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# The Mysterious Affair At Styles: A Hercule Poirot Mystery



## Synopsis

Captain Arthur Hastings, invalided in the Great War, is recuperating as a guest of John Cavendish at Styles Court, the "country-place" of John's autocratic old aunt, Emily Inglethorpe - she of a sizeable fortune, and so recently remarried to a man 20 years her junior. When Emily's sudden heart attack is found to be attributable to strychnine, Hastings recruits an old friend, now retired, to aid in the local investigation. With impeccable timing, Hercule Poirot, the famous Belgian detective, makes his dramatic entrance into the pages of crime literature.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have always loved Christie's books for quick and fun entertainment. Although I used to own her entire published works in English, I lost my whole collection years ago to severe water damage. Recently, I was talked into buying a Kindle (reluctantly--I still like the heft, smell and feel of a paper book) and I was pleased to see this book was available at the best price ever: free. However, I was extremely annoyed when I discovered that there is no attempt to reproduce the many diagrams and pieces of evidence discussed in the book; in fact, there isn't even an acknowledgement that they are completely missing. The story will say something like, "Below is a diagram representing the layout of the house", and below there is absolutely nothing. It turns out that these diagrams are essential to understanding (or solving on your own) the pivotal murder in the story. For shame! This destroys what Christie has always been known for--being completely fair with clues so that the perceptive reader can often solve much of the mystery right along with Poirot.

In 1920 Agatha Christie introduced a quirky little Belgian detective to the world in this book she wrote on a dare from her sister. The time is World War I and Poirot is one of a small group of Belgian refugees who has come to live in a rural English village. With his egg-shaped head and his well-groomed moustache, Poirot enters and soon becomes one of fiction's best-loved detectives. Also in this novel, the reader is introduced to his cohort, Captain Arthur Hastings, recovering from a war injury at the upper-class household known as Styles Court. The mistress of the manor is Emily Inglethorpe, an elderly woman who has just married a much younger man. The family members occupying the house all become suspects when Mrs. Inglethorpe is murdered and it is up to Poirot's little grey cells to sift through all the red herrings and, in the final chapter, reveal all in true detective fashion. High on Poirot's list of suspects are: John Cavendish, the elder stepson; Mary Cavendish, his wife; Lawrence Cavendish, the younger stepson; Evelyn Howard, Mrs. Inglethorpe's companion; Cynthia Murdoch, her protegee; and Dr. Bauerstein, a mysterious stranger who lives in Essex. All have motive and opportunity but only Poirot can discover the truth. This first novel sets the tone for many Christies to follow. The wealthy family inhabiting a country house, the non-violent method of murder (poisoning) so favored by Mrs. Christie, and the light-hearted but often serious romance all became hallmarks of many of her later works. Have a cup of hot chocolate with Poirot and enjoy the adventure.

This review applies only to the Kindle edition. There are illustrations which are essential to the plot and referenced in the text. They are missing from this edition. I had to find another copy in order to finish the book. Very disappointed in the lack of quality in this release.

Hercule Poirot, the little Belgian detective has returned to Styles Court, the scene of his first English adventure in crime for his final case. But now the handsome country mansion is a guest house and Poirot, old and arthritic, is one of the guests. He invites Captain Hastings to join him and then reveals the reason for his request. Poirot informs his old friend that they are "here to hunt down a murderer." And to find out who is the killer, first a murder has to be committed. But who will be the victim? Although *Curtain* was written during the London blitz in the early years of World War II, it never got published until 1975. The reason being that in this book the famous detective Hercule Poirot concludes his wonderful career. Agatha Christie wanted Poirot not to survive his creator. Therefore she finished his career by writing *Curtain* and locked the manuscript in a bank vault. Dame Agatha Christie died on January 12, 1976, one year later than her most famous creation. *Curtain* is a vintage Christie. The plot is ingenious and seems totally committed to putting

the reader on the wrong track. Although the actual motive and operation procedure of the murderer are quite dubious and unbelievable, there is only one word that can truly describe the denouement: sublime. In a few lines Poirot explains how the unsuspecting reader probably missed five smartly interwoven clues. When you read these lines you can only but hit yourself on the head for being so short-sighted, exactly the same feeling reflected by Captain Hastings at the end of the book.

This is Poirot's first case and Christie's debut as a mystery writer. It is an auspicious start to a brilliant career for both the author and her creation. It's a bit over-ambitious; the young Christie was heavy-handed with the clues in this one, and while the ending is a surprise, the last section of the book is just a bit too long for the ending to have quite the impact that Christie would achieve in later works. This is perhaps the only Christie book about which one can say there are "too many clues;" it is nonetheless an astounding achievement for a first-time author. And, of course, any fan of Poirot will want to read the case that "started it all."

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