1936

Comparison of the mystery solution methods of Auguste Dupin and Sherlock Holmes

Wentworth, Robert B.

Boston University

A COMPARISON OF THE MYSTERY SOLUTION METHODS OF AUGUSTE DUPIN AND SHERLOCK HOLMES

A THESIS

by

Robert B. Wentworth

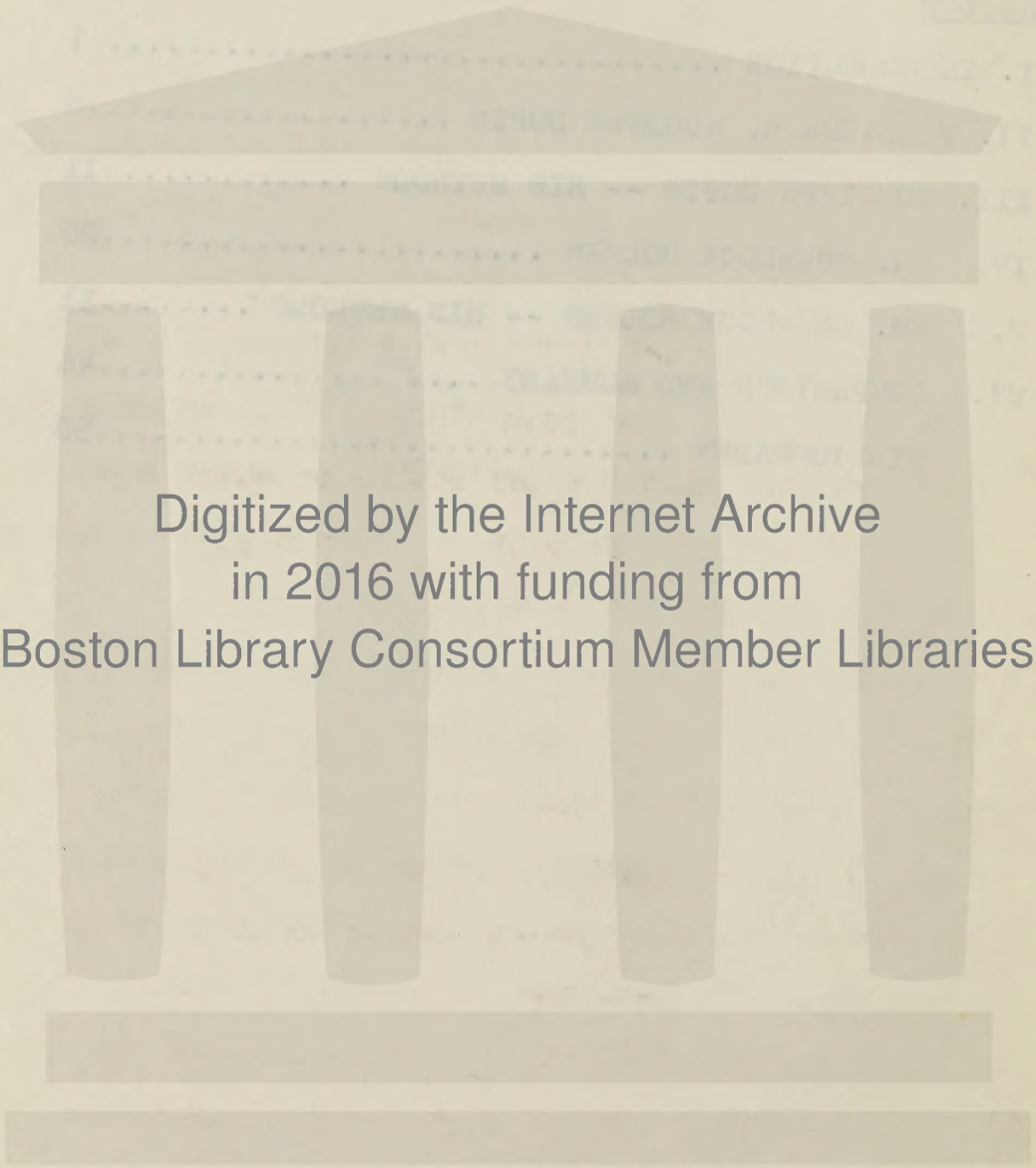
Northeastern University, B.S. in B.A.

Presented as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education at the Boston University School of Education, Boston, Massachusetts.

July 15, 1936

First Reader: Everett L. Getchell, Professor of English
Second Reader: George K. Makechnie, Instructor in Social Studies
Third Reader: Franklin C. Roberts, Associate Professor of Education

CONTENTS



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There have been mysteries since the beginning of time,but it was with Poe that the true detective story originated. His master detectives, Legrand and Dupin, have been equalled only by the Sherlock Holmes of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

This is a tale of two cities, or rather of Mr, Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street, London, and Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin of Rue Dunot, Paris. What was the method by which Dupin unravelled the unsolved mysteries of the French police, and Holmes succeeded where Scotland Yard had failed?

In countless other tales, detectives have paraded through a weird order of events, through crime and quasi-love, but never were there detectives who could surpass Dupin and Holmes. In The Murders in the Rue Morgue and in The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes it is not the mystery itself which is of chief interest, but the rare, detailed, analytical method by which the protagonist reaches a solution seemingly beyond the power of man to discover. The wrongdoing has been accomplished; attention is attracted to the unscrambling of the egg and not to the fact that the egg has been scrambled. It is not remarkable that these methodists do succeed, for their ability, ambition, and confidence suggest the probability of a satisfactory solution, but how they succeed is extraordinarily amazing!

Their lives have been ordered along definite patterns. Dupin is real, but strangely real since his reality is in terms of one ability only; likewise there is no well-rounded character development of Holmes. Perhaps neither Dupin nor Holmes is fully satisfactory from the artistic viewpoint, but are not the tales of both Poe and Doyle possessed of greater artistry than unadorned tales of mystery lacking a central figure and emphasizing the gruesome merely for its own sake? Arrogant sleuths who render a debased imitation lacking in ingenuity and intellectual vitality are scarcely worthy of mention here.

Much of the raison d'etre for the similarity between Dupin and Holmes may be explained by the fact that the former was the intellectual model for the latter. Random selections from the writings of Poe and Doyle bear out this point. In a critical review of Hawthorne, Poe had this to say about the construction of a tale:

"A skilful artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accomodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents-- he then combines such events--as may best aid him in establishing his preconceived effect. If this very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of fullest satisfaction...."

In the Poe tales of ratiocination, the mystery is early at hand. The pre-established design is the logical solution of that mystery by a specialist in crime detection. The same intent is

is equally evident in the detective tales of Doyle; furthermore, we have Doyle's own acknowledgment that his Holmesian documents were inspired by the method of Dupin. In speaking of Poe as the father of the detective story, Doyle says that Poe

"covered its limits so completely that I fail to see how his followers can find ground which they can confidently call their own. For the secret of the thinness and also of the intensity of the detective story is that the writer is left with only one quality, that of intellectual acuteness, with which to endow his hero. Everything else is outside the picture and weakens the effect. The problem and its solution must form the theme, and the character drawing is limited and subordinate. On this narrow path the writer must walk, and he sees the footmarks of Poe always in front of him. He is happy if he ever finds the means of breaking away and striking out on some little side-track of his own."

Additional evidence of the Poe influence is found in the chapter of Memories and Adventures in which are recorded numerous sidelights on the career and fame of the Baker Street genius. "The first thing," Doyle said in explaining that he always knew the end of a Holmes story before it was started,

"is to get your idea. Having got that key idea one's next task is to conceal it and lay emphasis upon everything which can make for a different explanation. Holmes, however, can see all the fallacies of the alternatives, and arrives more or less dramatically at the true solution by steps which he can describe and justify."(1)

Three stories by Edgar Allan Poe contain all that an anonymous biographer revealed to the world about the illustrious French detective. The most satisfying of Dupin's adventures is

---

(1) Doyle, A. Conan, Memories and Adventures (1924) p. 101.

Murders in the Rue Morgue, in which the problem and the method of solution are particularly logical. The atmosphere is natural ("art which conceals art"), the narrative relatively free from awkwardness, and Dupin is in his most convincing form as he unwinds the chain of circumstance which led to the brutal murder of the two female recluses.

The structure of the story has been extraordinarily well manipulated for the murders outwardly seem to have been committed from the most commonplace of motives, yet not a single clue is evident. The problem is an ingenious one, but the solution is even more ingenious. Much of the strength of the narrative is attributable to the fact that the secret is kept from the public until near the end of the story, although the outward procedures of the protagonist are shown in detail. Sherlock Holmes could have solved the Rue Morgue case admirably and effectively, and not without adding a touch of his own personality, but where is there another detective who could be all that Dupin was?

Following The Murders in the Rue Morgue, Dupin was next engaged in solving The Mystery of Marie Roget. There is no denying that this mystery is outre enough, but its presentation is long and involved to the extent that interest is lost in the narrative and the actual functioning of the wonder-worker somewhat obscured by a mass of unnecessary discussion. The problem in this case differs from the other Poe problems in that it is

Murders in the Rue Morgue, in which the problem and the method of solution are particularly logical. The atmosphere is natural ("art which conceals art"), the narrative relatively free from embellishments, and Dupin is at his most convincing form as he unwinds the chain of circumstances which led to the brutal murder of the two female residents.

The structure of the story has been extraordinarily well manipulated, for the murders outwardly seem to have been committed from the most commonplace of motives; yet not a single clue is evident. The problem is an ingenious one, but the solution is even more ingenious. Much of the strength of the narrative is attributable to the fact that the secret is kept from the public until near the end of the story, although the detailed procedures of the protagonist are shown in detail. Sherlock Holmes could have solved the Rue Morgue case admirably and effectively, and not without adding a touch of his own personality, but where is there another detective who could be all that Dupin was?

Following The Murders in the Rue Morgue, Dupin was next engaged in solving The Mystery of Marie Roget. There is no denying that this mystery is outre enough, but its presentation is long and involved to the extent that interest is lost in the narrative and the actual functioning of the master-author somewhat obscured by a mass of unnecessary discussion. The problem in this case differs from the other two problems in that it is

a literal adaption of an actual murder which took place in New York City and remained unsolved until some time after the publication of the Marie Roget tale.

The final adventure is The Purloined Letter, a brief narrative which illustrates the extreme cleverness of Dupin. The detective personally finds and recovers an important government letter which had escaped the search of the police. The Gold Bug is rightfully regarded as one of the best of the tales of ratiocination, but since it is Legrand and not Dupin who deciphers the pirate code that story will not be considered here.

The Sherlock Holmes stories are better known and more numerous. Holmes was in active practise for twenty-three years; during seventeen of those years Watson co-operated and kept his notes. H.W. Bell has worked out a minute chronology of the Holmes adventures in which he records one hundred and twenty-nine cases, mostly"unpublished". (1) The cases which have been made public are included in the volumes A Study in Scarlet, The Sign of the Four, Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes, Return of Sherlock Holmes, Hound of the Baskervilles, The Valley of Fear, Case Book of Sherlock Holmes, and His Last Bow. Incidents will be cited from some of these tales to illustrate the Baker Street method.

(1) H.W. Bell, Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson (1932) The "unpublished" cases are those merely mentioned by name in the stories.

CHAPTER II

MONSIEUR C. AUGUSTE DUPIN

Two men in an obscure Parisian library in search of the same rare volume originated one of the most distinctive partnerships in all detective fiction. Numerous subsequent meetings followed the first chance encounter and a mutual respect and admiration grew up between M. Dupin and his anonymous biographer. Presumably it was their mutuality of interests and the lack of any permanent arrangements which led to their securing quarters together. In any case,"it was at length arranged that we should live together during my stay in the city" -- a stay which turned out to be of many years duration.

The mansion chosen was situated in a desolate portion of Faubourg St. Germain in Paris. From The Purloined Letter (an adventure which occured several years later) it seems evident that the quarters indicated must have been au troisieme, No. 33, Rue Dunot,Faubourg St. Germain since there is no mention of a change of domicile or a separation of the domestic arrangements of the two men. Anon (1) has noted in the record of The Murders in the Rue Morgue that the residence chosen was one which had been long deserted and that he furnished it at his own expense. Had a temporary arrangement

---

(1) Since the biographer is anonymous, he is hereby named Anon.

been intended it seems unlikely that any attempt would have been made to furnish a structure so completely lacking in the necessities of living.

The French detective was a man of extensive, even extraordinary, reading habits. Anon, in his philosophical comments on Dupin's method, shows a familiarity with the field of classical literature, yet he confesses to being astonished at the vast extent of Dupin's reading, a characteristic of the latter which causes him to regard Dupin's company as a "treasure beyond price."

The ordinary conversation employed by Dupin was not devoid of frequent literary allusions. In his remarks to Anon, Dupin mentions having discussed the theories of Epicurus and their confirmation by later nebular cosmogony. In reference to a bitter satire upon Chantilly (an ex-cobbler who was then playing the role of Xerxes on the stage) Dupin recalled a Latin line -- Perdidit antiquum litera prima sonum -- "about which we have often conversed".

There is considerable other evidence. In commenting on the <u>faux pas</u> methods of the Paris police, Dupin recalls the <u>nouveau riche</u> awkwardness of M. Jourdain who called for his <u>robe de chambre--pour mieux entendre la musique</u>. Later, he likens the wisdom of the Prefect to the pictures of the Goddess Laverna (all head and no body) but admires the gentleman for his way ' <u>de nier ce qu'est et d'expliquer ce</u>

been intended it seems unlikely that any attempt would have been made to furnish a structure so completely lacking in the necessities of living.

The French detective was a man of extensive, even extraordinary, reading habits. Anon, in his philosophical comments on Dupin's method, shows a familiarity with the field of classical literature, yet he confesses to being astonished at the vast extent of Dupin's reading, a characteristic of the latter which causes him to regard Dupin's company as a "treasure beyond price."

The ordinary conversation employed by Dupin was not devoid of frequent literary allusions. In his remarks to him, Dupin mentions having discussed the theories of Epicurus and their confirmation by later nebular cosmogony. In reference to a bitter satire upon Chantilly (an ex-cobbler who was then playing the role of Xerxes on the stage) Dupin recalls a Latin line -- Perdidit antiquum litera prima sonum -- "about which we have often conversed".

There is considerable other evidence. In commenting on the faux pas methods of the Paris police, Dupin recalls the nouveau riche extravagances of M. Jourdain who called for his robe de chambre--pour mieux entendre la musique. Later, he likens the wisdom of the Prefect to the pictures of the god Laverna (all head and no body) but admires the gentleman for his way ' de nier ce qui est, et d'expliquer ce

que n'est pas' --- a quotation from Rousseau's Nouvelle Heloise.

Much of Dupin's time must have been spent in scholastic pursuits. Not only was he in the habit of frequenting public libraries, but he had a commendable library of his own. Dupin and Anon must have studied together frequently, for when the Prefect brought them their first knowledge of the ill-fated Marie the two comrades had been occupied in research which had so completely engaged their attention for nearly a month that neither had had any contact with the outside world.

Two years had elapsed from the time of the Rue Morgue affair to the Prefect's visit. Probably no cases were solved by Dupin during this interval. Anon remarked after the Prefect's visit that it had not seemed likely, until then, that he would again have any opportunity to make public any remarkable feats of Dupin's intellect. Apparently it was customary for Dupin to employ his talents in a manner which would not attract public attention. His studies do not seem to have been a deliberate part of his case work; his achievements were probably more of an academic nature.

This theory is strengthened by the observation that no other activities on the part of M. Dupin are indicated for the two year interim between the solution of The Murders in the Rue Morgue and the Prefect's visit regarding The Mystery of Marie Roget. Anon noted that Dupin demonstrated no desire to take an active part in public affairs or to retrieve the

the family fortune. He was a member of a very illustrious family which once laid claim to considerable wealth but " it was many years since Dupin had ceased to know or be known in Paris". By courtesy of his creditors and through economical living, Dupin was able to maintain a comfortable existence with books as his sole luxury. Such evidence points to a life of quiet study.

The remnants of the family fortune enabled the great detective to continue his studies and he made no attempt to capitalize on his fame, as he might easily have done, when his name was on the lips of every police officer in Paris. He might have been a consulting detective or he might have joined the regular police force under cicumstances decidedly favorable to himself. It was his own desire that he remain in semi-retirement until summoned by some extraordinary situation. His reticence to reveal, even to the Prefect, the method he used made his accomplishments seem the more remarkable. But this did not bother Dupin who merely "relapsed into his old habits of moody revery".

On those occasions when M. Dupin employed his talents in the public interest he did not lack for reward once his reputation had been established by the Rue Morgue solution. Anon does not indicate, but it is likely that the inquiry into tragedy of the Rue Morgue was undertaken partly for the self-satisfaction of solving the case and partly because the bank

messenger, Le Bon, falsely accused of the atrocities, had once performed a service for Dupin. The detective may have been rewarded, but he did not work with the financial reward in mind.

When the Prefect, fearing for his reputation since no explanation of the Roget mystery was at hand, two years later brought the case of the unfortunate Marie to the Chevalier a "liberal proposition" (the precise nature of which Anon kept confidential) was arranged.

In The Purloined Letter the difficulty was so simple on the surface that the Prefect apologized for bringing the matter to the attention of Dupin. "The fact is, the business is very simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively odd." On a later visit, however, the Prefect grew desperate and offered fifty thousand francs for the return of the letter. Dupin demanded the Prefect's check at once; upon receiving it he handed over the purloined letter. Thus, although his life was semi-monastic, Dupin could so identify himself with other personalities that he was able to interprete their actions and gain pecuniary rewards which, if only incidental, were nevertheless evident and satisfying.

CHAPTER III

MONSIEUR DUPIN -- HIS METHODS

The method of M. Dupin is essentially that of scientific progress. Scientific method reasons from what is to what ought to be; scientifically established laws are the basis for the formulation of new hypotheses and the discovery of phenomena not previously observed. Where the majority of men see only the ordinary, one man sees the extraordinary. From a single observation he progresses until at last a new truth is made known. Apparently unassociated materials are to him the framework of a new and beautiful building.

There are illustrations on every hand. It is said that Grant at Vicksburg examined the knapsacks of the slain Confederate soldiers to see if they contained rations, which would indicate the men were moving out because the fortification was untenable. Economists continue to follow the business cycle and construct price indices to determine the trend of future business. New interpretations are being put upon social phenomena and marked tendencies are being carefully observed, a process which leads to the establishment of new laws in the social sciences. Chemists have discovered traces of rare elements in the sun, reasoned that the same elements must be present in the earth, and then discovered that their theory was correct. Einstein advances theories which only a very few scientists can comprehend but which he holds must be true because of the logi-

cal use of the data upon which the theories are based. This exact, mathematical, unprejudiced, and logical method of science is the method of C. Auguste Dupin.

Balanced as the method is, Dupin's technique is that of the mad genius of Poe. It was Poe's axiom that "human ingenuity could not devise a cipher which human ingenuity could not solve." With the exception of Marie Roget, Poe created the mystery or puzzle and then endowed his hero with a good share of his own talent for analysis and his own peculiarity of mind.

Analysis of Dupin's method is difficult because the method is analysis itself -- so Anon commented in his philosophising upon the remarkable powers of his detective friend. In substance the biographer contends that the analyist delights in displaying his mental powers just as a gymnast glories in demonstrating physical prowess. It is part of the method to appear to have no method at all, to handle the affair at hand with the greatest of ease; in short, to have an almost psychic insight. Dupin follows this procedure with facility, yet he is modest enough not to indulge in vainglorious show.

Modesty does not prevent him, however, from a quiet exercise of his faculties simply for the purposes of amusing observation. The outstanding example occurs when Dupin breaks into his friend's thoughts after a fifteen minute silence and outlines the whole chain of reflection. The two were strolling down a dirty street in Paris one evening when Dupin commented that "he" was a rather small fellow and ought to go into

sal one of the data upon which the invention was based. This exact, mathematical, unquestioned, and logical method of solving is the method of C. Auguste Dupin.

Original as the method is, Dupin's technique is that of the true genius of Poe. It was Poe's motto that "human ingenuity could not devise an cipher which human ingenuity could not resolve." With the exception of Marie Rogêt, Poe created the mystery or puzzle so, then endowed his hero with a good share of his own talent for analysis and his own peculiarity of mind.

Analysis of Dupin's method is difficult because the method of analysis itself -- as Poe expounded in his philosophizing upon the resolvable content of his detective fiction. In some instances the reader concedes that the analytic solution is disguised his mental powers that are a phrenologists in representing physical process. It is part of the method to appear to have no method at all, to baffle the official and with the prefect of police, to keep up almost a puzzle to the end. Dupin follows this procedure with facility, yet he is careful enough not to indulge in deductive ones.

Frequently Dupin does not permit him, however, from a quiet contemplation of his faculties simply for the purpose of amusing or astonishing. The delightful episode occurs when Dupin breaks into his friend's thoughts after a fifteen minute silence and continues the whole chain of reflection. In another episode, after a visitor's question he was ruminating upon again the ... there the "I" was a rather would follow and ought to go into

vaudeville. Dupin had "followed" his friend's thoughts perfectly; they were both thinking of Chantilly, the ambitious cobbler who had attempted, with incomplete success, the role of Xerxes.

Rather than leave Anon in complete bewilderment, Dupin graciously explained the procedure, thus dispelling any suggestion of deus ex machina that might have arisen from such a performance. It so happened that the two companions had been talking about horses when a fruit dealer swept by quickly and accidentally thrust Anon against a pile of paving stones. Here Dupin's assistant slipped, but he continued to walk on with a careful regard for the condition of the pavement until he reached a street paved with an experimental block known as "stereotomy". "Stereotomy" suggested the atomy theories of Epicurus, (so Dupin explained) which in turn suggested the later nebular cosmogony which they had recently discussed. Anon then looked up at the great nebula Orion and recalled the Latin line originally applied to that constellation but recently used in a bitter satire upon Chantilly. Anon smiled as he thought of the cobbler's offering and drew himself up to his full height as he recalled the small stature of the would-be Xerxes.

Without detracting from the remarkable nature of this demonstration, several critical comments might be made. In the first place, the element of chance has not been entirely eliminated. The leap from paving blocks to the theories of Epicurus is a rather broad jump. The new type of paving block might

have brought to mind any one of a number of other topics. Unless there was a strong previous association between the paving blocks and another topic,it is conceivable that each time the new surfacing material was viewed a different thought connection would be made. At night the first response might be that such a street would facilitate the escape of criminals from the scene of their wrong-doing, (it was a "dirty portion of the city") which in turn might direct attention to the type of weapons most suitable under the circumstances. In the daytime, the sharp contrast between the venerable surroundings and the modern street might have led the observor's thoughts into architecture and the possibility of changes in the style of buildings to improve their appearance.

Another objection occurs. Could Dupin have reasoned correctly in this case without the specialized knowledge, gained only by close companionship, of his friend's interests? Dupin remarked that his friend could not think of "stereotomy" without thinking of atomies and the theories of Epicurus which they had recently discussed.Dupin had also told his friend that the theories of Epicurus were strikingly similar to the later nebular cosmogony and the Latin line Dupin had emphasized as being a reference to Orion was a quotation which the friends had often discussed. Thus Dupin was aware of three connecting links which assisted him in tracing Anon's thoughts with a degree of certainty which could not have been enjoyed with a stranger. Part of the method was in knowing the man with whom it was desir-

able that he identify himself.

Intimate acquaintance with those whose thoughts or deeds are to be analyzed was not an essential, however, as Dupin showed clearly in the solutions of the cases which he undertook for the public benefit. He was singularly successful even when he knew nothing of the parties involved except what he had read in the newspapers. Obviously, he could not know by direct experience what thought connections were in the minds of the perpetrators of a crime. He did, however, know human nature well enough to realize what was probably true. If a particular hypothesis as to what had happened did not prove, by subsequent investigation or reasoning, to be correct at least Dupin knew what to observe and he was eventually successful.

Anon recorded his belief that Dupin's knowledge of what to observe was comparable to the ability possessed by skilled card players who evaluate considerable that is external to the game. Such players contrast the facial expressions of their respective partners with the countenances of their opponents. They note every fleeting glance as the game progresses, and observe what plays are made under pretense and what ones accidentally.

Hervey Allen in his mammoth life of Poe (1) implies that the method of Dupin is that of an automatic chess player, Poe's first venture into abstract reasoning being an articel which purported to reveal how Maelzell's Chess Player actually won

---

(1) Hervey Allen, Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allan Poe. (Two volumes)

games from human opponents. Anon, however, indicated that the Dupin method was more than that of chess. Chess to him is chiefly calculation and it does not involve analysis requiring activity on the part of "the higher powers of the reflective intellect."

Dupin's knowledge of what to observe is illustrated by the following contributory observations which were overlooked or not understood by the Paris police in The Murders in the Rue Morgue:

1. That there was something peculiar about the fact that witnesses of several nationalities agreed that one of the voices was that of a Frenchman while no two witnesses agreed regarding the nationality of the second voice.

2. The other possibilities being already eliminated, the murderers must have escaped through the windows at the back of the room in spite of the seeming impossibility of this means of egress.

3. The sashes of the back windows, securely fastened from within, must have the power to fasten themselves since they could not have been fastened by anyone on the inside.

4. One of the back windows could not have been the means of escape since it was securely nailed; therefore, the assassins must have escaped through the other window.

5. That the nail of the other window had been broken off in the middle so that the two portions of the window appeared

to be fastened together, but actually were not.

6. That the broad shutter on the second window, if swung back to the wall, would reach within two feet of the lightening rod and that an entrance to the room might have been effected by "extraordinary agility".

7. That there was probably a connection between the very unusual activity required for entrance and the "very peculiar and unequal voice about whose nationality no two persons could agree."

8. That the delivery of a large sum of gold at the house three days previously was a mere coincidence since the gold was left in full view after the murders had been committed.

9. That ordinary human strength could not have thrust one of the bodies up the chimney when the united efforts of several men were required to drag it down.

10. That a tuft of hair found clasped in the hands of one of the corpses was not a human hair and that the marks of fingers were so placed on the throat of this corpse that no human hands could have made the impressions at any one time.

11. That the atrocities committed could not have been the work of any beast other than the Ourang-Outang.

12. That the testimony of neighbors that a Frenchman was heard to utter "mon Dieu" and similar words indicated that he was in some way implicated in the assassinations, although he may be guilty of no crime other than failure to reveal what he knows.

These were the essential steps in Dupin's analysis. The brilliance of the inditement lies not so much in the sequence of the data, but in the fact that Dupin realized, even before establishing in his own mind the course of events, what data were probably important and what were not. The police were equally industrious in gathering clues, but,inasmuch as they overlooked or misinterpreted essential elements, they were unable to reconstruct the whole scene.

Dupin's first clue came from noticing the unusual about the commonplace. It was not peculiar that the neighbors were unable to identify any speech in a "language" which was not familiar, but it was peculiar that one of the voices did not resemble any language. This information was readily available in the newspapers, but it remained for Dupin to fit the fragments together and see a new relationship,i.e., to conclude that, in all probability, the voice was not of any known nationality. This conclusion, plus the peculiar quality of the voice (a quality which all the neighbors noticed but found hard to describe), suggested that it might not have been the voice of a human being. This gave Dupin a working hypothesis; he was then able to know <u>what</u> to look for next, an advantage which the police did not have.

Dupin scored his next point when he assumed that the murderers must have escaped through the back windows since screams of persons in agony were still heard as the <u>gendarmes</u>

rushed the stairs, and since no secret passage was revealed when the walls and flooring were laid bare. But it was "obvious" to the police that the back windows were nailed shut, hence they assumed that there could have been no escape in that direction. This single assumption prevented the gendarmes from finding a solution to the mystery. Dupin reasoned that the guilty ones must have escaped in that direction,therefore, there must be an error in the assumptions of the police. The mistake of the police was discovered by elimination; Dupin proved "that these apparent impossibilities are, in reality, not such".

The police did not find the self-fastening spring which had to be released before the windows could be opened because they assumed that the windows could not have been opened when a vigorous attempt to raise them failed. Nor did the police realize that one of the nails was broken because they were not aware that logically something had to be peculiar about the nail in the second window. Dupin knew that the nail in the second window was what should be observed. On examining it he saw that the two sections of the window were not held together because the nail had been broken some time previously.

With his theory verified, Dupin then knew what to look for on the exterior of the house. He was able to visualize what persons who had escaped from the window would be likely to do . He saw not only that the feat might have been accomplished, but also noted the "extraordinary agility" which would be required.

A satisfactory explanation of the means of egress suggested a similar means of ingress prior to the occurence of the butchery.

While continuing the investigation in this manner, Dupin continued also to bear in mind the inhuman aspects of one of the voices and the ghastliness of the slaughter and disorder inside the apartment. Having observed correctly, he was quick to grasp the relationship of the various observations and come to a general conclusion.

The steps listed above were the chief points of Dupin's resolution of the crime. The solution was not completed by the above analysis, but the Chevalier had reason to believe that an infuriated Ourang-Outang and a Frenchman had gained access to the apartment by way of the lightening-rod, shutter, and window, and had descended by a similar route.

But where were the guilty parties? To discover this Dupin went into the realm of conjecture. His imagination helped him more than most people's imaginations help them because he based his conjectures on an analysis more complete than that of other men.

The following advertisement was inserted in a leading paper:

CAUGHT -- In the Bois de Boulogne, early in the morning of the --inst, a very large, tawny Ourang-Outang of the Bornese species. The owner (who is ascertained to be a sailor, belonging to a Maltese vessel)may have the animal again, upon identifying it satisfactorily, and paying a few charges arising from its capture and keeping. Call at No.-- Rue--, Faubourg St. Germain -- au troisieme.

Assuming that the conclusions so far reached were correct, Dupin had to pretend to have information which he did not have in order to get the final evidence in his hands. He had good reason to believe that the crime had been committed by an infuriated Ourang-Outang, but no such beast had been reported loose (it would be likely to attract much attention in a city like Paris) and, since several days had elapsed after the atrocities, if the animal had been at large it might have been captured by its owner before the time of the advertisement. The region of Paris indicated in the advertisement was chosen because of its distance from Rue Morgue, and possibly because a beast would attract less attention in the woods, yet an infuriated animal would be likely to cause considerable havoc before reaching the woods. Nevertheless, this little deceit performed its function admirably.

The intimation of the sailor's identity was, of course, a device for bringing the unknown Frenchman, whomever he might be, to Dupin. The Chevalier told Anon that the supposition here was not entirely gratuitous, but that if it were incorrect the owner of the beast would probably think that the advertiser had been misled by some circumstance not worth considering.

Coupled with his imagination, Dupin revealed an understanding of human nature. Again he identified himself with his opponent to determine what move the opponent would make next. Naturally the owner of the beast would wish to claim it because of its great rarity. It is generally known that the police

have no clues. If the beast were found far from the scene of the crime it would not be connected with the affair. The owner has been spotted; perhaps it would be best for him to avoid suspicion and claim the beast at once.

Later developments proved that Dupin's reasoning was correct. As his reward for the surrender of the beast, (he had not even seen the beast, much less capture it!) Dupin demanded of the French sailor who answered the advertisement the full truth about the murders. The sailor's testimony supported the conclusions already reached by Dupin and supplied additional facts which completed the explanation of all that happened to the ill-fated females.

In The Mystery of Marie Roget the Chevalier is again at work in solving a murder mystery. His method has not changed appreciably except that his solution is completely theoretical, being derived only from the data and arguments found in several newspapers over a period of time. Dupin's solution was adequate; it was later confirmed in all significant aspects by the testimony of persons involved in the actual crime upon which the Roget affair was based.

In The Purloined Letter Dupin's technique of identifying himself with his opponent is shown at its best. A letter of great importance had been stolen by a government minister who was able to hold an unfair political advantage as long as the document remained in his possession. The police made an exten-

sive and intensively profound search, but without success.

Here the difficulty of the mystery is its very self-evidence. Dupin recovered the missing letter because he knew enough about the minister to realize that he was boldly intriguing, that he would be aware of, and guard against, the ordinary methods of police search. The minister could not use the document for the purposes for which it was purloined unless it was near at hand. The Prefect's minute search of all conceivable hiding places on the minister's premises failed to reveal the letter. Dupin therefore concluded that the minister must have been sufficiently sagacious to resort to the expedient of concealing the letter by not concealing it at all. "He never once thought it probable, or possible," said Dupin of the Prefect, "that the minister had deposited the letter immediately beneath the nose of the whole world by way of preventing any portion of that world from perceiving it."

The entire solution hinges upon this point. Dupin found occasion to pay a political visit to the minister. During the visit, he surveyed the apartment, and noted a battered letter, unlike the missing one in outward appearance, prominently displayed in a card case. This was the purloined letter.

On a subsequent visit Dupin appropriated the letter and substituted an outward imitation of it while the minister's attention was attracted by a riot carefully executed in the street. The significant feature of Dupin's recovery of the stolen document was his use of the same method for retrieving

the lost article that the minister had used for stealing it in the first place.

Even the most brilliant of men are not self-sufficient. Dupin could not have function to perfection with the aid of his accomplice, the good Anon. Anon served most frequently in an intellectual capacity; he was capable enough himself to really appreciate the greatness of the detective.

Dupin could hardly have asked for a more understanding assistant for Anon was philosophically akin to Dupin himself. Anon's explanation of the methods used by Dupin might even have been written by Dupin himself so well do they demonstrate the analysis which Dupin used. As an analyst, Anon must have been equally brilliant but less experienced in practise.

Throughout the mysteries, Anon served as an intellectual check. He was admiring but not demonstrative in his praise. His appreciation was rational, intellectual; what he did not understand he sought to understand. Sometimes he made a suggestion as to the outcome of the analysis under consideration. He was never a Greek chorus.

At the time of the Chantilly episode, Anon confessed that the method was beyond his comprehension. A few days later when the Ourang-Outang atrocities were under investigation, Anon, still remembering the explanation of the Chantilly episode, was "on the verge of comprehension without being able to comprehend, like a man who is about to recall something but

is unable to recall it." Later that same day Dupin asked Anon what impression he had received from the evidence that had been gathered so far. Anon expressed a belief that a raving maniac escaped from a nearby asylum must have been the perpetrator of the crime. Dupin commented that in some ways the idea was not irrelevant; he then proceeded to discover additional traces of guilt.

Sometimes the accomplice played a more vigorous role in the Dupin method. Towards the end of The Murders in the Rue Morgue he was charged with the duty of taking pistols and standing ready to use them.

CHAPTER IV

MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES

Sherlock Holmes is the Londoner who bears intellectual resemblance to the Parisian Dupin. The character has been variously portrayed in illustrations, on the stage, and in the films, but Doyle conceived the man as being "over six feet, but so excessively lean that he seemed considerably taller.... He had as I imagined him, a thin razor-like face, with a great hawks-bill of a nose, and two small eyes, set close together on either side of it." (1)

The influence of Dupin has already been emphasized. In addition to this fictional ancester, Holmes had a predecessor in real life. At Edinburgh, where Doyle was a student, there was a surgeon by the name of Joseph Bell who had a remarkable ability at diagnosis. Doyle was this man's Watson. He was chosen to be out-patient clerk in the medical school, and in that capacity made case notes on Dr. Bell's patients.

Here Doyle had an excellent chance to study methods. The contrast is striking. The young student attempted to know the patients by their answers to the conventional questions; Dr. Bell, like the Sherlock Holmes which was to be, inferred a great deal from a few rapid glances. That much of Dr. Bell went into the character of Sherlock Holmes is shown by the following passage from Memories and Adventures:

---

(1) A. Conan Doyle, Memories and Adventures, p. 100.

"It is no wonder that after the study of such a character I used and amplified his methods when in later life I tried to build up a scientific detective who solved cases on his own merits and not through the folly of the criminal. Bell took a keen interest in these detective tales and even made suggestions which were not, I am bound to say, very practical." (1)

Baker Street Studies, the work of several leading Conan Doyle critics, sheds some light upon the elusive character of Sherlock Holmes. Discussion is rife as to the nature and extent of Holmes' college career, but there is reason to believe that Holmes may have been a Cambridge student for two or three years. In any case, it is certain that Holmes was in a British college for at least two years,during which time he devoted himself industriously to such subject matter as would aid him in a detective career,and engaged in very little social life. (2)

In the account of The Gloria Scott he is recorded as saying to Watson:

> "(Victor Trevor) was the only friend I made during the two years that I was at college. I was never a very sociable fellow, Watson,always rather fond of moping in my rooms and working out my own little methods of thought, so that I never mixed much with the men of my year. Bar fencing and boxing I had few athletic tastes, and then my line of study was quite distinct from that of the other fellows, so we had no points of contact at all."

In another of the Baker Street Studies, Vernon Rendall (3) outlines the limitations of Sherlock Holmes. At the time of Holmes' supposed death at the hands of Prof. Moriaty, Watson

---

(1) Ibid, p. 21
(2) For an extensive discussion of Holmes' college career see the article by Dorothy L. Sayers in Baker Street Studies.
(3) Vernon Rendall, "The Limitations of Sherlock Holmes" in Baker Street Studies.

described the detective as "the best and the wisest man whom I have ever known." Rendall challenges this statement, pointing out that Holmes could not qualify as a philosopher because, unlike Socrates, he could not stand in the streets lost in meditation or converse with all classes of people. The argument is further upheld by the fact that Holmes, in The Abbey Grange, quoted the maxim Vox populi, vox Dei; a truly scientific philosopher would not hold to such an unscientific belief.

Holmes appears to be too much of a mechanical device to be a well-liked character, but popular acclaim indicates that this is not the situation. To many people Sherlock Holmes is a living character; he receives a vast amount of mail, and visitors still look for his quarters at 221 B Baker Street, an address which never existed.

Watson has emphasized Holmes' lack of interest in feminine companionship, and this is the common belief, but Roberts (1) maintains that Holmes' attitude towards the fair sex was a normal viewpoint. Instances in support of this latter position may be cited from Watson's own reports.

In A Scandal in Bohemia, Holmes paid an intellectual tribute to Irene Adler who is "the woman" because she outwitted him by his own methods. In The Speckled Band he showed a cordial, rather than intellectual attitude towards Miss Stoner, although the occasion was not one for social formalities. When she started to unfold her sinister tale, Holmes was at once sympa-

(1) S.C. Roberts, "Sherlock Holmes and the Fair Sex" in Baker Street Studies.

thetic and bent forward to pat his client gently. Holmes seemed to take a genuine interest in the woman throughout the case, and, at its conclusion, he and Watson escorted her to her aunt's residence.

In A Case of Identity a woman's fiance disappeared very suddenly and mysteriously. Holmes regarded the case as a easy one, but he accepted it because it afforded him an opportunity to do a service for Miss Southerland. Holmes attitude was one of understanding. "You have been very shamefully treated," he told Mary Southerland at the conclusion of the case when it was discovered that her missing fiance was none other than her irate parent in disguise. Later he confessed to Watson he found the girl more interesting than the case.

Who is Sherlock Holmes? The conclusion of Vincent Starrett may be regarded as final.

> "There can be little doubt that the real Holmes was Conan Doyle himself. In innumerable ways throughout his life of extraordinary service, the British novelist demonstrated the truth of the assertion. From first to last --- as student, physician, writer, spiritualist, and prophet of the war -- he was always the private detective, the seeker after hidden truths, the fathomer of obscure mysteries, the hound of justice upon the trail,of injustice and official apathy." (1)

That Doyle projected himself into his hero as Poe made himself a part of Dupin seems all the more evident from a reading of Memories and Adventures. Doyle asserts that the general lines of reasoning advocated by Holmes have a practical appli-

---

(1) Vincent Starrett, Private Life of Sherlock Holmes, p. 111.

cation to life; he furthermore maintains that in two cases which attracted world-wide attention and in a number of minor cases, he was able to lend mental assistance by employing Holmes' methods. "A man cannot spin a character out of his own inner consciousness and make it really life-like unless he has some possibilities of that character within him." (1)

(1) A. Conan Doyle, Memories and Adventures, p. 94.

CHAPTER V

MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES -- HIS METHODS

The criminals he pusued were never crass blunderers; the method of Sherlock Holmes, therefore, made no allowance for criminal folly. The crime has been committed and the evidence obscured; the great detective must visualize the crime and the method of the criminal. Who knows but that he may at some time have been tempted to a career of crime? He is a dangerous man, but always dangerous for the right cause.

Unemotional, almost mechanical, reasoning is the chief characteristic of the Holmes procedure. In the Adventures Watson noted that "all emotions... were abhorent to his cold, precise, but admirably balanced mind. He was, I take it, the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen." The extent to which Holmes carried his system may be illustrated by one of his own statements in The Sign of the Four:

> "Love is an emotional thing...opposed to that true, cold reason which I place above all things. I should never marry myself lest I should bias my judgment."

Holmes' reasoning was accompanied by keen observation,but frequently he did not actually witness the data used in his solutions. He was capable of listening to a client and supplying some of the details himself before the client had an opportunity to disclose them. There is a startling example in A Scandal in Bohemia. A masked nobleman, presumably a secret

agent, visited Baker Street to lay before Holmes a problem which threatened to compromise the reigning family of Bohemia. Before the visitor had established himself and proceeded with the delicate circumstances Holmes remarked coolly, "If your Majesty would condescend to state your case I should be better able to advise you." This statement was a great shock to the masked visitor, but had he been familiar with the Holmes system he would not have been overwhelmed by the remark.

Holmes' method has frequently been referred to as that of the science of deduction. Doyle, in his autobiography, speaks of the "clever little deductions" of Holmes. Starrett says, "Deduction, of course, was his principal tool of office, and seldom was he at fault." (1) There are similar comments by other critics. In the chronicles Watson made repeated reference to the "science of deduction". Shortly after meeting Holmes for the first time he commented, in The Sign of the Four, on this so-called science.

What seems to have been generally overlooked is the fact that this so-called science is not a science in itself nor is it deduction in the accurate sense of the word. In the first place, a science is a body of knowledge of observed tendencies. Holmes kept elaborate data books and a card index for reference. Watson may have had in mind that this accumulation of data constituted a separate science, since independent sciences are

(1) Vincent Starrett, Private Life of Sherlock Holmes, p. 27.

sometimes established from the observation of distinct tendencies in a specialized portion of a broad field. The sciences of Economics, Sociology, and Psychology, for instance, have all been determined with some degree of certainty within the area of observed social phenomena.

On the other hand, there are other fields which are not sciences but which make use of the scientific method and the laws and information provided by various recognized sciences. Holmes' methods fall within this group of "other fields". There is no science of Holmes and no science of detective ability, but there is ample opportunity to use the material provided by chemistry, medicine, geology, psychology and other sciences.

By scientific method is meant an expert pursuit of knowledge; the method itself goes back to Francis Bacon. It may be called the method of reflective thinking or the problem method, but essentially it consists of defining the problem, forming a hypothesis, gathering data from which a rational elaboration of the possible solution is made, and reaching a concluding belief. If properly verified the belief may be applied in subsequent cases.

It was this method of science rather than any one science which Holmes used. He was interested in gathering all kinds of information which might pertain in any way to the type of case with which he dealt. He even excluded all other facts from his mind entirely, on the grounds that the brain could retain only a limited amount of material and one must choose that which is

practical.

He drew his data chiefly from the fields of chemistry, anatomy, and sensational literature, although making some use of botany, geology, and law. His cases were frequently brought to a swift conclusion because he had data from his previous studies clearly in mind or because he was able to refer quickly to the desired facts. Despite some minor fallacies of reasoning which have crept into the Holmesian scheme, the great fathomer followed the scientific method faithfully.

Although much emphasis is placed upon deduction by Holmes himself (who is given to making casual statements about having "deduced as much"), by Watson, and by various critics, the mystery solving technique is chiefly induction rather than deduction. (1) Holmes gathers data from various sources, reflects upon that information, and finally reaches a conclusion which usually embraces the solution of the mystery. In the main, he proceeds from specific and minor items to a major generalization. Were the process strictly deductive, Holmes would know the answer to the puzzle from the start and endeavor to discover clues for academic reasons only. A. Conan Doyle knew the solution of the mysteries before the quest began and deduced,or provided, clues which would lead up to the correct explanation. Sherlock Holmes was not possessed of such omnipotent power and had to work his way from small details to the one large conclu-

(1) This point is not discussed in Poe's stories, but the term "induction" occurs in the records of Dupin's cases.

sion.

Whatever the source of Holmes' data most of the material went into his unique library. There were the great case books wherein the chronicler Watson recorded the professional career of the master mind. In addition, Holmes maintained an "encyclopaedia of reference", volume V of which contained notes on such varied topics as vipers, a circus dancer, and foreign vampires. (1)

Rendall (2) expresses a belief that Holmes must have been a man of little leisure who sat up late nights doing the perpetual writing which he might have done in the daytime, revising and annotating his vast records. Watson mentioned Holmes' careful reading of several newspapers; Rendall surmises that Holmes must have been equally careful in arranging and classifying that material -- a labor which would extend far into the night.

In addition to gathering facts from newspapers, personal observation, and interviews with clients, Holmes, with the help of Watson, conducted various medical and chemical experiments. Some use was made of the medical knowledge of John H. Watson, late of the Army Medical Department. The first meeting of Holmes and Watson (told in A Study in Scarlet) took place in a hospital laboratory where Holmes was engaged in what he

(1) Mentioned in The Sussex Vampire.
(2) Vernon Rendall, "The Limitations of Sherlock Holmes" in Baker Street Studies.

considered "the most practical medico-legal discovery for years" -- an "infallible" test for blood-stains. Holmes pursued no organized course of medical or chemical study, but chose such portions of the curriculum as he found desirable. He also conducted strange experiments (such as beating the subjects in the dissecting room with a stick to see how far bruises may be produced after death)on his own initiative. His accumulated facts consisted not only of the common-place but the bizarre and little-known as well.

Starrett considers "the familiar Baker Street pose of lounging indifference" (1) a factor in Holmes' success. It is a question just how much this "pose" was a part of the actual method and how much it was merely an assumed attitude intended,perhaps, to impress Watson, who was somewhat given to blind worshipping, and also to impress the public who read the chronicles of the cases. It is a characteristic of many capable men that they are able to relax completely before a great effort which will put a heavy strain upon them. This may have been true of Sherlock Holmes, since in pursuit he displayed great vigor and alacrity, both physically and intellectually. The Baker Street lounging may have constituted an appraisal of the mental mechanism comparable to the check-up on the rolling stock of a long-distance train stopped for a short while at an important station.

But not all of Holmes' lounging was commendable method. When first residing with Holmes, Dr. Watson commented, in

(1) Vincent Starrett, Private Life of Sherlock Holmes, p. 28.

A Study in Scarlet, on the detective's habit of lying about idly for days at a time with "such a dreamy, vacant expression in his eyes, that I might have suspected him of being addicted to the use of some narcotic had not the temperance and cleanliness of his whole life forbidden such a notion." Later stories chronicled by Watson bear definite evidence of Holmes' use of cocaine and morphine in alarming proportions, of his over-stimulation of the mind as a result of putting too great a value upon an immediate success.

Dr. Watson was horrified by this reckless disregard for the future and took measures to stop the practise. He seems to have been in some measure successful for in The Yellow Face he recorded that "save for an occasional use of cocaine, he(Holmes) had no vices, and he only turned to the drug as a protest against the monotony of existence when cases were scanty and the paper uninteresting."

Tobacco played an unique role in the Holmes method. Sometimes cigar ashes were an important clue; in fact, Holmes made such a careful study of smoker's ashes that he was able to write a monograph on one hundred and forty varieties of tobacco ash. Much of his knowledge of these varieties must have come from his own constant smoking. (It was characteristic of Holmes that he kept his cigars in the coal-scuttle and his tobacco in the toe end of a Persian slipper. Noted in The Musgrave Ritual.) When listening to the horror tale of some unfortunate client he was in the habit of making his pipe a close companion. In

ordinary conversation with Watson and when a visitor was expected he was more likely to smoke a cigarette.

Sometimes another man's pipe was the means of putting Holmes in the mood for a case. In The Yellow Face, Holmes and Watson returned from a walk in the park to find a pipe, left accidentally by a hurried visitor, lying on the table. Holmes examined it with interest and announced that it was the property of a "muscular man, left-handed, with an excellent set of teeth, careless in his habits, and with no need to practise economy." Such ability may have been demonstrated merely to astound Watson, but the episode served to put Holmes in the right frame of mind to tackle a new case.

In The Man With the Twisted Lip, Holmes used tobacco with a vengeance. He and Watson were spending the night at a the home of a client. Holmes constructed a divan out of bed-pillows and sofa cushions and there perched himself, Oriental fashion, with an ounce of shag tobacco and a box of matches laid in front of him. He was silent and motionless during the night-long vigil, but when morning came he was confident of the solution. Subsequent events proved his confidence to have been well-founded.

Not only did Holmes make use od these artificial measures, but there were the regular police and the Baker Street Irregulars to play supporting roles. Frequently Holmes turned a completed case over to the police because he was serving in the

capacity of consulting detective or, because, as in The Adventure of the Empty House, he had reasons for not letting the criminal element know of his presence in the city. Throughout the whole of Holmes' active practise, the police were admirable assistants in handling routine affairs and in making the final capture once the culprit had been isolated. For professional reasons, however, Holmes made use of Watson when he might have used a patrolman and, under special circumstances, "my brother Mycroft" was an accomplice, as in The Final Problem, when it was essential that Watson believe Holmes to be dead.

Sometimes extras were required to enact a scene and it was then that the Baker Street Irregulars were called into service. This group of citizen volunteers could be employed for any purpose on short notice. They served to advantage in A Scandal in Bohemia, A Study in Scarlet, The Sign of the Four, and in a number of the Adventures.

Not always was Holmes' dramatic scheming an essential part of the solution of a problem; at times it was a vigorous flourish for its own sake. An outstanding example of the Holmes' showmanship is found in the adventure known as The Naval Treaty. Serious international consequences threatened unless a certain treaty was returned promptly. One evening a government official dined at Baker Street. Sherlock asked his guest to remove the cover from one of the serving plates. The guest complied and thus revealed the missing treaty. Amid his client's frantic delight, Holmes announced calmly, "There! There! It was too

capacity of committing atrocities [illegible]. However, as in *The [illegible]-*
[illegible] of the [illegible], he [illegible] that [illegible] the
[illegible] of [illegible] in the city. [illegible],
the world of [illegible], the [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible] in handling [illegible] affairs and in [illegible] the [illegible]
[illegible] the [illegible] [illegible]. [illegible]
pictures, however, [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible]
that a [illegible], [illegible], "an [illegible]
[illegible]" and an [illegible], as in *The [illegible]*, [illegible] is
[illegible] [illegible].

[illegible] that the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].
This [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]
[illegible]. [illegible] *[illegible]*
[illegible], [illegible], The [illegible] of [illegible], and
[illegible] of *[illegible]*.

[illegible] of a [illegible], [illegible]
[illegible] in [illegible] *The [illegible]*
[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] a [illegible]
[illegible]. [illegible]
[illegible] of the [illegible]. [illegible]
[illegible], [illegible]

bad to spring it on you like this, but Watson here will tell you that I can never resist a touch of the dramatic."

In The Silver Blaze, Holmes co-operated dramatically with the Scotland Yard force, but in a more subtle vein. A famous race horse had disappeared and an attendant had been murdered.

"Is there any point to which you wish to draw my attention?"
"To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."
"The dog did nothing in the night-time."
"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.

Although various persons contributed to the Holmes methodology from time to time, Watson was an ever present help as a biographer, if not as an actual participant as well. Without his Boswell, Holmes was less glorious. In The Musgrave Ritual the conversation turned to the pre-Watson days.

"These are the records of your early work then," I asked. I have often wished that I had notes of these cases."
"Yes,my boy; these were all done prematurely, before my biographer had come to glorify me."

Watson will be remembered as an eminent biographer, but he was quick to answer any call of adventure in which he was needed to complete the Holmesian plan of action. In A Study in Scarlet it was Holmes' command to "get your hat" and "come if you have nothing else to do" which sent the two companions out together. In The Hound of the Baskervilles, Holmes shouted to Watson,"Your hat and boots, Watson, quick!"

Sometimes Holmes would let a case wait rather than pursue it further without the presence of John H. Watson. In The Adventure of the Speckled Band, Holmes' desire for the services of

his companion caused him to "knock up" Watson at the unusual hour, for professional cases, of seven fifteen in the morning. A young lady, unaccompanied, had just arrived at their quarters in a considerable excitement. Even when Watson was living at some distance from Baker Street, Holmes, who seldom went anywhere except for professional purposes, sometimes called in person; he did, for instance, in the case of The Stock-Broker's Clerk.

The medical ability of John H. Watson did not pass unnoticed. It may be significant that Watson and Holmes met for the first time in a hospital laboratory which was familiar to both of them. Helen Simpson (1) points out that on this occasion Holmes temporarily cast aside his usual scientific attitude and, in a burst of excitement, made the extravagent statement that he had discovered a reagent "precipitated by Haemogoblin, and by nothing else".

As a doctor, Watson could not accept such a statement, but he showed appreciation of Holmes' ability and laid the way for a greater service by making the tactful observation that the test was a delicate one. Holmes himself must have recognized -- or at least suspected -- the unsoundness of this hasty conclusion because there is ample evidence in Watson's later records that he was reluctant to draw any final conclusions until sufficient data were at hand.

(1) Helen Simpson, "Medical Career and Capacities of Dr. J.H. Watson" in Baker Street Studies.

In The Spreckled Band, Holmes told Watson that the latter's medical observation was excellent, but that he did not "deduce" sufficiently from what he observed. Watson's medical knowledge served the usual purposes, but what Holmes had gathered from his own unorthodox study of medicine was background for his detective work.

Although slow in realizing the detective significance of his medical observations, Watson was none the less swift in his diagnosis. When Dr. Grimesby Roylott angrily burst into the room while Holmes and Watson were considering the case of The Spreckled Band Watson not only noticed the peculiarity of his dress, but was able to recall afterwards the physical condition of the man. "A large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles burned yellow with the sun, and marked with every evil passion, was turned from one of us to the other, while his deep-set, bile-shot eyes, and his high, thin, fleshless nose, gave him somewhat the resemblance to a fierce old bird of prey."

The description suggests a drug addict. Such a diagnosis is remarkable considering the briefness of the time the angry visitor was in the room and the excitement which such a sudden and unexpected call would naturally produce. This diagnostic ability was undoubtedly invaluable to Holmes in checking his own observations.

In The Man With the Twisted Lip, Watson was concerned with his patient Isa Whitney, a man with "a yellow,pasty face,drooping lids, and pin-point pupils". As Whitney's medical adviser,

he went alone, late at night, into a nefarious opium den to remove Whitney, who had been there three days. (Watson showed no reluctance about going on expeditions of his own when the occasion required.) While completing this duty, Watson met Holmes, who was in disguise, and the two set out together on the adventure of The Man With the Twisted Lip.

In this adventure Watson made a quick and clever, but incorrect diagnosis. His medical description of the prisoner was based on a momentary observation from a position outside the cell. Essentially what he saw bore out what Holmes had reported regarding the beggar noticed on Threadneedle Street.

Holmes, however, had reasoned that, despite the beggarly condition and the twisted lip, the prisoner must be none other than the affluent Neville St. Clair. An application of sponge and water to the face of the sleeping beggar revealed him as the missing man. This is but another indication that Holmes and Watson were both keen observors, but that Holmes used what he observed in such a way as to bring the mystery to its end.

Helen Simpson (1) has summarized the occasions on which Watson rendered medical aid in the performance of his duties as assistant to Detective Holmes. She mentions the dressing of Victor Hatherley's thumb in The Engineer's Thumb, artificial respiration of Beddington in The Stock-Broker's Clerk, the reviving of Mr. Melas in The Greek Interpreter,the rousing of Miss Barnet from opium poisoning in Wisteria Lodge, the recov-

(1) Ibid.

ery of Lady Frances Carfax from chloroform poisoning in Lady Frances Carfax, the recovery of Dr. Huxtable in The Priory School, and the amelioration of the sufferings of Baron Gruner in The Illustrious Client. As a general practioner, Watson was undoubtedly good and he enjoyed a thriving practise when not too much occupied with Baker Street methods.

Sickness sometimes had a direct bearing on the solution of a mystery. Holmes was a past master at assuming a physical condition other than his true one. He fainted conveniently and convincingly in The Reigate Puzzle in order to distract attention from an important paper he desired to obtain.

In The Dying Detective Holmes, by actually going without food for three days, by the use of a skillfully arranged background, by the aid of personal make-up, completely fooled his doctor friend. The deception was carefully planned and executed with the full powers of the master mind. Psychological effects were not overlooked; Holmes mentioned the names of two imaginary diseases of a serious nature. Watson was compelled to admit he had never heard of such diseases; he even sent for a man of doubtful reputation who purported to be familiar with the affliction from which Holmes supposedly suffered.

In The Resident Patient the London sleuth was concerned with a man apparently suffering from a serious nervous malady. The ruse was so clever that even a specialist was deceived by it, but as the investigation progressed, Holmes was able to proclaim:

"A fraudulent imitation, Watson, though I should hardly dare hint as much to our specialist. It is a very easy complaint to imitate. I have done it myself."

The last remark is additional evidence of Holmes' ability to simulate a condition for investigation purposes.

Not only did Holmes pretend illness to further his work, but he remained "dead" for a period of three years to all but "my brother Mycroft". John H. Watson, unaware of the true situation, contributed a convincing account of Sherlock's death in the story known as The Final Problem.

The two associates did not meet again until The Adventure of the Empty House, but during the interval Holmes had been following the trail of the Moriaty lieutenants until their carelessness (for they were of a mentality comparable to that of Holmes)laid them open to conquest.

In The Adventure of the Empty House the "second most dangerous man in London" was seized. The three years of Holmes' diaappearance had been merely preparation for the one dramatic moment when the culprit stepped into the trap and was caught.

CHAPTER VI

COMPARISON AND SUMMARY

A comparison of the character and methods of Dupin and Holmes reveals numerous striking similarities.

1. Each character was, above all else, a self-trained rational detective. Their whole lives were ordered in that one direction, everything else being subordinate. If they were weak in other life situations, it was because they were exceedingly strong in scientific analysis. Holmes was, perhaps, the more aggresive detective since he was engaged with cases nearly all of the time, but Dupin was equally proficient.

2. A salient feature of the method of both detectives was their knowledge of <u>what</u> to observe. Invariably the initial clue came, not from any new development in the mystery, but from the attaching of significance to some element not previously considered important. The <u>what</u> to observe was typically an apparently minor detail;it was a detail of major importance. Sometimes the first clue had already been examined casually in the official search. Dupin or Holmes, however, saw what had already been noted in a different light, the cold light of reason.

3. Similarly, the detectives were able to see the extraordinary where others saw only the ordinary. Whether scanning the newspapers or inspecting the premises of a crime, the detectives directed their efforts towards discovering what extraordinary events had occured which had not happened before.

4. Their methods did not constitute a distinct science, but whatever procedures they employed were logical, scientific technique, chiefly inductive. Their attitudes were remarkably free from prejudice (except possibly prejudice towards the official police) and, for the most part, demonstrated unusual clarity of vision. When they followed the trail of injustice they did so with all their attention directed towards correct methodology, never resorting to the practise of dashing cross-country to investigate a clever, but unfounded, hypothesis.

5. Identity with the opponent was one of the Dupin - Holmes tenets. Both detectives were able to judge, with suprising accuracy, the mental calibre of men they did not know. Having evaluated an opponent's mental capacity, they were able to so identify themselves with that opponent that they would be able to think his thoughts and thus discover, in many cases, what he had actually done.

6. Probabilities, whether in the field of mathematics or in human conduct, were given special attention by both men. These detectives reconstructed what might possibly have happened to discover what probably did happen. With a probable event noted, they knew what to look for next to make the probability a certainty.

7. As men, both characters were "rugged individualists". Their experiences were unique and their semi-formal education was largely self-inflicted. Dupin seems to have engaged chiefly

in classical research, while Holmes' reading was hand-picked, for his own immediate purposes, from the sciences and from sensational literature. Both men, however, made frequent reference to medical works and conducted laboratory experiments as a part of their case work. They were both enthusiastic newspaper readers. Sometimes the papers were the source of significant data; Dupin even solved a murder mystery using no data except that published in the public press.

Dupin and Holmes are virtually products of the same mould, but each has his distinguishing features since the ways of a Frenchman are not the ways of an Englishman. One wonders what the result would be if the two men were to meet socially. Would Holmes take the conversational lead because of his longer experience? Would he feel superior to Dupin (at first he scorned Dupin) or would he show deference to his predecessor? Furthermore, what would be the Frenchman's attitude towards Holmes? Would his more substantial scholastic background give him a dignity to which even Holmes would bow? Possibly so, for one imagines Dupin as the more poised of the two.

It is hard to picture the two detectives as admirable co-workers on the same case. They were too independent for such an arrangement. At an informal meeting, however, they might devote their time together to a discussion of the cases they had solved, each seeking to prove himself the more able detective. Better still, they might join in casting good-

natured aspersions at the police of their respective cities.

8. In spite of considerable self-sufficiency, neither Dupin nor Holmes could function to perfection without his accomplice. The two assistants are not greatly unlike each other. Anon possessed more ability for abstract reasoning than did Watson; in fact, the former's reasoning was so closely identified with that of Dupin that Anon often explained the detective's procedure in his own language instead of relying upon quotations.

Both assistants served in three capacities. They were students of the rational analysis of their respective masters. They were also active accomplices who knew how to handle firearms. They will be remembered longest, however, because they were biographers of the first order. Nor did they omit to praise the accomplishments of their respective leaders.

9. There was a similarity of cases recorded by the biographers. Certain cases, such as The Purloined Letter and The Naval Treaty , are almost identical in plot structure. Varied as their separate works were, they nevertheless fell along parallel lines. What is of most importance is the fact that in all their cases, no matter how obscure the mystery, Dupin and Holmes solved the problem and left nothing of significance without its logical explanation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Allen, Hervey, Israfel: The Life and Times of Edgar Allen Poe. (1927) New York: George H. Doran Company. (2 vols)
2. Bell, H.W., Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson: The Chronology of their Adventures. (1932) London: Constable and Co.Ltd. This first edition is limited to 500 copies.
3. Doyle, A. Conan, The Complete Sherlock Holmes. (1930)Garden City,New York: Doubleday,Doran and Company, Inc. The A. Conan Doyle Memorial Edition (2 volumes)
4. Doyle, A. Conan, Memories and Adventures (1924) Boston: Little Brown and Company.
5. Matthews, Brander, Inquiries and Opinions (1908) New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Contains critical comments on Poe and the detective-story.
6. Poe, Edgar Allen, Works. (1894) Chicago: Stone and Kimball Volume III -- Tales of Ratiocination
7. Sayers, Dorothy L., and others, Baker Street Studies (1934) London: Constable and Company Ltd. Contains articles by Dorothy L. Sayers, Helen Simpson,Vernon Rendall, Vincent Starrett, Ronald A. Knox, A.G. Macdonell, S.C. Roberts, H.W. Bell.
8. Starrett, Vincent, Private Life of Sherlock Holmes (1934) London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, Ltd. First edition.