

THE STRAND MAGAZINE.

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Frontispiece: "I had one hand over his mouth ere he could shout or cry."

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SHERLOCK HOLMES has achieved that rarest of all reputations in literature, for he has become the symbol of a vital force in the language, and has taken his place among the small band of men who are types of their calling. For anyone to be described as a Sherlock Holmes is for all the world to understand that he is an individual gifted with an extraordinary sense of logical deduction, the ability to reason clearly from cause to effect, or from effect back again to cause, and to arrange a series of given facts in their ordered sequence for the elucidation of a mystery.

Brilliant creation as he was, however, Sherlock Holmes stands forth as another example of the famous dictum, "There is nothing new under the sun." All his admirers know that the author of his being derived the idea of his character from a famous professor of Edinburgh, under whom Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, as a medical student, studied long before he had any intention of devoting himself to the service of letters.

Professor Bell, however, took to his lecture-room and to the out-patient department of the hospital no new idea, for the process of drawing deductions from established facts was as old as the sun, and the application of the principle to literature had fascinated writers from the earliest ages. Like much of our knowledge, it came from the East. One of its oldest forms is the Eastern fable which may be familiar to many readers, since it has been seized upon for translation in all European languages.

A dervish was journeying alone in the desert, when he met two merchants. "You have lost a camel," said he to the merchants.

"It is true, we have," they replied.

"Was he not blind in his right eye and lame in his left leg?" inquired the dervish.

"He was," replied the merchants.

"And had he not lost a tooth?"

"He had," said the merchants.

"And was he not loaded with honey on one side and wheat on the other?"

"Most certainly he was," they replied; "and, as you have evidently just seen him, we pray you to tell us where to find him."

"My friends," said the dervish, "I have never seen your camel, nor ever heard of him except from you."

"A pretty story, truly," said the merchants.

"But where are the jewels which formed part of his cargo?"

"I have neither seen your camel nor your jewels," repeated the dervish.

On this they seized his person and forthwith hurried him before a justice, where, on the strictest search, no proof could be found against him, either of falsehood or of theft.

They were about to proceed against him as a sorcerer when the dervish, with great calmness, thus addressed the Court: "I have been much pleased with your surprise, and own that there has been some ground for your suspicions; but I have lived long and alone, and I can find ample scope for observation even in a desert. I knew that I had crossed the track of a camel that had strayed from its owner because I saw no mark of any human footstep on the same route. I knew that the animal was blind in one eye

because it had cropped the herbage only on one side of its path; and I perceived that it was lame in one leg from the faint impression which that particular foot had produced upon the sand. I concluded that the animal had lost one tooth because wherever it had grazed a small tuft of herbage was left uninjured in the centre of its bite. As to that which formed the burden of the beast, the busy ants informed me that it was corn which had dropped on the one side, and the clustering flies that it was honey on the other."

This idea of deduction may be traced in a Persian book called "Nigaristan," which may be translated as "The Picture Gallery." It is a miscellany of stories and poetry on moral subjects, written by Muin-al-din Juwaini in 1335. Later on an Italian found it, and translated it. The Italian work was used by Gueulette as the basis of his "Soirées Bretonnes"—a work on which, it is believed, Voltaire founded "Zadig," the hero of a series of incidents in exactly the same way as Sherlock became the hero of a series of problems, so that the most famous character of THE STRAND MAGAZINE can trace back his ancestry to a period which might make most of our bluest-blooded aristocracy turn green with envy.

Zadig sought his happiness in the study of Nature. "No one is happier," he said, "than the philosopher who reads this great book which God has placed under his eyes. The truths which he discovers are his own; he nourishes and elevates his soul; he lives a tranquil life; he fears nothing from man." "Full of these ideas," we are told, "he withdrew to his house in the country on the borders of the Euphrates. There he occu-

pled himself solely in calculating how many inches of water ran under the arches of a bridge in a second, or if there fell a cubic inch of rain in the Month of Mice more than in the Month of Sheep. It did not enter his imagination to make silk of spiders' webs or porcelain with broken bottles; but he made a special study of the properties of animals and plants, and he soon acquired a sagacity by means of which he discovered a thousand differences where other men saw nothing but uniformity."

It was this capacity which distinguished him, as it was a similar capacity which distinguished Sherlock, though the latter used his deductive powers only in the elucidation of crime.

One day when Zadig was walking near a little wood he saw the Queen's chief attendants and several officers running towards him. He noticed that they were in great anxiety, for they ran about as if they were quite bewildered, looking for something of great value which they had lost. When they came up to him the chief Eunuch said: "Have you seen the Queen's pet dog?"

Zadig replied, "It is a little female dog."



"HAVE YOU SEEN THE QUEEN'S PET DOG?"

"You are right," said the Eunuch.

"It is a very small spaniel," added Zadig; "she has recently had puppies, she has a limp of the left forefoot, and she has very long ears."

"You have seen her, then?" exclaimed the Eunuch, joyfully.

"No," replied Zadig, "I have never seen her. I did not know that the Queen had such a dog."

Precisely at the same time, by an extraordinary coincidence, the most beautiful horse in the King's stable had escaped from the hands of the stable attendants and galloped out on the plains of Babylon. The Grand Vizier and all the other officers ran after it with as much anxiety as the first Eunuch after the spaniel. The Grand Vizier addressed himself to Zadig, and asked him if he had seen the King's horse pass. Zadig replied, "It is a horse which gallops to perfection; it is five feet high, with very small hoofs. It has a tail three and a half feet long; the bit of its bridle is of twenty-three-carat gold; its shoes are of silver."

"What road has it taken? Where is it?" demanded the Vizier.

"I have never seen it," replied Zadig, "and I have never heard it spoken of."

The Grand Vizier and the first Eunuch had no doubt that Zadig had stolen the King's horse and the Queen's dog. They had him conveyed before the Great Desterhan, who condemned him to the knout and to pass the rest of his days in Siberia. The judgment had scarcely been pronounced when the horse and the dog were found. The judges were under the sad necessity of reversing their judgment, but they condemned Zadig to pay four hundred ounces of gold for having said that he had never seen what he had seen. He was first obliged to pay this fine; after which he was permitted to plead his cause before the council of the Great Desterhan. He spoke in these terms:—

"Stars of Justice, Abysses of Science, Mirrors of Truth which have the weight of lead, the hardness of iron and the brilliance of the diamond, and much affinity with gold: Since I am permitted to speak before this august assembly I swear to you by Orosmede that I have never seen the respected dog of the Queen nor the sacred horse of the King of Kings. This is what happened to me. I was walking towards the little wood, where I lately encountered the venerable Eunuch and the most illustrious Grand Vizier. I had seen on the sand the traces of

an animal, and I had easily judged that they were those of a little dog. The light and long furrows imprinted on the little eminences of sand between the traces of the feet showed me that it was a female that had lately given birth to pups. Other traces which appeared to have continually raised the surface of the sand by the side of the front feet told me that she had long ears. As I remarked that the sand was always less crushed by one foot than by the three others, I understood that the dog of our august Queen was, if I may dare to say so, a little lame.

"With regard to the King's horse, you must know that while I was walking in the roads of this wood I perceived the marks of the hoofs of a horse. They were all at equal distances. 'Here,' said I, 'is a horse which gallops perfectly.' The dust of the trees in a narrow route only seven feet broad was brushed off here and there, to right and left, at three and a half feet from the middle of the road. 'This horse,' I added, 'has a tail of three and a half feet long, which, by its movement right and left, has scattered the dust.' I had seen under the trees, which formed a canopy five feet high, newly fallen leaves from the branches, and I knew that this horse had touched them, and therefore it was five feet high. As to the bridle, it must be of twenty-three-carat gold, for it had rubbed its bit against a stone, and I had made the assay of it. I judged, finally, by the marks which its shoes had left on the pebbles of another kind, that it was shod with silver of a fineness of twelve deniers."

All the judges admired the profound and subtle discernment of Zadig. The news of it reached the King and Queen. Nothing else was spoken of in the ante-chambers, the chambers, and the Cabinet; and though the Magis were of opinion that he ought to be burnt for sorcery, the King ordered that they should give him back the fine of four hundred ounces of gold to which he had been condemned. The officers came to him in their grand robes bearing the four hundred ounces; they only retained three hundred and ninety-eight for the expenses of justice, while their valets demanded a "tip."

The first application of the idea embodied in these stories to the detective belongs to Edgar Allan Poe, who, in the estimation of many competent judges, still holds pride of place, supreme and unassailable, among the short-story writers of the world. In C. Auguste Dupin he introduced a detective whose paternity Sherlock Holmes might be

proud to claim. Like Sherlock Holmes, he was interested in the detection of crime, not as a professional, but as an amateur, to whom the placing of each insignificant fact in its proper place was as fascinating as to the worker in mosaic is the placing of each tiny tessera in the design.

While thrown prominently into view in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"—the story which reaches the high-water mark of its class as

failed, and she had to leave it on the table, relying on the fact that things which are not hidden at all are often most free from observation. This fact, it may be remarked, was made use of by Sardou in his famous comedy,



"THE OFFICERS CAME TO HIM IN THEIR GRAND ROBES BRASING THE FOUR HUNDRED GUNCES."

an acknowledged masterpiece among short stories, unless Poe's own "Gold Bug" may be regarded as taking its place—the methods Dupin adopted in "The Purloined Letter" may be taken as most typical of his method. In that case, as in so many of Sherlock Holmes's investigations, the police were entirely baffled. The Prefect of the Parisian police went to consult him on the mystery, to which the only objection from Dupin's point of view was that there was no mystery.

Those who have read the story will remember that a document of supreme importance had been stolen from the Royal apartments. The thief was known, for he was seen to take the letter, which was in his possession. He was an exalted personage—a Minister of State. While the lady to whom the letter was addressed was reading it she was interrupted by the unexpected arrival of someone from whom she wished to conceal it. She tried to put it into a drawer, but

known in its English dress as "The Scrap of Paper."

As soon as the Minister entered he saw the paper, recognised the handwriting, and, having a letter somewhat similar in his possession, substituted the one for the other. The lady to whom the letter belonged saw what he did, but did not dare prevent him, in consequence of the presence of the third person. The situation thus developed became interesting, for, while the Minister was using the information obtained to his great advantage, the lady robbed was unable to demand her letter from him. She therefore put the case into the hands of the police.

The police searched the Minister's house while he was away, but found nothing. That was the position of affairs when the police called on Dupin, who obtained from them an exact description of the letter. After a few weeks the Prefect returned to the amateur and acknowledged that he had again searched

the Minister's house without any result. In despair he offered fifty thousand francs for the letter. With exquisite simplicity Dupin replied, "You may as well fill in a cheque for the amount mentioned; when you have signed it I will hand you the letter."

To the amazement of the head of the profession of *police* Dupin explained his method, which may be said to be summed up in the familiar axiom, "Put yourself in his place," a method which Sherlock Holmes himself adopted with conspicuous success on more than one occasion. The imagination, indeed, which Sherlock so frequently insisted upon in his conversations with Dr. Watson, Dupin applied to the case, and began by putting himself in the place of the Minister, who, being a courtier and a bold intriguer, could not fail to anticipate that the police would do exactly what they did—waylay him and search his house. Indeed, he frequently absented himself from his house in order to enable them to search for the letter, and arrive at the conclusion that it was not on the premises.

Dupin, however, concluded that, as most self-evident things pass unnoticed, the Minister had not attempted to hide the letter at all. Accordingly, he went to his house, where he found the Minister. In order to obtain the excuse of wearing spectacles of smoked glasses Dupin complained of weak eyes, and so minutely examined the room without appearing to do so. While he was talking he noticed a little card-rack of paste-board dangling by a little dirty blue ribbon from a brass knob beneath the middle of the mantelpiece.

It had three or four compartments, containing five or six visiting-cards and a single letter, which was soiled, crumpled, and torn

nearly in two, and had a large black seal bearing the Minister's cipher very conspicuously. It was addressed in a female hand to the Minister himself, and looked as if it had been carelessly thrown into one of the upper divisions of the rack.

Dupin concluded that it was the letter he was in search of, for he noticed that the edges of the paper seemed to be more chafed than was necessary. He concluded that it had been turned inside out, redirected, and resealed: for it must be remembered that those were the days in which envelopes were not commonly used. Dupin bade the Minister good day and went away, having taken the precaution to leave his gold snuff-box on the table.

Next morning he called for it. In the middle of a conversation with the Minister there was a sudden report of a pistol beneath the window, followed by fearful screams and loud shouting, all previously arranged for by the amateur detective. The Minister rushed to the window, threw it open, and looked out; whereupon Dupin, to use his own words, "stepped to the card-rack, took the letter, and replaced it by a facsimile carefully prepared at my lodgings." Having secured the letter, Dupin bade the Minister farewell and left.

The firing of the revolver to distract the attention of the Minister is closely akin to the alarm of fire which Sherlock caused his accomplice to raise at the house of the Larrabees when he was investigating the mystery of the purloined documents, which formed the subject of the famous play bearing his name.

Closely allied to Dupin is M. Lecoq, who,



"DUPIN STEPPED TO THE CARD-RACK AND TOOK THE LETTER."

thanks to the invention of Emile Gaboriau, has become the beau-ideal of the detective in France. Unlike Dupin, however, and therefore unlike Sherlock Holmes, he was not an amateur, but a professional member of the police force, which he entered to make a career for himself. The originality of his methods caused his colleagues to be antagonistic to him, and in this way the author introduced that hostility to the deductive philosophy which has always been characteristic of detective stories.

If one turns to Gaboriau's story, "File No. 113," the closeness of the methods of Lecoq, Dupin, and Holmes is seen at a glance.

A safe has been robbed, and it is of the utmost importance to discover who robbed it. In discussing the matter with one of his subordinates, Lecoq says: "Do you remember the scratch you discovered on the green paint of the safe-door? You were so struck by it that you broke into an exclamation directly you saw it. You carefully examined it, and were convinced that it was a fresh scratch only a few hours old. Now, with what was it made? Evidently with a key. That being the case, you should have asked for the keys both of the banker and the cashier; one of them would have had some of the hard green paint sticking to it."

Might not that little speech, so lucid in its statement, have been made by Sherlock himself?

Lecoq had a photograph made of the safe, which showed the scratch with great exactness. It ran from top to bottom, starting from the hole of the lock, and went from left to right. Although very deep at the keyhole, it ended off in a scarcely perceptible mark.

"Naturally you thought," said Lecoq to his subordinate, "the scratch was made by the person who took the money. Let us see if you are right. I have a little iron box painted with green varnish like the safe. Here it is. Take the key and try to scratch it." The assistant tried and failed. "It is very hard, my friend," said Lecoq, "and yet that on the safe is still harder and thicker, so you see the scratch you discovered could not have been

made by the trembling hand of a thief letting the key slip."

"It certainly required great force to make that scratch."

"Yes; but how was that force employed? I have been racking my brains for the last three days, and only yesterday did I come to a conclusion." Lecoq went to the door of the room, took the key from the lock, and called the subordinate over to him. "Now, suppose," he said, "I want to open this door and you don't want it opened; when you saw me about to insert the key what would be your first impulse?"

"To put my hand on your arm and draw it towards me so as to prevent you introducing the key."

"Precisely so. Now let us try it."

The assistant obeyed, and the key, held by M. Lecoq, pulled aside from the lock, slipped along the door and traced upon it a diagonal scratch from top to bottom, the exact reproduction of the one in the photograph.

"What a man you are!" said the subordinate. "Two persons were present at the robbery; one wished to take the money and



"THE KEY SLIPPED ALONG THE DOOR AND TRACED UPON IT A DIAGONAL SCRATCH FROM TOP TO BOTTOM."

the other wished to prevent its being taken."

If one substitutes the names of Sherlock and of Watson for those of Lecoq and his subordinate, might not the little dialogue have been written by the accomplished hand of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle?

By the way, Lecoq, like Sherlock, always worked alone. He took a pride in his solutions, and refused assistance because he wished to share neither the pleasure of success nor the pain of defeat.

In the course of one of his cases he had occasion to examine a letter composed of printed words cut out and pasted on a sheet of paper—a similar course, it will be remembered, to that which Sherlock Holmes had to adopt in elucidating the mystery of "The Hound of the Baskervilles." From certain words it contained, which men never use, Lecoq quickly came to the conclusion that the letter was composed by a woman. He approached the window and began to study the pasted words with the scrupulous attention which an antiquarian would devote to an old, half-effaced manuscript.

"Small type, very slender and clear; the paper is thin and glossy—consequently these words have not been cut from a newspaper, magazine, or even a novel. I have seen type like this. I recognise it at once."

He stopped, his mouth open and his eyes fixed, appealing laboriously to his memory. Suddenly he struck his forehead exultingly. "Now I have it. Why did I not see it at once? These words have been cut from a prayer-book."

He moistened with his tongue one of the words pasted on the paper, and, when it was sufficiently softened, detached it with a pin. On the other side of this word was printed the Latin word "Deus." "What became of the mutilated prayer-book? Could it have been burnt?" "No," he replied to himself, "because a heavily-bound book is not usually burnt! It is thrown into some corner." And in a corner it was eventually found.

Surely that was Sherlock all over, even to the fact that the man whose very fate depended upon the success of his investigations almost forgot the circumstance in his admiration of Lecoq's method; for his energy, his bantering coolness when he wished to discover anything, the surety of his deductions, the

fertility of his expedients, and the rapidity of his movements were astonishing.

In "The Moon-stone" Wilkie Collins, the king of constructive novelists, gave us a detective to whom in some respects Sherlock bears a by no means slight resemblance. This is his description:—

"Sergeant Cuff was a grizzled, elderly man, so miserably thin that he looked as if he had not got an ounce of flesh on his bones in any part of him. His face was as sharp as a hatchet, and the skin of it was as yellow and dry and withered as an autumn leaf. His eyes, of a steely light grey, had a disconcerting trick whenever they encountered your eyes of looking as if they expected something more from you than you were aware of yourself. His walk was soft, his voice was melancholy, his long, lanky fingers were hooked like claws. He might have been a parson or an undertaker, or anything else you like, except what he really was."

Sergeant Cuff formulated into words the theory which Sherlock put into action. He was investigating a smear on a newly-painted door when he was called in to unravel the mystery of the disappearance of the moon-stone. He was told by the superintendent who had the case in hand that it was made by the petticoats of the women-servants as they crowded into the room for the inquiry.

"Did you ascertain which petticoat?" he asked.

"I cannot charge myself with such trifles," said the superintendent. Cuff's rejoinder might have been made by Sherlock.

"I made a private inquiry last week; at one end of the inquiry there was a murder, and at the other end there was a spot of ink which could not be accounted for. In all my experience along the dirtiest ways of this dirty little world I have never met such a thing as a trifle yet. We must see the petticoat that made the smear, and we must know for certain that the paint was wet."

Not very long ago a writer in one of the weekly papers declared that the detective in literature is passing to decay. It may be doubted, however, whether, so long as deduction exercises its fascination, he will ever disappear from the pages of fiction. The processes on which he works are, as we have seen, of the most remote antiquity, and they have not lost their fascination yet.