

A STUDY GUIDE TO SHERLOCK HOLMES

By William S. Dorn



**The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes
Adventure XVI -- The Adventure
of the Cardboard Box**

THE CARDBOARD BOX DATE OF THE ADVENTURE*

(Date when Susan Cushing received two severed ears)

CLUES:

1. "It was a blazing hot day in August." (888)
2. Watson was living with Holmes in Baker Street.
3. Watson was married in late 1888 or early 1889
4. From Wednesday, August 7, 1888 to Saturday, August 10, 1888 it was very hot in England.
5. Holmes says, "Today is Friday." (892)
6. The newspaper report says, "At two o'clock yesterday afternoon a small packet ... was handed in by the postman". (890)
7. The newspaper report was published on the same day that Holmes made that statement in Clue Number 5.

CONCLUSIONS:

- A. 1, 2, and 3 imply the case was in August 1888.
- B. A and 4 imply the case opened between Wednesday, August 7, 1888 and Saturday, August 10, 1888
- C. B and 5 imply the case opened on Friday, August 9, 1888
- D. C, 6, and 7 imply the packet arrived on Thursday, August 8, 1888

**Susan Cushing received the two ears on
Thursday, August 8, 1888**

*The story may contain other clues to the date of the adventure. However, use only the clues shown here. Your only goal should be to use logical reasoning to find a date based on the clues shown here.

THE CARDBOARD BOX VOCABULARY WORDS

shingle of Southsea (888) – **pebble beach at Southsea**

filaments (888) – **long, slender projections**

General Gordon (889) – **Charles “Chinese” Gordon**

(1833-1885), British general sent to Khartoum in the Sudan in 1884 to rescue English garrisons that were under attack by the Mahdi, Mohammed Ahmed. Gordon himself was besieged for 10 months. A relief expedition arrived on January 28, 1885 to find that Khartoum had been captured, and Gordon killed two days before.

Henry Ward Beecher (889) – **US Congregational minister and militant opponent of slavery; he traveled to Britain and helped turn British sentiment against the South**

our boots (890) – **our servant**

placid-faced (891, 893) – **calm faced**

grizzled hair (891, 893) – **hair flecked with grey**

antimacassar (891, 893) – **a cover to protect the arms or back of a chair**

outhouse (891) – **building that is separated from the main building**

steward (893) – **ship’s employee who attends to the passengers’ wants**

tenacious (895) – **holding fast with fury**

pinna of the ear (896) – **projecting portion of the ear**

upper lobe of the ear (896) – **top part of ear**

cartilage (896) – **elastic tissue**

elucidate (897) – **shed light on the meaning**

sanguine (897) – **optimistic**

obtuse (897) – **dense**

- foolscap (897) – **A sheet of writing paper measuring approximately 13 by 16 inches with a watermark of a fool's cap with bells**
- swarthy (897) – **dark complexioned**
- darbies (897) – **handcuffs**
- block (898) – **a pulley or a system of pulleys set in a casing**
- blue ribbon (898, 899) – **not drinking, named for the Blue Ribbon Army, a teetotaler organization founded in 1878**
- flint (898) – **a very hard, fine-grained quartz that sparks when struck with steel**
- besotted (899) – **muddled or stupefied**
- rows (899) – **arguments**
- curled (899) – **handsome**
- poop (899) – **part of ship towards the rear**
- forecastle (899) – **part of ship in front of the main mast**
- hogshead (900) – **a large cask**
- footpath (900) – **sidewalk**
- docker's hammer (900) – **dock worker's hammer**
- booking-office (900) – **ticket office**
- the Parade (900) – **the walk along the shore**
- stove (901) – **knocked out a plank**

THE CARDBOARD BOX OPEN QUESTIONS

1. The thought reading episode with which the story begins appeared earlier in *The Strand* edition of “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box”. However, that latter adventure was omitted from the book, *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. “The Resident Patient” was included in the book, and Doyle lifted the thought reading episode and put it in “The Adventure of the Cardboard Box”. Why do you suppose the “Adventure of the Cardboard Box” was omitted from *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*?

(HINT: “The Cardboard Box” was first published in *The Strand* magazine in January 1893. When the book, *The Memoirs*, was published in 1894, that story was omitted although “The Resident Patient” was included in the book. “The Cardboard Box” was included in a later volume, *His Last Bow*, published in 1917.)

“The Cardboard Box” was not published in *The Memoirs* because Doyle thought it would not be proper to use a story about marital infidelity in a book that would be widely read, more widely read than the magazine in which the story first appeared. However, he (Doyle) was loath to omit the thought reading episode, so he lifted it and inserted it verbatim in “The Resident Patient”. “The Cardboard Box” was later included in the volume *His Last Bow* published in 1917. By that time, Doyle thought including such a story in a book would be acceptable to the general public.

2. This story contains the only clue to Inspector Lestrade’s first name? What is the clue?

On page 898, Lestrade signs a letter as G. Lestrade.

THE CARDBOARD BOX SIMPLE QUIZ*

1. The package that Susan Cushing received contained
 - a. a severed thumb
 - b. two severed ears
 - c. a dead rat
 - d. none of the above

2. How many Cushing sisters were there?
 - a. two
 - b. three
 - c. four
 - d. none of the above

3. Jim Browner was
 - a. the murderer
 - b. the murdered man
 - c. the detective who Holmes helped solve the case
 - d. none of the above

* The Simple Quiz is designed to determine if the student has read the story. Anyone who has read the story through should have no trouble in completing this quiz. The Intermediate and Advanced Quizzes are more challenging.

THE CARDBOARD BOX INTERMEDIATE QUIZ[#]

1. How did Jim Browner kill his wife, Mary, and her lover, Alec Fairbairn?
 - a. he capsized their boat
 - b. he struck them with his stick
 - c. he drowned them
 - d. none of the above

2. Why had the packet containing the severed ears been delivered to the wrong person?
 - a. the correct addressee had recently moved
 - b. the sender had misspelled the name
 - c. there were two people whose first names began with the same letter of the alphabet
 - d. none of the above

3. What were the two severed ears packed in?
 - a. formaldehyde
 - b. cotton saturated in iodoform
 - c. rock salt
 - d. none of the above

4. How did the case end?
 - a. Jim Browner confessed
 - b. Jim Browner was tried and convicted
 - c. Jim Browner committed suicide
 - d. none of the above

[#] The Intermediate Quiz is designed to test whether the student has read the story with reasonable attention to detail. The Simple Quiz is an easier test while the Advanced Quiz is much more challenging.

THE CARDBOARD BOX ADVANCED QUIZ[&]

1. From where was the cardboard box mailed?
 - a. Belfast
 - b. Dublin
 - c. Liverpool
 - d. none of the above

2. At the time of this story, for how long had Susan and Sarah Cushing not lived together?
 - a. about two weeks
 - b. about two months
 - c. about four months
 - d. none of the above

3. Where had Tom Browner followed his wife, Susan, and Alec Fairbairn on the train and then hired a boat from which he murdered both of them?
 - a. Liverpool
 - b. New Brighton
 - c. Southampton
 - d. none of the above

4. Where did Susan Cushing, who received the packet containing the two severed ears, live?
 - a. Cross Street, Croydon
 - b. Bush Villa, Penge
 - c. New Street, Wallington
 - d. none of the above

[&] The Advanced Quiz is designed for aficionados of the Canon. The questions are quite challenging. The Intermediate and Simple Quizzes are designed for the more casual reader of the stories.

ANSWERS TO QUIZZES FOR HIS LAST BOW

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Wisteria Lodge				
Simple	b	a	a	xx
Intermediate	a	b	a	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a
Cardboard Box				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	c	c	a
Advanced	a	b	b	a
Red Circle				
Simple	b	b	a	xx
Intermediate	b	b	c	a
Advanced	b	c	c	a
Bruce Partington Plans				
Simple	a	b	a	xx
Intermediate	c	c	a	b
Advanced	a	b	a	a
Dying Detective				
Simple	d	a	b	xx
Intermediate	b	c	b	c
Advanced	a	b	c	c
Lady Frances Carfax				
Simple	c	a	b	xx
Intermediate	a	b	b	c
Advanced	b	c	b	a

QUESTION	1	2	3	4
Devil's Foot				
Simple	c	c	b	xx
Intermediate	b	a	c	b
Advanced	b	c	c	a
His Last Bow				
Simple	b	b	c	xx
Intermediate	c	a	a	b
Advanced	a	d	c	a