



*An Inquiry into:
"The Gloria Scott"*

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"The Gloria Scott" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* and in *Harper's Weekly* in April 1893. It is part of *The*

Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes.

The respected Canon scholar Martin Dakin once referred to the date in which this adventure supposedly took place as "one of the thorniest problems in Holmesian chronology." This comment is certainly confirmed by the diversity of our chronologists' estimates.

If the case indeed took place in 1873, the year upon which most of our chronologists agree, then Sherlock Holmes was 19 and Dr. John H. Watson 21.

Main Characters:

Victor Trevor, son of Victor Trevor Sr. and college friend of Holmes. Mr. Trevor Sr., Justice of the Peace in the Norfolk Broads. Hudson, a sailor on the *Gloria Scott*. Beddoes, Fellow prisoner and friend of Trevor Sr. Evans, Jack Prendergast, bloodthirsty leader of the mutiny on board the *Gloria Scott*.

Notable Quotes:

"I don't know how you manage this, Mr. Holmes, but it seems to me that all the detectives of fact and of fancy would be children in your hands. That's your line of life, sir, and you may take the word of a man who has seen something of the world."

"And that recommendation, with the exaggerated estimate of my ability with which he prefaced it, was, if you will believe me, Watson, the very first thing which ever made me feel that a profession might be made out of what had up to that time been the merest hobby."

Holmes' First Case?

At the beginning of this reminiscence, we see Holmes telling Watson about his part in the events that took place when, as a student, he visited with the Trevors. Very naturally the Good Doctor wonders

<i>The Gloria Scott</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	1885
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Sunday, July 12, 1874</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>The Summer of 1875</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	1873
<i>Brend</i>	<i>August 1873</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Late September 1876</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>July 1874</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>July 1873</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>Summer 1875</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Saturday, July 3, 1880</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	1874
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>The Summer of 1876</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.

what the importance of this early case was: “But why did you say just now that there were very particular reasons why I should study this case?” to which our sleuth replies, “Because it was the first in which I was ever engaged.”

One cannot help wondering whether this reply was strictly correct. Victor Trevor comments on how Holmes’ talent for deduction and observation were well known. Later on we learn that young Trevor described to his father “one or two trivial feats which I had performed. Obviously, this must have

taken place at the university.



What I know about Sherlock Holmes, even at this early age, precludes me from thinking that Holmes was in the habit of displaying his abilities—much like card tricks—to simply impress fellow students, especially when one considers

that he was not especially gregarious. As Holmes himself puts it when talking about Trevor, “He was the only friend I made during the two years I was at college. I was never a very sociable fellow, Watson, always rather fond of moping in my rooms and working out my own little methods of thought, so that I never mixed much with the men of my year . . . and then my line of study was quite distinct from that of the other fellows, so that we had no points of contact at all.”

In fact, had not been for Trevor’s bull terrier trying to crunch his ankle, he would not have met him all.

What one may deduce from this, then, is that he must have been involved in some sort of investigations—albeit very minor ones—not meriting recording or recollection.

While it is unlikely that Holmes would have kept extensive notes about these early, pre-Watson cases, one must lament the fact that he did not turn them over to his biographer. Surely there must have been one or two others meriting publication. It is also unlikely that, like so many of these latter cases, none of these early inquiries could have involved the highest in the land.

Although it is highly unlikely that these cases would have been of great importance, their value would have been that they might have served as some sort of a chronicle of the Great Detective’s development into the master sleuth we have all come to know and admire.

The Mysterious Studies

Assuming that it is true that young Sherlock Holmes had not considered the possibility of becoming a detective until this option was suggested to him by a flabbergasted Trevor senior, it begs the question

of what was Holmes pursuing at university. He noted in passing to Watson that he pretty much kept to himself while he devoted his time to working “out my little methods of thought.”

If this was not in preparation to pursue a unique career as the world’s only consulting detective, what, then, was his aim in college? This is made far more intriguing by the fact that he stated that he had charted his own course of studies because what he needed to attain his goals was not ordinarily available. This leaves out any definite course of study requiring explicit courses and lectures leading to a degree.

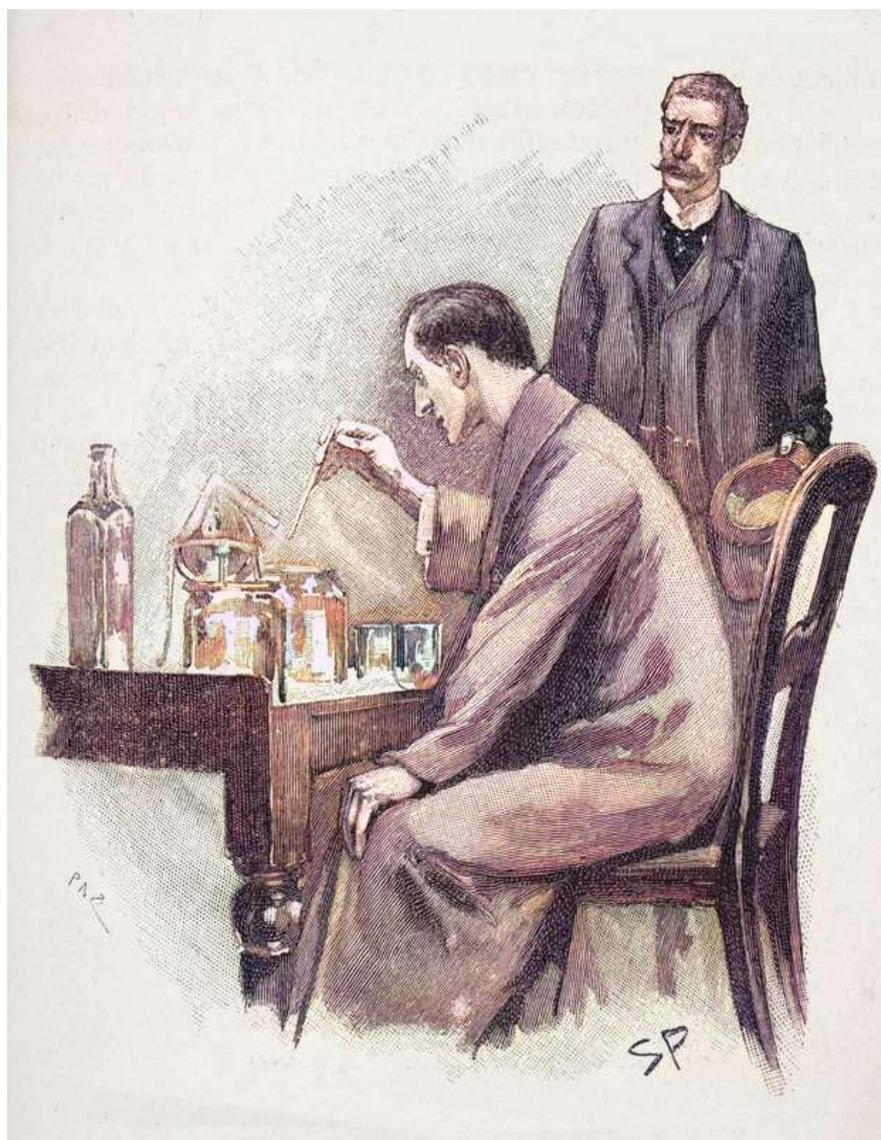
So what was he working towards before considering becoming a detective?

He must have had some career goal, considering that at the time (whether he attended Oxford or Cambridge) tuition for someone who was not reading for honors averaged £60 (≈\$23,000), which would make attending university during Queen Victoria’s time was almost as piritically expensive as it is today. This makes one wonder where the funds to pay for this came from. Although someone of Holmes’ intelligence and abilities—even back then—would have had no trouble in obtaining a scholarship, the fact that he was not engaged in any definite course of study would have made him ineligible for one; the undecided do not get scholarships.

It does not appear that Holmes was short of funds during that time, as much as he was when the need to share rooms led him to team of with Watson. Had it been otherwise, he would not have wasted the Long Vacation (a three-month summer break) in a leisurely visit to Victor’s home. Let us recall that the only reason why he cut his visit short was because of Trevor senior’s discomfort around him.

He then proceeded to go “up to my London rooms, where I spent seven weeks working out a few experiments in organic chemistry.” These “London rooms” must have been as comfortable as those in 221B, considering that he had sufficient space and privacy to conduct chemical experiments.

By the time he and Watson meet, Holmes kept been busy continuing to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for his chosen profession such as, for example, beating up cadavers in the dissecting rooms to determine how far bruises may be produced after death and working up a test for hemoglobin. We see here a much focused Holmes.



From what Stamford told Watson, it would also seem that although not exactly affluent, Holmes was still at least partly engaged in university studies: “I have no idea what he intends to go in for. . . [h]is studies are very desultory and eccentric, but he has amassed a lot of out-of-the way knowledge which would astonish his *professors*, [emphasis added].”

Trevor Senior—a Peculiar Man

There is no doubt that unlike his son, Trevor senior had peculiar tastes and reactions. He falls into a dead faint when Holmes tells him about his “JA” tattoo—a relatively unimportant happening—but only requires a simple jolt of brandy when Hudson reemerges from his hidden past. One would imagine that this second shock, the encounter with the man who can wreck not only

his life, but his son’s as well, would have seem more deserving of a fainting spell than the previous one.

Another indication of his unusual personality is his choice in tattoos. The second puzzler is his choice of tattoos. He later tells his son that his real name was James Armitage, and this is why he was so shocked when the Great Detective mentioned it.

Strictly as an observer of skin art, now even—alas—invading the hide of ladies, I have noticed that those who indulge in this form of expression do so to memorial-

ize someone as in the archetypical “Mother” tattoo, to denote membership in an exclusive clan, as in the “Death From Above” tattoo over a skull and crossbones. Then there is admiration, as the young man I once saw on a beach, whose back was adorned with portraits of the entire bridge complement of the USS *Enterprise*. The question being then, how common is it for someone to have his own initials tattooed on himself? While it is true you are honoring someone you like best, it is not a common thing.

A Better Detective?

One must give Hudson credit. It certainly seems as if his people-finding abilities surpass even those of Sherlock Holmes! Of course, his accomplishment in locating Trevor is not unique in the Canon; this is not the only case in which the trigger for something disastrous to be set in motion is the sudden appearance of somebody out of another’s past.

Perennially I wonder how these people were able to locate their victims after they have moved away, changed their names, and have been living a completely different existence for years. Then as now, London counted its population in the millions, and there were no phonebooks or an intrusive Internet with a plethora of personal information that is nobody’s business existed available to locate someone.

Finally, as any of us who have made the mistake of attending a high school reunion have learned, it is often difficult to recognize someone after 30 years, regardless of the fact that you attended the same classes for years. Would it be that easy after all those years, to recognize someone with whom we were only acquainted with for a short time?



Murray's Bivouac

Oxford and Sherlock Holmes

Discussions and arguments as to which university Sherlock Holmes might have referred to as his *alma mater*, have taken place ever since GLOR first appeared in print. The contenders have been Oxford and Cambridge.

There is no certainty as to which of these two highly reputable educational establishments he attended; however, his rather acerbic reference to Cambridge as "this inhospitable town" in "The Missing Three Quarter" heavily point, many believe, to Oxford.

Where the college is concerned, the evidence turns even flimsier. Researchers have discovered that a Mr. E.G.A Holmes attended St. John's in 1869, to read *Literae Humaniores*. One would assume that he pursued his interest in chemistry during his free time, and we are told in GLOR that Holmes did likewise during the long vacation.

Regarding the matter of which college he attended, the incident with the bull terrier who savored the Great Detective's ankle may give us a clue. Dogs were allowed only in University College's grounds, so it would seem that it may have been there where our future detective spent his student days.



OXFORD AND SHERLOCK HOLMES ?

Claims have been made for Christ Church as Holmes' college ...

Other claims have been made for University College ...

Holmes came up from Merchant Taylors' School in 1869, aged 15

He went down in 1876, having received his M.A.

The Chequers – 'where the port used to be above mediocrity and the linen above reproach' (Holmes in 'The Creeping Man')

But the evidence strongly suggests St John's

Charles Cree, of University College, recorded a day at the Perch, Binsey, when a certain 'Holmes' was the cause of some merriment

A bull terrier 'froze' onto his ankle on the way to Chapel
Its owner, Victor Trevor, became his only friend at college
(The Gloria Scott)

What else happened in 1873:

Empire

The Canadian Parliament establishes the North-West Mounted Police (renamed the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in 1920).

The end of the war between the United Kingdom and Ghana's King Kofi KariKari, who was involved in the trading of slaves, leads to the establishment of the Gold Coast Colony.

Prince Edward Island joins the Canadian Confederation.

Sir Benjamin Pine becomes Lieutenant-governor of the Colony of Natal.

◀ British Naval Officer John Moresby discovers the site of Port Moresby, and claims the land for Britain.

Alexander Mackenzie becomes the second Prime Minister of Canada.

Irish Home Rule movement: The Home Government Association reconstitutes itself as the Home Rule League.



Britain

British ocean liner RMS *Atlantic* sinks off Nova Scotia, killing 547.

The Kennel Club, the world's first kennel club, is founded in the United Kingdom.

In Chipping Norton, England, rioters attempt to free the Ascott Martyrs—16 women sentenced to imprisonment, for attempting to dissuade strikebreakers.

Alexandra Palace in London is destroyed by fire, only a fortnight after its opening.

New Rush in Griqualand West, South Africa is renamed Kimberley.

World

Japan adopts the Gregorian calendar.

The California Penal Code goes into effect.

American Indian Wars—Modoc War—First Battle of the Stronghold: Modoc Indians defeat the United States Army.



The Spanish Cortes deposes King Amadeus I, and proclaims the First Spanish Republic. Emilio Castelar, the former foreign minister, becomes prime minister of the new Spanish Republic.

◀ Ulysses S. Grant is sworn in for a second term, as President of the United States, signs the Coinage Act of 1873, which ends bimetallism in the U.S., and places the country on the gold standard.

The University of California opens its first medical school in San Francisco.

Censorship: The United States Congress enacts the Comstock Law, making it illegal to send any "obscene, lewd, or lascivious" books through the mail.

Emancipation Day for Puerto Rico: Slaves are freed.

First Aceh Expedition: A Dutch military expedition is launched to bombard Banda Aceh, capital of the Aceh Sultanate (in modern-day Indonesia), beginning the Aceh War.

Der Gründerkrach: The Wiener Börse (Vienna stock exchange) crash in Austria-Hungary ends the Gründerzeit, and heralds the global Panic of 1873 and Long Depression.

Levi Strauss and Jacob Davis receive United States patent No. 139121, for using copper rivets to strengthen the pockets of denim work pants. Levi Strauss & Co. begin manufacturing the famous Levi's brand of jeans, using fabric from the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Henry Rose exhibits barbed wire at an Illinois county fair, which is taken up by Joseph Glidden and Jacob Haish, who invent a machine to mass-produce it.

Classical archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann discovers Priam's Treasure.

The city of Khiva falls to Imperial Russian forces, under the command of General Konstantin von Kaufman.

Ochanomizu Women's University founded in Japan (then the Tokyo Women's Normal School).

American Indian Wars: While protecting a railroad survey party in Montana, the Seventh Cavalry, under Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, clashes for the first time with the Sioux, near the Tongue River (only 1 man on each side is killed).

A peace treaty is signed between Imperial Russia and the Khanate of Khiva, making the khanate a Russian protectorate.



The Austro-Hungarian North Pole Expedition discovers Franz Josef Land.

The International Meteorological Organization (IMO) is established.

◀ At Adair, Iowa, Jesse James and the James-Younger Gang pull off the first successful train robbery in the American Old West (\$3,000 from the Rock Island Express).

German troops leave France, upon completion of payment of indemnity for the Franco-Prussian War.

The New York stock market crash triggers the Panic of 1873, part of the Long Depression.

Establishment of the Home Ministry in Japan, introducing police services of the Empire of Japan on the European model.

Budapest, Hungary's capital is formed from Pest, Buda and Óbuda.

The Heineken Brewery is founded in Amsterdam, the Netherlands.

The League of the Three Emperors is created. It links the conservative monarchs of Austria-Hungary, the German Empire, and the Russian Empire in an alliance against radical movements.

The Swedish arms company Aktiebolaget (AB) Bofors-Gullspång, better known as Bofors, is founded.

The Married Woman's Property Rights Association is founded in Sweden.

Napoleon III, last Emperor of the French dies.

Art

Enrico Caruso born.

Sergei Rachmaninoff born.

Science and Technology

Alberto Santos-Dumont, Brazilian aviation pioneer is born.

Captain Bertram Dickson, Scottish soldier, explorer and pioneer aviator; involved in the world's first mid-air collision is born.

Next week's case: MUSG

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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