Are You An Art Sleuth

Hermione and Her Little Group of Serious Thinkers/Voke Easeley and His New Art

Voke Easeley and his new art, I am indebted to Fothergil Finch. Fothergil is a kind of genius hound. He scurries sleuthing around the town ever on the

Punch/Volume 147/Issue 3828/Our Booking-Office

that starry dream of a detective story which I sometimes have, where sleuth-hounds are pattering along the Milky Way and pursue at last the Great Bear to

The Lone Wolf/Chapter 4

learn something illuminating before very long. The business of a sleuth is to sleuth, and sooner or later Roddy must surely make some move to indicate

Punch/Volume 147/Issue 3825/A New Art

hastily. In a few tense words he explained the situation to the famous sleuth, while Madge Capperton stood silent, pressing her hands to her heart. The

Divine Comedy (Longfellow 1867)/Volume 1/Canto 33

whelps upon the mountain For which the Pisans cannot Lucca see. 30 With sleuth-hounds gaunt, and eager, and well trained, Gualandi with Sismondi and Lanfranchi

Layout 2

The Lodger/Chapter XV

sharply annoyed with herself. How could she have dropped off like that? Mr. Sleuth must have been down and up again hours ago! Then, gradually, she became

People You Know/Part 4

Cigaroots, a 1-lb. Plug of Tobacco, a Deck of Playing Cards, a Copy of "Old Sleuth" and a Pair of Brass Knucks. "I have underrated the Educational Facilities

People You Know, by George Ade (Part 4) — Illustrated by John T. McCutcheon and Others

New York, R. H. Russell, 1903 — Copyright 1902, 1903 by Robert Howard Russell — First Impression, April 1903

Aunt Jane's Nieces on Vacation/Chapter 17

not a bad sleuth yourself, Hetty," he remarked. "No detective could have acted more wisely and promptly than you did that night." "It was an accidental

People You Know/Part 1

but when one of them thought of clinching with old Eagle-Eye, the Family Sleuth, he weakened. Florine would have remained a Dead Card if she had not gone

People You Know, by George Ade (Part 1) — Illustrated by John T. McCutcheon and Others

New York, R. H. Russell, 1903 — Copyright 1902, 1903 by Robert Howard Russell — First Impression, April 1903

Poor Scotland Yard!

private detective agencies in various cities I came across only one fellow sleuth who would confess that he read detective stories. “I eat 'em up,” this one

IN some years of working for private detective agencies in various cities I came across only one fellow sleuth who would confess that he read detective stories. “I eat 'em up,” this one said without shame. “When I'm through my day's gum-shoeing I like to relax; I like to get my mind on something that's altogether different from the daily grind; so I read detective stories.”

He would have liked “The False Faces;” it is different from any imaginable sort of day's work. Scotland Yard promises to “safeguard the safety” (page 29, if you think I spoof) of an American inventive genius who has business with the British government. Arrayed against him and it is a medley of scoundrels—a “shuddersome” Communist with “a smile that revolted,” a hyphenated “brute-beast” of a German, a Russian Baron who has “the air of a world cosmopolitan,” and so on, including a nameless skeptic who doubts that a certain blueprint is an original drawing. Everybody moves around a good deal, using trains, motorcycles, automobiles, airplanes, submarines, secret passages: sewers, and suspended ropes. Most of the activity seems purposeless, but in the end dear old England is saved once more from the Bolshevists.

I don't think it will stay saved unless something is done to Scotland Yard. It is, if this evidence is to be believed, a scandalously rattle-brained organization: trivialities are carefully guarded while grave secrets are given out freely: no member ever knows what his coworkers are up to. But we aren't in a position to criticize our cousins: here in the same book is an American Secret Service operative occupied with stolen necklaces and red plots, when he should be home guarding presidents, or chasing counterfeiters, or performing some of the other duties of his department, and in '“The Benson Murder Case” the New York police and district attorney are not a bit less haphazard.

Alvin Benson is found sitting in a wicker chair in his living room, a book still in his hand, his legs crossed, and his body comfortably relaxed in a lifelike position. He is dead. A bullet from an Army model Colt .45 automatic pistol, held some six feet away when the trigger was pulled, has passed completely through his head. That his position should have been so slightly disturbed by the impact of such a bullet at such a range is preposterous, but the phenomenon hasn't anything to do with the plot, so don't, as I did, waste time trying to figure it out. The murderer's identity becomes obvious quite early in the story. The authorities, no matter how stupid the author chose to make them, would have cleared up the mystery promptly if they had been allowed to follow the most rudimentary police routine, But then what would there have been for the gifted Vance to do?

This Philo Vance is in the Sherlock Holmes tradition and his conversational manner is that of a high-school girl who has been studying the foreign words and phrases in the back of her dictionary. He is a bore when he discusses art and philosophy, but when he switches to criminal psychology he is delightful. There is a theory that any one who talks enough on any subject must, if only by chance, finally say something not altogether incorrect. Vance disproves this theory: he manages always, and usually ridiculously, to be wrong. His exposition of the technique employed by a gentleman shooting another gentleman who sits six feet in front of him deserves a place in a How to be a detective by mail course.

To supply this genius with a field for his operations the author has to treat his policemen abominably. He doesn't let them ask any questions that aren't wholly irrelevant. They can't make inquiries of anyone who might know anything. They aren't permitted to take any steps toward learning whether the dead man was robbed. Their fingerprint experts are excluded from the scene of the crime. When information concerning a

mysterious box of jewelry accidentally bobs up everybody resolutely ignores it, since it would have led to a solution before the three-hundredth page.

Mr. Van Dine doesn't deprive his officials of every liberty, however: he generously lets them compete with Vance now and then in the expression of idiocies. Thus Heath, a police detective-sergeant, says that any pistol of less than .44 calibre is too small to stop a man, and the district attorney, Markham, displays an amazed disinclination to admit that a confession could actually be false. This Markham is an outrageously naïve person: the most credible statement in the tale is to the effect that Markham served only one term in this office. The book is written in the little-did-he-realize style.

“The Malaret Mystery” has to do with a death in Morocco. The reader is kept in rural England and the clues are brought to him through two or three or more hands. The result is a tiresomely slow and rambling story altogether without suspense, but this method does keep the solution concealed until the very last from those readers who have forgotten the plot, which is an old friend in not very new clothes. The motivation, if you are interested in that sort of thing, is pretty dizzy.

“Sea Fog,” in spite of its rather free use of happenstance, is by far the best of this group. To the coast of Sussex comes a boy bound for the sea. In a deserted mill he spies on Kest and his map, in the morning fog he sees Kest killed, in the days that follow he sees more dead men. If toward the end these dead men turn up with almost mechanical regularity, Mr, Fletcher's skill keeps it from being too monotonous a process. But even that skill doesn't quite suffice to make the forced ending plausible. Poor old Scotland Yard is put up to silly tricks again. However, “Sea Fog” offers more than two hundred decidedly interesting pages.

Most of the fifteen stories in “The Massingham Butterfly” deal with crime in its milder forms. They are all mild stories, some of them obviously written long ago. There is no especial reason for anyone's reading them.