

**ARTHUR MORRISON**



**MARTIN  
HEWITT,  
INVESTIGATOR**

**Arthur Morrison**

# **Martin Hewitt, Investigator**

**Enriched edition.**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Tristan West*

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# Introduction

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Martin Hewitt, Investigator brings together a self-contained suite of detective short stories by Arthur Morrison, each chronicling an inquiry conducted by the eponymous private investigator. This collection is not a compendium of the author's complete works, but a focused presentation of seven linked cases, organized to showcase the range of problems Hewitt confronts. The volume offers a coherent vision of professional detection in the late-Victorian milieu, balancing incident with method and emphasizing the practical craft of solving crime. It is designed for readers seeking a unified introduction to Morrison's sleuth, with sustained attention to how cases are conceived, pursued, and concluded.

In genre terms the book belongs to classic crime and detection, and its constituent texts are short stories rather than a novel. Each case is shaped as a discrete narrative that begins with a perplexing situation, advances through interviews, observation, and reasoned inference, and culminates in clarification. The stories are framed as case histories recounted by a close observer of Hewitt's work, lending continuity and perspective while preserving the crisp boundaries of magazine-length fiction. The result is a compact cycle that rewards careful reading, as recurring settings, professional procedures, and the investigator's temperament accrue resonance from one tale to the next.

Across the collection Morrison unifies the cases through themes of rational inquiry, the evidential value of ordinary

facts, and the moral complexity of urban life. Crime is treated not as spectacle but as a knot created by motives, opportunity, and circumstance, to be untied by patience and common sense. Misleading appearances, the use of time and space, and the significance of small material traces are examined without sensationalism. The stories repeatedly contrast impulse with calculation and show how everyday institutions—offices, households, workshops, and transport—shape both wrongdoing and its detection. These elements produce puzzles that feel grounded, comprehensible, and fair.

Morrison's stylistic signature here is clarity: plain yet exact prose, restrained characterization, and a steady pace that places method before melodrama. Settings are rendered with the observational care associated with his wider writing, giving the cases a tangible sense of streets, rooms, and routines. Hewitt himself is courteous, practical, and businesslike, an investigator whose competence rests on close attention, plausible hypotheses, and tested procedures. Conversation, documents, and physical detail are weighed with equal seriousness, and the narrative voice preserves a professional tone even when events grow urgent. The focus remains on how a sound mind navigates uncertainty to reach warranted conclusions.

As a contribution to the evolution of detective fiction, these stories exemplify a distinctly English emphasis on orderly reasoning and accessible clues. They show how the form could thrive beyond larger-than-life eccentricities, inviting readers to match wits with a seasoned but recognizably human professional. The cases' continued appeal lies in their balance of ingenuity and everyday texture: puzzles arise from familiar environments, and solutions depend on intelligible logic rather than occult revelation. Read today, the collection illuminates the period's confidence in applied

intelligence while offering enduring models of clear plotting, disciplined narrative economy, and scrupulous attention to evidence.

This sequence of seven tales offers varied premises that test the detective's versatility. A chain of robberies disturbs a country residence and its guests. A disquieting disappearance sets in motion a citywide search. A sudden death in private circumstances raises questions no witness can immediately answer. Industrial secrecy appears endangered by cunning rivals. A celebrated jewel brings mischance and suspicion into fashionable circles. An antique cameo poses problems of provenance and possession. Finally, an affair involving a tortoise and an apparently trivial clue invites an ingenious reading of motive. Together, these problems demonstrate how one method adapts across contexts.

Although concise, the stories reward attentive reading, as Morrison embeds crucial indications in conversational turns and small objects. This volume includes illustrations, a feature consonant with the period and supportive of the scenes' concrete atmosphere, though the texts themselves carry full narrative force. Readers new to Arthur Morrison will find a clear entry to his detective mode, distinct from his social novels yet informed by the same observational discipline. Returning readers can appreciate the sequence as a concentrated study in professional practice, where consistency of approach yields continually fresh results and the pleasures of careful reasoning remain undiminished.

# Historical Context

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Published in 1894, Arthur Morrison's *Martin Hewitt, Investigator* emerged in a London saturated with serialized crime fiction, particularly through George Newnes's *Strand Magazine*, where several tales first appeared and were soon issued in volume by Ward, Lock & Bowden. The late-Victorian metropolis—electrified, rail-linked, and swelling past five million inhabitants—supplied both setting and anxieties for narratives of surveillance and order. Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* had, since 1891, set a benchmark for analytical detection; Morrison's countertype, a practical professional based in central London, responded to readers eager for method without theatrics. The collection's cases trace the capital's interlocking worlds of finance, law, and genteel domesticity.

Institutional policing had matured by the time Morrison wrote. The Metropolitan Police created a Detective Department in 1842, reorganized as the Criminal Investigation Department in 1878 after scandal, and by the 1890s collaborated with coroners and magistrates in increasingly standardized inquiries. Telegraph lines, improved postal services, and photography aided identification and coordination; European innovations such as Alphonse Bertillon's anthropometric system (1880s) were widely discussed in British periodicals, even before fingerprints were officially adopted in 1901. Morrison situates Hewitt as a private complement to this apparatus, operating in the gaps where commercial secrecy, social

reputation, or jurisdictional limits encouraged clients to seek discreet, extra-official expertise.

London's late-century commercial expansion provides the backdrop for many plots. The City's banks, brokers, and insurers—shaken by the 1890 Baring crisis and increasingly entangled in global markets—made financial integrity both lucrative and vulnerable. Precious stones imported through imperial networks, from Kimberley diamonds to Indian jewelry, circulated among merchants and private collectors, creating opportunities for fraud and theft. Patentable technologies and confidential contracts, vital to firms in engineering and chemicals, heightened fears of industrial espionage. Morrison channels these realities into cases where documents, securities, and portable luxury items become catalysts for crime, reflecting a society in which trust, discretion, and swift restitution carried measurable economic value.

The collection's recurrent movement between London chambers and suburban or rural villas mirrors demographic shifts of the 1870s–1890s, when railways enabled middle-class flight to commuter belts while retaining ties to the City. Country-house routines, with their hierarchies of family and servants, generated both opportunities for pilfering and intense concern for propriety, prompting discreet investigations that preserved reputation. Technologies such as strong-room safes, time-locks, and improved window fastenings—advertised widely in metropolitan newspapers—shaped both criminal method and defensive response. Morrison exploits timetables, messenger networks, and hotel registers, evoking a society whose mobility and record-keeping could both conceal and reveal the movements of suspects.

International tensions and rapid military innovation also inform several scenarios. The Naval Defence Act of 1889 accelerated Britain's shipbuilding, while the Whitehead and Brennan torpedoes, debated in technical journals, epitomized sensitive intellectual property with national-security implications. Parliament's Official Secrets Act (1889) criminalized disclosures from government and contractors, reflecting anxieties about espionage in dockyards and armaments firms. Against this backdrop, Morrison's plots involving engineering designs, confidential drawings, or foreign agents resonate with contemporary fears that commercial theft could shade into treason. The same global circuits that moved weapons moved luxury goods, making jewels and art both symbols of status and targets attractive to transnational thieves.

The popularity of Hewitt's cases owes much to the late-Victorian media ecosystem. After the 1870 Education Act expanded literacy, cheap monthlies and illustrated weeklies flourished; *The Strand Magazine*, launched in 1891 by George Newnes, perfected a blend of engravings and tightly plotted narratives. Morrison's stories, accompanied by illustrations and briskly paced, suited railway reading and the parlour alike. Their 'businesslike' detective contrasted with Holmes's dramatic eccentricity, offering readers plausible office routines, client interviews, and fee-based services. This alignment with everyday professional culture encouraged a cordial reception among clerks and merchants who recognized their own workplaces, risks, and reputational concerns in the fiction.

Morrison's background shaped his sensibility. Born in London's East End in 1863, he later chronicled slum life in *A Child of the Jago* (1896), revealing intimate knowledge of urban poverty, informal economies, and the limits of policing. While Martin Hewitt moves largely in respectable

precincts—Temple chambers, counting-houses, and respectable suburbs—the stories retain an awareness of the city’s social gradients and the porous boundaries between genteel respectability and desperate opportunism. Philanthropic and reform movements—the Charity Organisation Society, settlement houses like Toynbee Hall (1884)—were prominent in the 1890s, framing crime as a social phenomenon. Morrison’s restrained tone avoids moral panic while emphasizing systemic vulnerability.

Contemporary legal culture further structures the tales’ procedures and stakes. Coroner’s inquests, magistrates’ hearings, and in-camera consultations with solicitors provided recognizable stages for evidence and testimony, while libel and defamation law encouraged the discreet handling of scandal. The period also saw growth in private inquiry offices and commercial information agencies, giving a real-world counterpart to Hewitt’s practice. By aligning detection with contracts, documents, and accountable process rather than with inspired genius, Morrison captured a civic mood shaped by economic uncertainty after 1890 and cautious optimism by mid-decade. The collection’s success rested on that equilibrium: modern anxieties assuaged by competent, unshowy professionalism.

# Synopsis (Selection)

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## ILLUSTRATIONS

The images that accompany the cases emphasize period settings and objects, subtly directing attention to rooms, tools, and street life that matter to the reasoning.

They reinforce the collection's concrete, unshowy approach, where visual detail carries weight alongside testimony.

## MARTIN HEWITT, INVESTIGATOR.

This opening piece introduces Hewitt as a calm, practical detective and frames the narratives as case papers recounted by an observant journalist.

It signals the series' signatures: everyday London milieus, close material observation, and solutions derived from patient reasoning rather than flamboyant theatrics.

## **Jewel and Art Thefts (The Lenton Croft Robberies; The Quinton Jewel Affair; The Stanway Cameo Mystery)**

In these high-society thefts, Hewitt maps domestic routine, travel, and access—reading locks, packaging, and innocuous ornaments—to follow how valuables changed hands without notice.

The tone is crisp and observant, with themes of social display, insurance pressure, and the ingenuity of concealment over force.

## **II. THE LOSS OF SAMMY CROCKETT**

When the celebrated Sammy Crockett disappears before an important engagement, Hewitt navigates sports circles, betting interests, and city backstreets to trace the missing figure.

The story favors legwork and careful scheduling clues over melodrama, highlighting themes of publicity, profit, and the quiet pressures that push ordinary people toward risky acts.

## **III. THE CASE OF MR. FOGGATT**

After a well-to-do man is found dead under puzzling circumstances, Hewitt sifts statements, room layouts, and practical possibilities to reconstruct what could actually have happened.

The piece balances urban respectability with hidden tensions, using clear-eyed reasoning to cut through appearances without sensationalism.

## **IV. THE CASE OF THE DIXON TORPEDO**

When confidential plans for a new torpedo vanish from a firm, Hewitt treats the office as a problem of access, duplication, and motive, testing the mechanics of how information moves.

Industrial-age anxieties about invention, secrecy, and trust come to the fore, handled with Morrison's steady,

procedural tone.

## **VII. THE AFFAIR OF THE TORTOISE**

A quarrel in a lodging-house leads to a perplexing death, and a tortoise becomes an unexpected hinge for timing and inference.

The tale blends a touch of the exotic with everyday observation, showing Hewitt's habit of reading living habits and small behavior as evidence.

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# MARTIN HEWITT, INVESTIGATOR.

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## I. THE LENTON CROFT ROBBERIES

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Those who retain any memory of the great law cases of fifteen or twenty years back will remember, at least, the title of that extraordinary will case, "Bartley v. Bartley and others," which occupied the Probate Court for some weeks on end, and caused an amount of public interest rarely accorded to any but the cases considered in the other division of the same court. The case itself was noted for the large quantity of remarkable and unusual evidence presented by the plaintiff's side—evidence that took the other party completely by surprise, and overthrew their case like a house of cards. The affair will, perhaps, be more readily recalled as the occasion of the sudden rise to eminence in their profession of Messrs. Crellan, Hunt & Crellan, solicitors for the plaintiff—a result due entirely to the wonderful ability shown in this case of building up, apparently out of nothing, a smashing weight of irresistible evidence. That the firm has since maintained—indeed enhanced—the position it then won for itself need scarcely be said here; its name is familiar to everybody. But there are not many of the outside public who know that the credit of the whole performance was primarily due to a young clerk in the employ of Messrs. Crellan, who had been given

charge of the seemingly desperate task of collecting evidence in the case.

This Mr. Martin Hewitt had, however, full credit and reward for his exploit from his firm and from their client, and more than one other firm of lawyers engaged in contentious work made good offers to entice Hewitt to change his employers. Instead of this, however, he determined to work independently for the future, having conceived the idea of making a regular business of doing, on behalf of such clients as might retain him, similar work to that he had just done with such conspicuous success for Messrs. Crellan, Hunt & Crellan. This was the beginning of the private detective business of Martin Hewitt[4q], and his action at that time has been completely justified by the brilliant professional successes he has since achieved.

His business has always been conducted in the most private manner, and he has always declined the help of professional assistants, preferring to carry out himself such of the many investigations offered him as he could manage. He has always maintained that he has never lost by this policy, since the chance of his refusing a case begets competition for his services, and his fees rise by a natural process. At the same time, no man could know better how to employ casual assistance at the right time.

Some curiosity has been expressed as to Mr. Martin Hewitt's system, and, as he himself always consistently maintains that he has no system beyond a judicious use of ordinary faculties[1q], I intend setting forth in detail a few of the more interesting of his cases in order that the public may judge for itself if I am right in estimating Mr. Hewitt's "ordinary faculties" as faculties very extraordinary indeed. He is not a man who has made many friendships (this, probably, for professional reasons), notwithstanding his

genial and companionable manners[2q]. I myself first made his acquaintance as a result of an accident resulting in a fire at the old house in which Hewitt's office was situated, and in an upper floor of which I occupied bachelor chambers. I was able to help in saving a quantity of extremely important papers relating to his business, and, while repairs were being made, allowed him to lock them in an old wall-safe in one of my rooms which the fire had scarcely damaged.

The acquaintance thus begun has lasted many years, and has become a rather close friendship. I have even accompanied Hewitt on some of his expeditions, and, in a humble way, helped him. Such of the cases, however, as I personally saw nothing of I have put into narrative form from the particulars given me.

"I consider you, Brett," he said, addressing me, "the most remarkable journalist alive. Not because you're particularly clever, you know, because, between ourselves, I hope you'll admit you're not; but because you have known something of me and my doings for some years, and have never yet been guilty of giving away any of my little business secrets you may have become acquainted with. I'm afraid you're not so enterprising a journalist as some, Brett. But now, since you ask, you shall write something—if you think it worth while."

This he said, as he said most things, with a cheery, chaffing good-nature that would have been, perhaps, surprising to a stranger who thought of him only as a grim and mysterious discoverer of secrets and crimes. Indeed, the man had always as little of the aspect of the conventional detective as may be imagined. Nobody could appear more cordial or less observant in manner, although there was to be seen a certain sharpness of the eye—which might, after all, only be the twinkle of good humor.

I *did* think it worth while to write something of Martin Hewitt's investigations, and a description of one of his adventures follows.

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At the head of the first flight of a dingy staircase leading up from an ever-open portal in a street by the Strand stood a door, the dusty ground-glass upper panel of which carried in its center the single word "Hewitt," while at its right-hand lower corner, in smaller letters, "Clerk's Office" appeared. On a morning when the clerks in the ground-floor offices had barely hung up their hats, a short, well-dressed young man, wearing spectacles, hastening to open the dusty door, ran into the arms of another man who suddenly issued from it.

"I beg pardon," the first said. "Is this Hewitt's Detective Agency Office?"

"Yes, I believe you will find it so," the other replied. He was a stoutish, clean-shaven man, of middle height, and of a cheerful, round countenance. "You'd better speak to the clerk."

In the little outer office the visitor was met by a sharp lad with inky fingers, who presented him with a pen and a printed slip. The printed slip having been filled with the visitor's name and present business, and conveyed through an inner door, the lad reappeared with an invitation to the private office. There, behind a writing-table, sat the stoutish man himself, who had only just advised an appeal to the clerk.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lloyd—Mr. Vernon Lloyd," he said, affably, looking again at the slip. "You'll excuse my care to start even with my visitors—I must, you know. You come from Sir James Norris, I see."

"Yes; I am his secretary. I have only to ask you to go straight to Lenton Croft at once, if you can, on very important business. Sir James would have wired, but had not your precise address. Can you go by the next train? Eleven-thirty is the first available from Paddington."

"Quite possibly. Do you know any thing of the business?"

"It is a case of a robbery in the house, or, rather, I fancy, of several robberies. Jewelry has been stolen from rooms occupied by visitors to the Croft. The first case occurred some months ago—nearly a year ago, in fact. Last night there was another. But I think you had better get the details on the spot. Sir James has told me to telegraph if you are coming, so that he may meet you himself at the station; and I must hurry, as his drive to the station will be rather a long one. Then I take it you will go, Mr. Hewitt? Twyford is the station."

"Yes, I shall come, and by the 11.30. Are you going by that train yourself?"

"No, I have several things to attend to now I am in town. Good-morning; I shall wire at once."

Mr. Martin Hewitt locked the drawer of his table and sent his clerk for a cab.

At Twyford Station Sir James Norris was waiting with a dog-cart. Sir James was a tall, florid man of fifty or thereabout, known away from home as something of a county historian, and nearer his own parts as a great supporter of the hunt, and a gentleman much troubled with poachers. As soon as he and Hewitt had found one another the baronet hurried the detective into his dog-cart. "We've something over seven miles to drive," he said, "and I can tell you all about