

He Got His Man

MEMOIRS OF A BOW STREET RUNNER. By Henry Goddard. With an Introduction by Patrick Pringle. 253 pp. New York: William Morrow & Co. \$4.75.

By REX STOUT

IN the year that Arthur Conan Doyle was born, 1859, a man named Henry Goddard had a well-established and highly successful practice as a private detective in London, though not with headquarters in Baker Street. Born in 1800, in Surrey, he had enlisted in the Bow Street Foot Patrol at the age of 24, had been promoted to the Day Patrol within a year, had become a Bow Street Runner in 1826, had been appointed the first Chief Constable of the County of Northampton in 1840, and had got a job as doorkeeper at the House of Lords in 1850. But evidently he spent little time keeping a door or doors, for from 1850 on he operated as a private detective, with so many clients and cases that in 1856 he went to the House of Lords only eighty-nine days.

This book, Henry Goddard's memoirs, competently and thoroughly authenticated by Patrick Pringle, is quite an eye opener. There is indeed nothing new under the sun. Not so long ago a detective story writer was highly praised for his ingenuity in having a murderer pass in and out unnoticed by disguising himself as a postman; in 1827 Henry Goddard solved a case by deducing that a robber had disguised himself as a chimney sweep. In 1835 Goddard nailed a burglar (a butler, no less) by comparing a bullet with the butler's bullet mold—though there was no police laboratory and he had never heard of the words "ballistics" and "photomicrography." And Goddard's tailing technique might be studied with profit today by many a New York cop.

HE kept getting better throughout his career and reached the peak of his performance after he became a private detective. His investigation of an embezzlement by one Edward James Farrer, Esq., and his tracking Farrer to Australia, was his masterpiece, and is the last case reported in his memoirs. No modern detective, real or fictional, could possibly improve on it. It wasn't Goddard's fault that *The Newcastle Guardian* of Nov. 26, 1853, declared that he had located a notorious swindler "in the country amidst the Rocky Mountains in the territory of Wisconsin." Goddard didn't bother to write a letter to the editor. All he had wanted was to find his man, and he did.

Anyone who likes to read about crime and detection wants this book, and anyone interested in the history of those activities needs it.

Mr. Stout, creator of the fictional detective Nero Wolfe, is the author most recently of "Three Witnesses."

The New York Times

Published: March 24, 1957

Copyright © The New York Times