



# The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes

## Adventure XVI – The Adventure of the Cardboard Box

### Publishing History

# 16 of the 60 stories

First printed in *The Strand Magazine*, January 1893

In the US *Harper's Weekly*, January 14, 1893

Part of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* collection by  
George Newnes, Ltd., London, 1894

Harper Bros., New York, 1894

British Illustrator - Sidney Paget

### Chronology

Baring Gould places the dating of the story as Saturday, August 31 to Monday, September 2, 1889 which makes 25<sup>th</sup> of the 60.

This means that Holmes is 35 and Watson 37.



### Christopher Morley Says

“This story, first written for *The Strand* in 1893, was withheld from book publication until 1917; the author believed it made unchivalrous reflections on female character! The very respectable Miss Cushing receives an unpleasant package in the mail: a tobacco box filled with coarse salt in which are two “very singular enclosures.” When you observe Holmes suddenly staring at Miss Cushing’s profile you are getting “warm.”

### Dummies Short Summary

“This story of marital infidelity and murder was considered too racy for the American edition of *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes* and didn’t appear in book form in America until *His Last Bow*.”

## **How Many Words**

At 8,730 words CARD has the 37<sup>th</sup> most words (#1 is VEIL – 4,499, #56 if NAVL – 12,701)

## **Classifying This Case**

This case is one of 23 classified as a MURDER and one of 14 where the perpetrator was either killed, arrested, or otherwise satisfactorily handled.

## **The Best Of Sherlock Holmes**

- 1944 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it #9 on their worst list
- 1999 – The Baker Street Irregulars voted it 26nd of the 56 short stories
- 1999 – The Sherlock Holmes Society of London voted it 31nd of the 56 short stories

## **What Else Happened That Year (1889)**

- British South Africa Company Charter awarded.
- Transvaal claimed to be "encircled" by Rhodes' concessions in East Africa. Rhodesia established.
- Great London Dock Strike; the "Dockers' Tanner"; growth of unskilled workers unions; New Unionism; Gasworkers' Union formed.
- March 30, Early use of photographs in newspaper: Illustrated London News runs Cambridge and Oxford boat crews.
- Establishment of telephone company.
- Board of Agriculture becomes government department with minister.
- General Booth (Salvation Army) publishes Survey of London Life and Labour.
- Italy takes Somalia and Ethiopia.
- October 6--The Moulin Rouge first opens its doors.
- Mayerling tragedy: suicide of Crown Prince Rudolph of Austria and Baroness Maria Vetsera.
- Treaty of Acciali: Ethiopia made Italian protectorate.
- End of Portuguese Empire in Brazil; republic proclaimed.
- Promulgation of Japanese Constitution.
- Paris Exhibition: proof of industrial development in France.
- Work on Panama Canal stopped; French company bankrupt.

- Bismarck introduces Old Age Insurance in Germany.
- Erection of Tacoma Building in Chicago. First skyscraper, 13 stories high.
- Conan Doyle publishes A Sign of Four.
- Mark Twain publishes A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.
- Sudermann publishes Die Ehre, a German play.
- Renoir paints Girls Picking Flowers.
- Eiffel Tower completed, 985 feet high, taller than the Great Pyramid, become highest structure on earth.
- Eastman's Kodak camera comes into production, using photographic film.
- First linotype machine in use.

### **Holmes And Watson – Personal Information**

The pair are sharing their rental quarters at 221B.

### **Dramatis Personae**

- **Susan Cushing**, a quiet maiden lady of 50.
- **Sara Cushing**, her younger sister
- **Mary Cushing**, a third, and youngest, sister
- **Jim Browner**, married to Mary
- **Alec Fairbairn**, had an adulterous affair with Mary?
- **Lestrade** an inspector from Scotland Yard
- **Algar** of the Liverpool force, a friend of Holmes who made a few local inquiries
- **Inspector Montgomery**, of the Shadwell station – took Browner's statement.

### **Quotable Sherlock**

- "Your hand stole toward your own old wound...."
- "You have observed, of course, that the ears are not a pair."
- "I should prefer that you do not mention my name at all in connection with the case, as I choose to be only associated with those crimes which present some difficulty in their solution."
- "Although he [Lestrade] is absolutely devoid of reason, he is as tenacious as a bulldog when he once understands what he has to go."

- “We approached the case, you remember, with an absolute blank mind, which is always an advantage. We had formed no theories. We were simply there to observe and to draw inferences from our observations.”
- "What is the meaning of it, Watson? What object is served by this circle of misery and violence and fear? It must tend to some end, or else our universe is ruled by chance, which is unthinkable. But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever."

### **Holmes' Fee**

No mention. Lestrade called Holmes in. We believe there was a retainer arrangement between Holmes and the Yard. This would help us understand how Holmes made a living, and also why he let Scotland Yard take credit for his solutions. (Of the fully recorded cases there are at least nine, REIG, BLAC, SIXN, GOLD, ABBE, CARD, DYIN, STUD, VALL, in which Holmes participated solely in order to assist the police.

### **Unrecorded Cases**

Aldridge, who helped Holmes and Lestrade in the bogus laundry affair.

### **Sherlock Holmes On The Big And The Little Screen**

There were some thoughts about not publishing this story due to its “gruesome” content. You would think that would cause many more than 2 appearances on the screen.

- 1923 *The Cardboard Box* with Eille Norwood, The National Film and Television Archive at the BFI has viewing copies of this film but it has not been released
- 1994 *The Cardboard Box* with Jeremy Brett was one of the last few episodes from Granada TV's *Sherlock Holmes* series

### **Annotated Sherlock**

- “**en rapport**” French: harmony of relation.
- “**honeydew tobacco**” Smoking tobacco sweetened with molasses.
- “**the pinna**” The projecting portion of the exterior ear.
- “**blue ribbon**” On the wagon. Not drinking. From an organization of teetotalers called the Blue Ribbon Army in 1878.

- **“parliament has risen”** “adjourned for summer recess
- **“brown study”** a vacuous or melancholy state of mind
- **“antimacasser”** a covering hung over backs of chairs and sofas to protect furniture from hair grease, took its name from a popular hair oil – Macasser Oil

### **Holmes The Author**

Holes claims he wrote Monographs on the human ear - Two separate monographs published in the *Anthropological Journal*

### **Weapons**

Only two weapons and one is rarely used as a weapon.

- Knife - Which James Browner used to cut off the ears of his wife, Mary, and her lover, Alex Fairbairn, in order to send them to his wife’s shrewish, meddling sister.
- Oar - With which Alex Fairbairn tried to defend himself and Mary Browning against the fury of her husband.

**Frank Mentzel**