



*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*.

The exact date for this case varies, depending on the chronologist. However, they are all in agreement that the year in which this adventure took place was 1895.

If that is so, then at the time Sherlock Holmes was 41 years old and Doctor John H. Watson 43.

Watson 46.

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 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 Quest for Redemption

The width and breadth of Empire inspired (among many others) the theme of the search for redemption, renewal, or of the quest for one's destiny to be attained by leaving the home country for other, exotic, lands. This is clearly reflected in much of the literature of the 19th and early 20th century. A cursory glance shows us that the Sacred Writings also came under the influence of this theme of redemption.

<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.

In the present case, Gilchrist, after confessing to his original intention to cheat in the examination for the Fortescue Scholarship declares, "I have determined not to go in for the examination. I have been offered a commission in the Rhodesian Police, and I am going out to South Africa at once." An approving Holmes then confirms the young man's decision as being the correct one by telling him, "I trust that a bright future awaits you in Rhodesia. For once you have fallen low. Let us see in the future how high you can rise."



The quest for redemption is found in GLOR, in which young Victor Trevor, devastated after having found out the truth about his father, abandons England for the Terai tea planting in North Bengal, India where, according to Holmes, he meets with success and very likely the anonymity he sought.

The Hon. Philip Green, in LADY, after having been refused by the Lady Frances Carfax for his uncouthness, emigrates to South Africa, where he carves out his fortune and returns in hopes that his redemption will have made him deserving of the lady's affections.

Then in DEVI we have Dr. Leon Sterndale, the great lion-hunter and explorer. After having being discovered by Holmes as having been the one who used the ghastly root to avenge the death of the woman he loved, he revealed to our friends that, "I had intended to bury myself in central Africa. My work there is but half finished." Then Holmes, using his superior judgment, decides that the man has suffered enough and urges him to "Go and do the other half."

Redemption may have been sought but was not always attained, however. In SIGN, Jonathan Small tells our friends that he "got into a mess over a girl, and could only get out of it again by taking the Queen's shilling and joining the 3d Buffs, which was just starting for India." Little did he know of course that, like Captain Hook, there was a crocodile licking its chops over the prospect of meeting him.

In SPEC, we have Dr. Roylott of Stoke Moran who, to avoid living the horrible life of an aristocratic pauper worked hard to learn a profession, took a medical degree and moved to Calcutta. There, as his stepdaughter put it, "by his professional skill and his force of character, he established a large practice." Unfortunately, the same flaw in his character which eventually led him to murder and his death forced him to return in disgrace to the Mother Country.

Then last, but not least, in EMPT we met Colonel Sebastian Moran, who had the career of an honorable soldier, until he began to go wrong and, as Holmes said, "Without any open scandal he still made India too hot to hold him."

This pursuit for a new life was not limited solely to young men. Imperial England saw many of its best and brightest depart for the Raj to make their careers and fortunes as bureaucrats, businessmen, and soldiers. The unintended consequence of all this was that countless young ladies, bereft of eligible bachelors, found themselves facing an uncertain future.

With nothing to lose and much to gain, some of these women also abandoned their native Britain for the exotic glamour of India and—because men outnumbered women by roughly four to one in the Raj—their best chance of finding a husband.



The ladies who ventured upon the ocean to reach India in search of an adequate spouse were, for the years that this exodus lasted were, perhaps unkindly so, referred to as “the fishing fleet.”

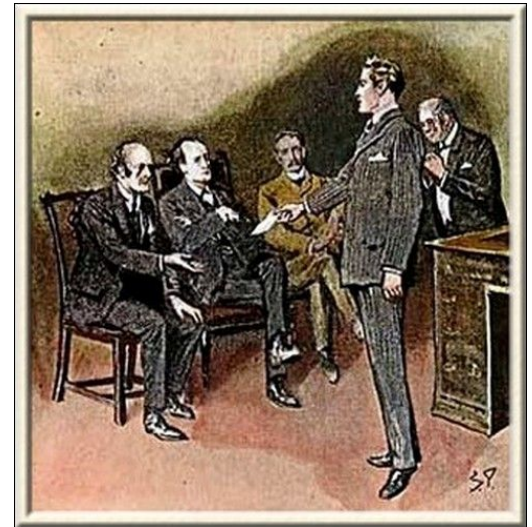
A similar situation existed in the United States. It being almost 97% the size of Europe (with Texas alone more than seven times larger than England) could have been described as an empire within a single continent. Redemption and fortune were to be found in the frontier, in moving West. The frontier provided a “safety-valve of social discontent,” offering the opportunity of a fresh start. The time when mail-order brides were popular in the Wild West was comparable to the days of the “fishing fleet.”

The Reluctant Scholar

Although Gilchrist’s behavior is deserving of praise (particularly his recovery from an impulse caused by a passing moment of temptation) there seems to be very little of the academic in him even though he is described as a “fine scholar.” He seems to be someone unlikely to devote himself to obtaining a scholarship based on his proficiency in a classic language such as ancient Greek. A career in an active service, such as the Rhodesian Police definitely seems to fit him better than years of rounded shoulders formed from peering at dusty volumes.

As evidence for this, one must consider that Gilchrist could not have been even considered for a commission in the Rhodesian Police unless he had applied for it. He had to have presented paperwork, very likely letters of recommendation, etc. before the Rhodesian Police knew that he even existed, let alone offer him a commission. Lacking anything even approaching email, he would have had to mail all that information, and it would have taken weeks to get there.

Even assuming that the Rhodesian Police was so anxious to recruit him that they telegraphed their acceptance, it seems inescapable that communication between Gilchrist and the South African authorities had to have been going on for quite some time—certainly well before he was tempted to peek at the examination galleys.



The Uncomfortable Detective

Regardless of how much one may like to travel and visit different surroundings, there are few of us who feel comfortable outside of the hospitable background of our house. Surrounded by familiar things—one’s books, furniture, pictures and other possessions—one is at ease and better able to enjoy the company of others and pursue various interests.



Sherlock Holmes Museum

Watson’s remark 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,” is not only understandable, but also informative of the Great Detective’s personality.

It isn’t, I think, that Sherlock Holmes was a misanthrope. He enjoyed the study of mankind far too much for that. It is quite obvious that he was

happiest when he knew that a client was coming to place before him a difficult case, or there was an unexpected knock on the door at 221B.

Holmes was unsocial. It is difficult for us to imagine him enjoy attending a soirée at the mansion of some socially important person. It is not that he minded being around people, he liked to attend concerts and art exhibits, and he found Watson a most congenial companion—and not only because he could use him to bounce ideas.

It seems that, like Professor Higgins in *My Fair Lady*, he did not appreciate any interference with those things he most wanted to engage in, whether it is the study of ancient charters, chemical experiments, or updating his casebooks. Perhaps there also was a touch of shyness.

As Professor Higgins puts it in *My Fair Lady*:

*I'm a quiet living man
Who prefers to spend the evening in the silence of his room
Who likes an atmosphere as restful as an undiscovered tomb
A pensive man am I of philosophical joys
Who likes to meditate, contemplate
Free from humanity's mad inhuman noise
Just a quiet living man.*

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

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.

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.