

AGATHA CHRISTIE
THE ADVENTURE
OF THE CHEAP FLAT



So far, in the cases which I have recorded, Poirot's investigations have started from the central fact, whether murder or robbery, and have proceeded from thence by a process of logical deduction to the final triumphant unravelling. In the events I am now about to chronicle, a remarkable chain of circumstances led from the apparently trivial incidents which first attracted Poirot's attention to the sinister happenings which completed a most unusual case.

I had been spending the evening with an old friend of mine, Gerald Parker.

There had been, perhaps, about half a dozen people there beside my host and myself, and the talk fell, as it was bound to do sooner or later wherever Parker found himself, on the

subject of house-hunting in London. Houses and flats were Parker's special hobby. Since the end of the War, he had occupied at least half a dozen different flats and maisonnettes. No sooner was he settled anywhere than he would light unexpectedly upon a new find, and would forthwith depart bag and baggage. His moves were nearly always accomplished at a slight pecuniary gain, for he had a shrewd business head, but it was sheer love of the sport that actuated him, and not a desire to make money at it. We listened to Parker for some time with the respect of the novice for the expert. Then it was our turn, and a perfect babel of tongues was let loose. Finally the floor was left to Mrs Robinson, a charming little bride who was there with her husband. I had never met them before, as Robinson was only a recent acquaintance of Parker's.

“Talking of flats,” she said, “have you heard of our piece of luck, Mr Parker? We’ve got a flat - at last! In Montagu Mansions.”

“Well,” said Parker, “I’ve always said there are plenty of flats - at a price!”

“Yes, but this isn’t at a price. It’s dirt cheap. Eighty pounds a year!”

“But - but Montagu Mansions is just off Knightsbridge, isn’t it? Big handsome buildings. Or are you talking of a poor relation of the same name stuck in the slums somewhere?”

“No, it’s the Knightsbridge one. That’s what makes it so wonderful.”