

A FAMOUS SHORT STORY.

The Purloined Letter.

At Puils, Just after dark one guary evening in the autumn of 15-, I was enjoying the two-fold luxury of meditation and a meershaum, in company with my friend, C. Auguste Dupin, in his intle back library, or book closet, au troissieme, No. 33 Rue Dunot, Faubourg street, Germain. For one hour at least we had maintained a profound silence; while each, to any casual observer, might have seemed intently and exclusively occupied with the curling eddies of smoke that oppressed the atmosphere of the chamber. For myself, however, I was mentally discussing certain topics which had formed matter for conversation between us at an earlier period of the evening-I mean the affair of the Rue Morgue, and the mystery attending the murder of Marie Roget. I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G-, the prefect of the Paris-

ian police. We gave him a hearty welcome: for there was nearly half as much of the entertaining as of the contemptible about the man, and we had not seen the second sec him for several years. We had been eitting in the dark, and Dupin now arose for the purpose of lighting a lamp, but sat down again without do-ing so, upon G-'s saying that he had called to consult us, or rather to ask the omion of my friend about some

called to consult us, or rather to ask the opinion of my friend about some official business which had occasioned a great deal of trouble. "If it is any point requiring reflec-tion," observed Dupin, as he forebore to enkindle the wick, "we shall examine it to better purpose in the dark." "That is another of your odd no-tione," said the prefect, who had a fashion of calling everything "odd" that was beyond his comprehension, and thus lived amid an absolute fector and thus lived amid an absolute legion of "oddities."

"Very true," said Dupin, as he sup-plied his visitor with a pipe, and rolled towards him a comfortable chair. And what is the difficulty now?" I asked. "Nothing in the assassination way. I home?"

way I hope?

"Oh, no: nothing of that nature. The fact is, the business is very simple indeed, and I make no doubt that we can manage it sufficiently well ourselves; but then I thought Dupin would like to hear the details of it, because it is so excessively odd.

"Simple and odd," said Dupin, "Why, yes: and not exactly that, either. The fact is, we have all been a great deal puzzled because the affair is simple, and yet baffles us altogether

"Perhaps it is the very simplicity of the thing which puts you at fault," said my friend. "What nonsense you do talk!" replied

the prefect, laughing heartily. "Perhaps the mystery is a little too plain," said Dupin. "Oh, good heavens! Who ever heard

"Oh, good heavens! Who ever heard of such an idea?" "A little too self-evident." "Hai hat ha!-ha! ha! ha!-ho! ho! ho!" roared our visitor, profoundly amused. "Oh, Dupin, you will be the death of me yet." "And what, after all, is the matter on hand?" I asked. "Why, I will tell you." replied the prefect as he gave a long, steady, and contemplative puff, and settled himself in his chair. "I will tell you in a few words; but, before I begin let me cau-tion you this is an affair demanding the

but it is possible that some such opinon may have been entertained." "It is clear," said I, "as you observe, that the letter is still in possession of

that the letter is still in possession of the minister, since it is this possession, and not any employment of the letter, which bestows the power. With the employment the power departs." "True," said H., "and upon this con-viction I proceeded. My first care was to make thorough search of the minis-ter's hotel; and here my chief embar-rassment lay in the nacessity of search-ing without his knowledge. Beyond all things, I have been warned of the dan-ger which would result from giving him reason to suspect our design." "But," said I, "you are guite au fait in these investigations. The Parisian police have done this thing often be-fore."

O yes; and for this reason I did not Gyes, and for this reason 1 did not despair. The habits of the minister gave me, too, a great advantage. He is frequently absent from home all night. His servants are by no means numerous. They sleep at a distance from their master's apartment, and be-ing childly. Neurolitang are frequent ng chiefly Neapolitans, are readily nade drunk. I have keys, as you mow, with which I can open any hamber or cabinet in Paris. For three onths a night has not passed during e greater part of which I have not en engaged personally in ransacking s D- Hotel. My honor is interested. and, to mention a great secret, the reard is enormous. So I did not aban in the search until I had become fully satisfied that the thief is a more astute man than myself. I fancy that I have nvestigated every nook and corner of he premises in which it is possible that

the paper can be concealed." "But is it not possible." I suggested, "that, although the letter may be in possession of the minister, as it un-questionably it, he may have concealed it elsewhere than upon his own prem-lece?"

"This is barely possible," said Dupin. "The present peculiar condition of af-fairs at court, and especially of those intrigues in which D- is known to be involved, would render the instant availability of the document-lis sus-ceptibility of the document-lis sus-ceptibility of being produced at a mo-ment's notice-a point of nearly equal importance with its possession." "Its susceptibility of being pro-duced." said I. "That is to say, of being destroyed," said Dupin. "This is barely possible," said Dupin

sald Dupin. "True," I observed, "the paper is clearly, then, upon the premises. As for its being upon the person of the minister, we may consider that as out of the question."

"Entirely," said the prefect. "He has been twice waylaid, as if by footpads, and his person rigorously searched un-der my own inspection."

"You might have spared yourself this trouble," said Dupin, "D-, I presume, is not altogether a fool, and, if not, must have anticipated these waylayings as a matter of course.

"Not altogether a fool," said G., "but then he's a poet, which I take to be only one remove from a fool." "True," said Dupin, after a long and delightful whiff from his meerschaum,



granning and parcel; we not only opened every leaf in book, but we turned over every leaf in book, but we turned over every leaf in each volume; not contenting ourselves with a mere shake, according ourserves fashion of some of our police officers. We also measured the thickness of every book cover with the most accu-rate admonstrate with the most accu-Everything Known ‡ rate admeasurement, and applied to each the most jealous scrutiny of the microscope. Had any of the bindings been recently meddled with it would have been utterly impossible that the fact should have escaped observation. Special Inducements Will 1 Some five or six volumes, just from the hands of the binder, we carefully probed, longitudinally, with the be Offered our Friends \$ needles "You explored the floors beyond the carpets?" "Beyond doubt. We removed every

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carpet, and examined the boards with

"And the paper on the walls?" You looked into the cellars?"

ORGANS "We did." "Then," I said, "you have been mak-ing a miscalculation, and the letter is not upon the premises, as you sup-

"I fear you are right there," said the prefect. "And now, Dupin, what would you advise me to do?" "To make a thorough research of the prevalence."

"That is absolutely needless," replied G. "I am not more sure than I breathe than I am that the letter is not at the

"I have no better advice to give you," said Dupin. "You have, of course, an accurate description of the letter?" "Oh, yes!" and here the prefect, pro-

ducing a memorandum book, proceeded to read aloud a minute account of the internal, and especially of the external, appearance of the missing document. Soon after finishing the perusal of this description, he took his departure, more entirely depressed in spirits than I had entirely depressed in spirits than I had ver known the good gentleman before. In about a month afterwards he paid

us another visit, and found us occupied very nearly as before. He took a pipe and a chair, and entered into some or-dinary conversation. At length I said; "Well, but G-, what of the pur-loined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such thing as over-reaching the

Minister?" "Confound him, say 1-yes; I made the re-examination, however, as Dupin suggested; but it was all labor lost, as

suggested; but it was all hoor lost, as I knew it would be." "How much was the reward offered, did you say?" asked Dupin. "Why, a very great deal-a very lib-eral reward-I don't like to say how much, precisely; but one thing I will say, that I wouldn't mind giving my individual check for 50,000 francs to any one who could obtain me that letany one who could obtain me that let-ter. The fact is, it is becoming of more and more importance every day:

and the reward has been lately doubled. If it were trebled, however, I could do

At it were trended, however, i could do no more than I have done." "Why, yes," said Dupin, drawlingly, between the whiffs of his merchaum, "I really think, G-, you have not ex-erted yourself-to the utmost-In this matter. You might-do a little more, I think eb?"

matter. You might-do a little more, I think, eh?" "How? In what way?" "Why (puff, puff) you might (puff, puff) employ counsel in the matter, eh? (puff, puff, puff). Do you remember the story they tell of Abernethy?" "No; hang Abernethy?" "To be sure; hang him and welcome. But once upon a time a certain yich

But, once upon a time, a certain rich miser conceived the design of spunging upon the Abernethy for a medical opinion. Getting up, for this purpose, an ordinary conversation in a private

plies 'odd,' and loses; but upon the o himself, "The simpleton had them even upon the first trial, even upon the first trial, and his amount of cunning is just sufficient to make him have them odd upon the sec-ond; I will therefore guess odd,' he ond, I will therefore guess odd; no guesses odd, and wins. Now, with a simpleton a degree above the first, he would have reasoned thus: 'This fel-low finds that in the first instance I guessed odd, and, in the second, he will propose to himself, upon the first im-pulse, a simple variation from even to odd on did the disc observations but these odd, as did the first simpleton; but then a second thought will suggest that this is too simple a variation, and finally he will decide upon putting it even as before. I will therefore guess even;" he guesses even and wins. Now, this mode of reasoning in the school boy, whom his fellows termed 'lucky,' what, in its

lazy analysis, is it?" "It is merely," I said, "an identifica-tion of the reasoner's intellect with that

his oppone lt is," sai "It is," said Dupin; "and, upon in-quiring of the boy by what means he effected the thorough identification in which his success consisted. I received answer as follows: 'When I w' h to find answer as follows: When I will to find out how wise, or how stupid, or how good or how wicked is any one, or what are his thoughts at the moment, I fashion the expression of my face, as accurately as possible, in accord-ance with the expression of his, and then what to substitute the other then wait to see what thoughts or sen-timents arise in my mind or heart, as f to match or correspond with the ex-pression.' This response of the school boy lies at the bottom of all the spuri ous profundity which has been attrib

the opponent's intellect with which the second you

"For its practical value it depends "For its practical value it depends upon this," replied Dupin; "and the prefect and his cohort fall so frequently irst, by default of this identification, ind, secondly, by HI-admensurement, r rather through non-admeasurement, f the intellect with which they are en

of the intellect with which they are en-gaged. They consider only their own ideas of ingenuity; and, in searching for anything hidden, advert only to the modes in which they would have hidden it. They are right in this much-that their own ingenuity is a faithful rep-resentative of that of the mass; but when the cuming of the individual felon is diverse in character from their own, the felon folls them, of course. This always happens when it is above their own, and very usually when it is below. They have no variation of prin-ciple in their investigation; at best. ciple in their investigation: at best, when urged by some unusual emer-gency-by some extraordinary reward --they extend or exaggerate their old their principles. What, for example, in this case of D-, has been done to vary the principle of action? What

s all this boring, and probing, and sounding, and scrutinizing with the microscope, and dividing the surface of the building into registered square inches-what is it all but an exagger-ation of the application of the one principle or set of principles of search, which are based upon the one set of no-tions regarding human ingenuity, to which the prefect. In the long routine of his duty, has been accustomed? Do you not see that he has taken it for granted that all men proceed to con-ceal a letter-not exactly in a gimlet hole bored in a chair-leg, but, at least, in some out-of-the-way hole or corner suggested by some tenes of thought uggested by some tenor of thought which would urge a man to secrete a etter in a gimlet-hole bored in a chair

******************** And do you not see also that ich recherches nooks for concealmen are adapted only for ordinary occasions and would be adopted only by ordinary intellects; for, in all cases of conceal-ment, a disposal of the article con-PALACE. cealed-a disposal of it in this recherche manner is, in the very first instance, presumable and presumed; and thus its discovery depends not at all upon the cumen, but altogether upon the mer-are, patience and americation of th mination of the seekers; and where the case is of im-portance-or, what amounts to the same thing in the political eyes, when the reward is of magnitude-the qualties in question have never been known o fail. You will now understand what I meant in suggesting that, had the purloined letter been hidden anywhere within the limits of the prefect's exam-nation—in other words, had the prin-******************* company, he insinuated his case to the ""We will suppose,' said the miser, '"We will suppose,' said the miser, 'that his symptoms are such and such; now, doctor, what would you have di-rected him to take?" ination—in other words, had the prin-clule of its concealment been compre-hended within the principles of the prefect, its discovery would have been a matter altogether beyond question. This functionary, however, has been thoroughly mystified; and the remote source of his defeat lies in the sup-position that the minister is a fool be-cause be has acquired remove as a 'Take!' said Abernethy; 'why, take "Take!' said Abernethy; 'why, take advice to be sure.'" "But," said the prafect, a little dis-composed, "I am perfectly willing to take advice, and to pay for it. I would really give 50,000 francs to any one. who would aid me in the matter." "In that case," replied Dupin, open-ing a drawer, and producing a check book. "you may as well 60 cause he has acquired renown as a poet. All fools are poets—this the pre-fect feels; and he is merely guilty of a non distributio medil in thence infer-ring that all poets are fools." "But is this really the poet?" I asked There are two brothers, I know; and book, "you may as well fill me up a check for the amount mentioned. When you have signed it I will hand you the both have attained reputation in let-ters. The minister, I believe, has writ-ten learnedly on the differential cal-culus. He is a mathematician and no letter." I was astounded. The prefect ap-peared absolutely thunderstruck. For some minutes he remained speechless and motionless, looking incredulously at my friend with open mouth, and eyes, that seemed starting from their sockets; then, apparently recovering himself in some measure, he seized a pen, and after several pauses and va-cant stares, finally filled up and signed a check for 50,000 france, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The latpoet. "You are mistaken; I know him well he is both. As poet and mathematician he would reason well; as mere mathe-matician he could not have reasoned at all, and thus would have been at the mercy of the prefect." "You surprise me," I said, "by these sinions, which have been contradicted by the voice of the world. You do not mean to set at naught the well-digested a check for so,oo rranes, and handed it across the table to Dupin. The lat-te rexamined it carefully and deposited it in his pocketbook: then, unlocking an escritoire, took thence a letter and gave it to the prefect. This functionary grasped it in a perfect agony of joy, ouened it with a trambiling hand case. idea of centuries. The mathematical reason has long been regarded as the reason has not been regarded as the reason par excellence." "'Il y a a parler.'" replied Dupin, quoting from Chamfor, "'que toute idee publique, toute convention recue, prapid it with a trembling hand, cast a rapid glance at its contents, and then, scrambled and struggling to the door, rushed at length unceremoniously from the room and from the house, without idee publique, toute convention recue, est use sottise car elle a convenue au plus grand nombre.' The mathemati-clans, I grant you have done their best to promulgate the popular error to which you allude, and which is none the less an error for its promulgation as truth. With an art worthy a better cause, for example, they have insinu-ated the term 'nanivesis' into architection having uttered a syllable since Dupin had requested him to fill up the check. When he had gone my friend entered into some explanations. "The Parisian police," he said, "are exceedingly able in their way. They are persevering, ingenious, cunning and thoroughly versed in the knowledge which their duties seem chiefly to de-mand. Thus, when G-detailed to us his mode of searching the premises at the Hotel D-, I felt entire confidence in his having made a satisfactory in-vestigation, so far as his labors ex-tended." cause, for example, they have insinu-ated the term 'analysis' into application to algebra. The French are the origin-ators of this particular deception; but if a term is of any importance—if words derive any value from applicability— then 'analysis' conveys 'algebra' about as much as in Latin 'ambitus' implies 'ambition.' 'religio' 'religion,' or 'hom-ines honesti,' 'a set of honorable men.' 'You have a quarrel on hand, I see, with some of the algebraists of Paris; but proceed." ton Route. "So far as his labors extended?" said L "I mean to say," continued Dupin, "that if the minister had been no more said L. "Yes," said Dupin. "The measures adopted were not only the best of their kind, but carried out to absolute per-fection. Had the letter been deposited within the range of their search, these fellows would, beyond a question, have found it." "that if the minister had been no more than a mathematician, the prefect would have been under no necessity of giving up this cheque. I knew him, however, as both mathematician and poet, and my neasures were adapted to his capacity, with reference to the cir-cumstances by which he was surround-ed. I knew him, however, as a cour-tier, too, and as a bold intriguant. Such a man, I considered could not fail to be aware of the ordinary political modes of action. He could not have failed to merely laughed; but he seemed ulte serious in all that he said. "The measures, then," he continued, "The measures then," he continued, "were good in their kind, and well exe-cuted; their defect law in their being inapplicable to the case and to the man. A certain set of highly ingeni-ous resources are, with the prefect, a sort of procrustean bed, to which he forcibly adapts his designs. But he perpetually errs by being too deep or too shallow for the matter in hand; and many a school boy is a better reasoner than he. I once knew one about § years of age whose success at guessing in the game of 'even and odd' attracted universal admiration. This game is simple, and is played with marbles. One player holds in his hand a number of these toys, and de-mands of abother whether that number aware of the ordinary pointical indees of action. He could not have failed to anticipate—and events have proved that he did not fail to anticipate—the waylayings to which he was subjeced. He must have foreseen, I reflected, the secret investigations of his premises. His frequent absences from home at night, which were halled by the prefect mands of another of these toys, and de-mands of another whether that number is even or odd. If the guess is right, the guesser wins one: if wrong, he loses one. The boy to whom I allude won all the marbles of the school. Of course he had some principle of guess-ing; and this lay in mere observation and admeasurement of the astuteness of his opponent. For example, an arrant simpleton is his apponent, and, holding up his closed hand, asks: 'Are they oven or odd?' Our school boy re-





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tion you this is an affair stealest secrecy, and that I should most probably lose the position I now bold were it known that I confided it "Proceed," said L "Or not." said Dupin. "Well, then. I have received person-

al information, from a very high quar-ter, that a certain document of importance has been purloined from the royal apartments. The individual who purloined it is known; this beyond a doubt; he was seen to take it. It is known, also, that it still remains in his

"How is this known?" asked Dupin. "It is clearly inferred," replied the prefect, "from the nature of the docu-ment, and from the non-appearance of certain results which would at once arise from its passing out of the rob-ber's possession, that is to say, from his employing it as he must design in the end to employ it." "Be a little more explicit," I said. "Well, I may venture so far as to say that the paper gives its holder a cer-tain power in a certain quarter where such power is immensely valuable." The prefect was fond of the cant of diplomacy.

Still I do not quite understand," said Dupin

Well, the disclosure of the doc ument to a third person, who shall be nameless, would bring in question the honor of a person of most exalted staand this fact gives the holder of the document an ascendency over the illustrious personage whose honor and

illustrious personage whose honor and peace are so jeopardized." "But this ascendency,"I interposed, "would depend upon the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowledge of the robber. Who would dare--" "The thief," said G., "is the Minister D-, who dares all things, those unbe-coming as well as those becoming a man. The method of the theft was not less ingenious than bold. The document in question--a letter, to be frank--had been received by the personage robbed while alone in the royal boudoir. Dur-ing its perusal she was suddenly in-terrupted by the entrance of the other exalted personare from whom especial-ly it was her wish to conceal it. After ly it was her wish to conceal it. After a hurried and vain endeavor to thruat it in a drawer, she was forced to place it, open as it was, upon a table. The it, open as it was, upon a table. The address, however, was uppermost, and, the contents thus unexposed, the letter escaped notice. At this juncture enters the Minister D—. His lynx eye imme-diately perceives the paper, recognizes the handwriting of the address, ob-serves the confusion of the personage addressed, and fathoms her secret. Af-ter some business transactions, hur-ried through in his ordinary manner, he produces a letter somewhat similar to the one in question, opens if, pre-tends to read it, and then places it in close juxtaposition to the other. Again he converses for some fifteen minutes upon the public affairs. At length, in taking leave, he takes also from the table the letter to which he had no claim. Its rightful owner saw, but, of course, dared not call attention to the act, in the presence of the third per-sonage, who stood at her elbow. The minister decamped, leaving his, own jetter—one of no importance—upon the table." address, however, was uppermost, and etter-one of no importance-upon the table

"Here, then," said Dupin to me, "you have precisely what you demand to make the ascendency complete—the robber's knowledge of the loser's knowl-

robber's knowledge of the loser's knowl-edge of the robber." "Yes," replied the Prefect; "and the power thus attained has, for some months past been wielded, for politi-cal purposes, to a very dangerous ex-tent. The personage robbed is more thoroughly convinced every day of the necessity of reclaiming her letter. But this, of course, cannot be done openly. In fine, driven to despair, she has com-mitted the matter to me,"

"Than whom" said Dupln, amid a perfect whirlwind of smoke, "no more sagaclous arent could. I suppose, be de-eired or even imagined." "You flatter me," replied the prefect;

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"altogether I have been guilty of cer-

"altogether I have been guilty of cer-tain doggerel myself." "Suppose you detail," said I, "the particulars of your search." "Why, the fact is, we took our time, and we searched everywhere. I have had long experience in these affairs. I took the entire building, room by room, devoting the nights of a whole week to each. We examined, first, the furni-ture of each apartment. We opened every possible drawer; and I presume you know that, to a properly trained police agent, such a thing as a secret drawer is impossible. Any man is a dolf who permits a 'secret' drawer to escape him in a search of this kind. The thing is so plain. There is a cer-tain amount of bulk-of space- to be accounted for in every cabinet. Then we have accurate rules. The fiftleth part of a line could not escape us. Af-ter the cabinets, we took the chairs. The coshions we probed with the fine, long needles you have seen me emply. long needles you have seen me emply From the tables we removed the tops."

Why so?" Sometimes the top of a table, or "Sometimes the top of a table, or other similarly arranged piece of furni-ture is removed by the person wishing to conceal en article; then the leg is excavated, the article deposited within the cavity and the top replaced. The bottoms and tops of bedposts are employed in the same way." "But could not the cavity be detected by sounding?" I asked. "By no means, if, when the article is deposited, a sufficient wadding of cot-ton be placed around it. Besides, in our case we were obliged to proceed without noise." "But you could not have removed—

without noise." "But you could not have removed→ you could not have taken to pieces all inticles of furniture in which it would have been possible to make a deposit in the manner you mention. A letter may be compressed into a thin spiral roll, not differing much in shape or bulk from a large knitting-needle, and in this form it might be inserted into the rung of a chair, for example. You

not take to pieces all the chairs? Certainly not; but we did better-w examined the rungs of every chair in the hotel, and, indeed, the jointings of every description of furniture by the aid of a most powerful microscope. Had there been any traces of recent disthere been any traces of recent dis-turbance, we should not have failed to detect it instantly. A single grain of gimlet-dust, for example, would have been as obvious as an apple. Any dis-turbance in the bluing-any unusual gaping in the joints-would have suf-ficed to insure detection."

"I presume you looked to the mir-rors, between the boards and the plates, and you probed the beds and the bed clothes, as well as the curtains

the bed clothes, as well as the curtains and carpets." "That, of course; and when we had absolutely completed every particle of the furniture in this way, then we ex-amined the house Itself. We divided its entire surface into compartments, which we numbered, so that none might be where it is not as the transmission. which we humbered, so that bone might be missed; then we scrutinized each in-dividual square inch throughout the premises, including the two houses im-mediately adjoining, with the microas before

"The two houses adjoining!" I ex-latmed, "you must bave had a great leal of trouble." "We had; but the reward offered is-

prodigious." "You include the grounds about the

houses! "All the grounds are paved with brick. They gave us comparatively little trouble. We examined the moss between the bricks, and found it un-disturbed."

"You looked among D-'s papers, of course, and into the books of the li-brary?"

"Certainly; we opened every package





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night, which were halled by the prefect as certain aids to his success. I re-garded only as ruses, to afford oppor-tunity for thorough search to the po-lice, and thus the sooner to impress them with the conviction to which G--, in fact, did finally arrive-the convic-tion that the letter was not upon the premises. I felt aiso that the whole train of thought, which I was at some pains in detailing to you just flow, con-cerning the invariable principle of po-licial action in searches for articles concealed-I felt that this whole train of thought would necessarily pass through the mind of the minister. It would imperatively lead him to despise all the ordinary nocks of concealment.

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