
DR. THORNDYKE
HIS FAMOUS CASES
AS DESCRIBED BY
RAUSTIN FREEMAN

THIRTY-SEVEN
DR. THORNDYKE
STORIES

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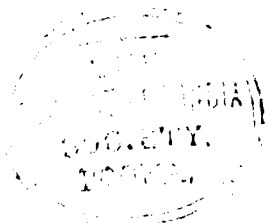
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THE FAMOUS CASES OF ^{S 5 27}
DR. THORNDYKE

*Thirty-seven of his criminal
investigations as set down by*

R. AUSTIN FREEMAN



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PREFACE

In the table of contents, the stories included in the present collection are divided into two groups, which I have named respectively "Inverted" and "Direct" stories; on which classification a few explanatory comments may appropriately be offered.

The Detective Story differs from all other forms of fiction in that its interest is primarily intellectual. Emotion, dramatic action, humour, pathos, "love interest," may all be present. But they are mere accessory factors which may at will be omitted without vital injury to the story. The one essential, sine qua non, is a problem, the solution of which shall afford the ingenious reader an agreeable exercise in intellectual gymnastics.

But in order to attain this result, the Detective Story must conform to three indispensable conditions: 1. The problem must be susceptible of, at least approximate, solution by the reader; 2. The solution offered by the author through the official investigator must be absolutely conclusive and convincing; 3. No material fact must be withheld from the reader. All the cards must be honestly laid on the table before the solution is announced.

Consideration of these conditions, and especially of the last, suggested to me, many years ago, an interesting question. "Would it be possible" (I quote from the original preface to "The Singing Bone") "to write a Detective Story in which, from the outset, the reader was taken entirely into the author's confidence, was made an actual witness of the crime and furnished with every fact that could possibly be used in its detection? Would there be any story left to tell when the reader had all the facts? I believed that there would; and, as an experiment to test the justice of my belief, I wrote 'The Case of Oscar Brodski.' Here the usual conditions are reversed; the

reader knows everything, the detective knows nothing, and the interest focuses on the unexpected significance of trivial circumstances.

“By excellent judges on both sides of the Atlantic—including the editor of Pearson’s Magazine—this story was so far approved of that I was invited to produce others of the same type.” Six of these “inverted” stories are here included; and connoisseurs of this class of fiction will probably agree that the separate presentation of the problem and the process of its solution add to, rather than detract from, the intellectual interest of the story as a whole especially if the reader should pause after reading the first part, and endeavour to assess the evidential value of the facts in his possession.

R. A. F.

GRAVESEND,
3rd April, 1929.

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