

SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES

THE ADVENTURE OF THE THREE STUDENTS

By SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

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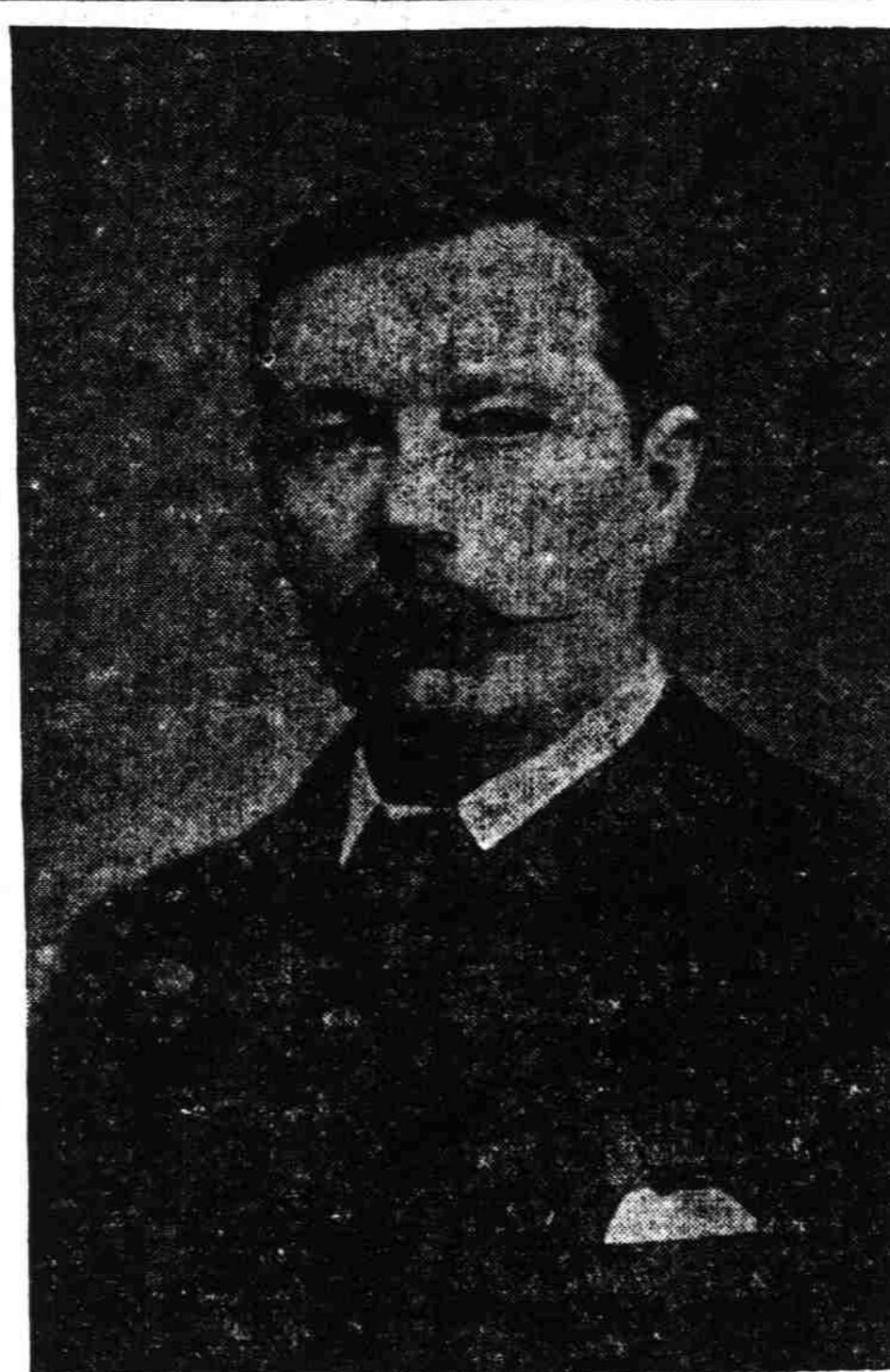
This is the first installment of a series of Sherlock Holmes detective stories by A. Conan Doyle. One complete story will appear every Sunday in The Star. Next Sunday a case of identity will appear.

It was in the year '95 that a combination of events, into which I need not enter, caused Mr. Sherlock Holmes and myself to spend some weeks in one of our great universities and it was during this time that the small but instructive adventures which I am about to relate befell me. It will be obvious that any details which would help the reader to exactly identify the college or the criminal would be injudicious and offensive. So painful a scandal may well be allowed to die out. With due discretion incident itself may, however, be described, since it serves to illustrate some of those qualities for which my friend was remarkable. I will endeavor in my statement to avoid such phrases as would serve to limit the events to any particular place, or give any clue as to the people concerned. We were residing at the time in furnished lodgings close to a library where Sherlock 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. Here it was that one evening we received a visit from an acquaintance, Mr. Hilton Soames, tutor and lecturer at the College of St. Luke's. He Soames was a tall, spare man, of a nervous and excitable temperament, but always known him to be restless in his manner, but on this particular occasion he was in such a state of uncontrollable agitation that it was clear something very unusual had occurred.

"I trust, Mr. Holmes, that you can spare me a few hours of your valuable time. We have had a very painful incident at St. Luke's, and really, but for the happy chance of your being in town, I should have been at a loss what to do."
"I am very busy just now, and I decline no distractions," my friend answered. "I should much prefer that you called in the aid of the police."
"No, no, my dear sir; such a course is utterly impossible. When once the case is evoked it cannot be stayed again, and this is just one of those cases where, for the credit of the college, it is most essential to avoid scandal. Your discretion is as well known as your powers, and you are the one man in the world who can help me. I beg you Mr. Holmes, to do what you can."
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. He shrugged his shoulders in ungracious acquiescence, while our visitor in hurried words and with much excitable gesticulation poured forth his story.

"I must explain to you, Mr. Holmes, that tomorrow is the first day of the examination for the Fortescue scholarship. I am one of the examiners. My subject is Greek, and the first of the papers consists of a large passage of Greek translation which the candidate has not seen. This passage is printed on the examination paper, and it would naturally be an immense advantage if the candidate could prepare it in advance. For this reason, great care is taken to keep the paper secret."
"Today, about 3 o'clock, the proofs of this paper arrived from the printers. The exercise consists of half a chapter of Thucydides. I had to read it over carefully, as the text must be absolutely correct. At 4:30 my task was not yet completed. I had, however, promised to take tea in a friend's rooms, so I left the proof upon my desk. I was absent rather more than an hour."
"You are aware, Mr. Holmes, that our college doors are double—a green baize one within and a heavy oak one without. As I approached my outer door, I was amazed to see a key in it. For an instant I imagined that I had left my own there, but on feeling in my pocket I found that it was all right. The only duplicate which existed, so far as I knew, was that which belonged to my servant, Bannister—a man who has looked after my rooms for ten years, and whose honesty is

absolutely above suspicion. I found that the key was indeed his that he had entered my room to know if I wanted tea, and that he had very carefully left the key in the door when he came out. His visit to my room must have been within a very few minutes of my leaving it. His forgetfulness about the key would have mattered little upon any other occasion, but on this one day it has produced the most deplorable consequences."
"The moment I looked at my table, I was aware that some one had rummaged among my papers. The proof was in three long slips. I had left them all together. Now, I found that one of them was lying on the floor, one was on the side table near the window, and the third was where I had left it. Holmes stirred for the first time.



SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
Creator of "Sherlock Holmes," the Greatest Character in Fiction

man who tampered with them came upon them accidentally without knowing that they were there."
"So it seems to me."
Holmes gave an enigmatic smile.

"Well," said he, "let us go round. Not one of your cases, Watson—mental, not physical. All right, come if you want to. Now Mr. Soames—at your disposal!"
The sitting room of our client opened by a long low, lattice window on to the ancient lichen-tinted court of the old college. A Gothic arched door led to a worn stone staircase. On the ground floor was the tutor's room. Above were three students, one on each story. It was already twilight when we reached the scene of our problem. Holmes halted and looked earnestly at the window. Then he approached it, and, standing on tip-toe with his

neck craned, he looked into the room. "He must have entered through the door. There is no opening except the one pane," said our learned guide.

Mr. Soames was somewhat overwhelmed by this flood of information. (Continued On Page Fourteen.)

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