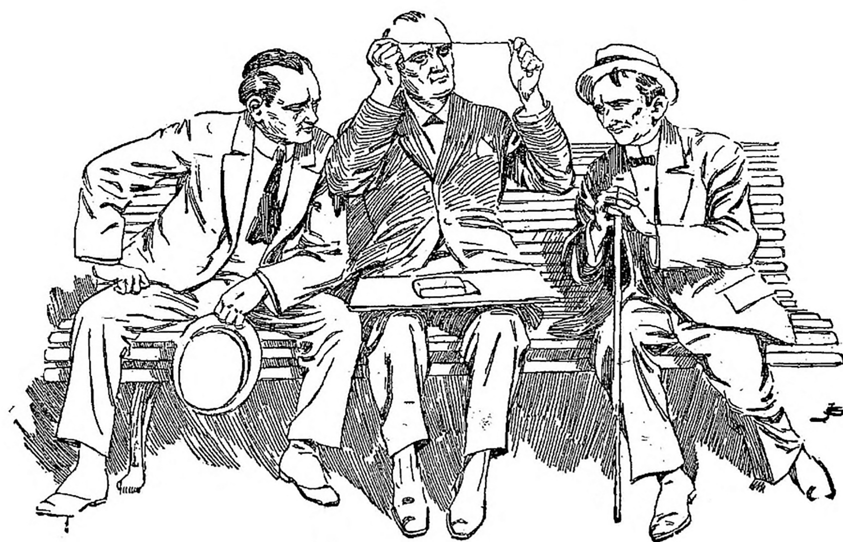
# The Adventure of the Cardboard Box

*by A. Conan Doyle*

*A New Annotated Edition*



*Sherlock Holmes examines the cardboard box.*

By J. Basté in *Les Annales Politiques et Littéraires* (1920).
Courtesy of Alexis Barquin and the ACD Encyclopedia.

# The Adventure of the Cardboard Box

## A New Annotated Edition

*Arthur Conan Doyle,*[1] *with notes*[2] *by Mary M. Alcaro,*[3] *Peter E. Blau,*[4] *Ross E. Davies,*[5] *Carlina de la Cova,*[6] *Jenn Eaker,*[7] *Jayantika Ganguly,*[8] *Walter Jaffee,*[9] *Robert A. James,*[10] *Roger Johnson,*[11] *Alexander Katz,*[12] *Robert S. Katz,*[13] *Michael Kean,*[14] *Anastasia Klimchynskaya,*[15] *Jennifer Kneeland,*[16] *Nick Martorelli,*[17]

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[2] Among other accomplishments, many of our contributors are invested in the Baker Street Irregulars and/or Adventuresses of Sherlock Holmes. We note only those invested in the most recent classes.

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[7] Jenn Eaker has written for the *Baker Street Journal* and wrote two award-winning articles in *The Serpentine Muse.* She lives in New York City and works in television.

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*Burt Wolder,*[26] *Beverly Wolov,*[27] *Tamar Zeffren,*[28] *and Christopher Zordan*[29]

## INTRODUCTION, WITH A NOTE ON THE TEXT

*Ira Brad Matetsky*

As editor-in-chief of *The Green Bag Almanac and Reader*, an annual publication celebrating excellence in legal writing, Ross Davies gets to choose each year's theme. For 2015 and again for 2016, he chose Sherlock Holmes. The 2015 edition featured, among other Sherlockian material, a "Lawyerly Annotated Edition" of "The Adventure of the Norwood Builder."[30] This feature was so well-received that the 2016 edition contained lawyerly annotations to a second canonical story, "The Adventure of the Reigate Squire."[31] Non-lawyer readers should know that while these annotations were written by lawyers and judges, the notes were not unduly technical and should be readily accessible to interested Sherlockians who do not share a legal background. Look them up sometime, if you haven't already seen them.

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[18] Ira Matetsky co-edited *Upon the Turf*, was invested in the BSI in 2019 as "The Final Problem," and won the Morley-Montgomery Award for 2019.

[19] Scott Monty is executive editor and co-host of "I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere" and "Trifles." He writes the Timeless & Timely newsletter for business executives.

[20] Oscar Ross is the Purser and co-founder of The Crew of the S.S. *May Day*, moored at Belfast, Northern Ireland.

[21] Greg D. Ruby is the founder and Gasogene of The Sherlockians of Baltimore and The Fourth Garrideb. He edits *The Newspapers* and works as a meetings and event planner.

[22] Monica Schmidt is president of The Younger Stamfords and was invested in the BSI in 2019 as "Julia Stoner." She is a licensed mental health counselor.

[23] Marina Stajić, Ph.D., has been a practicing forensic toxicologist for over 40 years.

[24] Jean Upton is Editor of *The District Messenger*, the monthly newsletter of the Sherlock Holmes Society of London.

[25] Karen Wilson is a Baltimore, Maryland philosophy teacher, church musician, and mom, and a past Gasogene of Watson's Tin Box of Ellicott City.

[26] Burt Wolder co-hosts "I Hear of Sherlock Everywhere" and "Trifles." He is chief marketing officer for a medical information services company.

[27] Beverly Wolov has an M.A in the History of Decorative Arts from the Smithsonian/Corcoran College of Art and Design, with a background is in fashion history.

[28] Tamar Zeffren is an officer of the Priory Scholars of New York and is an archivist.

[29] Christopher Zordan is a chemist working in pharmaceuticals and an officer of the Priory Scholars of New York.

[30] 2015 Green Bag Alm. 116, 5 J. of L. 235, available at http://journaloflaw.us.

[31] 2016 Green Bag. Alm. 109, 6 J. of L. 141, available at http://journaloflaw.us.

Now that *The Baker Street Almanac* stands on its own, the editors have decided to revive the annual feature of annotating a different Sherlock Holmes story each year, beginning this year with "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box." Annotations were solicited from two dozen Sherlockians. In selecting invitees, we looked well beyond the legal profession, although lawyers certainly were not unrepresented.

As in the past, our annotations follow in the Sherlockian annotation tradition, which began with William S. Baring-Gould's *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, continued with *The Oxford Sherlock Holmes*, and culminated in Leslie S. Klinger's *Sherlock Holmes Reference Library* and *New Annotated Sherlock Holmes.* Citations to these prior annotations appear in the footnotes, together with our current authors' additions to their work.[32]

If you enjoy reading our New Annotated Edition of this story, and might like to participate in this project by writing your own annotation for "The Adventure of the Priory School" (which will appear in the 2021 edition of the *Baker Street Almanac*), please see page 352 of this *Almanac* and email me at irabrad221b@gmail.com.

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"The Adventure of the Cardboard Box" first appeared in the January 1893 issue of *The Strand Magazine* in the United Kingdom, and the January 14, 1893 issue of *Harper's Weekly* in the United States. The text reprinted below is taken from the *Harper's Weekly* version.

As is well-known, when the second series of 12 Sherlock Holmes short stories was assembled in book form, Arthur Conan Doyle directed that "The Cardboard Box" be omitted from what became *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes.* There has been much speculation on why he did so, though I know of no direct evidence from Doyle's own mouth or pen.[33] The British edition of *The Memoirs* followed Doyle's direction and left out "The Cardboard Box." The first American edition included "The Cardboard Box," but was soon followed by a "new and revised edition" that omitted it. "The Cardboard Box" was eventually published in book form, both in the U.K. and the

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[32] Baring-Gould's *The Annotated Sherlock Holmes* will be cited as "WBG"; the Oxford Sherlock Holmes volume on *The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*, as "OSH: Memoirs"; Klinger's Reference Library volume on *The Memoirs*, as "LSK, Ref: Memoirs"; and Klinger's *New Annotated Sherlock Holmes*, as "LSK, 1 New Ann."

[33] In a September 22, 1893 letter to Harper & Brothers (publisher of the U.S. editions of *The Adventures* and *The Memoirs*), Doyle states laconically that "I should like the second story omitted," but gives no reason for this before moving on to other matters.

U.S., in the collection *His Last Bow* in 1917. The text used in preparing that edition was derived from *The Strand Magazine*, not *Harper's Weekly*.

There is a Sherlockian cottage industry in compiling and analyzing textual variations in different versions of each story that have appeared in periodicals and books on both sides of the Atlantic. One reason the editors chose "The Cardboard Box" as this year's annotated story was in anticipation of the opportunity to examine variations between the little-seen *Harper's Weekly* text of this story and the better known *Strand Magazine* and *His Last Bow* texts. In 2018, Ross used the *Harper's Weekly* text of "The Adventure of the Resident Patient" as the basis for one of his Sherlockian maps and asked me to help proofread it. In doing so, I spotted some interesting differences between what I was reading and the text that I knew.[34] Those changes had previously gone unnoticed because when "The Cardboard Box" was dropped, its opening "mind-reading scene" was moved to "The Resident Patient." This required the substitution of a newly edited version of "The Resident Patient" in the U.S. *Memoirs* for the text that had been derived from *Harper's Weekly*. As a result, the *Harper's Weekly* "Resident Patient" was lost to Sherlockians for more than 100 years. But the *Harper's Weekly* "Cardboard Box" never was used for *The Memoirs* at all, and was just as lost. What interesting changes, we wondered, would we find in the newly rediscovered *Harper's Weekly* text as compared to the *Strand's* or George Newnes's or Doubleday's?

Having now made the comparison, we have an anticlimactic answer: None. Disappointing as it may be to report, there are no differences between the various texts of "The Cardboard (or Card-Board) Box" that have any bearing on the meaning of the story. In fact, there are virtually no differences at all. There are, of course, the usual Americanizations of punctuation and spelling, according to the American standards of punctuation and spelling in 1893. The most prominent of these changes is that the title of the story appeared in *Harper's Weekly* as "The Adventure of the Card-Board Box" as opposed to the *Strand's* "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box." (Nineteenth-century American editors were hyphen-happy.) Words such as "clue" and "endeavoured" and "discoloured" were predictably changed to "clew" and "endeavored" and "discolored" as per the U.S. spellings of the day, and so forth. There is not much grist for the mill there.

There is one change that at first glance appears substantive — *Harper's Weekly* omits two paragraphs of the canonical text[35] — but those paragraphs

[34] *See* Ira Brad Matetsky, "More Textual Variations in 'The Resident Patient,'" 68 Baker Street J. 6 (Autumn 2018).

[35] The two paragraphs are quoted in their place in footnote 61 below.

turn out to be so inconsequential that they were probably omitted either to save a few lines of space or simply by mistake, so there is little to be read into the change either. The next longest change — an omission of three words in *Harper's Weekly*[36] — is, if anything, even less important. In another minor variation, *Harper's Weekly* describes Holmes at one point as sitting "in deep thought" rather than "in deep meditation"[37] — most likely out of concern that some readers would not know the word "meditation," rather than for any "deeper" reason.

But perhaps it should be a relief that we can focus on a single agreed text of the story, without side-debates about line readings and bad quartos. In any event, on to the story.

## THE ADVENTURE OF THE CARD-BOARD BOX

*By A. Conan Doyle*

In choosing a few typical cases which illustrate the remarkable mental qualities of my friend Sherlock Holmes, I have endeavored, as far as possible, to select those which presented the minimum of sensationalism, while offering a fair field for his talents. It is, however, unfortunately, impossible to entirely separate the sensational from the criminal, and a chronicler is left in the dilemma that he must either sacrifice details, which are essential to his statement, and so give a false impression of the problem, or he must use matter which chance, and not choice, has provided him with.[38] With this short preface I shall turn to my notes of what proved to be a strange, though a peculiarly terrible, chain of events.

It was a blazing hot day in August.[39] Baker Street was like an oven, and the glare of the sunlight upon the yellow brick-work of the houses across the road was painful to the eye. It was hard to believe that these were the same walls which loomed so gloomily through the fogs of winter. Our blinds were half-drawn, and Holmes lay curled upon the sofa, reading and re-reading a letter which he had received by the morning post. For myself, my term of service in India had trained me to stand heat better than cold, and a ther-

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[36] See footnote 119 below.

[37] See footnote 78 below.

[38] THE EDITORS: This type of story opening, in which Watson begins a story by discussing his difficulties in deciding which of Holmes's cases to report, will become a familiar one. For other examples, see "The Five Orange Pips," "The Resident Patient," "The Solitary Cyclist," and "The Golden Pince-Nez."

[39] WBG, p. 2:193, n. 1.

mometer at ninety was no hardship.[40] But the morning paper was uninteresting. Parliament had risen.[41] Everybody was out of town, and I yearned for the glades of the New Forest[42] or the shingle of Southsea.[43] A depleted bank account[44] had caused me to postpone my holiday,[45] and as to my companion, neither the country nor the sea presented the slightest attraction to him. He loved to lie in the very centre of five millions of people, with his filaments stretching out and running through them, responsive to every little rumor or suspicion of unsolved crime. Appreciation of nature found no place among his many gifts,[46] and his only change was when he turned his mind from the evil-doer of the town to track down his brother of the country.

Finding that Holmes was too absorbed for conversation, I had tossed aside the barren paper,[47] and leaning back in my chair, I fell into a brown-

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[40] JAY GANGULY: Dr. Watson's Indian landing, as briefly recorded in *A Study in Scarlet*, was at the city of Bombay (now renamed "Mumbai") on the western coast of India. From there he made his way to Candahar (we know it as "Kandahar") in Afghanistan. Dr. Watson's visit was about 140 years ago — he participated in the Second Afghan War, and from his words, it appears he was involved in the Battle of Kandahar, which took place in September 1880. Currently, a temperature of 90 degrees is fairly commonplace for Mumbai, and it actually gets much hotter than that in the summer — not surprising, given the rapid urbanization of the city. Nearly a century and a half ago, 90 degrees was not the average temperature for Mumbai, unlike today, but summers in Mumbai would still easily hit this mark. Also, the route from Mumbai to Kandahar passed through several Indian states, some of which fall in the Thar Desert. There, a temperature of 90 degrees would actually be considered pleasant, even back in Dr. Watson's day. As such, when Dr. Watson says a temperature of 90 degrees was no hardship for him thanks to his Indian days, he is not exaggerating. India is a tropical country, after all.

[41] WBG, p. 2:193, n. 1.

[42] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 29, n. 4; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 428, n. 4; OSH: Memoirs, p. 278; WBG, p. 2:194, n. 4.

[43] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, pp. 29-30, n. 5, LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 428, n. 5; OSH: Memoirs, p. 279.

[44] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, pp. 29-30, n. 5, LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 428, n. 5; OSH: Memoirs, p. 279.

[45] WSB, p. 2:194, n. 5.

[46] WBG, p. 2:194, n. 6.

[47] ROSS E. DAVIES: The "barren paper" tossed aside by Watson is not just any paper. It is *The Times*, which is unsurprising in two ways. First, *The Times* was London's great newspaper, read in sitting rooms and club rooms across London and around the world. Second, as Brad Kefauver has observed, *The Times* is "Sherlock Holmes's favorite newspaper." *A Day in the Life, a Day in* The Times, 53 Baker Street J. 39 (Autumn 2003). But in a third way, Watson's tossing aside of that particular paper is an event of some slight, obscure Canonical significance. *The Times* is mentioned by name in the Canon seven times — more than any other paper (Stephen Clarkson, *The Canonical Compendium* 46-47 (1999)) —

study.[48] Suddenly my companion's voice broke in upon my thoughts.

"You are right, Watson," said he. "It does seem a most preposterous way of settling a dispute."[49]

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but in none of the seven stories identified by Clarkson does Watson read the *Times*. In *The Sign of Four*, both Holmes and Mary Morstan read it. In "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle," "The Adventure of the Engineer's Thumb," *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and "The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter," Holmes reads it. In "The Adventure of the Solitary Cyclist," Violet Smith at least looks at it. And in *His Last Bow*, Baron Von Herling refers to it. No sign of a Watson-*Times* relationship anywhere. Nor does there appear to be one in Watson's report of "The Adventure of the Cardboard Box," printed in the January 1893 issue of *The Strand* (U.K.). *The Times* is not mentioned in the text, and while there is a Sidney Paget portrayal of the scene in which Watson tosses aside that "barren paper," the printed picture is not sharp enough to show the name of the paper. Fortunately, however, the name of that paper is preserved in the Arthur Conan Doyle Collection at the Toronto Public Library. The Library has Paget's original illustration, in which "THE TIMES" is easy to see across the top of the front page of the paper. See for yourself, courtesy of the Toronto Public Library: Paget's work (enlarged for easy reading and general appreciation) is on the dust jacket of the book in which this annotation appears, the 2020 *Baker Street Almanac.* So, *The Times* appears in eight stories, not seven, and Watson did read it, on at least one occasion.

[48] LSK, 1 New Ann., pp. 423-24, n.7. ROSS E. DAVIES: The leading authority on the meanings of English words that we know as the *Oxford English Dictionary* published its definition of "brown study" in 1888. That definition has never changed: "A state of mental abstraction or musing: 'gloomy meditations' (Johnson); 'serious reverie, thoughtful absent-mindedness' (Webster); now esp. an idle or purposeless reverie." Intriguingly, that definition was a little bit controversial in its own time. In the course of a lengthy discussion of "the case of the somewhat peculiar expression *brown study*," a review in the April 4, 1889 issue of *The Nation* complained that, "[t]he adjective here has assuredly the general idea of 'deep,' 'profound,' 'abstracted.' It is hard to fix upon the phrase the sense of 'gloomy meditation', by which Johnson [that is, lexicographer Samuel Johnson] defined it; and the particular meaning given to it in this dictionary of 'an idle and purposeless reverie' is certainly not common." So, at the time Watson tossed aside that "barren paper," a contemporary reader would almost certainly have envisioned a deeply abstracted Watson, but perhaps not a gloomy one. Anatoly Liberman, *A Study in Brown and in a Brown Study, Part 3*, OUPblog, blog.oup.com/2014/10/brown-etymology-word-origin-part-3/ (Oct. 22, 2014). On the other hand, the topic Watson was thinking about — the awful American Civil War — would have provided good grounds for gloom.

[49] ROBERT S. KATZ: The so-called "mind-reading" sequence that begins here is one of the most significant sections of the entire Canon. In fact, it is so important that it appears twice in the actual stories. It was and remains the opening of "The Cardboard Box," but when this group of short stories first came to be anthologized, the subject-matter of this story was regarded as too provocative and the story was removed from the book version. However, Watson, or Conan Doyle as Literary Agent, liked this segment so much that it was transposed to the beginning of "The Resident Patient." When "The Cardboard Box" was ultimately anthologized in *His Last Bow*, the opening remained. It was a bit confusing

to this author, as a first-time reader, to see a section appear in two places in the Canon. But the section is so much fun and so meaningful that the duplication is easily accepted. This bit of Baker Street dialogue is noteworthy as it provides us one of the few and perhaps most useful pieces of biographical information about the life of John Watson. We realize that Watson had a considerable interest in and knowledge of the American Civil War, even though it took place far from England and several decades earlier. We also learn that Watson owned portraits of General Charles Gordon and Henry Ward Beecher. Finally, we see him reaching for his leg when he thinks of a war wound.

These seemingly unrelated bits of data, combined with a few other nuggets elsewhere in the Canon, are our best clues in trying to piece together Dr. Watson's childhood. Elsewhere in the Canon (*The Sign of Four*), we learn that Watson had spent some time in the minefields of Ballarat, in Australia. Combined with the vividness of his descriptions of two great American mining areas, the Southwest in *A Study in Scarlet* and the coal country of the Vermissa Valley in *The Valley of Fear*, we can suggest that Watson's father may have been in the mining industry and traveled the world as part of his career. The pictures of Gordon and Beecher, both staunch abolitionists, give us an indication of the political views of the Watson family. As Watson was likely a few years older than Holmes, he would have been in his early teens, living in a mining area of Pennsylvania, when the American Civil War broke out. As I indicate in my article "A Long Afternoon" (appearing in *The Watsonian*, Volume 1, Number 1, 2013), young John would have run away to join the Union Army and ended up in the regiment commanded by the friend and colleague of Henry Ward Beecher's brother-in-law (husband of Harriet Beecher Stowe), the fabled Twentieth Maine. Finding himself holding Little Round Top at the Battle of Gettysburg, Watson suffered the leg wound mentioned in this segment. This explains the anatomic discrepancies between his various injuries: His first wound came at Gettysburg, and it was at Maiwand that he subsequently received the second.

Judged as literature, this segment is one of the most enjoyable sequences in the Canon. It shows Holmes as the ultimate master of observation, diagnosis, and deduction. Nearly every Sherlockian will point to this as one of the most popular moments in the sixty stories. It's so well-written and entrancing that no one cares that it appears twice. But as history, it is unparalleled as it provides us one of the few glimpses into the childhood of John H. Watson. He tells us little about his family and his background, but occasionally lets us peek into a remarkable early life. This particular "peek" enhances our understanding of the Canon.

ANASTASIA KLIMCHYNSKAYA: As a detective, Holmes is a reader of signs (and, in fact, scholarship on the detective novel often draws attention precisely to the detective's role as reader). It is this uncanny ability to interpret traces legible only to him that frequently leads other characters to proclaim Holmes a wizard or magician, such as in "The Adventure of the Beryl Coronet." Usually, however, such signs are physical remnants of external, physical acts: footprints, bloodstains, mud, or tobacco ash. Here, although many of the signs Holmes interprets are external (Watson's expressions, sighs, and glances), the crux of his reading lies in Watson's *interiority,* in the thoughts and emotions whose immediate physical locus is hard to pinpoint. In this sense, Holmes might be considered to be venturing into the territory of Freud, who is often evoked in Sherlockian pastiches because he, too, reads and interprets signs — those of mental disorders. At the same time, Holmes is not entirely new to this kind of psychological dabbling: he has certainly made generalizations about how

"Most preposterous!" I exclaimed; and then, suddenly realizing how he had echoed the inmost thought of my soul, I sat up in my chair and stared at him in blank amazement.

"What is this, Holmes?" I cried. "This is beyond anything which I could have imagined."

He laughed heartily at my perplexity.

"You remember," said he, "that some little time ago, when I read you the passage in one of Poe's sketches[50] in which a close reasoner follows the unspoken thoughts of his companion, you were inclined to treat the matter as a mere tour de force of the author. On my remarking that I was constantly in the habit of doing the same thing, you expressed incredulity." [51]

"Oh, no!"

"Perhaps not with your tongue, my dear Watson, but certainly with your eyebrows. So when I saw you throw down your paper and enter upon a train of thought, I was very happy to have the opportunity of reading it off, and eventually of breaking into it, as a proof that I had been in rapport[52] with you."

But I was still far from satisfied. "In the example which you read to me," said I, "the reasoner drew his conclusions from the actions of the man whom he observed. If I remember right, he stumbled over a heap of stones, looked up at the stars, and so on. But I have been seated quietly in my chair, and what clews can I have given you?"

"You do yourself an injustice. The features are given to man as the means by which he shall express his emotions, and yours are faithful servants."

"Do you mean to say that you read my train of thoughts from my features?"

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a particular type of person is apt to act. One might remember, for example, his insistence in "A Case of Identity" that a woman in love tends to be unwilling to be disabused of her delusion.

One will also note that Holmes here takes a stab at the kind of "mind-reading" that Poe's detective Dupin engages in, which is ironic given Holmes' criticism of Dupin in *A Study in Scarlet* as "a very inferior fellow" whose "trick . . . of breaking in on his friends' thoughts with an apropos remark after a quarter of an hour's silence is really very showy and superficial." It seems that Holmes has rid himself of such qualms about showiness or superficiality since those early days.

THE EDITORS: Although Holmes's displays of "mind-reading" ability occur throughout the Canon and are an aspect of Holmes's talent known even to the general public, this scene contains the longest illustration of such a chain of reasoning. Only the opening of "The Dancing Men" might be comparable.

[50] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 30, n. 7; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 424 n. 8; OSH: Memoirs, p. 279.

[51] WBG, p. 2:195, n. 7.

[52] OSH: Memoirs, p. 280; WBG, p. 2:195, n. 9.

"Your features, and especially your eyes. Perhaps you cannot yourself recall how your reverie commenced?"

"No, I cannot."

"Then I will tell you. After throwing down your paper, which was the action which drew my attention to you, you sat for half a minute with a vacant expression. Then your eyes fixed themselves upon your newly framed picture of General Gordon,[53] and I saw by the alteration in your face that a train of

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[53] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 31, n. 8; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 424, n. 9; OSH: Memoirs, p. 280; WBG, p. 2:195, n. 9. MICHAEL KEAN: Leslie Klinger's cited notes on General Charles "Chinese" Gordon sketch this extraordinary man and his remarkable career quite well. However, some information about Gordon's early life might prove useful in understanding how he developed into a complex and (some might say) neurotic Victorian hero. Gordon's father was also a career Army officer, ultimately achieving the rank of Lieutenant General. His postings in Dublin, Leith and Corfu required the family to move frequently. When the family returned to Woolwich, young Charles entered the Academy as an officer cadet at the age of fifteen. He was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers in 1852. He was intelligent and industrious, and his posting in the Crimea and his success in China resulted in considerable notoriety. Nevertheless, throughout his life, Gordon maintained an almost puritanical aversion to recognition. After returning to England from China, he accepted the important but unglamorous role of Engineering Officer at Gravesend, supervising the construction of the fortifications for the defense of the Thames.

Gordon's mother was a pious woman, and raising eleven children doubtlessly made her long-suffering as well. From her, young Gordon developed a strong spiritual inclination and a literal view of the Bible, though he eschewed organized religion and never joined a church. His belief in traditional Christianity created in him a missionary zeal, which translated into his care of young neglected boys. He fed and clothed hundreds of children, and each evening taught basic literacy to a small group of them, spending his own money on their welfare. Charles Gordon and Sherlock Holmes were both involved with a group of street urchins. Gordon's boys learned to read the Bible, while Holmes' Baker Street irregulars served as his eyes and ears throughout London.

One might wonder whether the fact that Dr. Watson, who like General Gordon had also been a military officer and had seen action in remote parts of the British Empire, added to Watson's "brown study" and his ruminations about the futility of war as a means of settling disputes. Did the good doctor think about how fortunate he was to have been rescued on the battlefield by his orderly, Murray, while Gordon was killed and decapitated by the Ghazis at Khartoum?

General Gordon was lionized by the British public during the late nineteenth century, and was one of the four individuals profiled by Lytton Strachey in his classic biography, *Eminent Victorians.* A caricature of Gordon appeared in an 1881 issue of the popular British magazine, *Vanity Fair*, as part of its color lithograph portrait series, with the title, "The Ever Victorious Army." A statue of General Gordon by Sir Hamo Thorneycroft formerly stood in Trafalgar Square, but has now been moved to the Victoria Embankment.

For those who are interested in learning more about one of the best known, yet most enigmatic Victorians, I recommend Lord Elton, *General Charles Gordon's Khartoum Journal*

thought had been started. But it did not lead very far. Your eyes flashed across to the unframed portrait of Henry Ward Beecher[54] which stands upon the top of your books. You then glanced up at the wall, and, of course, your meaning was obvious. You were thinking that if the portrait were framed, it would just cover that bare space, and correspond with Gordon's picture over there."

"You have followed me wonderfully!" I exclaimed.

"So far I could hardly have gone astray. But now your thoughts went back to Beecher, and you looked hard across as if you were studying the character in his features. Then your eyes ceased to pucker, but you continued to look across, and your face was thoughtful. You were recalling the incidents of Beecher's career. I was well aware that you could not do this without thinking of the mission which he undertook on behalf of the North at the time of the civil war, for I remember your expressing your passionate indignation at the way in which he was received by the more turbulent of our people.[55] You felt so strongly about it that I knew you could not think of Beecher without thinking of that also. When, a moment later, I saw your eyes wander away from the picture, I suspected that your mind had now turned to the civil war,[56] and when I observed that your lips set, your eyes sparkled, and your hands clinched, I was positive that you were indeed thinking of the gallantry which was shown by both sides in that desperate struggle. But then, again, your face grew sadder; you shook your head. You were dwelling upon the sadness and horror and useless waste of life. Your hand stole towards your own old wound and a smile quivered on your lips, which showed me that the ridiculous side of this method of settling international questions[57] had forced itself upon your mind. At this point I agreed with you

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(1961); Lord Elton, *Gordon of Khartoum* (1955); Lawrence and Elisabeth Hanson, *Chinese Gordon: The Story of a Hero* (1954); Peter Johnson, *Gordon of Khartoum* (1985); Roy MacGregor-Hastie, *Never to be Taken Alive* (1985); Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Road to Khartoum* (1978); and John H. Waller, *Gordon of Khartoum: The Saga of a Victorian Hero* (1988).

[54] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 31, n. 9; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 424, n.10; OSH: Memoirs, p. 280; WBG, p. 2:195 n. 10. THE EDITORS: Beecher was a prominent American clergyman and abolitionist, but another source of his notoriety during his lifetime was his involvement in a prominent, controversial, inconclusive adultery trial. *See, e.g.*, Robert Shaplin, "The Beecher-Tilton Affair," The New Yorker (June 12, 1954); Michael A. Green, "Battle in Brooklyn: The Cross-Examination of Henry Ward Beecher in the Trial of the Century," Judicial Notice No. 13 (Historical Society of the New York Courts 2009).

[55] WSB, p. 2:195, n. 11.

[56] OSH: Memoirs, p. 281.

[57] THE EDITORS: Does Holmes here describe the causes of the American Civil War as "international questions" rather than domestic ones, and thereby implicitly endorse one side of a key issue in that conflict? We know that Watson, as an admirer of Beecher, would not

that it was preposterous, and was glad to find that all my deductions had been correct."

"Absolutely," said I. "And now that you have explained it, I confess that I am as amazed as before."

"It was very superficial, my dear Watson, I assure you. I should not have intruded it upon your attention had you not shown some incredulity the other day. But I have in my hands here a little problem which may prove to be more difficult of solution than my small essay in thought-reading.[58] Have you observed in the paper a short paragraph referring to the remarkable contents of a packet sent through the post to Miss Susan Cushing, of Cross Street, [59] Croydon?"[60]

"No; I saw nothing."[61]

"Miss Susan Cushing, living at Cross Street, Croydon, has been made the victim of what must be regarded as a peculiarly revolting practical joke,[62]

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have taken that side. Or have his thoughts moved from the Civil War as an example of warfare to more current or prospective wars that were indeed of an "international" nature?

[58] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 32, n. 11.

[59] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 33, n. 12; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 427, n. 13.

[60] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 33, n. 13, WBG, p. 2:195, n. 15.

[61] THE EDITORS: At this spot appears the only significant textual variation between the *Harper's Weekly* version of this story and other published versions. In the *Strand* and book versions of the story, after Watson says "No, I saw nothing," these two paragraphs follow:

> "Ah! then you must have overlooked it. Just toss it over to me. Here it is, under the financial column. Perhaps you would be good enough to read it aloud."
>
> I picked up the paper which he had thrown back to me, and read the paragraph indicated. It was headed, "A Gruesome Packet."

The story continues as above. As there is nothing unusual about these two omitted paragraphs, but they also are not essential to the narrative, one concludes that they were dropped in *Harper's Weekly* either to save a few lines of space or by simple inadvertence.

[62] KAREN WILSON: After the passage of the Anatomy Act of 1832 made cadavers more available to medical schools for dissection, "easily accessible bodies became a staple of [English] medical school humor." Dissecting-room pranks — from the depositing of body parts in unlikely places, to actual cannibalism — "became a Victorian cliché." (Malchow, *Gothic Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Stanford University Press, 1996). This was not limited to Britain: Henry Brodribb Irving's *Studies of French Criminals* (William Heinemann, 1901) recounts the 1878 case of Barré and Lebiez, who left dismembered remains of their victim in rooms they had let in Paris' Rue Polivau, "correctly surmis[ing] that the proximity of the street to the surgical theatres would cause the remains, when discovered, to be regarded as a practical joke on the part of some medical student." (The police weren't fooled for long, however.)

That practical joking was a part of the general culture is reflected in several canonical mentions. Villains invoke it: Jonas Oldacre ("The Norwood Builder") defends his attempt to frame John McFarlane as "a practical joke, nothing more." James Windibank ("A Case of

unless some more sinister meaning should prove to be attached to the incident. At two o'clock yesterday afternoon a small packet, wrapped in brown paper, was handed in by the postman. A card-board box was inside, which was filled with coarse salt. On emptying this, Miss Cushing was horrified to find two human ears, apparently quite freshly severed. The box had been sent by parcel post[63] from Belfast[64] upon the morning before. There is no

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Identity") takes a similar tack — "It was only a joke at first" — when Holmes identifies him as Hosmer Angel. Naïve Jabez Wilson ("The Red-Headed League") theorizes that his odd experience was an expensive prank, while deserted houseguest John Scott Eccles ("Wisteria Lodge") initially believes he's been the victim of an "absurd practical joke." Elsie Cubitt ("The Dancing Men"), knowing better, hopes her husband will dismiss the mysterious cyphers as a "senseless practical joke." And unfortunate John Openshaw ("The Five Orange Pips") finds the police convinced that his seed-bearing missives "are all practical jokes."

[63] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 33, n. 14. ROGER JOHNSON and JEAN UPTON: Although King Charles II established the General Post Office in 1660, the transport of parcels within the British Isles was for nearly two centuries undertaken by private companies. At first they were courier services using stage coaches, but by 1850 the railway companies had a near monopoly. It was not until 1882, after lengthy negotiations with the railway companies, that legislation enabled the Post Office to set up Parcel Post as a specialized service, and the necessary arrangements could begin. (Post Office depots throughout the U.K. had to be reconstructed, a great amount of new equipment acquired, delivery routes revised, and the public made aware of the new service.) Parcel Post began operating on the 1st August 1883, fulfilling its mission "to convey and deliver packages up to a certain limit of weight, at a fixed charge irrespective of distance." Each package would bear a sticker certifying that it was to be sent by Parcel Post, and by the 1890s — a little after the time of "The Cardboard Box" — the Parcel Post was handling 50 million parcels a year.

The cardboard box with its gruesome contents was posted in Belfast, whence it would have been taken by train to Dublin and there transferred to a steamship which took it across the Irish Sea to Holyhead on the island of Anglesey in North Wales. In the mid-1860s, the contract for the Mail steamers passed from the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company to the London and North Western Railway Company, whose famous train the Irish Mail conveyed the box to Euston Station in London. The Mail trains included Travelling Post Offices: specially adapted carriages in which postal staff sorted the mail en route. The box was dispatched from Belfast in the morning. The distance to Dublin by train is just over 110 miles, so it would be in plenty of time for the crossing. By 1885, the night mail from Dublin took less than ten and a half hours to reach Euston Station, and from there it was less than twenty miles to Croydon. The box was handed to Miss Cushing at 2:00 p.m. — probably not the last of the six or seven delivery rounds that day. (In central London, 221B Baker Street enjoyed up to twelve postal deliveries a day.)

Parcel Post no longer exists under that name. Its successor since 1990 is called Parcelforce Worldwide. (Information from The Postal Museum, www.postalmuseum.org; *Dickens's Dictionary of London* (1888; [reprinted by Old House Books, 1993); and RTÉ Radio 1 documentary *The Irish Mail*, www.rte.ie/radio1/doconone/2012/0703/647118-documentary-

indication as to the sender, and the matter is the more mysterious as Miss Cushing, who is a maiden lady of fifty, has led a most retired life, and has so few acquaintances or correspondents that it is a rare event for her to receive anything through the post. Some years ago, however, when she resided at Penge,[65] she let apartments in her house to three young medical students,[66] whom she was obliged to get rid of on account of their noisy and irregular habits. The police are of opinion that this outrage may have been perpetrated upon Miss Cushing by these youths who owed her a grudge, and who hoped to frighten her by sending her these relics of the dissecting-rooms. Some probability is lent to the theory by the fact that one of these students came from the north of Ireland, and, to the best of Miss Cushing's belief, from Belfast. In the meantime the matter is being actively investigated, Mr. Lestrade, one of the very smartest of our detective officers, being in charge of the case."

"So much for the *Daily Chronicle*,"[67] said Holmes, as I finished reading. "Now for our friend Lestrade.[68] I had a note from him this morning, in

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podcast-irish-mail-euston-dublin-train-journey/.)

[64] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 33, n. 15.

[65] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 33, n. 16. THE EDITORS: "Rumpole of the Bailey" fans will recall Penge as the location of the Penge Bungalow Murders, in which the defendant was successfully defended by the young barrister Horace Rumpole, alone and without a leader.

[66] SCOTT MONTY: The number three comes up repeatedly in the Canon. Of all the stories with numbers in their titles, three appears the most frequently — three times! ("The Three Students," "The Three Garridebs," "The Three Gables".) Holmes had three dressing gowns (or at least three colors of dressing gown: mouse, blue, and purple). What is it about that number? The number three is a fascinating number in that it's easy for the brain to recall things threes. But why do we see threes so often in the Canon?

While it's not "an exercise in trigonometry" ("The Musgrave Ritual"), it does involve mathematics and Holmes's knowledge of it. Holmes chastised Watson for his writing, saying it would have been akin to inserting "an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid." (*The Sign of Four.*) Euclid had five postulates, and the fifth was: "if a straight line intersects two other straight lines, and so makes the two interior angles on one side of it together less than two right angles, then the other straight lines will meet at a point if extended far enough on the side on which the angles are less than two right angles." The result? A triangle. Holmes understood the power of three.

Regarding the Solar System, Holmes said, "you say that we go round the sun. If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work." (*A Study in Scarlet.*) The Earth? We're the third planet from the Sun.

[67] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 34, n. 17; OSH: Memoirs, p. 282.

[68] NICK MARTORELLI: With this phrase, it seems that Holmes and Lestrade are no longer the adversaries they were in *A Study in Scarlet* or "The Noble Bachelor." An established inspector at the time of *Study*, Lestrade is in the practice of taking cases to Holmes at Baker Street, but he is unwilling to allow Holmes any notoriety or public credit for the solution.

which he says: I think that this case is very much in your line. We have every hope of clearing the matter up, but we find a little difficulty in getting anything to work upon. We have, of course, wired to the Belfast post-office,[69] but a large number of parcels were handed in upon that day, and they have no means of identifying this particular one, or of remembering the sender. The box is a half-pound box of honeydew tobacco, [70] and does not help us in any

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Scotland Yarders continue to see Holmes as a rival through many of the early stories, with both Jones (in *The Sign of Four*) and Lestrade (in "The Boscombe Valley Mystery" and "The Noble Bachelor") dismissing and openly competing with Holmes's methods and conclusions. By the time "The Cardboard Box" is published, however, Lestrade has become a "friend" who refers this case to Holmes not only because he needs some help, but because he knows that it is "very much in your line." Holmes is noticeably cheerier toward Lestrade as well, explaining his deductions about the tarred string and providing him with the name of the criminal. Perhaps once Holmes was able to establish his own reputation, his attitude toward the Yarders softened. Lestrade shows himself to evolve his opinion on Holmes, culminating in "The Six Napoleons," where he routinely visits Baker Street for conversation and the occasional cigar. It is this case where we see that their relationship is progressing, towards Lestrade's openly telling Holmes in "The Six Napoleons" that the Yarders aren't "jealous of you down at Scotland Yard. No sir, we're proud of you." Holmes and Lestrade — from rivals to colleagues.

[69] OSCAR ROSS: "You will observe that this line of boats calls at Belfast, Dublin and Waterford," remarks Holmes while discussing this case. From that we may deduce that James Browner, the steward of the *S.S. May Day*, was a regular visitor to Belfast. It is probable that he would have been familiar with one of Belfast's landmark buildings, the Custom House, which housed the Queen's Square post-office. The location would have been particularly convenient for him to post his "gruesome packet" as it was close to the docks where his ship berthed. In August 1886, two years prior to the mostly likely date of the case, a new GPO opened at Royal Avenue, the city's new main thoroughfare. As a consequence of this, Queen's Square, which had been the town's chief post-office since 1857, was demoted to branch status.

In his first note to Holmes, Inspector Lestrade wrote: "We have wired to the Belfast post-office but a large number of parcels were handed in that day and they had no means of identifying any particular parcel or of remembering the sender."

It seems unlikely that Scotland Yard would have bypassed the new GPO in Royal Avenue and instead wired to Queen's Square or one of several other smaller offices in the vicinity. The new GPO was also only a short walking distance from Browner's ship, and it had one big advantage which someone in his situation may have appreciated. Being much bigger and busier, it offered a greater degree of anonymity than a smaller office. So, and on the balance of probabilities, my vote goes to Royal Avenue as the location for the "Belfast post-office."

[70] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 34, n. 18; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 428, n. 14; OSH: Memoirs, p. 282; WBG, p. 2:196, n. 14. MONICA SCHMIDT: As an occasional cigar smoker who knows little about tobacco, I interviewed noted Sherlockian pipe and tobacco enthusiasts Al Shaw and Dino Argyropoulos and consulted a scholarly work by James O'Leary, each of whom

way. The medical student theory still appears to me to be the most feasible, but if you should have a few hours to spare, I should be very happy to see you out here. I shall be either at the house or in the police station all day.' What say you, Watson? Can you rise superior to the heat, and run down to Croydon with me on the off chance of a case for your annals?"

"I was longing for something to do."

"You shall have it, then. Ring for our boots,[71] and tell them to order a cab. I'll be back in a moment, when I have changed my dressing-gown and filled my cigar-case."

A shower of rain fell while we were in the train, and the heat was far less oppressive in Croydon than in town. Holmes had sent on a wire, so that Lestrade, as wiry, as dapper, and as ferretlike as ever, was waiting for us at the station.[72] A walk of five minutes took us to Cross Street, where Miss Cushing resided.

It was a very long street of two-story brick houses, neat and prim, with whitened stone steps and little groups of aproned women gossiping at the doors. Half-way down. Lestrade stopped and tapped at a door, which was opened by a small servant girl. Miss Cushing was sitting in the front room, into which we were ushered. She was a placid-faced woman with large, gentle eyes, and grizzled hair curving down over her temples on each side. A worked

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has completed extensive research on tobacco in the Sherlockian Canon, including O'Leary's having tracked down an example of the most likely culprit for the actual cardboard box itself. *See* James O'Leary, "Discovered: THE Cardboard Box", *in The Newspapers: An Irregular Journal of Sherlockiana*, vol. 3 (Sherlockians of Baltimore, Greg Ruby ed. 2019); *see also* https://www.ihearofsherlock.com/2019/09/discovered-cardboard-box.html. All three scholars agree that in Holmes's time, "honeydew tobacco" most likely referred to naturally sweetened tobacco that was pressed into a cake or "plug" in the curing process and allowed to age in a manner that allowed the natural sugars to come forth. Shaw stated that the higher the Virginia content, the sweeter the smoke after aging and pressing. In other regions, additives like licorice or molasses were used to sweeten the tobacco, but this was not allowed in tobaccos made in England until 1986 (https://www.jrcigars.com/blending-room/university/pipe-tobacco/2015/06/22/#). Argyropoulos noted manufactures of tobacco often supplied retail outlets with loose tobacco in cardboard boxes which the retailor would transfer to storage jars in their shops. A half-pound (8 ounces) of tobacco is a fairly large quantity, which means that "the stuff in the cardboard box was probably a bulk tobacco." Shaw pointed out that each tobacconist had its own house blends of tobaccos, so without the tobacconist information regarding the blend (the lack of specificity regarding tobacco was typical of Doyle), it would be impossible to track down the specific blend of honey-dew tobacco was stored in the box.

[71] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 34, n. 19.

[72] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 34, n. 20.

antimacassar[73] lay upon her lap, and a basket of colored silks stood upon a stool beside her.

"They are in the out-house,[74] those dreadful things," said she, as Lestrade entered. "I wish that you would take them away altogether."

"So I shall, Miss Cushing. I only kept them here until my friend Mr. Holmes should have seen them in your presence."

"Why in my presence, sir?"

"In case he wished to ask any questions."

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[73] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 35, n. 21; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 429, n. 16; OSH: Memoirs, p. 282. BEVERLY WOLOV: First advertised in 1807, Macassar (or Makassar) oil was described as "an unguent for the hair." Its promotor, Alexander Rowland of Hatton Garden, London, claimed that it was based on sweet oils from Macassar, a seaport on the island of Celebes. In actuality, "Macassar oil" was most likely manufactured from the seeds of a *Schleichers oleosa* tree, which grows in Nepal and India, nowhere near Celebes and Macassar. Olive and other oils were added to create a pomade.

In addition to providing a "smooth and beautiful gloss" to one's tresses, Macassar oil was touted as preserving hair from changing color or falling out. Advertised in upscale publications such as *La Belle Assemblée,* it quickly became popular for men and women alike. The problem was that the Macassar pomade left oil stains on upholstered furniture. In order to protect costly fabric coverings, housewives draped the backs of chairs and sofas with washable cloths. By 1830, these furniture protectors were known as antimacassars. While Macassar hair oil gradually disappeared from use, antimacassars remain in use even today, protecting upholstered bus and airline seats from grease and hair dirt.

Traditional nineteenth-century antimacassars were made with sturdy cotton or linen thread in order to be hard-wearing and eminently washable. Patterns for crocheting or tatting these upholstery protectors were available in magazines and needlework newsletters such as *Weldon's*. Some antimacassars covered the entire chair back to avoid slippage.

That Susan Cushing had "a basket of coloured silks" implies embroidery as her needlework technique of choice. Her fabric base would have been silk, cotton, linen, or wool cloth. Capricious color fastness of the embroidery silks, not to mention delicacy of the thread, would have made laundering Susan Cushing's antimacassar difficult. Her finished piece was meant to be decorative, rather than hard-wearing functional. It suggests a gesture toward middle-class refinement with little expectation of visitors. The working of the antimacassar also supplies financial information about Susan Cushing. Rather than basic wood furniture, she can afford an upholstered chair that requires protection. Holmes and Watson find her sitting at her needlework twice during the afternoon, implying lifestyle ease. Indeed, a maid answers the door, in blunt contrast to white-aproned housewives gossiping on their stoops, pausing from doing their own housework. This casual portrait of Susan Cushing at ease gives a glimpse of the emerging middle class and the social dichotomy of the neighborhood.

[74] THE EDITORS: As used here, "out-house" means simply "a building that is separated from the main building." William S. Dorn, 2 *A Study Guide to Sherlock Holmes* 133 (2000, e-book 2012), available at http://www.beaconsociety.com.

"What is the use of asking me questions, when I tell you that I know nothing whatever about it?"

"Quite so, madam," said Holmes, in his soothing way. "I have no doubt that you have been annoyed more than enough already over this business."

"Indeed I have, sir. I am a quiet woman and live a retired life. It is something new for me to see my name in the papers and to find the police in my house. I won't have those things in here, Mr. Lestrade. If you wish to see them you must go to the out-house."

It was a small shed in the narrow garden which ran down behind the house. Lestrade went in and brought out a yellow card-board box, with a piece of brown paper and some string. There was a bench at the edge of the path, and we all sat down while Holmes examined, one by one, the articles which Lestrade handed to him.

"The string is exceedingly interesting," he remarked, holding it up to the light and sniffing at it. "What do you make of this string, Lestrade?"

"It has been tarred."

"Precisely. It is a piece of tarred twine.[75] You have also, no doubt, remarked that Miss Cushing has cut the cord with a scissors, as can be seen by the double fray on each side. This is of importance."

"I cannot see the importance," said Lestrade.

"The importance lies in the fact that the knot is left intact, and that this knot is of a peculiar character."

"It is very neatly tied. I had already made a note to that effect," said Lestrade, complacently.

"So much for the string then," said Holmes, smiling; "now for the box wrapper. Brown paper, with a distinct smell of coffee.[76] What, you did not

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[75] WALTER JAFFEE: Tarred twine was commonly found on most ships of the era. Tar was applied to fiber cordage when the expected use of such cordage would cause it to be exposed to weather. Tarring the twine prevents the twine from rotting. Tarred cordage has 75 percent of the strength of untarred. It was part of a vessel's normal stores and used to bundle coils of rope and to make ratlines, marline, houseline, hambroline, seizing, rounding, worming, serving, and whipping. (Rene de Kerchove, *International Maritime Dictionary* (2d ed. 1961)). Tarred twine was similar in diameter and purpose to sailmaker's twine, which was coated with beeswax rather than tar, and used on yachts and other passenger-carrying vessels to sew and shape canvas into sails. Many sailing ships carried a sailmaker as part of the crew, whose job was to make sails for the vessel.

[76] WALTER JAFFEE: During this time period of the late 1880s, green coffee beans were shipped from South America in burlap bags. Brown paper was always used to cover the area in which the coffee was loaded, to prevent the commodity from becoming tainted by contact with any metal in the decks or bulkheads. (See Dr. Pierre Garouche, *Dictionary of Commodities Carried by Ship* (1952).)

observe it? I think there can be no doubt of it. Address printed in rather straggling characters: 'Miss S. Cushing, Cross Street, Croydon.' Done with a broad pointed pen, probably a J,[77] and with very inferior ink. The word Croydon has been spelt originally with an i, which has been changed to y. The parcel was directed then by a man — the printing is distinctly masculine — of limited education and unacquainted with the town of Croydon. So far, so good! The box is a yellow, half-pound honeydew box, with nothing distinctive save two thumb-marks at the left bottom corner. It is filled with rough salt of the quality used for preserving hides and other of the coarser commercial purposes. And embedded in it are these very singular inclosures."

He took out the two ears as he spoke, and laying a board across his knees, he examined them minutely, while Lestrade and I, bending forward on each side of him, glanced alternately at these dreadful relics and at the thoughtful, eager face of our companion. Finally he returned them to the box once more, and sat for a while in deep thought.[78]

"You have observed, of course," said he at last," that the ears are not a pair."

"Yes, I have noticed that. But if this were the practical joke of some students from the dissecting-rooms,[79] it would be as easy for them to send two odd ears as a pair."

"Precisely. But this is not a practical joke."

"You are sure of it?"

"The presumption is strongly against it. Bodies in the dissecting-rooms are injected with preservative fluid. These ears bear no signs of this. They are fresh, too. They have been cut off with a blunt instrument, which would hardly happen if a student had done it. Again, carbolic or rectified spirits[80] would be the preservatives which would suggest themselves to the medical

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[77] OSH: Memoirs, p. 282. BURT WOLDER: "J" was a designation used by many pen manufacturers and was a popular nib used on dip pens. The name may have referred to a rounded or slight curve at the point, making writing smoother. Use of a widely available writing point and inferior ink suggested an average, undiscriminating writer, complementing Holmes's other observations. Pen nibs were a big business in the 19th century. There were 14 different manufacturing operations involved in turning a sheet of steel into flexible and durable writing points. Many new manufacturing techniques were perfected in Birmingham, which became the world center for pen nibs. Joseph Gillott, a major Birmingham manufacturer, advertised the firm's J nib as "the perfected broad point . . . nicer in touch, subtler in the point, more flexible, and floats over the paper light as a feather." The J pen appears again in GREE when Mycroft observes the response to his advertisement was "written with a J pen on Royal Cream paper."

[78] THE EDITORS: The *Strand* and other versions read "meditation" rather than "thought" here.

[79] LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 431, n. 17.

[80] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 36, n. 22; OSH: Memoirs, p. 282.

mind, certainly not rough salt.[81] I repeat that there is no practical joke here, but that we are investigating a serious crime."

A vague thrill ran through me as I listened to my companion's words and saw the stern gravity which had hardened his features. This brutal preliminary seemed to shadow forth some strange and inexplicable horror in the background. Lestrade, however, shook his head like a man who is only half convinced.

"There are objections to the joke theory, no doubt," said he; "but there are much stronger reasons against the other. We know that this woman has

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[81] CHRISTOPHER ZORDAN: Holmes's inference that carbolic or rectified spirits to preserve the ears would be the preference of a medical man is reasonable. Both chemicals were a standard part of a doctor's chemical inventory and were readily available in any laboratory. Either chemical would have been a more likely choice than coarse salt for someone trained in their use. Carbolic, also known as carbolic acid or phenol, was in regular use as an antiseptic due to the work of Joseph Lister. Phenol was isolated from coal tar and a 5% solution in water was used to treat wounds to prevent infection. Short-term preservation of a severed ear would be possible, but eventually the tissue would degrade due to the acidic nature of the solution. Rectified spirits are a highly concentrated solution of ethanol in water. Produced by the repeated distillation of grain alcohol, the solution was usually between 90% and 95% ethanol. It was a common chemical in laboratories of the day and would be one of the chemicals of choice for preserving specimens, the other being formaldehyde.

MARINA STAJIĆ: Dissections for the purpose of gaining more information about the human body can be traced back to ancient civilizations, as can the origins of anatomic embalming. In the United Kingdom, "An Act for Regulating Schools of Anatomy" was passed in 1832, allowing anatomy schools to legally obtain a sufficient supply of cadavers for "anatomical examination" and thereby enabling medical students to study anatomy and practice their surgical skills. Before carbolic acid was introduced to dissecting rooms, the main preserving agents used in anatomy were alcoholic solutions of arsenic or alumina salts. Carbolic acid was introduced to anatomical embalming by Sigismond Laskowski, a Polish doctor, in 1866. He initially used a mixture of carbolic acid and glycerin and later replaced some of the glycerin with alcohol.

In 1869, Augustus Wilhelm von Hofmann identified formaldehyde. As an excellent preservative, it became the foundation for modern methods of embalming, replacing previous methods based on alcohol and the use of arsenic or alumina salts. By 1898, eight of 45 medical schools throughout Europe introduced formaldehyde for preservation purposes. Meanwhile, the antiseptic properties of carbolic acid were noticed by Sir Joseph Lister in his pioneering technique of antiseptic surgery. Lister decided that the wounds themselves had to be thoroughly cleaned and subsequently covered with a piece of rag or lint soaked in carbolic acid. Lister reported on the antiseptic properties of carbolic acid in the *Lancet* in 1867. Dr. Watson was obviously familiar with Lister's method when he treated Victor Hatherley's wound and covered it with carbolized bandages ("The Engineer's Thumb"). It is, therefore, curious that carbolic didn't suggest itself to the medical mind of Dr. Watson, a former medical student and army surgeon. It is equally curious that formaldehyde didn't suggest itself to the analytical mind of Sherlock Holmes.

led a most quiet and respectable life at Penge and here for the last twenty years. She has hardly been away from her home for a day during that time. Why on earth, then, should any criminal send her the proofs of his guilt, especially as, unless she is a most consummate actress, she understands quite as little of the matter as we do?"

"That is the problem which we have to solve." Holmes answered," and for my part I shall set about it by presuming that my reasoning is correct, and that a double murder has been committed. One of these ears is a woman's, small, finely formed, and pierced for an ear-ring. The other is a man's, sunburned, discolored, and also pierced for an ear-ring.[82] These two people are presumably dead, or we should have heard their story before now. To-day is Friday. The packet was posted on Thursday morning. The tragedy, then, occurred on Wednesday or Tuesday, or earlier.[83] If the two people were murdered, who but their murderer would have sent this sign of his work to Miss Cushing? We may take it that the sender of the packet is the man whom we want. But he must have some strong reason for sending Miss Cushing this packet. What reason, then? It must have been to tell her that the deed was done; or to pain her, perhaps. But in that case she knows who it is. Does she know? I doubt it. If she knew, why should she call the police in? She might have buried the ears, and no one would have been the wiser. That is what she would have done if she had wished to shield the criminal. But if she does not wish to shield him she would give his name. There is a tangle here which needs straightening out." He had been talking in a high quick voice, staring blankly up over the garden fence, but now he sprang briskly to his feet and walked towards the house.

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[82] JENNIFER KNEELAND: It was extremely common for women to have pierced ears in Europe throughout much of history. It was less common from the fourth to sixteenth centuries, when the fashion of the time would have hidden such piercings, but the trend returned with the changing hairstyles and clothing. By the 19th century, it was once again quite common in Britain and Ireland for women to have pierced ears.

Earrings did not come back into fashion for men until much later in the twentieth century. A pierced male ear in the nineteenth century in Britain was a reasonable link to a life at sea. Many sailors added a gold piercing as a sign of having crossed the Equator. Likewise, a black pearl earring would show that a sailor had survived a shipwreck. Eventually gold earrings were "Seen as a charm against drowning." (Chloe Rose, *Black Cats and Evil Eyes: A Book of Old-Fashioned Superstitions* (2012).) These piercings were so common among sailors that many reasons are offered for the ubiquity. Some people believed that it would improve eyesight to have an ear pierced. Others point to the practical application of the jewelry: a gold earring would pay for the burial of a sailor whose body washed up on shore. (Marge DeMello, *Encyclopedia of Body Adornment* (2007).)

[83] WBG, p. 2:198, n. 16.

"I have a few questions to ask Miss Cushing," said he.

"In that case I may leave you here," said Lestrade, "for I have another small business on hand. I think that I have nothing further to learn from Miss Cushing. You will find me at the police station."

"We shall look in on our way to the train," answered Holmes.

A moment later he and I were back in the front room, where the impassive lady was still quietly working away at her antimacassar. She put it down on her lap as we entered, and looked at us with her frank searching blue eyes.

"I am convinced, sir," she said, "that this matter is a mistake, and that the parcel was never meant for me at all. I have said this several times to the gentleman from Scotland Yard, but he simply laughs at me. I have not an enemy in the world, as far as I know, so why should any one play me such a trick?"

"I am coming to be of the same opinion. Miss Cushing," said Holmes, taking a seat beside her. "I think that it is more than probable—"

He paused, and I was surprised on glancing round to see that he was staring with singular intentness at the lady's profile. Surprise and satisfaction were both for an instant to be read upon his eager face, though when she glanced round to find out the cause of his silence he had become as demure as ever. I stared hard myself at her flat grizzled hair, her trim cap, her little gilt ear-rings, her placid features, but I could see nothing which could account for my companion's evident excitement.

"There were one or two questions—"

"Oh, I am weary of questions!" cried Miss Cushing, impatiently.

"You have two sisters, I believe."

"How could you know that?"

"I observed the very instant that I entered the room that you have a portrait group of three ladies upon the mantel-piece, one of whom is undoubtedly yourself, while the others are so exceedingly like you that there could be no doubt of the relationship."

"Yes, you are quite right. Those are my sisters Sarah and Mary."

"And here at my elbow is another portrait, taken at Liverpool, of your younger sister, in the company of a man who appears to be a steward by his uniform. I observe that she was unmarried at the time."

"You are very quick at observing."

"That is my trade."

"Well, you are quite right. But she was married to Mr. Browner a few days afterwards. He was on the South American line when that was taken,[84]

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[84] WALTER JAFFEE: There is no steamship company known as the South American line,

but he was so fond of her that he couldn't abide to leave her for so long, and he got into the Liverpool and London boats."

"Ah, the *Conqueror*, perhaps?"[85]

"No, the *May Day*,[86] when last I heard. Jim came down here to see me once. That was before he broke the pledge.[87] But afterwards he would always take drink when he was ashore, and a little drink would send him stark, staring mad. Ah! it was a bad day that ever he took a glass in his hand again. First he dropped me, and then he quarrelled with Sarah, and now that Mary has stopped writing, we don't know how things are going with them."

It was evident that Miss Cushing had come upon a subject on which she felt very deeply. Like most people who lead a lonely life, she was shy at first, but ended by becoming extremely communicative. She told us many details

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or Line, during the relevant era. Susan Cushing is clearly not versed in maritime matters and might easily have been confused by what she was told, or Browner may have lied, for reasons known only to himself, about the trade route his ship was on. The main purpose of this passage is to establish the fact that Browner wanted to hire on with a steamship company with shorter runs so that he could see his wife more often. Having said that, it also holds that the "distinct smell of coffee" (note 76 above) reflects that earlier in his career, Browner was with a ship that carried coffee, presumably from South America.

[85] WALTER JAFFEE: No ship named the *Conqueror* existed at that time. The name was mentioned by Holmes as a means of getting Miss Cushing to state the name of the ship Browner actually was on.

[86] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 37, n. 23; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 434, n. 18; OSH: Memoirs, p. 282; WBG, p. 2:199, n. 17. OSCAR ROSS: More than seventy years ago, American Sherlockian Richard W. Clarke claimed to have discovered the *May Day*, under the ownership of the Liverpool, Dublin, and London Steam Packet Company, in the Liverpool Registry. (The Nomenclature of Watson's Ships, *BSJ* (o.s.) 1, No. 2, April 1946.) Some prominent Sherlockian scholars have accepted Clarke's claim without question, thereby giving it a degree of tacit approval which was hardly deserved. However, according to R.C. Jarvis, "Of all the Shipping records in the UK, those in Liverpool are the most perfect." (Liverpool Statutory Registers of British Merchant Ships, Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, CV, 1953.) This writer was unable to find the *May Day* or its owner in the Lloyd's Registers or any of the other records examined at Liverpool's Maritime Archives and Library. Another scholar, Arthur D. Fay, was similarly unsuccessful when he investigated Lloyd's. ("The Ships in the Canon," *BSJ* 17, No. 1, March 1967.) Likewise, the legendary Sherlockian Donald A. Redmond also drew a blank. "There are *Mays*, *May Flowers* and *May Queens* in Lloyd's, but no *May Day*," he said. ("Ship Ahoy, Captain Basil," *BSJ* 36, No. 4, December 1986.).

So, where exactly does this leave us? The most probable explanation is that Watson embellished the adventure, replacing the name of the ship and its owner with fictitious alternatives. It's possible that the name *May* was borrowed from the *Mayumba*, a whaling ship with which Watson's literary agent was personally acquainted.

[87] OSH: Memoirs, p. 282.

about her brother-in-law, the steward, and then wandering off on to the subject of her former lodgers, the medical students, she gave us a long account of their delinquencies, with their names and those of their hospitals. Holmes listened attentively to everything, throwing in a question from time to time.

"About your second sister, Sarah," said he. "I wonder, since you are both maiden ladies, that you do not keep house together."

"Ah! you don't know Sarah's temper, or you would wonder no more. I tried it when I came to Croydon, and we kept on until about two months ago, when we had to part. I don't want to say a word against my own sister, but she was always meddlesome and hard to please, was Sarah."

"You say that she quarrelled with your Liverpool relations."

"Yes, and they were the best of friends at one time. Why, she went up there to live just in order to be near them. And now she has no word hard enough for Jim Browner. The last six months that she was here she would speak of nothing but his drinking and his ways. He had caught her meddling. I suspect, and given her a bit of his mind, and that was the start of it."

"Thank you, Miss Cushing," said Holmes, rising and bowing. "Your sister Sarah lives, I think you said, at New Street, Wallington?[88] Good by, and I am very sorry that you should have been troubled over a case with which, as you say, you have nothing whatever to do."

There was a cab passing as we came out, and Holmes hailed it. "How far to Wallington?" he asked.[89]

"Only about a mile, sir."

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[88] WBG, p. 2:200, n. 18.

[89] IRA MATETSKY: Given Holmes's well-supported statement in "The Red-Headed League" that "[i]t is a hobby of mine to have an exact knowledge of London," one might wonder why Holmes would need to ask a cabman the distance between Croydon and Wallington, two neighboring places in Greater London. The likely answer is based on the fact that taxi fares in London were generally based on the distance driven, rather than time — but in the days before taxi meters, the driver and the passenger had to come to an understanding on what that distance was. As one contemporary guide put it, "As for calculating fares, that must depend entirely on our own power of judging distance. Some people when in doubt take the driver's ticket and tell him to name his own fare; and when he is satisfied that he will be summoned if he be found to have overcharged, the plan is no doubt efficacious." *Charles Dickens (Jr.)*, Dickens's Dictionary of London (1879), quoted at Lee Jackson, "The Dictionary of Victorian London," www.victorianlondon.org/transport/cab-fares.htm. In other words, Holmes knew full well how far it was from Croydon to Wallington; he wanted to make sure that the cabbie knew, and that the cabbie knew Holmes knew.

"Very good. Jump in, Watson. We must strike while the iron is hot. Simple as the case is, there have been one or two very instructive details in connection with it. Just pull up at a telegraph office as you pass, cabby."

Holmes sent off a short wire, and for the rest of the drive lay back in the cab with his hat tilted over his nose to keep the sun from his face. Our driver pulled up at a house which was not unlike the one which we had just quitted. My companion ordered him to wait, and had his hand upon the knocker, when the door opened, and a grave young gentleman in black, with a very shiny hat, appeared on the step.

"Is Miss Sarah Cushing at home?" asked Holmes.

"Miss Sarah Cushing is extremely ill," said he. "She has been suffering since yesterday from brain symptoms[90] of great severity. As her medical adviser, I cannot possibly take the responsibility of allowing any one to see her. I should recommend you to call again in ten days." He drew on his gloves, closed the door, and marched off down the street.

"Well, if we can't, we can't," said Holmes, cheerfully.

"Perhaps she could not or would not have told you much."

"I did not wish her to tell me anything. I only wanted to look at her. However, I think that I have got all that I want. Drive us to some decent hotel, cabby, where we may have some lunch, and afterwards we shall drop down upon friend Lestrade at the police station."

We had a pleasant little meal together, during which Holmes would talk about nothing but violins, narrating with great exultation how he had purchased his own Stradivarius,[91] which was worth at least five hundred guineas, at a Jew broker's[92] in Tottenham Court Road, for fifty-five shil-

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[90] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 38, n. 24.

[91] ROBERT JAMES: A Stradivarius is a stringed instrument crafted by Antonio Stradivari or his family in Cremona, Italy during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. These instruments have been long reputed as the finest of their kind, and acquiring a genuine violin at a bargain price would be a marker of great acuity and fortune. A price of 55s is only one-half of one percent of 500 guineas (there were 21 shillings in a guinea). Holmes is proud of having struck such a deal, stressing that the broker was a denizen of the Tottenham Court commercial thoroughfare — and was Jewish. Conversely, the famous violinist Efrem Zimbalist, Sr. thought he bought a Stradivarius but later discovered it was an imitation, worth only a fraction of the purchase price; his seller committed no fraud and Zimbalist lost his lawsuit to rescind the sale, but Zimbalist was excused from paying the unpaid installments. *Smith v. Zimbalist,* 38 P.2d 170 (Cal. App. 1934). Auction price records in the 1890s do show that some Stradivarius violins were sold for 400 to 800 pounds (https://tarisio.com/cozio-archive/price-history/?Maker_ID=722).

[92] TAMAR ZEFFREN: The outsize prominence of Jews in the money-lending profession since the High Middle Ages has rendered them an enduring target of virulent anti-Semitic

lings.[93] This led him to Paganini,[94] and we sat for an hour over a bottle of

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rhetoric and action. A full treatment of this practice is beyond the scope of this note, but fleeting mentions of Jews from totemic Victorian literary works such as Charles Dickens' *The Pickwick Papers* (1836), which details the "greasy and mildewed appearance" of Jewish court assistants with "no fixed offices", and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72), which describes one of the primary characters, Will Ladislaw, as "the grandson of a thieving Jew pawnbroker," indicate that this anti-Semitic tradition continued to find robust expression in late-nineteenth-century England.

At the time "The Cardboard Box" was published in 1893, English Jews were no longer as prominently represented in the money-lending and aligned professions. Anne and Roger Cowen note "an important change" in the geographical and professional distribution of English Jewry starting as early as the 1830s — a shift away from their roots as "country pedlars" *Victorian Jews through British Eyes* (1998). In his examination of "Occupations of East London Jewry 1880-1905" in the *Social History of the Jews in England, 1850-1950* (1954), V.D. Lipman does not rank money-lending among the most popular occupations for British Jewry at that time.

Andrew Solberg and Charles Blanksteen have both recently produced investigations of anti-Semitism in the Canon. In "Sherlock Holmes: Anti-Semite?" (*Baker Street Journal* 51, no. 1 (2001)), Solberg analyzes the Canon's references to Jews alongside the corresponding *Oxford English Dictionary* etymology. He concludes: "Brokers" were, of course, money lenders, just as pawnbrokers are today. It is not surprising that there were Jewish brokers. As for the use of the word 'Jew' as an adjective, as I have discussed above, it was an acceptably neutral figure of speech that was not meant as an opprobrious phrase." Holmes' attitude at this juncture has already taken on a gleeful cast; a few sentences earlier, he "cheerfully" accepts being barred from visiting Miss Sarah Cushing. Subsequently, after dominating the conversation at his "pleasant little meal" with Watson with musical anecdotes, he reveals to Lestrade — well, "threw it over" — the name of the criminal with insouciance. I would argue that the most memorable part of Holmes' statement to Watson is not his straightforward characterization of the seller, but rather his evident self-satisfaction in having acquired an astonishingly rare instrument at a veritable bargain. His jubilation here over the Stradivarius puts one in mind of Holmes' reference in "The Red-Headed League" to "violin land, where all is sweetness, and delicacy, and harmony" — in stark contrast to Holmes' pessimistic closing words in "The Cardboard Box" about a "circle of misery and violence and fear."

THE EDITORS: Several issues relating to the treatment of Jews and Judaism in the Sherlockian Canon are also addressed in Hartley Nathan and Clifford Goldfarb's book *Investigating Sherlock Holmes: Some Unsolved Mysteries* (2014).

[93] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 39, n. 26; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 436, n. 20; WBG, p. 2:200, n. 19. GREG RUBY: Fifty-five shillings (£2 15s) was a tidy sum of money in 1890 and would have been two weeks' salary for a well-paid clerk in an office environment at that time (*Tempted London* (1889)). It seems unlikely that a pawn broker would have accepted Holmes's personal cheque for the purchase. At the time, the smallest Bank of England currency in circulation was a £5 note, so the transaction mostly likely was conducted with coins. The most efficient method would have been four coins — two gold sovereigns (worth 20s each), one gold half sovereign, and a silver crown (worth 5s).

claret[95] while he told me anecdote after anecdote of that extraordinary man. The afternoon was far advanced and the hot glare had softened into a mellow glow before we found ourselves at the police station. Lestrade was waiting for us at the door.

"A telegram for you, Mr. Holmes," said he.

"Ha! It is the answer!" He tore it open, glanced his eyes over it, and crumpled it into his pocket. "That's all right," said he.

"Have you found out anything?"

"I have found out everything!"

"What!" Lestrade stared at him in amazement. "You are joking."

"I was never more serious in my life. A shocking crime has been committed, and I think that I have now laid bare every detail of it."

"And the criminal?"

Holmes scribbled a few words upon the back of one of his visiting-cards and threw it over to Lestrade.

"That is it," he said; "you cannot effect an arrest until to-morrow night at the earliest. I should prefer that you would not mention my name at all in connection with the case, as I choose to be associated only with those crimes which present some difficulty in their solution. Come on, Watson." We strode off together to the station, leaving Lestrade still staring with a delighted face at the card which Holmes had thrown him.

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Guineas were last minted in 1817 and the term was often used in wagering on races and for professional services rendered. Each guinea is worth 21 shillings, as opposed to the pound or sovereign being worth 20 shillings each. In 1890, 500 guineas would have been able to rent housing for a family for 5 years (*The Nineteenth Century* (1888)) and would have the purchasing power of nearly $75,000 as this annotation is being written. (Eric W. Nye, "Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency", https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm.)

[94] ALEXANDER KATZ: Paganini was a composer-performer (1782-1840) known for his virtuoso performances and compositions, most notably *24 Caprices for the Violin* (1805-1809). He owned and performed using several violins that were created by master luthiers, including Guarneri and Stradivarius. He won two Guarneri violins through competitions, one in Livorno and one in Parma, illustrating how brilliant he was as a performer. In Livorno, a wealthy businessman lent him one for a competition, and refused to take it back; this violin became known as "Il Cannone Guarnerius". In Parma, Paganini won a challenging sight-reading competition. Holmes owned one Stradivarius, but could have appreciated Paganini's competitive drive, and also his violin collection. Holmes went to hear Sarasate perform, and he also owned a Stradivarius. Sarasate's Stradivarius is on display in a museum, although he and Paganini did not perform on the same violin. As Holmes acquired his Stradivarius in a rather unusual fashion, perhaps the story of Paganini's acquiring his Guarneri instruments is one of the anecdotes that Holmes recounted to Watson.

[95] WBG, p. 2:201, n.20.

"The case," said Sherlock Holmes, as we chatted over our cigars that night in our rooms at Baker Street, "is one where, as in the investigations which you have chronicled under the names of the 'Study in Scarlet' and of the 'Sign of Four,'[96] we have been compelled to reason backward from effects to causes.[97] I have written to Lestrade asking him to supply us with the details which are now wanting, and which he will only get after he has secured his man. That he may be safely trusted to do, for although he is absolutely devoid of reason, he is as tenacious as a bulldog when he once understands what he has to do, and indeed it is just this tenacity which has brought him to the top at Scotland Yard."[98]

"Your case is not complete, then?" I asked.

"It is fairly complete in essentials. We know who the author of the revolting business is, although one of the victims still escapes us. Of course you have formed your own conclusions."

"I presume that this Jim Browner, the steward of a Liverpool boat, is the man whom you suspect?"

"Oh! it is more than a suspicion."

"And yet I cannot see anything save very vague indications."

"On the contrary, to my mind, nothing could be more clear. Let me run over the principal steps. We approached the case, you remember, with an absolutely 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 did we see first? A very placid and respectable lady, who seemed quite innocent of any secret, and a portrait which showed me that she had two younger sisters. It instantly flashed across my mind that the box might have been meant for one of these. I set the idea aside as one which could be disproved or confirmed at our leisure. Then we went to the garden, as you remember, and we saw the very singular contents of the little yellow box.

"The string was of the quality which is used by sail-makers aboard ship,[99]

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[96] WBG, p. 2:201, n.20.

[97] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 40, n. 29; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 437, n. 21; OSH: Memoirs, p. 283.

[98] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 40, n. 30.

[99] PETER E. BLAU: Holmes has earlier described the string as "a piece of tarred twine." (See note 75 above.) The string most likely was sailmakers' twine, which consists of two or more threads twisted together and then waxed, or sometimes tarred. It is strong, and weatherproof, and ideal for making and repairing sails. It's also used for whipping the ends of rope to prevent unravelling, and thus would have been found aboard the SS *May Day*, which belonged to the Liverpool, Dublin, and London Steam Packet Company (and may not have had sails or sailmakers).

and at once a whiff of the sea was perceptible in our investigation. When I observed that the knot was one which is popular with sailors,[100] that the parcel had been posted at a port, and that the male ear was pierced for an ear-ring, which is so much more common among sailors than landsmen, I was quite certain that all the actors in the tragedy were to be found among our seafaring classes.

"When I came to examine the address of the packet I observed that it was to Miss S. Cushing. Now the oldest sister would of course, be Miss Cushing,[101] and although her initial was 'S.,' it might belong to one of the others as well. In that case we should have to commence our investigation from a fresh basis altogether. I therefore went into the house with the intention of clearing up this point. I was about to assure Miss Cushing that I was convinced that a mistake had been made, when you may remember that I came suddenly to a stop. The fact was that I had just seen something which filled me with surprise, and at the same time narrowed the field of our inquiry immensely.

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[100] PETER E. BLAU: The knot surely was a square knot, which was and is popular with sailors, and with just about anyone who wants a knot that's both easy to tie and reasonably strong. Also called a reef knot, it's known to have been used in ancient Greece and Rome, often as a symbol of love or marriage (hence the phrase "tying the knot"). The square knot bow will be familiar to all those who still tie their shoes with laces ("right over left, and left over right"). Holmes earlier said that the knot was "of a peculiar character," suggesting that he wasn't aware of how widely the square knot was to be found.

[101] IRA MATETSKY: Holmes's inference here, which may be missed by modern readers, is based on old etiquette convention (in both the U.K. and the U.S.) that in a family with more than one daughter, the eldest unmarried daughter is addressed on an envelope or card simply as "Miss [last name]," while the other daughters are "Miss [first name] [last name]." As Emily Post's *Etiquette* explained to twentieth-century Americans, "[t]he eldest daughter is Miss Smith; her younger sister, Miss Jane Smith." *See also, e.g.*, A. N. Wilson, *Victoria: A Life* 64 (Penguin Books 2014) (quoting a letter in which Princess Victoria observes that "Miss Harcourt . . . ought by rights be called Miss Georgiana Harcourt, [her father's] eldest daughter being unmarried"); Jo McMurtry, *Victorian Life and Victorian Fiction: A Companion for the American Reader* 34 (Archon Books 1978) ("The distribution of 'Miss'es in a family with several daughters observed a kind of feminine primogeniture: The eldest daughter was spoken of as 'Miss Jones,' her younger sisters, as 'Miss Mary Jones,' 'Miss Jane Jones,' and so on. Upon the marriage of the eldest, the next sister in age became 'Miss Jones.'"); R. Austin Freeman, *A Silent Witness*, ch. 12 (1912) (amusing scene in a Dr. Thorndyke novel referencing this point of nomenclature); J. Willis Westlake, *How to Write Letters: A Manual of Correspondence* 210 (1876). Of course, one might well wonder whether a man like James Browner could be expected to know of this social nuance — after all, we soon learn that it was Alec Fairbairn, not Browner, who "had wonderful polite ways with him for a sailor man" — but Holmes's deduction turns out to be correct.

"As a medical man, you are aware, Watson, that there is no part of the body which varies so much as the human ear.[102] Each ear is, as a rule, quite distinctive, and differs from all other ones. In last year's *Anthropological Journal*[103] you will find two short monographs from my pen upon the subject.[104] I had, therefore, examined the ears in the box with the eyes of an expert, and had carefully noted their anatomical peculiarities. Imagine my surprise, then, when, on looking at Miss Cushing, I perceived that her ear corresponded exactly with the female ear which I had just inspected. The matter was entirely beyond coincidence. There was the same shortening of the pinna,[105] the same broad curve of the upper lobe, the same convolution of the inner cartilage. In all essentials it was the same ear.

"Of course I at once saw the enormous importance of the observation. It was evident that the victim was a blood relation, and probably a very close one. I began to talk to her about her family, and you remember that she at once gave us some exceedingly valuable details.

"In the first place, her sister's name was Sarah, and her address had, until recently, been the same, so that it was quite obvious how the mistake had

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[102] CARLINA DE LA COVA: Holmes was correct in stating that the human ear is one of the most variable parts of the body. The ear is anatomically comprised of three regions, including the external, middle, and internal ear. Holmes, however, was referring to the external ear with its auricle (the visible part of the external ear) and external auditory meatus (the ear opening that allows for hearing). The shape, size, and contours of the external ear and the external auditory meatus are so diverse with distinguishing characteristics that they make each person's ears unique. This distinctiveness has resulted in the usage of ears for forensic identification. Nineteenth century French criminalist Alphonse Bertillon, whom Holmes mentions in the Canon (indicating his familiarity with Bertillon's methods), was the first to use the ear in criminalistics when his eleven-measurement identification system included ear metrics. Today, forensic scientists still rely on ear biometrics and features, especially if fingerprints are unavailable, to identify the remains of mutilated individuals or catch criminals who left earprints behind while pressing their ears against doors or windows to ascertain if someone was home during an attempted burglary. Although the ear is variable and distinctive, it does have specific non-metric traits that are genetic and thus are inherited from parent to offspring. These include ear shape, protrusion, and attached versus detached earlobes, to name a few. While these features may be shared in families, there will still be unique variation in size and other auricular features.

[103] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 41, n. 31; OSH: Memoirs, p. 283.

[104] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 41, n. 32; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 439, n. 22; WBG, p. 2:202, n. 21. THE EDITORS: For discussion of the theory that a contemporary two-part article on human ears in *The Strand Magazine* was a reprint of Holmes's monographs or at least was influenced by him, see pages 352-361 of this *Almanac*.

[105] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 41, n. 33; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 439, n. 23; OSH: Memoirs, p. 283; WBG, p. 2:202, n. 22.

occurred, and whom the packet was meant for. Then we heard of this steward, married to the third sister, and learned that he had at one time been so intimate with Miss Sarah that she had actually gone up to Liverpool to be near the Browners, but a quarrel had afterwards divided them. This quarrel had put a stop to all communications for some months, so that if Browner had occasion to address a packet to Miss Sarah, he would undoubtedly have done so to her old address.

"And now the matter had begun to straighten itself out wonderfully. We had learned of the existence of this steward, an impulsive man of strong passions — you remember that he threw up what must have been a very superior berth, in order to be nearer to his wife — subject, too, to occasional fits of hard drinking. We had reason to believe that his wife had been murdered, and that a man — presumably a seafaring man — had been murdered at the same time. Jealousy, of course, at once suggests itself as the motive for the crime. And why should these proofs of the deed be sent to Miss Sarah Cushing? Probably because during her residence in Liverpool she had some hand in bringing about the events which led to the tragedy. You will observe that this line of boats calls at Belfast, Dublin, and Waterford; so that, presuming that Browner had committed the deed, and had embarked at once upon his steamer, the *May Day*, Belfast would be the first place at which he could post his terrible packet.

"A second solution was at this stage obviously possible, and although I thought it exceedingly unlikely, I was determined to elucidate it before going further. An unsuccessful lover might have killed Mr. and Mrs. Browner, and the male ear might have belonged to the husband. There were many grave objections to this theory, but it was conceivable. I therefore sent off a telegram to my friend Algar, of the Liverpool force, and asked him to find out if Mrs. Browner were at home, and if Browner had departed in the May Day. Then we went on to Wallington to visit Miss Sarah.

"I was curious, in the first place, to see how far the family ear had been reproduced in her. Then, of course, she might give us very important information, but I was not sanguine that she would. She must have heard of the business the day before, since all Croydon was ringing with it, and she alone could have understood whom the packet was meant for. If she had been willing to help justice she would probably have communicated with the police already. However, it was clearly our duty to see her, so we went. We found that the news of the arrival of the packet — for her illness dated from that time — had such an effect upon her as to bring on brain fever.[106] It was

[106] THE EDITORS: There is a substantial Sherlockian literature on "brain fever," which

clearer than ever that she understood its full significance, but equally clear that we should have to wait some time for any assistance from her.

"However, we were really independent of her help. Our answers were waiting for us at the police station, where I had directed Algar to send them. Nothing could be more conclusive. Mrs. Browner's house had been closed for more than three days, and the neighbors were of opinion that she had gone South to see her relatives. It had been ascertained at the shipping offices that Browner had left aboard of the *May Day*, and I calculate that she is due in the Thames to-morrow night. When he arrives he will be met by the obtuse but resolute Lestrade, and I have no doubt that we shall have all our details filled in."

Sherlock Holmes was not disappointed in his expectations. Two days later he received a bulky envelope, which contained a short note from the detective, and a type-written document[107] which covered several pages of foolscap.[108]

"Lestrade has got him all right," said Holmes, glancing up at me. "Perhaps it would interest you to hear what he says."

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appears to be a state of prolonged unconsciousness or semiconsciousness following an individual's receiving bad news or an emotional shock. At least five canonical characters are described as suffering from this ailment, although it has been sardonically described elsewhere as "a well-known 19th-century malady affecting only literary characters." "Discovering Sherlock Holmes," http://sherlockholmes.stanford.edu/issue11.html. An important recent treatment of this subject is Enrico Solito, M.D. & Stefano Guerra, M.D., "Brain Fever: Myth or Reality?" in Robert Katz & Andrew Solberg, eds., *Nerve and Knowledge: Doctors, Medicine, and the Sherlockian Canon* (BSI Press 2015).

[107] THE EDITORS: Typewriters were in use in Great Britain by this era, though they were not as common then as they would later become. One person known to have owned a typewriter by the early 1890s is Arthur Conan Doyle. *See* Letter from Arthur Conan Doyle to (his mother) Mary Doyle, Sept. 28, 1891, reprinted in Jon Lellenberg, Daniel Stashower & Charles Foley, *Arthur Conan Doyle, A Life in Letters* 295 (HarperCollins 2009).

[108] JENN EAKER: Not to be confused with a fool's cap (a cap with bells worn by a court jester), foolscap, or foolscap folio, as defined by *Merriam-Webster* is a size of writing paper formerly standard in Great Britain. The writing paper got its name from the watermark of a fool's cap that used to be applied to the paper. Foolscap is cut to the size of 8½x13½ inches. Today's more common A4 paper, which is the current standard in Great Britain, is 8¼x11¾ inches. Sir Edward Henry, who served as Metropolitan Police Commissioner from 1903 to 1918 and is best known for establishing the Metropolitan Police Fingerprint Bureau, is also credited with introducing the use of typewriters at New Scotland Yard, the headquarters of the Metropolitan Police. (Fun fact: he is also credited with introducing the use of police dogs.) Constables were the ones who normally did the clerical work, but according to *Pitman's Journal of Commercial Education* for January 1916, for the first time women typists entered New Scotland Yard to take the places of constables who were needed elsewhere "in the war-depleted force." The article adds that those first women typists were not sworn in as constables themselves and did not have to wear a uniform.

"My dear Mr. Holmes,—In accordance with the scheme which we had formed in order to test our theories" — "the 'we' is rather fine, Watson, is it not?" — 'I went down to the Albert Dock[109] yesterday at 6 P. M., and boarded the ss. *May Day*, belonging to the Liverpool, Dublin, and London Steam Packet Company.[110] On inquiry, I found that there was a steward on board of the name of James Browner, and that he had acted during the voyage in such an extraordinary manner that the captain had been compelled to relieve him of his duties. On descending to his berth, I found him seated upon a chest, with his head sunk upon his hands, rocking himself to and fro. He is a big, powerful chap, clean-shaven, and very swarthy — something like Aldridge, who helped us in the bogus laundry affair. He jumped up when he heard my business, and I had my whistle to my lips to call a couple of river police, who were round the corner, but he seemed to have no heart in him, and he held out his hands quietly enough for the darbies.[111] We brought him along to the cells, and his box as well, for we thought there might be something incriminating; but, bar a big sharp knife, such as most sailors have, we got nothing for our trouble. However, we find that we shall

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[109] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 42, n. 34; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 441, n. 24; OSH: Memoirs, p. 283.

[110] PETER E. BLAU: The packet trade has more than 500 years of history, beginning with government ships that carried mail. Private companies eventually took over the trade, using medium-sized ships that also carried cargo and passengers. The *May Day* would have been a packet steamer, and Jim Browner, as a steward, would have tended to its passengers.

WALTER JAFFEE: Browner mailed the cardboard box when the ship was in Belfast on September 1, 1889. According to George Chandler's book *Liverpool Shipping: A Short History*, the run was dominated by the British and Irish Steam Packet Company and the City of Dublin Steam Packet Company. There is no mention of the Liverpool, Dublin and London Packet Company and one must assume this is a fictional name similar to those that actually existed. The City of Dublin Steam Packet Company was founded in 1823 to operate steamers from Dublin to Liverpool. The route was extended to London in 1826, and a Belfast-Glasgow route was operated in the late 1820s. In 1843, Liverpool and North Wales routes were taken over from the St. George Steam Packet Co. and this lasted until 1881. A service was started in 1838 by the *Royal William*, which made three round-trip voyages between Liverpool and New York in 1838 and 1839. She sailed from Liverpool for New York in July 1838 and was the first steamer to make a westbound transatlantic voyage from the Mersey. The *Royal William* was a wooden-hulled, side-paddle-wheel steamer. In 1839 she returned to Irish Sea voyages and later became a coal hulk. She was scrapped in 1888.

A regular Dublin-Belfast service was also operated from 1826 until the 1914-1918 war. Dublin-Liverpool services ceased in 1919 after two of the company's passenger ships were sunk during the war and their ships were taken over by the British & Irish Steam Packet Co. (Coast Lines). The company went into liquidation in 1924.

[111] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 43, n. 35; OSH: Memoirs, p. 284.

want no more evidence, for, on being brought before the inspector at the station, he asked leave to make a statement, which was, of course, taken down, just as he made it, by our short-hand man.[112] We had three copies type-written, one of which I inclose. The affair proves, as I always thought it would, to be an extremely simple one, but I am obliged to you for assisting me in my investigation. With kind regards, yours very truly, G. Lestrade."

"Hum! The investigation really was a very simple one," remarked Holmes; "but I don't think it struck him in that light when he first called us in. However, let us see what Jim Browner has to say for himself. This is his statement, as made before Inspector Montgomery at the Shadwell[113] Police Station, and it has the advantage of being verbatim:

"Have I anything to say? Yes, I have a deal to say. I have to make a clean breast of it all. You can hang me, or you can leave me alone. I don't care a plug which you do.[114] I tell you I've not shut an eye in sleep since I did it, and I don't believe I ever will again until I get past all waking. Sometimes it's his face, but most generally it's hers. I'm never without one or the other before me. He looks frowning and black-like, but she has a kind o' surprise upon her face. Ay, the white lamb, she might well be surprised when she read death on a face that had seldom looked anything but love upon her before.

"But it was Sarah's fault, and may the curse of a broken man put a blight on her and set the blood rotting in her veins! It's not that I want to clear myself. I know that I went back to drink, like the beast that I was. But she would have forgiven me; she would have stuck as close to me as a rope to a block if that woman had never darkened our door. For Sarah Cushing loved me — that's the root of the business — she loved me, until all her love

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[112] THE EDITORS: A British shorthand writer of the 1880s would likely have used a version of the Pitman system. There are contemporary reports that some police detectives of the period were expected to know, or were taught, shorthand so they could take down statements from prisoners and others. To help popularize its shorthand system, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd. published a magazine, *Pitman's Shorthand Weekly*, which beginning in 1893 serialized *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

[113] OSH: Memoirs, p. 284; WSB, p. 2:204, n. 22.

[114] IRA MATETSKY: Browner planned and carried out the premediated unlawful killing of two human beings and hence was guilty of murder under English law, unless he could convince a jury that either he acted under provocation causing the loss of self-control (which would reduce the crime of murder to manslaughter) or was not guilty by reason of insanity. If he was convicted of murder, a sentence of death by hanging would be mandatory, subject to the Queen's power (exercised in practice by the Home Secretary) to commute the sentence to imprisonment for life or a term of years. *See* Ira Brad Matetsky, "Homicide and Punishment: Murder in the Sherlockian Canon," in William A. Walsh & Donny Zaldin, eds., *Canon Law: Law, Lawyers and the Sherlockian Canon* (BSI Press 2019).

turned to poisonous hate when she knew that I thought more of my wife's foot-mark in the mud than I did of her whole body and soul.

"There were three sisters altogether. The old one was just a good woman, the second was a devil, and the third was an angel. Sarah was thirty-three and Mary was twenty-nine when I married. We were just as happy as the day was long when we set up house together, and in all Liverpool there was no better woman than my Mary. And then we asked Sarah up for a week, and the week grew into a month, and one thing led to another until she was just one of ourselves.

"I was blue-ribbon at that time,[115] and we were putting a little money by, and all was as bright as a new dollar. My God! Whoever would have thought that it could have come to this? Whoever would have dreamed it?

"I used to be home for the week-ends very often, and sometimes, if the ship was held back for cargo, I would have a whole week at a time, and in this way I saw a deal of my sister-in-law Sarah. She was a fine tall woman, black and quick and fierce, with a proud way of carrying her head, and a glint from her eye like the spark from a flint. But when little Mary was there I had never a thought for her, and that I swear as I hope for God's mercy.

"It had seemed to me sometimes that she liked to be alone with me, or to coax me out for a walk with her, but I had never thought anything of that. But one evening my eyes were opened. I had come up from the ship, and found my wife out, but Sarah at home. 'Where's Mary?' I asked. 'Oh, she

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[115] OSH: Memoirs, p. 284. MARY ALCARO: The Blue Ribbon Army was an 1870s American temperance organization founded by Francis Murphy, an evangelist and reformed drinker who had served jail time for crimes committed while under the influence. Like many of its contemporaries, the Blue Ribbon espoused a philosophy emphasizing religion and prayer for successful reformation. The name itself is a biblical allusion, bidding its wearers to "put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them." (Num. 15:38-39.)

The Blue Ribbon spread through America after being recognized by Frances Willard, a renowned social reformer and Woman's Christian Temperance Unions President, in 1874. Meetings lasted days or even weeks, and featured public signings of total abstinence pledges, which ran: "With charity to all and malice to none, I promise by divine help, to abstain from all intoxicating liquors and beverages and to discountenance their use by others." In 1877, William Noble brought the Blue Ribbon to England, where it found its home at Hoxton Hall, a music hall stripped of its license. (Despite the organization's Protestant foundation, secular spaces drew better crowds.) The Blue Ribbon turned out to be more than an "American fad;" the organization crossed class lines, with more than one million Englishmen taking the pledge — though how many would "break their blue ribbon" (a phrase Baring-Gould equates with "falling off the wagon") remains unknown. For more information, see Lilian Lewis Shiman, *Crusade Against Drink in Victorian England* (1988).

has gone to pay some accounts.' I was impatient, and paced up and down the room. 'Can't you be happy for five minutes without Mary, Jim?' says she. 'It's a bad compliment to me that you can't be contented with my society for so short a time.' 'That's all right, my lass,' said I, putting out my hand towards her in a kindly way, but she had it in both hers in an instant, and they burned as if they were in a fever. I looked into her eyes, and I read it all there. There was no need for her to speak, nor for me either. I frowned and drew my hand away. Then she stood by my side in silence for a bit, and then put up her hand and patted me on the shoulder. 'Steady old Jim!' said she; and, with a mocking laugh, she ran out of the room.

"Well, from that time Sarah hated me with her whole heart and soul, and she is a woman who can hate, too. I was a fool to let her go on biding with us — a besotted fool — but I never said a word to Mary, for I knew it would grieve her. Things went on much as before, but after a time I began to find that there was a bit of a change in Mary herself. She had always been so trusting and so innocent, but now she became queer and suspicious, wanting to know where I had been and what I had been doing, and whom my letters were from, and what I had in my pockets, and a thousand such follies. Day by day she grew queerer and more irritable, and we had causeless rows about nothing. I was fairly puzzled by it all. Sarah avoided me now, but she and Mary were just inseparable. I can see now how she was plotting and scheming and poisoning my wife's mind against me, but I was such a blind beetle that I could not understand it at the time. Then I broke my blue-ribbon and began to drink again, but I think I should not have done it if Mary had been the same as ever. She had some reason to be disgusted with me now, and the gap between us began to be wider and wider. And then this Alec Fairbairn chipped in, and things became a thousand times blacker.

"It was to see Sarah that he came to my house first, but soon it was to see us, for he was a man with winning ways, and he made friends wherever he went. He was a dashing, swaggering chap, smart and curled, who had seen half the world, and could talk of what he had seen. He was good company, I won't deny it, and he had wonderful polite ways with him for a sailor man, so that I think there must have been a time when he knew more of the poop than the forecastle.[116] For a month he was in and out of my house, and never once did it cross my mind that harm might come of his soft, tricky ways. And then at last something made me suspect, and from that day my peace was gone forever.

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[116] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 44, n. 37; LSK, 1 New Ann., p. 445, n. 26; OSH: Memoirs, p. 284.

"It was only a little thing, too. I had come into the parlor unexpected, and as I walked in at the door I saw a light of welcome on my wife's face. But as she saw who it was it faded again, and she turned away with a look of disappointment. That was enough for me. There was no one but Alec Fairbairn whose step she could have mistaken for mine. If I could have seen him then I should have killed him, for I have always been like a madman when my temper gets loose. Mary saw the devil's light in my eyes, and she ran forward with her hands on my sleeve. 'Don't, Jim, don't!' says she. 'Where's Sarah?' I asked. 'In the kitchen,' says she. 'Sarah,' says I, as I went in, 'this man Fairbairn is never to darken my door again.' 'Why not?' says she. 'Because I order it.' 'Oh!' says she, 'if my friends are not good enough for this house, then I am not good enough for it either.' 'You can do what you like,' says I, 'but if Fairbairn shows his face here again, I'll send you one of his ears for a keepsake.' She was frightened by my face, I think, for she never answered a word, and the same evening she left my house.

"Well, I don't know now whether it was pure deviltry on the part of this woman, or whether she thought that she could turn me against my wife by encouraging her to misbehave. Anyway, she took a house just two streets off, and let lodgings to sailors. Fairbairn used to stay there, and Mary would go round to have tea with her sister and him. How often she went I don't know, but I followed her one day, and as I broke in at the door, Fairbairn got away over the back garden wall, like the cowardly skunk that he was. I swore to my wife that I would kill her if I found her in his company again, and I led her back with me sobbing and trembling, and as white as a piece of paper. There was no trace of love between us any longer. I could see that she hated me and feared me, and when the thought of it drove me to drink, then she despised me as well.

"Well, Sarah found that she could not make a living in Liverpool, so she went back, as I understand, to live with her sister in Croydon, and things jogged on much the same as ever at home. And then came this last week and all the misery and ruin.

"It was in this way. We had gone on the *May Day* for a round voyage of seven days, but a hogshead[117] got loose and started one of our plates,[118] so that we had to put back into port for twelve hours. I left the ship and came home, thinking what a surprise it would be for my wife, and hoping that may be she would be glad to see me so soon. The thought was in my head as I turned into my own street, and at that moment a cab passed me, and there

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[117] OSH: Memoirs, p. 284.
[118] OSH: Memoirs, p. 284.

she was, sitting by the side of Fairbairn, the two chatting and laughing, with never a thought for me as I stood watching them.[119]

"I tell you, and I give you my word on it, that from that moment I was not my own master, and it is all like a dim dream when I look back on it. I had been drinking hard of late, and the two things together fairly turned my brain. There's something throbbing in my head now, like a docker's hammer,[120] but that morning I seemed to have all Niagara whizzing and buzzing in my ears.

"Well, I took to my heels, and I ran after the cab. I had a heavy oak stick in my hand, and I tell you that I saw red from the first; but as I ran I got cunning too, and hung back a little to see them without being seen. They pulled up soon at the railway station. There was a good crowd round the booking-office, so I got quite close to them without being seen. They took tickets for New Brighton.[121] So did I, but I got in three carriages behind them. When we reached it they walked along the Parade,[122] and I was never more than a hundred yards from them. At last I saw them hire a boat and start for a row, for it was a very hot day, and they thought, no doubt, that it would be cooler on the water.

"It was just as if they had been given into my hands. There was a bit of a haze, and you could not see more than a few hundred yards. I hired a boat for myself, and I pulled after them. I could see the blur of their craft, but they were going nearly as fast as I, and they must have been a long mile from the shore before I caught them up. The haze was like a curtain all round us, and there were we three in the middle of it. My God! Shall I ever forget their faces when they saw who was in the boat that was closing in upon them? She screamed out. He swore like a madman, and jabbed at me with

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[119] THE EDITORS: In the *Strand* and some other versions of the story, the words "from the footpath" appear at the end of this sentence.

[120] THE EDITORS: This means "a dock worker's hammer." (Dorn, note 74 above, p. 134.) It could refer to an implement that we would call a pile driver. In any event, dockers' hammers were loud. *See* Devon & Cornwall Police, "Plymouth Dock Police," https://www.devon-cornwall.police.uk/your-right-to-information/our-people/our-history/force-areas/plymouth/plymouth-dock-police-1834-present-day-mod-police/ (stating that the Dockyard Police Force established in 1834 "was the first police force to use whistles, long before the Metropolitans — an alternative to the rattle which could not be heard over the din of the docker's hammer").

[121] LSK, Ref.: Memoirs, p. 45, n. 38; OSH: Memoirs, p. 284; WBG, p. 2:207, n. 25.

[122] THE EDITORS: "In seaside resort cities, [a 'parade' was] a waterfront street or promenade, usually with the beach on one side and major hotels, shops, etc. on the other." Gregory Benford, *Benford's G&S Lexicon*, s.v. "Marine parade," https://gsopera.com/lexicon/marine-parade (discussing this term as used in Act I of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Mikado*).

an oar, for he must have seen death in my eyes. I got past it, and got one in with my stick that crushed his head like an egg. I would have spared her, perhaps, for all my madness, but she threw her arms round him, crying out to him, and calling him 'Alec.' I struck again, and she lay stretched beside him. I was like a wild beast then that had tasted blood. If Sarah had been there, by the Lord, she should have joined them. I pulled out my knife, and — well, there! I've said enough. It gave me a kind of savage joy when I thought how Sarah would feel when she had such signs as these of what her meddling had brought about. Then I tied the bodies into the boat, stove a plank, and stood by until they had sunk. I knew very well that the owner would think that they had lost their bearings in the haze, and had drifted off out to sea. I cleaned myself up, got back to land, and joined my ship without a soul having a suspicion of what had passed. That night I made up the packet for Sarah Cushing, and next day I sent it from Belfast.

"There you have the whole truth of it. You can hang me, or do what you like with me, but you cannot punish me as I have been punished already. I cannot shut my eyes but I see those two faces staring at me — staring at me as they stared when my boat broke through the haze. I killed them quick, but they are killing me slow; and if I have another night of it I shall be either mad or dead before morning. You won't put me alone into a cell, sir? For pity's sake don't, and may you be treated in your day of agony as you treat me now."

"What is the meaning of it, Watson?" said Holmes, solemnly, as he laid down the paper. "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.[123] But what end? There is the great standing perennial problem to which human reason is as far from an answer as ever."[124]

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[123] THE EDITORS: John McNabb cites this passage as proof that Sherlock Holmes was not a Darwinist, even though Holmes cites Darwin in another context in *A Study in Scarlet*. "Anthropology by Gaslight: Sherlock Holmes, Conan Doyle and the Anthropology of Detection at the Victorian *Fin de Siècle*," 49 World Anthropology 728, 739 (2017).

[124] THE EDITORS: This is surely the most melancholy and despairing ending to any of the 60 adventures. Although Holmes ofttimes complains of boredom or a lack of challenging cases, he rarely displays such a gloomy attitude toward life as a whole. Another time he does do so is at the opening of "The Adventure of the Retired Colourman," near the very end of the Canon.