between them as a family resemblance. He further deduces that the whole point of the exercise was to obtain an example of Pycroft's handwriting so that a 'fake' Pycroft may be employed at Mawsons (hence why they asked him to not officially resign his post). Mawsons was keeping a vast stock of valuable securities, and 'Pycroft' was to be a safebreaker.

From the newspaper, they learn that Mawson & Williams have suffered an attempted robbery, but that the criminal had been captured, although the weekend watchman has been murdered. Beddington, the forger and cracksman, was the miscreant, masquerading as Pycroft, and his brother was masquerading as Pinner. American railway bonds worth nearly £100,000 were taken, together with a large amount of scrip in mines and other companies, but the police recovered them from the thief.

As the police are called to arrest 'Pinner', Holmes observes that "Human nature is a strange mixture, Watson. You see that even a villain and murderer can inspire such affection that his brother turns to suicide when he learns that his neck is forfeited".