



The Memoirs of Detective Vidocq: Convict, Spy and Principal Agent of the French Police

Eugene Francois Vidocq

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Eugène François **Vidocq** (1775-1857) was a French criminal who became the founder and first director of the crime-detection Sûreté Nationale as well as the head of the first known private detective agency. Vidocq is widely regarded as the father of modern criminology and of the French police department. He is also considered to be the first private detective. Vidocq's successes as an investigator inspired many Victorian authors who borrowed his brilliance to embody their fictional heroes.

The character of **Sherlock Holmes** is very much based on Vidocq; so are both Jean Valjean and Inspector Javert in *Les Misérables*. Dickens mentions Vidocq in *Great Expectations*; Melville cites him in *Moby Dick*; and Poe refers to Vidocq's methods in *Murders in the Rue Morgue*.

As a player in the criminal underworld, Vidocq was a master of disguises and an accomplished thief, eventually turning his unlawful talents toward catching criminals as the first chief of secret police. Playing both sides of the law, Vidocq's life highlights the blurry line between law enforcement and the criminals they pursue. He has a knack for finding trouble throughout his topsy-turvy life, getting into one hot situation after another, often finding himself behind bars, only to escape the first chance he gets.

In December 1828, Vidocq published his **Memoirs**, with the help of some ghostwriters. The work became a bestseller and sold over 50,000 copies in the first year. His book takes the reader on a whirlwind tour of 1830s France, including the circus stage, pirate ships, prison cells and beautiful women's boudoirs. Vidocq's life story is unforgettable and includes some of the best crime stories and juicy tales ever written.

Out of print for many years, this newly revised edition of the **Memoirs** features a dynamic translation that brings this captivating autobiography to life for modern readers.

*"He preferred the tumultuous life of danger to the contentment of security. His story is one long swashbuckling adventure as he breaks out of jails, pursues actresses, duels to the death, raids the hells of criminals and stalks the Paris night in a thousand disguises." (Philip John Stead, *Vidocq: Picaroon of Crime*)*

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