

POIROT / HASTINGS

POIROT:

Mon ami! I am glad you sent for me.

HASTINGS:

(*to audience*)

I related the whole story, keeping back nothing, and omitting no circumstance, however insignificant. I was hardly as clear as I could wish. I repeated myself several times, and occasionally had to go back to some detail that I had forgotten.

POIROT:

Take time, *mon ami*. Arrange the facts, neatly, each in his proper place. Those of importance we will put on one side; those of no importance, *pouf!* Blow them away!

HASTINGS:

How does one decide what is important?

POIROT:

One fact leads to another— Does the next fit in with that? Good! We can proceed. This next little fact—no! Ah, that is curious! We examine. We search. And that little curious fact, that paltry little detail that will not tally, we put it here! Everything matters.

HASTINGS:

Y—es—

POIROT:

You have given me the facts faithfully. Of the order you present them—I will say nothing. Truly, it is deplorable! But I make allowances—you are upset. Excuse me, *mon ami*, you dressed in haste, and your tie is on one side. Permit me. *Ça y est!* The poor family, plunged in sorrow, prostrated with grief.

HASTINGS:

There was an... Her death was a shock and a distress, but she is not... passionately regretted.

POIROT:

Ah. It is not as though there was a blood tie. She has been kind and generous, but she was not their own mother. Blood tells—always remember that—blood tells. The present contention is that Emily died of...

HASTINGS:

Dr. Bauerstein believes strychnine.

POIROT:

It is a fast poison, yet the symptoms do not manifest themselves for nine hours! A heavy meal might slow the effects. Perhaps something may arise at the autopsy to explain it.