

THE BEST OF THE SHERLOCK HOLMES STORIES

The Mystery of the  
"Gloria Scott"

by  
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This is the eleventh of a series of stories by A. Conan Doyle, dealing with the adventures of the famous detective, Sherlock Holmes, up to the time of his memorable struggle for life upon the Switzerland mountain path with the redoubtable Moriarty. These are the original Sherlock Holmes stories, and the ones which made Dr. Doyle's fame. They are entirely apart from the series which recently appeared in the Sunday Call entitled "The Return of Sherlock Holmes."

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"I HAVE some papers here," said my friend Sherlock Holmes, as we sat one winter's night on either side of the fire, "which I really think, Watson, that it would be worth your while to glance over. These are the documents in the extraordinary case of the Gloria Scott, and this is the message which struck Justice of the Peace Trevor dead with horror when he read it."

He had picked from a drawer a little tarnished cylinder, and, undoing the tape, he handed me a short note scrawled upon a half sheet of slate-gray paper.

"The supply of game for London is going steadily up," it ran. "Head Keeper Hudson, we believe, has been you-told-to-receive all orders for fly-paper-and-for-preservation-of-your-hem-pheasants' life."

As I glanced up from reading this enigmatical message, I saw Holmes chuckling at the expression upon my face.

"You look a little bewildered," said he.

"I cannot see how such a message as this could inspire horror. It seems to me to be rather grotesque than otherwise."

"Very likely. Yet the fact remains that the reader, who was a fine, robust old man, was knocked clean down by it as if it had been the butt end of a pistol."

"You arouse my curiosity," said I. "But why did you say just now that there were very particular reasons why I should study this case?"

"Because it was the first in which I was ever engaged."

I had often endeavored to elicit from my companion what had first turned his mind in the direction of criminal research, but had never caught him before in a communicative humor. Now he sat forward in his armchair and spread out the documents upon his knees. Then he lit his pipe and sat for some time smoking and turning them over.

"You never heard me talk of Victor Trevor?" he asked. "He was the only friend I made during the two years I was at college. I was never a very sociable fellow, Watson, always rather fond of moping in my rooms and working out my own little methods of thought, so that I never mixed much with the men of my year. Bar fencing and boxing I had few athletic tastes, and then my line of study was quite distinct from that of the other fellows, so that we had no points of contact at all. Trevor was the only man I knew, and that only through the accident of his bull-terrier freezing on to my ankle one morning as I went down to the chapel."

"It was a prosaic way of forming a friendship, but it was effective. I was laid by the heels for ten days and Trevor used to come and inquire after me. At first it was only a minute's chat, but soon his visits lengthened, and before the end of the term we were close friends. He was a hearty, full-blooded fellow, full of spirits and energy, the very opposite to me in most respects, but we had some subjects in common, and it was a bond of union when I found that he was as friendless as I. Finally he invited me down to his father's place at Donnithorpe, in Norfolk, and I accepted his hospitality for a month of the long vacation."

"Old Trevor was evidently a man of some wealth and consideration, a J. P., and a landed proprietor. Donnithorpe is a little hamlet just to the north of Langmere, in the country of the Broads. The house was an old-fashioned, wide-spread, oak-beamed brick building, with a fine, lime-lined avenue leading up to it. There was excellent wild-duck shooting in the fens, remarkably good fishing, a small but select library, taken over, as I understood, from a former occupant, and a tolerable cook, so that he would be a fastidious man who could not put in a pleasant month there."

"Trevor senior was a widower, and my friend his only son."

"There had been a daughter, I heard, but she had died of diphtheria while on a visit to Birmingham. The father interested me extremely. He was a man of little culture, but a considerable amount of rude strength, both mentally and physically. He knew hardly any books, but he had traveled far, and seen much of the world, and had remembered all that he had learned. In person he was a thick-set, burly man with a shock of grizzled hair, a brown, weather-beaten face and blue eyes, which were keen to the verge of fierceness. Yet he had a reputation for kindness and charity on the countryside, and was noted for the leniency of his sentences from the bench."

"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. The old man evidently thought that his son was exaggerating in his description of one or two trivial feats which I had performed. 'Come, now, Mr. Holmes,' said he, laughing good-humoredly, 'I'm an excellent subject, if you can deduce anything from me.' 'I fear there is not very much,' I answered. 'I might suggest that you



"WE GOT ON  
THEM BEFORE  
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have gone about in fear of some personal attack within the last twelve-month."

"The laugh faded from his lips, and he stared at me in great surprise. 'Well, that's true enough,' said he. 'You know, Victor, turning to his son, when we broke up that poaching gang they swore to knife us, and Sir Edward Holly has actually been attacked. I've always been on my guard since then, though I have no idea how you know it.' 'You have a very handsome stick,' I answered. 'By the inscription I observed that you had not had it more than a year. But you have taken some pains to bore the head of it and pour melted lead into the hole so as to make a formidable weapon. I argued that you would not take such precautions

unless you had some danger to fear.' 'Anything else?' he asked, smiling. 'You have boxed a good deal in your youth.' 'Right, again. How did you know it?' 'Is my nose knocked a little out of the straight?' 'No,' said I. 'It is your ears. They have the peculiar flattening and thickening which mark the boxing man.' 'Anything else?' 'You have done a good deal of digging by your callouses.' 'Made all my money at the gold fields.' 'You have been in New Zealand.' 'Right again.' 'You have visited Japan.' 'Quite true.' 'And you have been most intimately associated with some one whose in-

itials were J. A., and whom you afterward were eager to entirely forget.' 'Mr. Trevor stood slowly up, fixed his large blue eyes upon me with a strange wild stare, and then pitched forward, with his face among the nutshells which strewed the deck, in a dead faint. 'You can imagine, Watson, how shocked both his son and I were. His attack did not last long, however, for when we undid his collar and sprinkled the water from one of the finger glasses over his face he gave a gasp or two and sat up. 'Ah, boys,' said he, forcing a smile, 'I hope I haven't frightened you. Strong as I look, there is a weak place in my heart, and it does not take much to knock me over. 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. At the moment, however, I was too much concerned at the sudden illness of my host to think of anything else. 'I hope that I have said nothing to pain you?' said I. 'Well, you certainly touched upon rather a tender point. Might I ask how you know, and how much you know?' He spoke now in a half-festive fashion, but a look of terror still lurked at the back of his eyes.

"It is simplicity itself," said I. 'When you bared your arm to draw that fish into the boat I saw that J. A. had been tattooed in the bend of the elbow. The letters were still legible, but it was perfectly clear from their blurred appearance and from the staining of the skin around them that efforts had been made to obliterate them. It was obvious, then, that those initials had once been very familiar to you, and that you had afterward wished to forget them.' 'What an eye you have!' he cried, with a sigh of relief. 'It is just as you say. But we won't talk of it. Of all ghosts the ghosts of our old lovers are the worst. Come into the billiard-room and have a quiet cigar.' 'From that day, amid all his cordiality, there was always a touch of sus-

picion in Mr. Trevor's manner toward me. Even his son remarked it. 'You've given the governor such a turn,' said he, 'that he'll never be sure again of what you know and what you don't know.' He did not mean to show it, I am sure, but it was so strongly in his mind that it peeped out at every action. At last I became so convinced that I was causing him uneasiness that I drew my visit to a close. On the very day, however, before I left, an incident occurred which proved in the sequel to be of importance.

"We were sitting out upon the lawn on garden chairs, the three of us, basking in the sun and admiring the view across the Broads, when a maid came out to say that there was a man at the door who wanted to see Mr. Trevor."

"What is his name?" asked my host. "He would not give any." "What does he want, then?" "He says that you know him, and that he only wants a moment's conversation."

"Show him round here." An instant afterward there appeared a little wizened fellow with a cringing manner and a shambling style of walking. He wore an open jacket, with a splotch of tar on the sleeve, a red-and-black check shirt, dungaree trousers, and heavy boots badly worn. His face was thin and brown and crafty, with a perpetual smile upon it, which showed an irregular line of yellow teeth, and his crinkled hands were half closed in a way that is distinctive of sailors. As he came slouching across the lawn I heard Mr. Trevor make a sort of hiccupping noise in his throat, and, jumping out of his chair, he ran into the house. He was back in a moment, and I smelt a strong reek of brandy as he passed me.

"Well, my man," said he, "what can I do for you?"

"The sailor stood looking at him with puckered eyes, and with the same loose-lipped smile upon his face. 'You don't know me?' he asked. 'Why, dear me, it is surely Hudson,' said Mr. Trevor in a tone of surprise. 'Hudson it is, sir,' said the seaman. 'Why, it's thirty years and more since I saw you last. Here you are in your house, and me still picking my salt meat out of the harness cask.'

"Tut, you will find that I have not forgotten old times," cried Mr. Trevor, and, walking toward the sailor, he said something in a low voice. "Go into the kitchen and get me a glass of brandy, and you will see food and drink. I have no doubt that I shall find you a situation."

"Thank you, sir," said the seaman, touching his forelock. "I'm just off a two-yearer in an eight-knot tramp, short-handed at that, and I want a rest. I thought I'd get it either with Mr. Beddoes or with you."

"Ah," cried Mr. Trevor. "You know where Mr. Beddoes is?"

"Bless you, sir, I know where all my old friends are," said the fellow with a sinister smile, and he slouched off after the maid to the kitchen. Mr. Trevor mumbled something to us about having been shipmate with the man when he was going back to the diggings, and then, leaving us on the lawn, he went indoors. An hour later, when we entered the house, we found him stretched dead drunk upon the dining-room sofa. The whole incident left a most ugly impression upon my mind, and I was not sorry next day to leave Donnithorpe behind me, for I felt that my presence must be a source of embarrassment to my friend.

"All this occurred during the first month of the long vacation. I went up to my London rooms, where I spent seven weeks working out a few experiments in organic chemistry. One day, however, when the autumn was far advanced and the vacation drawing to a close, I received a telegram from my friend imploring me to return to Donnithorpe, and saying that he was in great need of my advice and assistance. Of course I dropped everything and set out for the north once more.

"He met me with the dog-cart at the station, and I saw at a glance that the two last months had been very trying ones for him. He had grown thin and careworn, and had lost the loud, cheery manner for which he had been remarkable.

"The Governor is dying," were the first words he said. "Impossible!" I cried. "What is the matter?" "Apoplexy. Nervous shock. He's been on the verge all day. I doubt if we shall find him alive."

"I was, as you may think, Watson, horrified at this unexpected news. 'What has caused it?' I asked. 'Ah, that is the point. Jump in and we can talk it over while we drive. You remember that fellow who came upon the evening before you left us?' 'Perfectly.'

"Do you know who it was that we let into the house that day?" "I have no idea." "It was the devil, Holmes," he cried. "I stared at him in astonishment. 'Yes, it was the devil himself. We have not had a peaceful hour since—not one. The Governor has never held up his head from that evening, and now the life has been crushed out of him and his heart broken, all through this accursed Hudson.'

"What power had he, then?" "Ah, that is what I would give so much to know. The kindly, charitable, good old Governor—how could he have fallen into the clutches of such a ruffian! But I am so glad that you have come! Holmes, I trust very much to your judgment and discretion, and I know that you will advise me for the best."

"We were dashing along the smooth white country road, with the long stretch of the Broads in front of us glimmering in the red light of the setting sun. From a grove upon our left I could already see the high chimneys and the flag-staff which marked the squire's dwelling. 'My father made the fellow gar-