

AGATHA CHRISTIE
TRAGEDY AT
MARSDON MANOR



COOLTURA

I had been called away from town for a few days, and on my return found Poirot in the act of strapping up his small valise.

“*A la bonne heure*, Hastings. I feared you would not have returned in time to accompany me.”

“You are called away on a case, then?”

“Yes, though I am bound to admit that, on the face of it, the affair does not seem promising. The Northern Union Insurance Company have asked me to investigate the death of a Mr Maltravers who a few weeks ago insured his life with them for the large sum of fifty thousand pounds.”

“Yes?” I said, much interested.

“There was, of course, the usual suicide clause in the policy. In the event of his committing suicide within a year the premiums would be forfeited. Mr Maltravers was duly examined by the Company’s own doctor, and although he was a man slightly past the prime of life was passed as being in quite sound health. However, on Wednesday last – the day before yesterday - the body of Mr Maltravers was found in the grounds of his house in Essex, Marsdon Manor, and the cause of his death is described as some kind of internal hemorrhage. That in itself would be nothing remarkable, but sinister rumors as to Mr Maltravers’ financial position have been in the air of late, and the Northern Union have ascertained beyond any possible doubt that the deceased gentleman stood upon the verge of bankruptcy. Now that alters matters considerably. Maltravers had a

beautiful young wife, and it is suggested that he got together all the ready money he could for the purpose of paying the premiums on a life insurance for his wife's benefit, and then committed suicide. Such a thing is not uncommon. In any case, my friend Alfred Wright, who is a director of the Northern Union, has asked me to investigate the facts of the case, but, as I told him, I am not very hopeful of success. If the cause of the death had been heart failure, I should have been more sanguine. Heart failure may always be translated as the inability of the local G.P. to discover what his patient really did die of, but a hemorrhage seems fairly definite. Still, we can but make some necessary inquiries. Five minutes to pack your bag, Hastings, and we will take a taxi to Liverpool Street."