



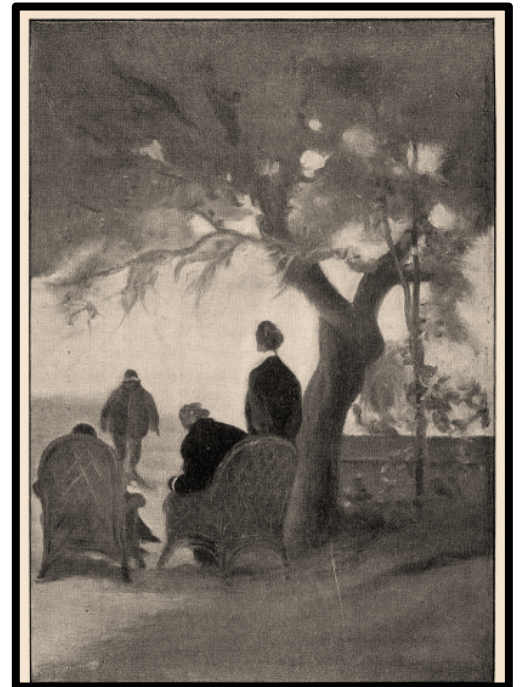
The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

Adventure XIX -- The Adventure of the Gloria Scott

Sherlock Holmes is probably the most immediately recognizable character in all of literature and film. Almost everyone can tell you about the Hound of the Baskervilles, and many are familiar with the dog in the night time, the Snake, and Professor Moriarty. But does the casual reader know anything of Holmes's college days, or of the vicious bull terrier who indirectly led Holmes to his life's work? No! "The Gloria Scott" is an adventure for devotees: those of us who want to know everything about our hero. As a detective story, it may not rank among the greats, but as a story of the Great Detective, it's just the thing for eager Hounds to sink their teeth into — just as that bull terrier decided to do.

Young Sherlock Holmes: Holmes said that the case "was the first in which I was ever engaged." The word "engaged" has a couple of meanings, of course. What did Holmes mean when he said "engaged?" Did he mean simply "involved" or "busy?" He was involved, it's true, but the case hardly absorbed him. And no one "engaged" him in the sense of hiring him — at least, he did not say that Victor Trevor paid him any money to advise him in his troubles. Then again, if this was the first case in which Holmes was "engaged," was Charles Augustus Milverton the second?

In his student days, Holmes said that he considered his habit of observation and deduction to be "the merest hobby." What subjects was he studying at college? What profession did he propose to follow before detective work lured him away? Wouldn't he have considered his skills at observation to be an asset in his main course of study, rather than a hobby unto itself? Or was he studying something where observation and deduction were not particularly useful to him? Can anyone think of a subject where this might be so?



Holmes spent his vacation working out a few problems in organic chemistry. Was he using his vacation time this way in order to advance his knowledge in a field that he was studying officially, or did he work on chemistry on his own time because he was not enrolled in any chemistry classes during the official term? I wonder if Holmes took any classes in common with Victor Trevor.

The Trevors: It doesn't take an in-depth study of this case to see that there are a few problems with Justice of the Peace Trevor's story of his youthful misfortunes. The first trouble comes with the dates. For Sherlock Holmes to have been at college, the story must have taken place around 1872 – 75. If Trevor's transportation for embezzlement took place thirty years before that time, how could it have been "'55, when the Crimean War was at its height"? Is there any logical explanation for the discrepancy? Should this error cause us to doubt the rest of the tale?

Trevor wrote most of his account when he was in reasonably good health, but he suffered a stroke when he read the message from his friend Beddoes. His confession is then appended with a shaky note saying, "Beddoes writes in cipher to say H. has told all. Sweet Lord, have mercy on our souls!" When did he write this? During a slight recovery from his stroke? Did he dictate the postscript to someone else? To whom?

Sherlock Holmes never saw old Trevor alive after he cut his vacation short and went to London. In fact, Holmes implies that he never saw old Trevor dead, either. Was Trevor really dead? Did he ever suffer a stroke? Who was the doctor?

And speaking of young Trevor: last year when we discussed "The Gloria Scott," the Hounds own Birlstone Railway Smash noted that according to the Sherlock Holmes Theory of Dogs (see "The Creeping Man") we might well expect Victor Trevor to have had a personality similar to the terrier who froze onto Holmes's ankle. What do you think? Does the phrase, "I keep a bull terrier!" mean "I'm extremely cranky and vicious!"?

Rosemary Michaud