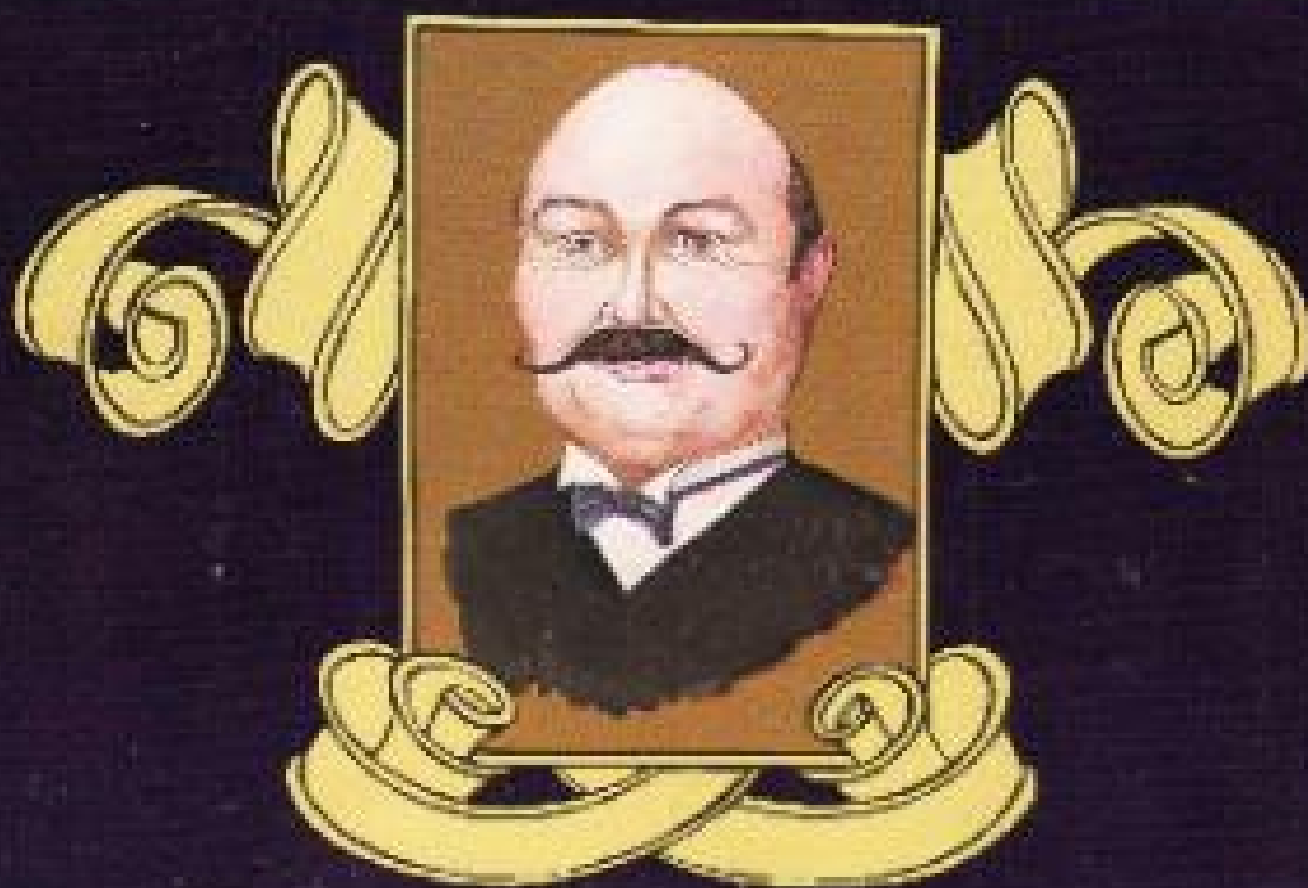


Agatha Christie

# HERCULE POIROT'S CASEBOOK



## HERCULE POIROT'S CASEBOOK

Agatha Christie is known throughout the world as the Queen of Crime. Her seventy-six detective novels and books of stories have been translated into every major language, and her sales are calculated in tens of millions.

She began writing at the end of the First World War, when she created Hercule Poirot, the little Belgian detective with the egg-shaped head and the passion for order - the most popular sleuth in fiction since Sherlock Holmes. Poirot, Miss Marple and her other detectives have appeared in films, radio programmes, television films and stage plays based on her books.

Agatha Christie also wrote six romantic novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott, several plays and a book of poems; as well, she assisted her archaeologist husband Sir Max Mallowan on many expeditions to the Middle East. She was

awarded the DBE in 1971.

Postern of Fate was the last book she wrote before her death in 1976, but since its publication two books Agatha Christie wrote in the 1940s have appeared: Curtain: Poirot's Last Case and Sleeping Murder, the last Miss Marple book.

Agatha Christie's Autobiography was published by Fontana in 1978.

Available in Fontana by the same author

The ABC Murders

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By the Pricking of My Thumbs

The Clocks

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and many others

AGATHA CHRISTIE

Hercule Poirot's

Casebook

FONTANA/Collins

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'The Incredible Theft', 'Murder in the Mews' and 'Triangle at Rhodes' were first published in *Murder in the Mews*, 1937; 'The Dream' and 'Four and Twenty Blackbirds' were first published in *The Adventures of the Christmas Pudding*, 1960; and 'Problem at Sea', 'The Third-floor Flat', 'The Adventure of Johnnie Waverly', 'The King of Clubs' and 'The Adventure of the Clapham Cook' were first published in *Poirot's Early Cases*, 1947.

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Murder in the Mews

Triangle at Rhodes

The Dream

Four and Twenty Blackbirds

Problem at Sea

The Third-floor Flat

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The King of Clubs

The Adventure of the Clapham Cook

## THE

### INCREDIBLE THEFT

#### CHAPTER I

As the butler handed round the soufflé, Lord Mayfield leaned confidentially towards his neighbour on the right, Lady Julia Carrington. Known as a perfect host, Lord Mayfield took trouble to live up to his reputation. Although unmarried, he was always charming to women.

Lady Julia Carrington was a woman of forty, tall, dark and vivacious. She was very thin, but still beautiful. Her hands and

feet in particular were exquisite. Her manner was abrupt and restless, that of a woman who lived on her nerves.

About opposite to her at the round table sat her husband, Air Marshal Sir George Carrington. His career had begun in the Navy, and he still retained the bluff breeziness of the ex-Naval man. He was laughing and chaffing the beautiful Mrs Vanderlyn, who was sitting on the other side of her host.

Mrs Vanderlyn was an extremely good-looking blonde. Her voice held a soupcon of American accent, just enough to be pleasant without undue exaggeration.

On the other side of Sir George Carrington sat Mrs Macatta, M.P. Mrs Macatta was a great authority on Housing and Infant Welfare. She barked out short sentences rather than spoke them, and was generally of somewhat alarming aspect. It was perhaps natural that the Air Marshal would find his right-hand neighbour the pleasanter to talk to.

Mrs Macatta, who always talked shop wherever she was, barked out short spates of information on her special subjects to her left-hand neighbour, yomag Reggie Carrington.

Reggie Carrington was twenty-one, and completely uninter-ested in Housing, Infant Welfare, and indeed any political

