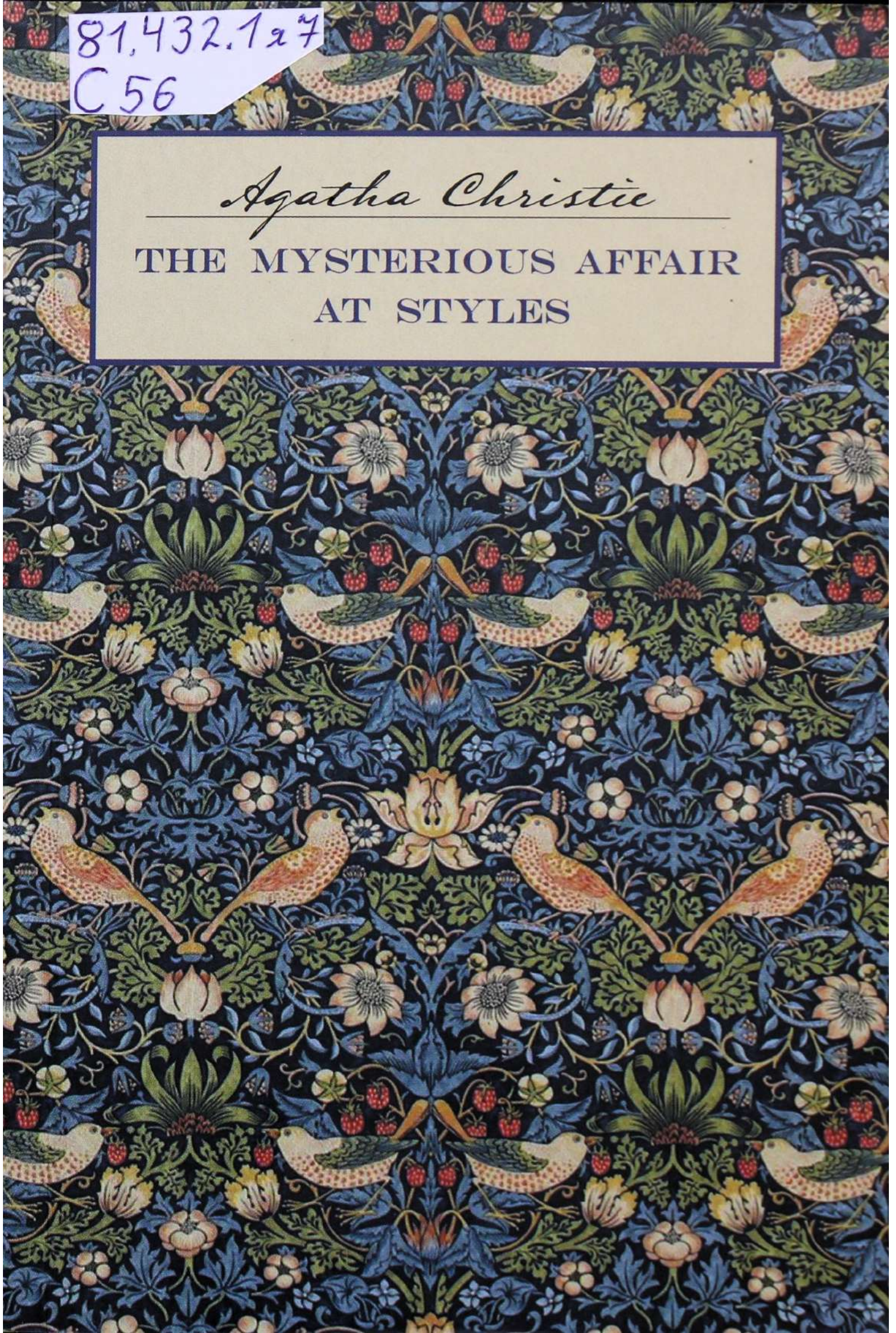


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Agatha Christie

THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR
AT STYLES



Agatha Christie

**THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR
AT STYLES**

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AGATHA CHRISTIE
THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR AT STYLES

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Перед вами самая первая книга Агаты Кристи. Гениальный сыщик Эркюль Пуаро сталкивается с будто бы простой задачей. Богатая леди стала жертвой злой воли одного из наследников. Ответ на вопрос «кто убийца?» очевиден, но дело значительно запутанней, чем кажется на первый взгляд, и только блестящий ум Пуаро способен разгадать эту головоломку.

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To my mother



CHAPTER 1

I Go to Styles

The intense interest aroused in the public by what was known at the time as 'The Styles Case' has now somewhat subsided. Nevertheless, in view of the world-wide notoriety which attended it, I have been asked, both by my friend Poirot and the family themselves, to write an account of the whole story. This, we trust, will effectually silence the sensational rumours which still persist.

I will therefore briefly set down the circumstances which led to my being connected with the affair.

I had been invalided home from the Front¹; and, after spending some months in a rather depressing Convalescent Home, was given a month's sick leave². Having no near relations or friends, I was trying to make up my mind what to do, when I ran across John Cavendish. I had seen very little of him for some years. Indeed, I had never known him

¹ **invalided home from the Front** — демобилизован с фронта по случаю ранения

² **given a month's sick leave** — получил месяц отпуска для восстановления

particularly well. He was a good fifteen years my senior, for one thing, though he hardly looked his forty-five years. As a boy, though, I had often stayed at Styles, his mother's place in Essex.

We had a good yarn about old times, and it ended in his inviting me down to Styles to spend my leave there.

'The mater will be delighted to see you again—after all those years,' he added.

'Your mother keeps well?' I asked.

'Oh, yes. I suppose you know that she has married again?'

I am afraid I showed my surprise rather plainly. Mrs Cavendish, who had married John's father when he was a widower with two sons, had been a handsome woman of middle-age as I remembered her. She certainly could not be a day less than seventy now. I recalled her as an energetic, autocratic personality, somewhat inclined to charitable and social notoriety, with a fondness for opening bazaars and playing the Lady Bountiful¹. She was a most generous woman, and possessed a considerable fortune of her own.

Their country-place², Styles Court, had been purchased by Mr Cavendish early in their married life. He had been

¹ **Lady Bountiful** — леди Баунтифул, т. е. щедрая благотельница (по имени персонажа пьесы Дж. Фаркера «Уловка кавалеров»).

² **country-place** — загородная усадьба

completely under his wife's ascendancy¹, so much so that, on dying, he left the place to her for her lifetime, as well as the larger part of his income; an arrangement that was distinctly unfair to his two sons. Their stepmother, however, had always been most generous to them; indeed, they were so young at the time of their father's remarriage that they always thought of her as their own mother.

Lawrence, the younger, had been a delicate youth. He had qualified as a doctor but early relinquished the profession of medicine, and lived at home while pursuing literary ambitions; though his verses never had any marked success.

John practised for some time as a barrister, but had finally settled down to the more congenial life of a country squire. He had married two years ago, and had taken his wife to live at Styles, though I entertained a shrewd suspicion that he would have preferred his mother to increase his allowance, which would have enabled him to have a home of his own. Mrs Cavendish, however, was a lady who liked to make her own plans, and expected other people to fall in with them, and in this case she certainly had the whip hand, namely: the purse strings².

John noticed my surprise at the news of his mother's remarriage and smiled rather ruefully.

¹ **He had been completely under his wife's ascendancy.** — Он находился полностью под влиянием своей жены.

² **she certainly had the whip hand, namely: the purse strings** — учитывая ее достаток, она могла рассчитывать на уважение

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