MEMOIRS OF A BOW STREET RUN-NER, By REX STOUT
With an Introduction by Patrick Ponzone
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By REX STOUT

IN the year that Arthur Conan Doyle was born, 1859, a man named Henry Goddard had a well-established and highly suc- cessful career as a private detective in London, though not with headquarters in Baker Street. In fact, as the editor of the Sunday Times, he had enlisted in the Bow Street Foot Patrol at the age of 30, and had been promoted to the Day Patrol less than a year later. In 1856, he had become a Bow Street Runner in 1836, and had been appointed the first Chief Commissioner of the county of Northampton in 1840, and had got a job as a doorkeeper at the House of Lords in 1850. But evidence was by no means the only time keeping a door or doors, for from 1850 on he operated as a private detective, with so much success that in 1856 he went to the House of Lords only eighty-nine days.

John, Henry Goddard's memoirs, compiled in 1859 and thoroughly authenticated by Patrick Ponzone, is quite an eye opener. His career was cut in 1887, when he died from a wound under the sun. Not so long ago a detective story writer was a man who was praised for his ingenuity in having an arm sliced off, zapped, shot to bits, in and out unnoticed by disguising himself as a postman, in 1827 Mr. Cow, in 1835, in 1856, and in 1887. In each case by deducing that a robber had disguised himself as a chimney sweep. In 1856 Goddard nailed a burglar (a burglar, no less) by comparing a bullet with the bullet's mold — though there is no question of his laboratory and he had never heard of the words "ballistics" and "photomicrography." And Goddard's techniques of detection were 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 pri- vate 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 mem- oirs. No modern detective, real or fictional, has been able to im- prove on it. It wasn't Goddard's fault that The Newcastle Guardian of Nov. 26, 1853, declared that he had discovered a notorious swindler "in the country amidst the Rocky Mountains in the ter- ritory of Washington," but the card didn't bother to write a letter to the editor. All he had wanted was to find his man, and he did. And even Mr. Goddard, who had always crime and detection wants this book, and anyone interested in the history of those activities needs it.

Mr. Stout, creator of the fic- tional detective Nero Wolfe, is a recent recipient of "Three Witnesses."

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