



*An Inquiry into:
"The Gloria Scott"*

Vol. XI No. 29 • August 13, 2020

"The *Gloria Scott*" was first published in *The Strand Magazine* and in *Harper's Weekly* in April 1893. It is part of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*.

The date in which this adventure took place has been rightly described as "one of the thorniest problems in Holmesian chronology," by none other than the respected Canon scholar Martin Dakin. The diversity shown by our chronologists in their estimates, shown on the table, clearly shows why this is so.

If the case indeed took place in 1873, the year upon which most of our chronologists agree, then Sherlock Holmes was 19 and Dr. John H. Watson 21.

Main Characters:

Victor Trevor, son of Victor Trevor Sr. and college friend of Holmes. Mr. Trevor Sr., Justice of the Peace in the Norfolk Broads. Hudson, a sailor on the *Gloria Scott*. Beddoes, Fellow prisoner and friend of Trevor Sr. Evans, Jack Prendergast, bloodthirsty leader of the mutiny on board the *Gloria Scott*.

Notable Quotes:

"I don't know how you manage this, Mr. Holmes, but it seems to me that all the detectives of fact and of fancy would be children in your hands. That's your line of life, sir, and you may take the word of a man who has seen something of the world."

"And that recommendation, with the exaggerated estimate of my ability with which he prefaced it, was, if you will believe me, Watson, the very first thing which ever made me feel that a profession might be made out of what had up to that time been the merest hobby."

<i>The Gloria Scott</i>	
<i>Chronologist</i>	<i>Date of the Adventure</i>
<i>Canon</i>	<i>1885</i>
<i>Baring-Gould</i>	<i>Sunday, July 12, 1874</i>
<i>Bell</i>	<i>The Summer of 1875</i>
<i>Blakeney</i>	<i>1873</i>
<i>Brend</i>	<i>August 1873</i>
<i>Christ</i>	<i>Late September 1876</i>
<i>Dakin</i>	<i>July 1874</i>
<i>Folsom</i>	<i>July 1873</i>
<i>Hall</i>	<i>Summer 1875</i>
<i>Keefauver</i>	<i>Saturday, July 3, 1880</i>
<i>Klinger</i>	<i>1874</i>
<i>Zeisler</i>	<i>The Summer of 1876</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.

Slander and Libel

It has been suggested by some Canon students (I suspect with tongue firmly planted upon cheek), that Hudson, the blackmailing sailor in this adventure, was none other than the deceased husband of Holmes' eminently respectable landlady, Mrs. Martha Hudson of 221B Baker Street.



Courtesy of ITV Granada

Of course, there is nothing to support such an outrageous allegation.

However, the fact remains that Mrs. Hudson is a bit of a mystery. Except for the fact that she had what Watson described as a "stately tread" we really know practically nothing about her, other than she was endowed with nearly godly patience, which enabled her for years to tolerate her famous tenant's uneven habits and outrageous untidiness.

Some cynics have suggested that surely this forbearance stemmed from the "princely sum" that the Great Detective paid for his rooms, but it has to be pointed out that her

actions clearly went well beyond the standard call of duty of landlady to lodger. She was quite willing to help Holmes in his work by putting herself at considerable personal risk, and we know that she was cared about his health, overlooking his more than occasional brusqueness.

Alas, Sidney Paget did not see fit to memorialize Mrs. Hudson in any of his seminal illustrations, so her appearance is mostly left to the imagination.

Perhaps it is for the best; it leaves each of us with our very own Mrs. Hudson.

The Fledgling Detective

Watson opens his narration of this story by telling us that Holmes suggested to him that he study the events that, years back, were connected with the Trevors. When the Good Doctor asks him the obvious question, "But why did you say just now that there were very particular reasons why I should study this case?" our sleuth states, "Because it was the first in which I was ever engaged."

Of course, who best to tell us when his detecting career started than the man himself? However, I tend to think that the Trevor affair stands out in his mind as the beginning of his



unique profession not because it started him out on the path of detection, but because of Trevor senior's suggestion that he would make an outstanding detective.

We know of two men who were acquainted with the young Holmes during his university days: Victor Trevor and Reginald Musgrave. It is also very interesting to note that both made very similar comments about our sleuth's abilities. Trevor mentions his acquaintance with Holmes' talent for deduction and observation. As Holmes himself recalled, "One evening, shortly after my arrival, we were sitting over a glass of port after dinner, when young Trevor began to talk about those habits of observation and inference which I had already formed into a system, although I had not yet appreciated the part which they were to play in my life."

Musgrave says, "I understand, Holmes, that you are turning to practical ends those powers with which you used to amaze us?" And then adds that Holmes' advice would be exceedingly valuable because, as he put it, "We have had some very strange doings at Hurlstone, and the police have been able to throw no light upon the matter."

Somehow, I cannot visualize Holmes as one of those noisome persons who has learned two or three prestidigitator tricks and insists on performing them over and over in front of an increasingly bored audience. Therefore, I cannot believe that Holmes used his talents as the source of parlor tricks to astonish his fellow classmates. There had have been instances in which they came to him for help on some matter. Perhaps Holmes did not consider these of sufficient importance to call to Watson's attention because if they involved some sort of criminal behavior at all, it must have been extremely minor. Obviously, this was not the case in the affair of the *Gloria Scott*.

It would have been interesting to know more about these little lost cases, not because of their importance, but because of the influence that they must have had in forming the formidable Sherlock Holmes.

The Elusive Career Path

If we are to assume that Holmes was not exaggerating for the sake of entertaining Watson when he said that he truly had not considered a career as detective until it was suggested to him by Trevor Sr., then what were his plans until that time? It is highly unlikely that Holmes was that common breed we so regularly encounter today, the eternal student uncertain of what he or she wants to be. Somehow, the idea that he was just taking a splattering of courses without any set goal seems as likely to me as releasing a ball and having it fall upwards.



Elsewhere, Holmes tells us that in order to prepare himself for his chosen career he had to chart his own course of studies, which would not have led to any degree or formal profession. In fact, by the time he met Watson, he was still busying himself to acquire knowledge that he believed essential to succeed in his invented profession. We learn that back then he had been beating up cadavers in the dissecting rooms to determine whether bruises could be produced after death, and had already obtained a sufficiently strong knowledge of chemistry to develop a test for hemoglobin.

We get the definite impression that at the time our two friends met and started their adventures together, Holmes was not exactly in the chips, and tuition at either Oxford or Cambridge for someone

not reading for honors was about £60 (≈\$25,000), making higher education tuition during the certain Gracious Lady's time almost as painful as it is today. Therefore, if we assume that this change in career plans resulted from his experience with the Trevors what then had previously been the goal of his studies?

Deep waters, indeed!

What else happened in 1889:

Empire

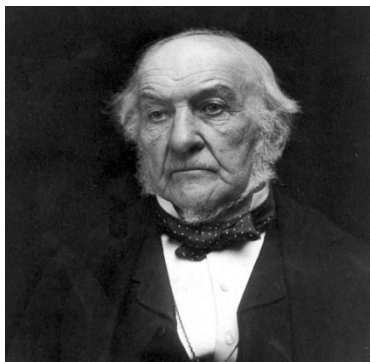
Royal Canadian Mounted Police formed.

Prince Edward Island joins the Dominion of Canada.

Start of Ashanti War.

Britain

Alexandra Palace opens and burns down sixteen days later.



Supreme Court of Judicature Act; reform of English judicial system.

Midland Grand Hotel at St Pancras opens.

◀ Gladstone's government resigns after the defeat of their Irish Universities Bill. Disraeli declines to take up office instead.

Severn Tunnel commenced; completed in 1886.

Irish University Bill rejected by Commons.

Beginning of industrial and agricultural depression in England.

Four Swans coaching inn, Bishopsgate, demolished.

First University Extension Classes set at Cambridge

La Belle Sauvage, coaching inn, Ludgate Hill, demolished.

Criterion Restaurant, Piccadilly, opens.

World

Dutch suppress revolt in Sumatra, Aceh war (1873-1903).

Final payment of French war indemnity; German evacuation completed.



Italian government secularizes Catholic convents.

The mark is adopted as the unit of standard coinage in Germany.

◀ Monarchist restoration in France frustrated by refusal of Comte de Chambord to accept the Tricolor as the national flag.

Pressured by Great Britain, the Sultan of Zanzibar closes the slave market.

Uniform Imperial Civil Code established in the German Empire.

New Austrian election law makes elections to the Reichstag direct rather than through local Diets.

Russia occupies Khiva in Turkestan; gains territory along the Oxus.

Amadeus of Savoy abdicates from Spanish throne; a republic is proclaimed resulting in a Carlist rising in Basque provinces.

Editors of Russian newspapers compelled to reveal names of contributors.

Russian students try to promote social reform among peasants.

“May Laws” in Germany restrict powers of the Church.

ART



Tolstoy publishes *Anna Karenina*.

Jules Verne publishes *Around the World in 80 Days*.

◀ Degas paints *The Cotton Office at New Orleans*.

Rimsky-Korsakov premieres opera *Ivan the Terrible*.

Science and Technology

Viennese doctor Christian Billroth, the “Father of Gastric Surgery,” first to remove a cancerous larynx.

Joseph F. Glidden, of the U.S.A., invents barbed wire.

Peters discovers the asteroid Electra.

Sholes and Glidden, U.S.A., design the first commercially successful typewriter, marketed in 1874.

Van der Waal publishes his equation for gases.

Next week's case: MUSG

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.

© 2020 Alexander E. Braun