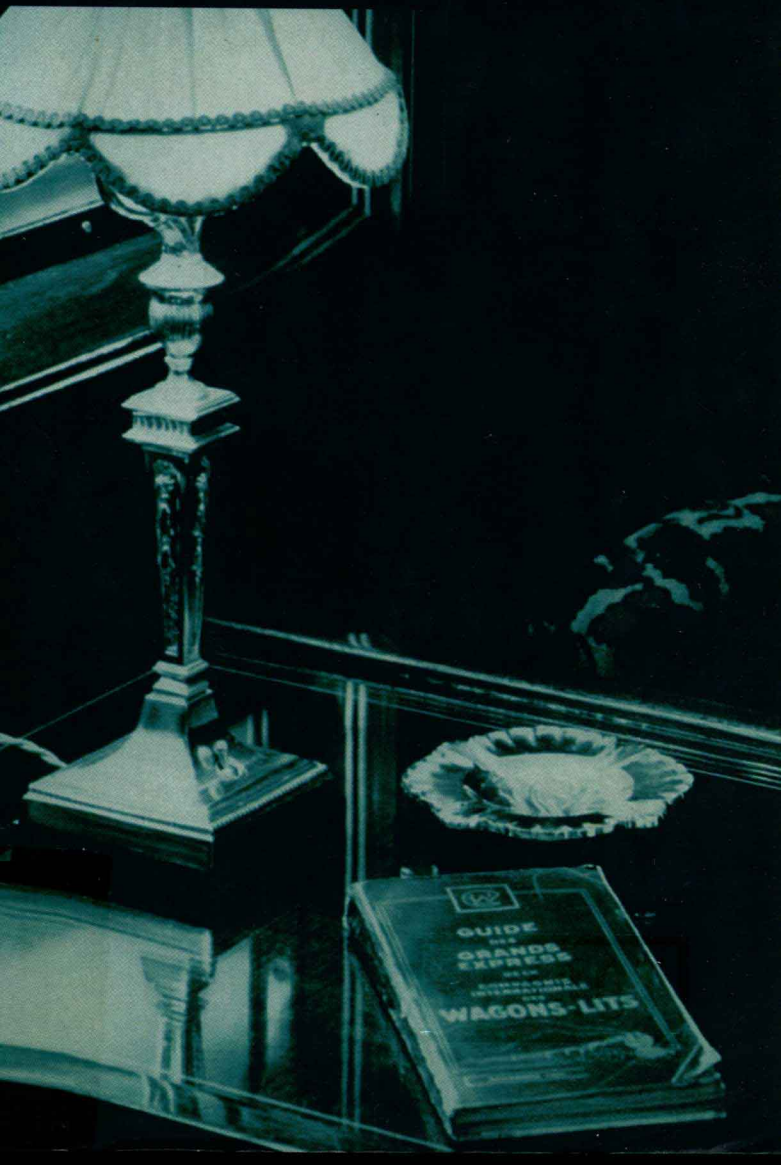


*Agatha Christie*

MURDER ON THE ORIENT EXPRESS



## Murder on the Orient Express

Agatha Christie is known throughout the world as the Queen of Crime. Her books have sold over a billion copies in English with another billion in 100 foreign languages. She is the most widely published author of all time and in any language, outsold only by the Bible and Shakespeare. She is the author of 80 crime novels and short story collections, 19 plays, and six novels written under the name of Mary Westmacott.

Agatha Christie's first novel, *The Mysterious Affair at Styles*, was written towards the end of the First World War, in which she served as a VAD. In it she created Hercule Poirot, the little Belgian detective who was destined to become the most popular detective in crime fiction since Sherlock Holmes. It was eventually published by The Bodley Head in 1920.

In 1926, after averaging a book a year, Agatha Christie wrote her masterpiece. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was the first of her books to be published by Collins and marked the beginning of an author-publisher relationship which lasted for 50 years and well over 70 books. *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* was also the first of Agatha Christie's books to be dramatised – under the name *Alibi* – and to have a successful run in London's West End. *The Mousetrap*, her most famous play of all, opened in 1952 and is the longest-running play in history.

Agatha Christie was made a Dame in 1971. She died in 1976, since when a number of books have been published posthumously: the bestselling novel *Sleeping Murder* appeared later that year, followed by her autobiography and the short story collections *Miss Marple's Final Cases*, *Problem at Pollensa Bay* and *While the Light Lasts*. In 1998 *Black Coffee* was the first of her plays to be novelised by another author, Charles Osborne.

## The Agatha Christie Collection

The Man In The Brown Suit  
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The Mysterious Mr Quin  
The Sittaford Mystery  
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Murder is Easy  
And Then There Were None  
Towards Zero  
Death Comes as the End  
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Crooked House  
They Came to Baghdad  
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The Unexpected Guest \*  
Ordeal by Innocence  
The Pale Horse  
Endless Night  
Passenger To Frankfurt  
Problem at Pollensa Bay  
While the Light Lasts

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The Mystery of the Blue Train  
Black Coffee \*  
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Lord Edgware Dies  
Murder on the Orient Express  
Three-Act Tragedy  
Death in the Clouds  
The ABC Murders  
Murder in Mesopotamia  
Cards on the Table  
Murder in the Mews  
Dumb Witness  
Death on the Nile  
Appointment With Death  
Hercule Poirot's Christmas  
Sad Cypress  
One, Two, Buckle My Shoe  
Evil Under the Sun  
Five Little Pigs

\* novelised by Charles Osborne

The Hollow  
The Labours of Hercules  
Taken at the Flood  
Mrs McGinty's Dead  
After the Funeral  
Hickory Dickory Dock  
Dead Man's Folly  
Cat Among the Pigeons  
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N or M?  
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Unfinished Portrait  
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The Rose and the Yew Tree  
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The Burden

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An Autobiography  
Come, Tell Me How You Live

### *Play Collections*

The Mousetrap and Selected Plays  
Witness for the Prosecution and  
Selected Plays

*Agatha Christie*

**Murder on the  
Orient Express**

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To M.E.L.M. Arpachiya, 1933



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**Part 1**

**The Facts**



## Chapter 1

# **An Important Passenger on the Taurus Express**

It was five o'clock on a winter's morning in Syria. Alongside the platform at Aleppo stood the train grandly designated in railway guides as the Taurus Express. It consisted of a kitchen and dining-car, a sleeping-car and two local coaches.

By the step leading up into the sleeping-car stood a young French lieutenant, resplendent in uniform, conversing with a small lean man, muffled up to the ears, of whom nothing was visible but a pink-tipped nose and the two points of an upward curled moustache.

It was freezingly cold, and this job of seeing off a distinguished stranger was not one to be envied, but Lieutenant Dubosc performed his part manfully. Graceful phrases fell from his lips in polished French. Not that he knew what it was all about. There had been rumours, of course, as there always were in

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such cases. The General – *his* General's – temper had grown worse and worse. And then there had come this Belgian stranger – all the way from England, it seemed. There had been a week – a week of curious tension. And then certain things had happened. A very distinguished officer had committed suicide, another had resigned – anxious faces had suddenly lost their anxiety, certain military precautions were relaxed. And the General – Lieutenant Dubosc's own particular General – had suddenly looked ten years younger.

Dubosc had overheard part of a conversation between him and the stranger. 'You have saved us, *mon cher*,' said the General emotionally, his great white moustache trembling as he spoke. 'You have saved the honour of the French Army – you have averted much bloodshed! How can I thank you for acceding to my request? To have come so far –'

To which the stranger (by name M. Hercule Poirot) had made a fitting reply including the phrase, 'But indeed do I not remember that once you saved my life?' And then the General had made another fitting reply to that disclaiming any merit for that past service, and with more mention of France, of Belgium, of glory, of honour and of such kindred things they had embraced each other heartily and the conversation had ended.

As to what it had all been about, Lieutenant Dubosc

was still in the dark, but to him had been delegated the duty of seeing off M. Poirot by the Taurus Express, and he was carrying it out with all the zeal and ardour befitting a young officer with a promising career ahead of him.

‘Today is Sunday,’ said Lieutenant Dubosc. ‘Tomorrow, Monday evening, you will be in Stamboul.’

It was not the first time he had made this observation. Conversations on the platform, before the departure of a train, are apt to be somewhat repetitive in character.

‘That is so,’ agreed M. Poirot.

‘And you intend to remain there a few days, I think?’

‘*Mais oui*. Stamboul, it is a city I have never visited. It would be a pity to pass through – *comme ça*.’ He snapped his fingers descriptively. ‘Nothing presses – I shall remain there as a tourist for a few days.’

‘La Sainte Sophie, it is very fine,’ said Lieutenant Dubosc, who had never seen it.

A cold wind came whistling down the platform. Both men shivered. Lieutenant Dubosc managed to cast a surreptitious glance at his watch. Five minutes to five – only five minutes more!

Fancying that the other man had noticed his surreptitious glance, he hastened once more into speech.

‘There are few people travelling this time of year,’

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he said, glancing up at the windows of the sleeping-car above them.

‘That is so,’ agreed M. Poirot.

‘Let us hope you will not be snowed up in the Taurus!’

‘That happens?’

‘It has occurred, yes. Not this year, as yet.’

‘Let us hope, then,’ said M. Poirot. ‘The weather reports from Europe, they are bad.’

‘Very bad. In the Balkans there is much snow.’

‘In Germany too, I have heard.’

‘*Eh bien,*’ said Lieutenant Dubosc hastily as another pause seemed to be about to occur. ‘Tomorrow evening at seven-forty you will be in Constantinople.’

‘Yes,’ said M. Poirot, and went on desperately, ‘La Sainte Sophie, I have heard it is very fine.’

‘Magnificent, I believe.’

Above their heads the blind of one of the sleeping car compartments was pushed aside and a young woman looked out.

Mary Debenham had had little sleep since she left Baghdad on the preceding Thursday. Neither in the train to Kirkuk, nor in the Rest House at Mosul, nor last night on the train had she slept properly. Now, weary of lying wakeful in the hot stuffiness of her overheated compartment, she got up and peered out.

This must be Aleppo. Nothing to see, of course. Just a long, poor-lighted platform with loud furious altercations in Arabic going on somewhere. Two men below her window were talking French. One was a French officer, the other was a little man with enormous moustaches. She smiled faintly. She had never seen anyone quite so heavily muffled up. It must be very cold outside. That was why they heated the train so terribly. She tried to force the window down lower, but it would not go.

The Wagon Lit conductor had come up to the two men. The train was about to depart, he said. Monsieur had better mount. The little man removed his hat. What an egg-shaped head he had. In spite of her preoccupations Mary Debenham smiled. A ridiculous-looking little man. The sort of little man one could never take seriously.

Lieutenant Dubosc was saying his parting speech. He had thought it out beforehand and had kept it till the last minute. It was a very beautiful, polished speech.

Not to be outdone, M. Poirot replied in kind.

'*En voiture, Monsieur,*' said the Wagon Lit conductor.

With an air of infinite reluctance M. Poirot climbed aboard the train. The conductor climbed after him. M. Poirot waved his hand. Lieutenant Dubosc came



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to the salute. The train, with a terrific jerk, moved slowly forward.

‘*Enfin!*’ murmured M. Hercule Poirot.

‘*Brrrrr,*’ said Lieutenant Dubosc, realizing to the full how cold he was . . .

## II

‘*Voilà, Monsieur.*’ The conductor displayed to Poirot with a dramatic gesture the beauty of his sleeping compartment and the neat arrangement of his luggage. ‘The little valise of Monsieur, I have placed it *here.*’

His outstretched hand was suggestive. Hercule Poirot placed in it a folded note.

‘*Merci, Monsieur.*’ The conductor became brisk and businesslike. ‘I have the tickets of Monsieur. I will also take the passport, please. Monsieur breaks his journey in Stamboul, I understand?’

M. Poirot assented.

‘There are not many people travelling, I imagine?’ he said.

‘No, Monsieur. I have only two other passengers – both English. A Colonel from India, and a young English lady from Baghdad. Monsieur requires anything?’

Monsieur demanded a small bottle of Perrier.