



The Return of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XXXVI -- The Adventure of the Three Students

First published in:

The Strand Magazine, June 1904; *Collier's*, September 24, 1904,

Time frame of story (known/surmised):

Spring of 1895, date not given.

Holmes & Watson living arrangements:

Holmes & Watson were spending some weeks in one of the great university towns, residing at the time in furnished lodgings close to a library where Holmes was pursuing some laborious researches in early English charters – researches which led to striking results. No mention of living arrangements back in London.

Opening scene:

Holmes & Watson were in the lodgings, and were visited by the about-to-be client. Holmes' temper had not improved since he had been deprived of the congenial surroundings of Baker Street. Without his scrapbooks, his chemicals, and his homely untidiness, he was an uncomfortable man. He attempted to “brush off” the potential client, but then became interested in the tale.



Client:

Mr. Hilton Soames, an acquaintance of Watson. He was a tutor and lecturer at the College of St. Luke's, a tall, spare man, of a nervous and excitable temperament. He had always been restless in his manner, but on this particular occasion he was in a state of uncontrollable agitation. It was clear something very unusual had occurred.

Crime or concern:

Disarrangement of the proofs of an exam for the Fortesque Scholarship. It was obvious that one of the three students residing in the building had been in Soames' office whilst he was at tea and had most likely copied the Thucydides chapter they were to translate in the exam, gaining an unfair advantage (serious cheating). Soames' butler, Bannister, had left his key in the door, an act of carelessness.

Villain:

One of the three students, Gilchrist. The other suspects were Daulat Ras, a silent, little, hook-nosed Indian, and Miles McLaren, brilliant, but wayward, dissipated, and unprincipled.

Motive:

See the exam question in advance, prepare, score well on the test and get the scholarship. The Fortesque scholarship was a very valuable one, and an unscrupulous man might very well run a risk in order to gain an advantage over his fellows.

Logic used to solve:

Holmes observed height of window, compared it to statures of the resident students. After carefully questioning the client, Holmes determined the man who tampered with the papers came upon them accidentally without prior knowledge they were there.

Examination of small pyramids of black, doughy clay found on the scene, determined to be small track clods from the jumping-shoes of Gilchrist, the athlete.

Policemen:

None

Holmes' fees:

No mention.

Food:

The landlady babbled of green peas at seven-thirty, but Holmes & Watson were an hour and a half late.

In the morning, Holmes declared, "It is time we went down to St. Luke's. Can you do without breakfast?"

"Our breakfast awaits us at home. Come, Watson!" – Holmes, after solving the case at St. Luke's.

Drink:

Soames gave Bannister a little of the universal palliative (brandy) to revive him after news of the incident.

Vices:

None mentioned.

Other cases mentioned:

None

Notable Quotables:

"The case is not entirely devoid of interest." – Holmes

"The first page on the floor, the second in the window, the third where you left it," said Holmes.

"Exactly, Mr. Holmes. You amaze me. How could you possibly know that?" "Pray continue your very interesting statement." – Holmes and Soames

"Not one of your cases. Watson – mental, not physical. All right; come if you want to." – Holmes

"Let us hear the suspicions. I will look after the proofs." – Holmes

Other interestings:

Type of pencil and its remaining length were determined by an examination of the shavings peeled off in sharpening it. "nn" were part of "Johann Faber," printed up near the butt end. This seemed like a clue, but was immaterial.

When all was said and done:

After his exposure, Gilchrist departed to accept a position with the Rhodesian Police, where he had been offered a position. The servant, Bannister, had previously been with the Gilchrist family, and helped cover for Gilchrist before Holmes exposed him.

McMurdo's Camp