



## The Detective Story.

Anybody, who is ~~not~~ ~~poss~~ able to write at all, can write a passable mystery story. A ~~crime~~ murder takes place in a certain house; seven or eight inmates of the house, ~~at the time of murder~~ have reasons to wish the ~~victim's~~ victim's death: this is enough, and <sup>/though\</sup> the murderer is, of course, generally somebody else. Yet, indeed, a story of this kind, if interestingly written, will always be acceptable reading, because it is always easy to make it really mysterious - ~~and so engrossing~~ legitimately so, as a matter of fact, within the province ~~to~~ to which it belongs.

It is when we move from the mere mystery story to the story of investigation proper, that difficulties begin to appear. Investigation must either be natural and patient, as in Mr. Wills Crofts' novels, or superior and scientific, as in Dr. Austin Freeman's. Most writers so confuse incident with investigation that it is difficult to determine, of certain stories, whether they can better be classed as mystery stories or as tales of investigation.

The two main writers in this class of story are Dr. Austin Freeman and Mr. Crofts. In both investigation is indeed investigation, and it would be of great advantage if Dr. Freeman would consider that love interest is futile for his readers and that it is quite unnecessary for his murderers to try to murder Thorndyke (we know he will not be murdered, so why try?) {...} Dr. Austin Freeman is a useless sinner in this connection. Why, also, the attempts on Thorndyke's and the narrator's lives? We know Thorndyke is unkillable and the narrator is presumably still living when he narrates.

The detective story proper, that is to say, the deductive tale, is at its highest and <sup>/because at its\</sup> simplest when no investigation is conducted, as in Poe's "Purloined Letter", where Dupin's obtaining of the letter is a mere postscript to <sup>/in\</sup> the narrative. The ideal detective story is that where the facts are put before the reader and the detective solves the ~~problem~~ problem without anything but those facts, that is to say, without shifting his chair. So, really, does Dupin solve the problem of the purloined letter. As soon as the Perfect has put his case, Dupin knows where ~~how~~ the letter is hidden; it is a minor point to find where it actually is hidden. Baroness ~~Orczy~~ Orczy has written her Old Man in the Corner stories entirely and precisely on this system, and they are, as detective stories, among the very best ever ~~written~~ published. It is a pity that neither inner distinction, that is to say, a careful adjustment of probabilities <sup>/a careful logical adjustment\</sup>, nor ~~the~~ outer distinction ~~of style~~, that is to say, literary style -, contributes to their being literature <sup>/something more\</sup>.

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## DIREITOS ASSOCIADOS

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