



An Inquiry into:  
*“The Adventure of  
 the Three Students”*

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“The Adventure of the Three Students” was first published in *Collier's Weekly Magazine* on June 1904 and in *The Strand Magazine* on the same date. It is part of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*.

The chronology for the exact date of this case varies, depending on the Canon expert. Their estimates are shown on the table. If the case took place in 1895, as all Canon chronologists state, at the time Holmes was 41 years old and Watson 43.

**Main Characters:**

Hilton Sloane, the tutor and lecturer at St. Luke's College. Bannister, Soames' loyal servant. Daulat Ras, a reserved and studious Indian student competing for the Fortescue Scholarship. Giles Gilchrist, athletic and hard-working student, also competing for the same scholarship. Miles McLaren, a wayward but brilliant student, the third competitor for the scholarship.

**Notable Quotes:**

My friend's temper had not improved since he had been deprived of the congenial surroundings of Baker Street.

Without his scrap-books, his chemicals, and his homely untidiness, he was an uncomfortable man.

**The Kind Misanthrope**

Despite all the sound and fury raised by the Arthur Conan Doyle Estate over the *Enola Holmes* series, in which the Great Detective displays affection for a putative younger sister, their claim that our sleuth was incapable of showing any warmth or fondness is in close orbit around a black hole and will soon disappear never to emerge again.

I am always fascinated by Watson's comment that, “My friend's temper had not improved since he had been deprived of the congenial surroundings of Baker Street. Without his scrap-books, his chemicals, and his homely untidiness, he was an uncomfortable man.” It shows a human, yet vulnerable facet of Holmes' personality.

<i>The Adventure of the Three Students</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>1895</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Friday, April 5, 1895</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>Late April 1895</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>March 1895</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>May 1895</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Thursday, April 18, 1895</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>March 1895</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>Early April 1895</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>Spring 1895</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Monday, May 6, 1895</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1895</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>Wednesday, March 27, 1895</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.

He appears to be at ease only when he is in a familiar comfortable place, surrounded by his books and belongings. It could be said without fear of exaggeration that his only declared friend also fits into this category. Surely we would all agree that we would count ourselves fortunate to have the Good Doctor as a close friend. One might almost think that there was a shy side in our sleuth's personality. As to his supposed misanthropy, the Estate doth protest too much, methinks.



Just because someone does not wear his heart on his sleeve does not mean that he is utterly lacking in feelings. In many societies—Victorian Britain being a prime example—it is not deemed proper to display one's emotions.



I posit that Mr. Sherlock Holmes was a man of deep feelings. We know nothing about his early life, but it might not be too far from the truth to hypothesize that he may have been profoundly hurt emotionally, resulting in his seeming dislike of his fellow beings. His attitude may have been simply one dictated by the instinct we all have towards pain avoidance. The Great Detective's personal sense of justice is very revealing in this aspect.

Unquestionably, Holmes had a somewhat fragile trust in the justice system. This is shown by the several times in which he has allowed his conscience to guide his decisions. He objectively studied and listened to the evidence gleaned from the various participants in a case. Although he may have not been personally invested in most of the recorded cases, he rarely was unattached and non-judgmental. For example, he shed no tears over Charles Augustus Milverton's early demise. On the contrary, he proceeded to destroy all the blackmail material in Milverton's safe, and protected the anonymity of his murderess.

At least on two separate occasions he and Watson passed justice of their own, adhering to the spirit (although not the letter) of English jurisprudence. One of these examples takes place in the present case. Although no actual crime was committed, Holmes concentrated upon the university cheating scandal—which but for his inter-

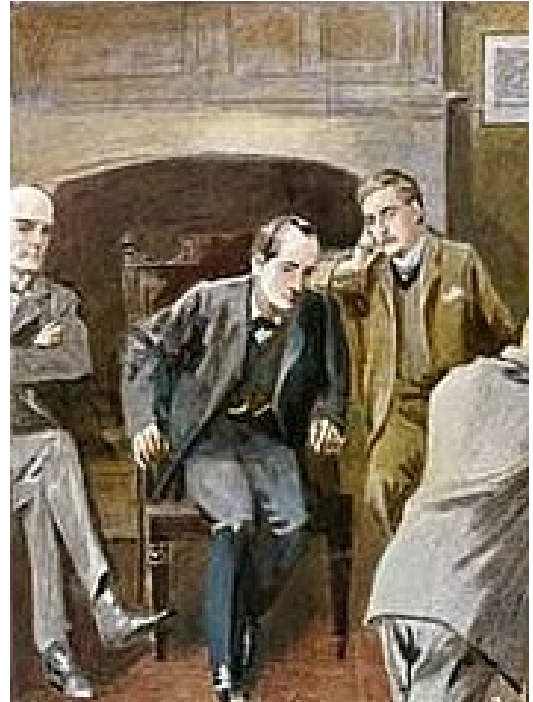
vention would have been a relatively minor, unimportant occurrence—with the same attention and care that he devoted to all his cases.

We see how Holmes created an improvised courtroom in the dormitory, where he arranged the chairs in a row of three, facing the suspect. This made him, Watson, and the professor “sufficiently imposing to strike terror into a guilty breast.” During this process Holmes listened with objectivity, even though he had already solved the case to his own satisfaction. Faced with such a court martial it is no wonder that poor Gilchrist broke into tears, readily confessing his guilt!

But then Holmes said kindly, “it is human to err, and at least no one can accuse you of being a callous criminal” When Gilchrist reveals to all his intention not to take the examination and leave school immediately to join the Rhodesian police Holmes, satisfied that the young man’s plan will serve justice, keeps the secret and deflects scandal.

At this point, Holmes’ attitude bordered on the paternal when he kindly consoled Gilchrist by telling him, “For once you have fallen low. Let us see, in the future, how high you can rise.” There is a promise of redemption in what he said to him, and it is obvious that he is attempting to bolster the young man’s spirits so that he will never again disappoint himself.

Unfeeling? What about then of our sleuth’s *cri de coeur* in 3GAR: “You’re not hurt, Watson? For God’s sake, say that you are not hurt!”



To which Watson tells us, “It was worth a wound—it was worth many wounds—to know the depth of loyalty and love which lay behind that cold mask. The clear, hard eyes were dimmed for a moment, and the firm lips were shaking. For the one and only time I caught a glimpse of a great heart as well as of a great brain. All my years of humble but single-minded service culminated in that moment of revelation.”

Then, in a very uncharacteristic and un-Holmesian manner, we are told that “His face set like flint as he glared at our prisoner, who was sitting up with a dazed face. ‘By the Lord, it is as well for you. If you had killed Watson, you would not have got out of this room alive.’”

### *The Hesitant Scholar*

Although we are told that Gilchrist was a “fine scholar,” this may have been in appearance only. He seems to have applied himself sufficiently to his studies to be able to compete for the coveted Fortescue Scholarship, but he gave no indication that his choice was to spend a lifetime breathing the ancient dust of great libraries.

Was his inclination to cheat in the exam by going over the galleys of the competition a desire for scholarship or simply a human (albeit unethical) reaction to the chance to make things easier? Considering how things turned out, it would appear that it was little more than an impulse of the moment, prompted by the opportunity to learn the exam’s contents beforehand.

In any case, even if he had gone through with it and aced the exam, it seems very likely that the scholarship would not have been used.



At the hearing arranged by Holmes, Gilchrist reveals he has been offered a commission in the Rhodesian police; then declares his intention to leave for South Africa to take it. This seems like a sound decision on the young man's part, but there is more here than meets the eye.



It is highly unlikely that a letter offering such a position just happened to come over the transom at the appropriate time. This means that it had to have been in the making for quite some time; in other words, he must have applied for the position, most likely weeks before, considering that in those days a letter to South Africa took two weeks to a month to arrive at its destination. Although there is nothing unusual in the Rhodesian Police's acceptance, but there must have been preliminaries before this; otherwise, how would they have even known that there was such a person as Gilchrist?

It seems rather obvious that well before the events that took place happened, Gilchrist had already decided that the academic life was not for him.

### *What else happened in 1895:*

#### *Empire*

Freetown, Sierra Leone, granted municipal status and privileges.

Anglo-French interests begin to conflict in Nile Valley.

U.S. intervenes in Anglo-Venezuelan border dispute, arbitration in Britain's favor.

Construction of Uganda railway commenced.

British East Africa Company surrenders Kenya as British protectorate.

Jameson Raid in South Africa in 1895—failed attempt to overthrow the Afrikaans government.

#### *Britain*



First automobile exhibition in London.

Electrification of first mainline railway.

◀ Liberals defeated at general election, Salisbury forms his third Unionist ministry.

Compulsory retirement of aged Duke of Cambridge as C-in-C of British Army.

London School of Economics and Political Science founded.

#### *World*

Japan takes Formosa (now Taiwan).

Germany, France, and Russia unite to compel Japan to return Liaotung peninsula to China.

Treaty of Simonoseki, end of Sino-Japanese war.

Cuban rebellions begin, U.S.A. protests brutal suppression.

Dreyfus refused new trial by French President Faure.

National League founded in Poland; aimed at autonomy under Russian suzerainty.

Nyssens Law extended to Belgian provinces and communes.

Armenian demonstration in Constantinople leads to massacre of 50,000 Armenians.

Frontiers of Pamirs fixed by commission of Russians, Afghans, and British.

Introduction of diphtheria antitoxin.

Completion of Kiel Canal (61 miles) makes Germany North Sea power.

Volleyball invented.

French troops capture Antananarivo in Madagascar.

Abyssinia defeats Italy in the First Italo-Ethiopian War (1885-1896).

### *Art*

◀ Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* debuts. Later that year, Wilde is imprisoned.

Corelli publishes *The Sorrows of Satan*.

H.G. Wells publishes *The Time Machine*.

### *Science and Technology*

Wilhelm Konrad Röntgen, German physicist, experiments with Crooke's tubes and discovers X-rays.

Ramsey obtains helium, first identified by its spectrum in the sun, in 1868.

On December 28th, in the Hotel Scribe, in Paris, the first public cinema show takes place.

Thomas Armat, of Washington, develops modern cinema projection.

King Gillette (U.S.) invents safety razor.

Guglielmo Marconi, an Italian electrical engineer, transmits the first wireless signal.

### *Next week's case: GOLD*

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](mailto:CourageousMurray@aol.com).**

