



Victorian Tales of Mystery and Detection: An Oxford Anthology

Michael Cox (Selector/Introduction) , Edgar Allan Poe (Contributor) , Arthur Conan Doyle (Contributor) , Grant Allen (Contributor) , Headon Hill (Contributor) , Israel Zangwill (Contributor) , C.L. Pirkis (Contributor) , Fergus Hume (Contributor) , more... L.T. Meade (Contributor) , Robert Eustace (Contributor) , Harry Blyth (Contributor) , Arthur Morrison (Contributor) , J. Sheridan Le Fanu (Contributor) , Rodrigues Ottolengui (Contributor) , Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (Contributor) , M.P. Shiel (Contributor) , Herbert Keen (Contributor) , Matthias McDonnell Bodkin (Contributor) , Guy Newell Boothby (Contributor) , E. Heron (Contributor) , H. Heron (Contributor) , Charles John Cutcliffe Wright Hyne (Contributor) , Victor L. Whitechurch (Contributor) , Charles Dickens (Contributor) , Emmuska Orczy (Contributor) , Sax Rohmer (Contributor) , Robert Barr (Contributor) , Mary Elizabeth Braddon (Contributor) , Mrs. Henry Wood (Contributor) , Richard Dowling (Contributor) , Wilkie Collins (Contributor) , Robert Edward Francillon (Contributor) , Gilbert Campbell (Contributor) , E. Conway (Contributor) , Hesketh Hesketh-Prichard (Contributor) , Kate Prichard (Contributor) ...less

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The Victorian era saw the first great flowering of the detective story. Edgar Allen Poe, Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Arthur Conan Doyle, J.S. LeFanu, and a host of others pioneered a genre of fiction that remains among the most popular today. Now, in *Victorian Tales of Mystery and Detection*, Michael Cox provides a sampling of the finest detective stories written from the 1840s to the early twentieth century. Here readers will find a vast array of detectives and villains, and a multitude of murder methods and motives. In Edgar Allen Poe's "The Purloined Letter," the identity of the robber is known from the start--it is the surreptitious retrieval of the letter that is the mystery. In M. McDonnell Bodkin's "Murder By Proxy," a gentleman is shot in the head at close range, by a murderer who was not even in the same room. Charles Dickens's "Hunted Down" portrays a murderer who was slowly poisoning his very own nieces for their insurance money. And in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "The Lost Special," a train and its passengers vanish in thin air. In addition, Cox (who is rapidly becoming one of the foremost experts on Victorian popular fiction) arranges the stories in chronological order so that readers can follow the genre as it develops over time. For instance, in Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" we see an example of the many Sherlock Holmes escapades that popularized and came to typify the detective story for the Victorian public. And in the progression of the stories, we witness the evolution of the investigator from Poe's brilliant and eccentric Chevalier C. August Dupin, to Doyle's scientific Sherlock Holmes, into Robert Barr's cavalier Valmont (a possible model for Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot).

Including well-known stories by famous authors, as well as little known gems reprinted for the first time,

Victorian Tales of Mystery and Detection not only offers hours of enjoyment and escape for all lovers of crime fiction, but also brings alive the society, language, the sights, and sounds of the Victorian age.

Contents:

The purloined letter by Edgar Allan Poe
The murdered cousin by J.S. Le Fanu
Hunted down by Charles Dickens
Levison's victim by Mary Elizabeth Braddon
The mystery at number seven by Mrs Henry Wood
The going out of Alessandro Pozzone by Richard Dowling
Who killed Zebedee? by Wilkie Collins
A circumstantial puzzle by R.E. Francillon
The mystery of Essex stairs by Sir Gilbert Campbell
The adventure of the blue carbuncle by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
The great ruby robbery by Grant Allen
The sapient monkey by Headon Hill
Cheating the gallows by Israel Zangwill
Drawn daggers by C.L. Pirakis
The greenstone god and the stockbroker by Fergus Hume
The arrest of Captain Vandaleur by L.T. Meade and Robert Eustace
The accusing shadow by Harry Blyth
The ivy cottage mystery by Arthur Morrison
The Azteck opal by Rodrigues Ottolengui
The long arm by Mary E. Wilkins
The case of Euphemia Raphash by M.P. Shiel
The tin box by Herbert Keen
Murder by proxy by M. McDonnell Bodkin
The duchess of Wiltshire's diamonds by Guy Boothby
The story of the Spaniards, Hammersmith by E. and H. Heron
The lost special by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
The banknote forger by C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne
A warning in red by Victor L. Whitechurch and E. Conway
The Fenchurch Street mystery by Baroness Orczy
The green spider by Sax Rohmer
The clue of the silver spoons by Robert Barr

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From Reader Review Victorian Tales of Mystery and Detection: An Oxford Anthology for online ebook

Bill FromPA says

1. The Purloined Letter - Edgar Allan Poe - The best of Dupin.
2. The Murdered Cousin - Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu - A later version of "Passage in the Secret History of an Irish Contess" from The Vampyre and Other Tales of the Macabre
3. Hunted Down - Charles Dickens - A serial murderer is caught by an insurance manager.
4. Levison's Victim - Mary Elizabeth Braddon - A rejected suitor tracks his rival, a murderer. Antisemitism.
5. The Mystery at Number Seven - Mrs Henry Wood - A housemaid is found dead by her coworker in a locked house.
6. The Going Out of Alessandro Pozzone - Richard Dowling - xenophobia. A player piano acts to provide an alibi for a revenge killing.
7. Who Killed Zebedee? - Wilkie Collins - A locked-room mystery. Early noir. The investigator finds his fiancée to be the guilty party.
8. A Circumstantial Puzzle - R. E. Francillon - After he dismisses a suspected clerk, a business man persuades helping his friend to deposit checks in a distant bank, only to have the friend arrested and accused of forgery.
9. The Mystery of the Essex Stairs - Sir Gilbert Campbell - A short mystery in which possession of a dog and message written in blood provide an essential clues.
10. The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle - Arthur Conan Doyle - A Christmas goose hides a stolen jewel.
11. The Great Ruby Robbery - Grant Allen - An American visitor to England misses her ruby necklace one morning; the investigating detective ironically suggests that the least likely suspect is probably guilty.
12. The Sapient Monkey - Headon Hill - A trained monkey is used to launder stolen banknotes.
13. Cheating the Gallows - Israel Zangwill - An "odd couple" sharing quarters; the neat, responsible one, a bank clerk, disappears with a fortune and his roommate then courts the criminal's fiancée.
14. Drawn Daggers - C. L. Pirakis - Loveday Brooke unmasks an imposture foisted on an accommodating clergyman by the supposed daughter of a friend residing in India.
15. The Greenstone God and the Stockbroker - Fergus Hume - The narrator emphasizes the element of chance in solving crimes, so it seems unfair to carp at the sheer improbability of the decisive clue.
16. The Arrest of Captain Vandaleur - L. T. Meade and Robert Eustace - A detective tale without detection in the exposure of a horse race betting scam.
17. The Accusing Shadow - Harry Blyth - A killer is recognized by the sole witness from his shadow on a window blind.
18. The Ivy Cottage Murder - Arthur Morrison - Martin Hewitt investigates a murder and solves a much earlier diamond theft.
19. The Azteck Opal - Rodrigues Ottolengui - A jewel theft on ship board draws the interest of a wealthy investigator who purchases rare gems as a means of preventing crime.
20. The Long Arm - Mary E. Wilkins - The murder of an old man in a rural setting throws suspicion on his daughter.
21. The Case of Euphemia Raphash - M. P. Shiel - A clever tale of murder and madness in an English mansion.
22. The Tin Box - Herbert Keen - A scam is practiced on a helpful gentleman by a widow seeking her husband's property.
23. Murder by Proxy - M. McDonnell Bodkin - A locked room mystery involving the incendiary effects of sunlight focused by a container of water.
24. The Duchess of Wiltshire's Diamonds - Guy Boothby - Crime pays in this tale which uses a standard

magician's prop to steal a diamond necklace. No mystery: the crime is explained in detail as it is being planned.

25. The Story of the Spaniards, Hammersmith - E. and H. Heron - Evidently the first of a series of Flaxman Low psychic investigator yarns; more suited to a ghost story collection than detective anthology.

26. The Lost Special - Arthur Conan Doyle - A "special" train and its passengers disappears completely between two stations. Is the letter suggesting the lines of an investigation from a certain Baker Street consulting detective?

27. A Banknote Forger - C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne - A straightforward story of detection with no clever twists.

28. A Warning in Red - Victor L. Whitchurch and E. Conway - A murder mystery solved by an enthusiast for train schedules and practices.

29. The Fenchurch Street Mystery - Baroness Orczy - A blackmailer disappears and his intended victim is tried for his murder.

30. The Green Spider - Sax Rohmer - The apparent abduction of a noted professor by a monstrous spider is explained by a perceptive student.

31. The Clue of the Silver Spoons - Robert Barr - A tale that plays with motive: the theft of 100 pounds is an act of compulsive kleptomania rather than financial desperation.

Theresa says

I changed this to "read," even though I didn't finish all 600 (!) pages of this book. However, it had to go back to the library. I would call this: "interesting for specialists." While Sherlock Holmes stories seem formulaic after you read a few of them, I can really see why they were so popular after reading some of Conan Doyle's contemporaries!

Benjamin Stahl says

I cannot say I've read much detective fiction yet I've never been a fan of the genre. It never did much for me, and I couldn't understand how such novels could be churned out so frequently yet remain fresh and interesting. I guess after reading a few exceptions in Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Sign of Four*, then Christie's *Orient Express*, I mistakenly believed I had warmed to it by now.

Well, maybe that is true, but this book did nothing but convince me otherwise. Doubtless there would be many great detection stories out there, and of course the Victorian period is one of my favourites for literature - particularly that of a dark or mysterious kind - but Michael Cox seems to have assembled a mostly odd bunch of tales that fail greatly in representing this once sensational avenue.

It must be said that there are a few decent stories here. Not many though. With thirty-one quite lengthy entries, the book is often a very plodding and tiresome reading experience. The few exceptions were, naturally, Doyle's *Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle*, a Sherlock tale where a jewel is smuggled inside a Christmas turkey. Better still was another Doyle story involving a missing railway car, *The Missing Special* - probably the best this book has to offer. There were several decent though forgettable stories like *Who Killed Zebedee?* (Wilkie Collins; 1881), *The Mystery at Number Seven* (Mrs Henry Wood; 1877), *The Accusing Shadow* (Harry Blythe; 1894) and *The Long Arm* (Mary E. Wilkins; 1895). Sheridan Le Fanu was, as usual, valuable for his contribution in *The Murdered Cousin* and finally, competing with Doyle's railway mystery for best story was the comical *Case of Euphemia Raphash* (M.P. Shiel; 1895) or the only supernatural entry, *The Story of the Spaniards* (E. and H. Heron; 1898).

There were a few more I might have mentioned but along with these, there were several that really just bored me. Some like *The Banknote Forger*, *The Clue of the Silver Spoons*, *The Sapient Monkey* and even Dickens' *Hunted Down* left me wholly unsatisfied. Curious also that of the three of Poe's Dupin stories, *The Purloined Letter* was chosen instead of *Murders in the Rue Morgue*.

Even with a subject like ghosts, reading so many genre-specific stories together does get jading, and I might have been more forgiving towards the weaker of these stories had I not read them all together. But as it was, I grew quickly tired of the same old schtick, some hapless victim getting murdered with a "heavy, blunt object," with some highly deductive Holmes knock-off leading the reader along like idiots. It actually took me nearly a month to finish this book and I look back with little fondness. Guess I still don't like detective stories that much after all.

(Oh yeah, the editing of this book was also atrocious. There were countless typos and grammatical errors. The worst case of shoddy presentation I have seen in a long time).

Nancy says

Written in a more wordy manner (i. e. frequent and long descriptions of people or places), the book took some adapting to. Having said that, it was an enjoyable read. There was some clever deducing to be done in the course of reading the thirty-one stories. It was a pleasure.

Siisso says

Accompanies with meerschaum in the smoking-room. Or the pleasure of a book in the drawing-room. After supper, a glass of grog and a smoke. It should be no other book than Victorian Detective Stories. One-and-thirty tales of a fiction category as it progressed to various forms beyond its master and creator -- Poe! If binge-reading doesn't hurt, eyes pleading, "your curiosity has been raised to fever heat." The introduction is beyond schooling enough -- with two titles as puns. Puns!

Louise Carlson Stowell says

I loved this anthology! How can you go wrong with stories by Conan Doyle, Dickens and the masters! Great summer read and easy to get through with a smattering of all sorts of situations!

I thought it was a great read for young and old alike.

Werner says

Note, Sept. 15, 2016: I just edited this review to correct one minor typo.

July 17, 2014

As would be expected with an anthology from Oxford Univ. Press, this one is a serious, quality production, concerned with providing selections that best illustrate the genre and period being surveyed, and with providing an illuminating and meaty introduction. (Editor Cox is also the editor of the excellent collections *The Oxford Book of English Ghost Stories* and *The Oxford Book of Twentieth-Century Ghost Stories*. Most of the 30 authors (there are 31 tales, but Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is represented twice) of the chronologically-arranged selections are British, but at least two Americans are included. And as Cox notes, he didn't interpret the word "Victorian" too strictly; Queen Victoria died in 1901, but we have a couple of Victorian-flavored Edwardian stories dating from 1904.

Before picking up this book, I knew that Edgar Allan Poe is credited with creating the mystery genre (mainly with his Dupin stories) in the 1840s, and that Doyle really popularized it beginning in the late 1880s with his iconic character of Sherlock Holmes. Poe is represented by the often-anthologized "The Purloined Letter;" Doyle by a Holmes story, "The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" (1892) and by "The Lost Special" (1898), one of his grimmer and more chilling stories, involving the total disappearance of an entire train and its passengers. (The latter tale also appears in *The Further Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, but Holmes isn't mentioned by name in this one and appears only peripherally.) These happened to be the only three selections in the book that I'd previously read. Doyle's pivotal influence is obvious in that 22, or over two-thirds, of the other writers here wrote their included stories in the 17 years *after* the publication of the first Holmes novel in 1887. And some of the sleuths created after Holmes, like the one in Headon Hill's "The Sapient Monkey" (1892) are pretty clearly modeled on him, though without the copying of any specific personal traits. But Cox's introduction not only notes the pre-Poe literary antecedents of the mystery story (he rightly mentions William Leggett's 1828 story "The Rifle," which is included in the fine anthology *The Delights of Detection*, as having a good prior claim to being the actual first detective story), but the fact that a fair amount of mystery fiction was produced between Poe and Doyle's outputs. Some of this development was in novel form (he mentions the role of Inspector Bucket in Dickens' *Bleak House*, as well as Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*, and was related to the "sensation novels" of the day; and indeed the real blossoming of the popular magazine market for short fiction didn't come until around the same time Doyle began writing. Only six stories here date from the period between Dupin and Holmes --but that's a far cry from the zero I might have expected!

As usual, I'm not reading these stories in exact order; but one of the two I read on this go-around dates from this period: Dickens' "Hunted Down" (1859), the premise of which is explained briefly in the Goodreads description above. My only quibble with that tale is the narrator's defense of the quack "science of physiognomy," or deducing character traits from physical features (this was unfortunately a real-life theory that bulked large in late 19th and early 20th-century criminology). Aside from that, though, it's a satisfying story. In the ingenious story by Hill (see above), a detective is called on prove a bank employee's innocence in the theft of some bank notes --but that won't be easy, since the young man definitely used one of them to pay a tailor's bill.

More of this review will follow next month!

July 6, 2015

Plans changed, and I had a longer hiatus than I expected before getting back to this book! I also didn't get to read as much in it this time as I'd hoped to; I only read a single selection, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu's "The Murdered Cousin" (1851). And as it turned out, I realized I'd read an abridged version of that one already in *Great Irish Tales of Horror: A Treasury of Fear*, which the editor of that anthology, Peter Haining, titled "Footsteps in the Lobby." As I noted in my review of the latter collection (www.goodreads.com/review/show/16091240), the plot of this one is "similar to" that of the author's Uncle Silas; indeed, Le Fanu simply changed the names, but otherwise largely recycled and expanded the premise,

plot, characterizations, and specific scenes and details from the story into the later novel. (No, I haven't read the latter, but I've seen the PBS adaptation, titled *The Dark Angel*.) Hopefully I'll read some more in this book next month!

August 9, 2015

This time around, I read 14 of the stories, again out of order, partly to first read all the remaining ones by authors whose work I'd read before: Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Wilkie Collins, Mary E. Wilkins Freeman (here identified just as Mary E. Wilkins), C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, Sax Rohmer, Robert Barr, and "E. and H. Heron," the pen names of Kate and Heskith Prichard. (Their contribution, "The Story of the Spaniards, Hammersmith," is actually supernatural fiction, featuring their ghost-busting occult detective series character Flaxman Low.) All of the stories in this batch are serviceable, solid works of entertaining fiction (though some rely more heavily on coincidence than others). Not all of them deal with murder; Rodrigues Ottolengui's "The Azteck Opal," for instance (as the title suggests), focuses on a jewel theft. A couple of these (besides the Flaxman Low yarn) also feature series sleuths: Catherine L. Pirkis' Loveday Brooke, a lady detective (and a smart one!), a rare gender-bender in that era, and Barr's transplanted Frenchman Eugene Valmont.

My favorite selection in this batch was Freeman's "The Long Arm," set in a New England village whose bucolic respectability can hide evil secrets. Rohmer's "The Green Spider," is probably the most original and offbeat of the bunch, and Collins' "Who Killed Zebedee?" the most emotionally intense and evocative. Notoriously weird author Matthew Phipps Shiel, in "The Case of Euphemia Raphash," gives us a story of the abduction and presumed murder of the title character; but there proves to be even more behind this mystery than initially appears, and this tale becomes the most chilling exploration of human darkness of the stories in this batch (and probably in the whole book). Also noteworthy are Hyne's "The Banknote Forger," which provides a clearly well-researched look at the details of the actual techniques of forgers, and "The Mystery of Essex Stairs" (1891) by Sir Gilbert Campbell, one of the earliest stories in the genre where a dog provides the key to solving a case.

Now, it'll be next summer before I'll be able to get back to this anthology. But I'll be looking forward to the rest of the stories!

July 11, 2016

This time around, I read eight more selections, including the two longest ones (ranging around 40 pages). Four of these featured series detectives: Harry Blythe's Jules Gervaise, whom I'm guessing may have been an influence on Agatha Christie's creation of Poirot; Arthur Morrison's Martin Hewitt, another fictional sleuth with an obvious strong Sherlock Holmes influence; Mrs. Henry Wood's John Ludlow --who actually doesn't do much detecting, at least here; he's a narrator/witness to the solution of the case by someone else-- and Miss Cusack, yet another smart female detective, the creation of L. T. Meade (who was a woman herself) and her collaborator Robert Eustace. She's not the only woman in this group of stories to solve a mystery, nor the only strong female character; and I also appreciated the fact that some of the authors move beyond the conventional attitude towards servants as essentially part of the furniture. In most (but not all) of the cases here, I was able to deduce the basic outline of the solutions before the big reveal, but that didn't interfere with my enjoyment.

My favorite tale in this batch is "The Great Ruby Robbery" by Grant Allen. Among other strong points, that one has a note of wry humor, which at times pokes gentle fun at Americans, the Irish, and the Brits themselves, but with the sense of a friend teasing, rather than an enemy mocking. The most ingenious story was Israel Zangwill's "Cheating the Gallows," while R. E. Francillon's "A Circumstantial Puzzle" is perhaps the weakest --its explanation doesn't, IMO, stand up very well to examination. In Fergus Hume's "The

Greenstone God and the Stockbroker," the titular "god" is a Maori idol, or fetish (spelled "fetich" here) which plays an unexpected part in unmasking a murderer. A knowledge of the world of horse racing, and of betting on it, would be helpful in reading the Miss Cusack story, "The Arrest of Captain Vandaleur" (a title that qualifies as something of a spoiler!), but isn't essential to the experience. Published in 1877, Mrs. Wood's "The Mystery at Number Seven" is the oldest selection in this group; the others cluster in date from 1889-1895.

There are four stories left in the book, so I'm expecting to finish it when I return to it (if all goes as planned) next month!

Aug. 14, 2016

I finally read the last four unread stories in the collection (of course, I haven't been reading them in order), all written between 1896 and 1901, and all by new-to-me authors. However, two of them --Guy Boothby's "The Duchess of Wiltshire's Diamonds," which introduced his series character Klimo, and "The Fenchurch Street Mystery," one of Baroness Orczy's Old Man in the Corner tales-- proved to be quite disappointing. Both are morally inverted glorifications of the "superior" smarts and ingenuity of self-serving, treacherous criminals (and in the latter case, a cold-blooded murderer), whom the narrators thoroughly sympathize with, standing the traditional moral conventions of the genre completely on their head. (And these are not instances where a protagonist may be outside the law, but still operates within a moral framework that can earn respect; these creeps have nothing that can earn deserved respect or admiration from any reader, except those who admire skill and craft employed in hurting others.) Since these were the last two stories I read in the book, it left me with a bad taste. (However, I do still want to read Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* someday; I think she may have been a better writer with that novel than she appears to be here.)

Although neither "The Tin Box" by Herbert Keen or "Murder by Proxy," featuring H. McDonnell Bodkin's series sleuth Paul Beck, are very challenging, partly because they both use too much foreshadowing (I figured out the basic gist of the solution well before the big reveal, in both cases), they're both entertaining. The Bodkin story in particular employs an ingenious and original murder method.

Overall, I'd definitely recommend this collection to mystery mavens, especially those with an interest in the genre's early development. Even the few stories that aren't satisfying as reading experiences have a historical interest; this is an anthology that's very much up to Oxford Univ. Press' high standard in that respect.

K. says

Picked this up at the Newton Library sale this summer, thinking it would be a fun fluff read in between serious books and projects. It was that! If you're a sucker for all things Victorian, pick this one up--borrow it!

One thing I learned about me is I love a mystery--but not really if it involves murder. I so much more like a plain unravelling--of any other adventure.

One thing that was very fun was reading authors I'd never heard of, and really liking their voices. I really enjoyed "The Great Ruby Robbery" by Grant Allen, "Drawn Daggers" by C. L. Perkis, and "The Clue of the Silver Spoons" by Robert Barr. Especially loved the narration of the first.

Of course I enjoyed the selection by Dickens, as I have to admit I blindly love anything written by him. His description in that one was just so, Dickensian--thus, Victorian perfection (hee hee).

There are also stories by well known Victorian authors such as Poe, Collins, Conan Doyle, and Baroness Orczy, some other lesser-knowns and some, to me, completely unknowns.

If you like mysteries and like Victoriana, this book would be a very amusing way to spend some chunks of leisure time.

Graham says

This huge volume is not for the faint of heart. The editor has taken a scholarly approach and uncovered a huge range of Victorian era detective stories in the style of Sherlock Holmes. The stories are diverse, but central ingredients are obviously crime, detection, clues and the laborious tracking down of suspects and criminals. The lengthy and sometimes long-winded style of these 19th century authors may be offputting to some, but the book is worth sticking with as it contains many intriguing and unknown gems to savour.

There was only one story I actively disliked - Mary E. Wilkins' *THE LONG ARM*, which seems insipid and lacking in colour. Many others are mildly entertaining and worth a single read. These include: Edgar Allan Poe's *THE PURLOINED LETTER*, one of Auguste Dupin's lesser cases; *HUNTED DOWN* by Charles Dickens, a murder mystery that starts off slow and builds to an electrifying climax; *THE GOING OUT OF ALESSANDRO POZZONE* by Richard Dowling, a typical story set during a dark and stormy night; *WHO KILLED ZEBEDEE?* by one of my favourite authors, Wilkie Collins, which is well structured but lacks atmosphere; also *A CIRCUMSTANTIAL PUZZLE* by R. E. Francillon, which does what it says on the tin - with the nice addition of a psychological angle to the usual proceedings.

THE MYSTERY OF ESSEX STAIRS by Sir Gilbert Campbell starts off strongly but ends with a wild leap of logic which turns it into an Enid Blyton-style fairy story. Grant Allen's *THE GREAT RUBY ROBBERY* has a good villain and a nice twist at the end, while *THE SAPIENT MONKEY* by Headon Hill belies its title and offers straightforward detective thrills. C. L. Pirakis offers a female crime-fighter in *DRAWN DAGGERS*, similar to a Holmes adventure, as do L. T. Meade and Robert Eustace in *THE ARREST OF CAPTAIN VANDALEUR* which is solid fare.

THE AZTECK OPAL by Rodrigues Ottolengui predates Agatha Christie in its tale of a crime at a dinner party on a ship, while M. P. Shiel's *THE CASE OF EUPHEMIA RAPHASH* is a little too abstract for my tastes. *THE TIN BOX* by Herbert Keen may not be the most exciting story in the world but it doesn't disappoint and *THE BANKNOTE FORGER* by C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne makes fine use of a drawing pin as a vital clue! *A WARNING IN RED* is one of many 'railway mysteries' written by Victor L. Whitechurch and his friend E. Conway. Baroness Orczy's *THE FENCHURCH STREET MYSTERY* features a decomposing body and a very obvious solution and *THE CLUE OF THE SILVER SPOONS* is Robert Barr's take on the genre with a distinctly psychological spin.

Other stories are definitely above average. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *LEVISON'S VICTIM* is a fine, traditional murder mystery that sees a truly despicable villain getting his comeuppance. *THE MYSTERY AT NUMBER SEVEN* by Mrs Henry Wood is a suspenseful tale both surprising and enjoyable, while *THE ADVENTURE OF THE BLUE CARBUNCLE* is a top-end Holmes adventure from Conan Doyle with an unusual and intriguing plot. Fergus Hume's story, *THE GREENSTONE GOD AND THE STOCKBROCKER*, has the best title in the anthology and tons of style to go with it and Arthur Morrison's *THE IVY COTTAGE MYSTERY* belies its workmanlike roots to prove very entertaining. *MURDER BY PROXY*, by M. McDonnell Bodkin, is a typical locked room mystery told in a good way.

Now for the stand-outs:

THE MURDERED COUSIN by J. S. Le Fanu - a short-story precursor to his novel, UNCLE SILAS. As gripping a tale of murder and mystery as you could wish to read.

CHEATING THE GALLOWS by Israel Zangwill - the author totally pulled the wool over my eyes in this unconventional story.

THE ACCUSING SHADOW by Harry Blyth - classic period fare from the creator of Sexton Blake. French fraudsters, romance and gruesome murder combine in this lengthy but compelling read.

THE DUCHESS OF WILTSHIRE'S DIAMONDS by Guy Boothby - a totally unpredictable story in which master-detective Klimo works as both detective - and criminal!

THE STORY OF THE SPANIARDS, HAMMERSMITH by E. and H. Heron - a spooktacular jaunt as psychic detective Flaxman Low tackles the spirit of a diseased leper.

THE LOST SPECIAL by Conan Doyle - this tale of a disappearing train might have a David Copperfield ring to it, but it's a logical, enthralling mystery nonetheless.

THE GREEN SPIDER by Sax Rohmer - weird gruesomeness and an almost Lovecraftian atmosphere combine to make one of the best.

Bev says

Victorian Tales of Mystery & Detection, edited by Michael Cox, gives us a sampling of some of the finest tales written from the 1840s to the early 20th Century. Authors include everyone from Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens to Edgar Allan Poe, and Sax Rohmer to Baroness Orczy. Readers are given a vast array of murderers and miscreants, detectives and villains, and methods and motives. There are old familiar favorites such as "The Purloined Letter" and virtual unknowns like "The Clue of the Silver Spoons" by Robert Barr. Something for every taste and mood.

I am well-acquainted with Poe's "Purloined Letter" and with both of the Holmes stories included here ("The Adventure of the Blue Carbuncle" and "The Lost Special")--and while I delight in the stories of these masters of the early detective novel, it was even more delightful to discover new Victorian treats.

Here are the best of those new treats:

"The Murdered Cousin" by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. I just discovered Le Fanu this past fall. I read a collection of his ghost stories for one of my Fall Challenges. "The Murdered Cousin," written in 1851 is billed as one of the earliest locked room stories. The story is full of atmosphere and leans more towards the gothic than detective fiction. There is no final summing up and the villains get away, but it is still a very satisfying story.

"Hunted Down" by Charles Dickens. A tale of murder done and a revenge that's due. It starts off slow but builds to a wonderful climax.

"Levison's Victim" by Mary Elizabeth Braddon (of Lady Audley's Secret fame). Another story of revenge for murder committed. This time the revenge stays within the bounds of the law.

"The Mystery at Number Seven" by Mrs. Henry Wood. Very suspenseful and enjoyable. A bit of a surprise at the end.

"The Mystery of Essex Stairs" by Sir Gilbert Campbell. A short and tidy little mystery which manages to include a dramatic courtroom scene.

"Daggers Drawn" by C. L. Pirakis. I have long had The Experiences of Loveday Brooks, Lady Detective on my list of books to look for. I am very glad to have had a chance to read one of the short stories included in that volume. "Daggers Drawn" pays homage to Sherlock Holmes and I find Miss Brooks' way of keeping clues to herself very much in the Holmes style. Very feminist characterization for the time period.

"The Ivy Cottage Mystery" by Arthur Morrison. A tidy little mystery with an interesting twist. I guessed part but not all.

"Murder by Proxy" by M. McDonnell Bodkin. A rather ingenious "locked room" story. Elegantly told with very interesting characters.

"The Clue of the Silver Spoons" by Robert Barr. A nifty bit of sleight of hand...both in the story itself and by the author of this intriguing little mystery.

Overall, I enjoyed the stories in this volume very much. Some were a bit obvious...but I'm sure they were much more startling to the reading public at the time. Given the many years of mystery-mongering between the Victorian Age and now, it's much more difficult to surprise today's reader. But there were some definite gems.

Judith says

It's a really nice collection. There are a great many different authors, not just Arthur Conan Doyle and Edgar Allan Poe. Of course there were some stories that were a bit abrupt, but for the most part, they were really well-written mystery/detective stories.
