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Book Reviews – The Surgeon of Crowthorne: A tale of murder, madness and the Oxford English dictionary.³

by
Simon Winchester

For a total change of pace, Simon Winchester's 'The Surgeon of Crowthorne' is a beguiling and erudite true story. The story centres around two distinguished-looking Victorians, both learned and serious, yet from very different worlds: Dr James Murray, a towering figure of British scholarship and editor of the great Oxford English Dictionary; and Dr W. C. Minor, a charismatic millionaire American Civil War surgeon and homicidal lunatic, who, confined to Broadmoor asylum, pursued his passion for words and became one of the OED's most valued contributors. Winchester has poignantly captured both Minor's schizophrenia and the unlikely friendship between these two men in this classic rendering of a forgotten segment of history.