



*An Inquiry into:  
"The Adventure of  
The Three Students"*

“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*.

Our chronologists are all in agreement that this case

took place in 1895. Since the case takes place in 1895, at that time Sherlock Holmes is 41 years old and Doctor John H. Watson is 43.

**Main Characters:**

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

**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.

**Holmes’ Medieval Research**

Watson opens this case by telling us that Holmes “was pursuing some laborious researches in Early English Charters—researches which led to results so striking that they may be the subject of one of my future narratives.”

What could these researches have entailed, and why would they have led to such striking results? Certainly it could have had nothing to do with crime in high places. Even if the Great Detective had found a contemporary record offering *prima facie* evidence describing how Richard shoved George Plantagenet head first into a cask of Malmsey wine or how he later disposed of the two little princes in the Tower—although it would have been of enormous historical interest—it could hardly have been described as “striking.”

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



The charters referred to by Watson probably were for the most part written instruments, contracts, or conventions by which sales of property rights and privileges were confirmed and held. Charters were granted by the Crown and the Lords Spiritual and Temporal to boroughs, guilds, religious foundations, and by some high nobility.

So, again, what could have been important enough to drag him away from “the congenial surroundings of Baker Street,” putting him in an evil temper? What could he have discovered among those crumbling charts that could lead to the striking results to which

Watson alludes to with his usual reservation?

Like so many of us, having been imprinted as a boy, within the profoundest depths of my mind’s Canonical world always reside the welcoming figures of Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce. Thus, inevitably in this case I think back to one of their movies—*Sherlock Holmes Faces Death*. In this somewhat hazy version of “The Musgrave Ritual,” the object of the search was an ancient Crown Grant that would have given the present Musgrave heiress title to more than 80,000 acres of the best land in England, now encompassing farms, towns, and even an industrial factory.



It being Hollywood make-believe, she of course indignantly destroys the chart by tossing it into a blazing fireplace, offended that anyone would have thought her capable of depriving of their property all those who now resided on the lands awarded to her by the grant.



A final question to consider is, if this was indeed a scholarly sabbatical for Holmes, what was Watson doing there? St. Luke’s College seems to be a thinly disguised Oxford or Cambridge University. Were that to be the case, then chances are that Holmes would have been conducting his research either at the Bodleian or University Library, depending on whether he was at Oxford or Cambridge. All indications seem to point to the former, because English charters were actively researched there. So what was Watson doing? Was he sitting next to

Holmes taking notes for him? Back then, in those university towns there would have been very little to entertain the Good Doctor.

### *The Cheater's Reaction*

If we go by the standards of our disreputable age, Gilchrist own reaction to his inclination to cheat in the exam for the Fortescue Scholarship might almost appear ludicrous. Before he was found out and made his tearful confession, he already had in his pocket a letter for Soames, indicating his intention to abandon his studies and accept a commission in the Rhodesian Police, stating that he would leave at once for South Africa. When he learns about this, Soames of course is delighted: "I am indeed pleased to hear that you did not intend to profit by your unfair advantage."



The principles and values inculcated to students in the public schools of the time were similar to those of some of the military academies; West Point, for example: "A cadet will not lie, cheat, steal, or tolerate those who do." In one of the schools I attended, sometimes a teacher or housemaster would interrogate you about a suspected misdemeanor. If he thought that you might not be telling the whole truth or perhaps embroidering things just a bit, at the end of your implausible narrative he would ask you, "Honor Bright?" This, much like a reaction from one of Pavlov's pups, made it impossible for one to fib.

Brainwashing honor into one's psyche? Doubtless. But couldn't we use a bit of that today?

### *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.A. 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*

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.

First automobile exhibition in London.

Electrification of first mainline railway.

Cardinal Vaughan lays foundation stone of Westminster Cathedral.

#### *World*

Chinese defeated by Japanese at Wei-hai-Wei; end of the Chinese-Japanese war. Formosa (now Taiwan) and Port Arthur ceded to Japan, but returned to China in exchange for indemnity.

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 by order of the government. Sultan Abdul Hamid II promises reforms in Turkey.

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

◀ Jack Dempsey, future U.S. boxing champion, is born.

Karl Marx, *Das Kapital*.

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

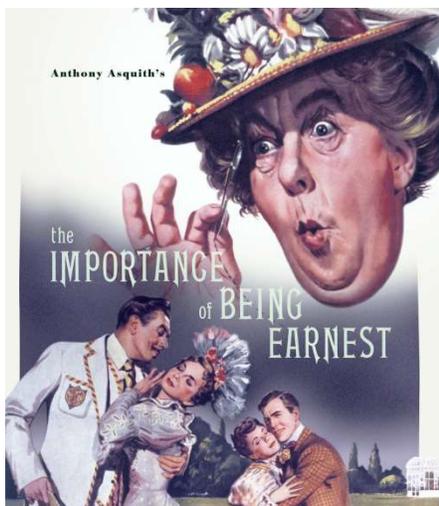
Queen of Korea is assassinated; the King is imprisoned, all under Japanese encouragement.

Volleyball invented.

French troops capture Antananarivo in Madagascar.

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

## *Art*



Tchaikovsky, first complete performance of *Swan Lake*.

Joseph Conrad, *Alayer's Folly*.

◀ Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* debuts. Later that year, he unsuccessfully sues the Marquis of Queensbury for libel and is imprisoned.

Sienkiewicz, *Quo Vadis*.

W.B. Yeats, *Poems*.

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.



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

◀ Introduction of diphtheria antitoxin.

Pasteur dies.

Konstantin Tsiolkovski formulates the principle of rocket reaction propulsion.

Sigmund Freud, *Studien über Hysterie*.

On December 28th, in the Hôtel Scribe, in Paris, the first public cinema show takes

place.

Thomas Armat, of Washington, develops modern cinema projection.

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

C. von Linde devices apparatus to liquefy air.

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..."

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