

# Macmillan Literature Collections

Welcome to the *Macmillan Literature Collections* – a series of advanced level readers containing original, unsimplified short stories written by famous classic and modern writers. We hope that these stories will help to ease the transition from graded readers to reading authentic novels.

Each collection in the series includes:

## Introduction

- an introduction to the short story
- tips for reading authentic texts in English
- an introduction to the genre
- a carefully-chosen selection of classic and modern short stories.

## The stories

Each story is presented in three parts: the introduction and pre-reading support material; the story; and post-reading activities. Each part includes the following sections:

- *About the author* – in-depth information about the author and their work
- *About the story* – information about the story, including background information about setting and cultural references
- *Summary* – a brief summary of the story that does not give away the ending.

## Pre-reading activities

- *Key vocabulary* – a chance to look at some of the more difficult vocabulary related to the main themes and style of the story before reading the story
- *Main themes* – a brief discussion of the main themes, with questions to keep in mind as you read.

## The story

You will find numbered footnotes in the stories. These explain cultural and historical references, and key words that you will need to understand the text. Many of these footnotes give definitions of words which are very formal, old-fashioned or rarely used in modern English. You will find more common, useful words and phrases from the stories in the *Glossary* at the end of the book. Words included in the *Glossary* will appear in **bold**.

## Post-reading activities

- *Understanding the story* – comprehension questions that will help you make sure you have understood the story
- *Language study* – a section that presents and practises key linguistic and structural features of authentic literary texts (you will find an index of the areas covered at the end of the book)
- *Literary analysis* – discussion questions that guide you to an in-depth appreciation of the story, its structure, its characters and its style.

In addition, at the end of each book there are:

- suggested *Essay questions*
- a comprehensive *Glossary* highlighting useful vocabulary from each story
- an index for the *Language study* section.

## How to use these books

You can use these books in whatever way you want. You may want to start from the beginning and work your way through. You may want to pick and choose. The *Contents* page gives a very brief, one-line introduction to each story to help you decide where to start. You may want to learn about the author and the story before you read each one, or you may prefer to read the story first and then find out more about it afterwards. Remember that the stories and exercises can be challenging, so you may want to spend quite a long time studying each one. The most important thing is to enjoy the collection – to enjoy reading, to enjoy the stories and to enjoy the language that has been used to create them.

## Answer keys

In many cases you can check your answers in the story by using the page references given. However, an Answer key for all the exercises is available at [www.macmillanenglish.com/readers](http://www.macmillanenglish.com/readers).

# Introduction

## What is a short story?

A short story is shorter than a novel, but longer than a poem. It is usually between 1,000 and 20,000 words long. It tells a story which can usually be read quite quickly. It often concentrates on one, central event; it has a limited number of characters, and takes place within a short space of time.

## History of the short story

Stories and storytelling have existed for as long as people have had language. People love, and need, stories. They help us explain and understand the world. Before people could read or write, story tellers travelled from village to village, telling stories.

The first written stories developed from this storytelling tradition. Two of the best known examples of early, written stories in Europe appeared in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *Decameron* are both based on the same idea. A group of people who are travelling or living together for a short time, agree to tell each other stories. Their individual short stories are presented together as one long story.

The first modern short stories appeared at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Early examples of short story collections include the *Fairy Tales* (1824–26) of the Brothers Grimm, and Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840). In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, printed magazines and journals became very popular and more and more short stories were published. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century most well-known magazines included short stories in every issue and the publishers paid a lot of money for them. In 1952 Ernest Hemingway's short story, *The Old Man and the Sea*, helped sell more than five million copies of the magazine *Life* in just two days.

## The short story today

Today, short stories are often published in collections called anthologies. They are usually grouped according to a particular category – by theme, topic, national origin, time or author. Some newspapers and magazines continue to print individual stories. Many short stories are first published on the Internet, with authors posting them on special interest websites and in online magazines.

## Reading authentic literary texts in English

Reading authentic literary texts can be difficult. They may contain grammatical structures you have not studied, or expressions and sayings you are not familiar with. Unlike graded readers, they have not been written for language students. The words have been chosen to create a particular effect, not because they are easy or difficult. But you do not need to understand every word to understand and enjoy the story. When you are reading in your own language you will often read so quickly that you skip over words, and read for the general effect, rather than the details. Try to do the same when you are reading in English. Remember that stopping to look up every word you don't know slows you down and stops you enjoying the story.

When you are reading authentic short stories, remember:

- It should be a pleasure!
- You should read at your own pace.
- Let the story carry you along – don't worry about looking up every word you don't understand.
- Don't worry about difficult words unless they stop you from understanding the story.
- Try not to use the *Glossary* or a dictionary when you're reading.

You might want to make a note of words to look up later, especially key words that you see several times (see *Using a Dictionary* on page 9 for more tips on looking up and recording new words). But remember, you can always go back again when you have finished the story. That is the beauty of reading short stories – they are short! You can finish one quite quickly, especially if you do not worry about understanding every single word; then you can start again at the beginning and take your time to re-read difficult passages and look up key words.

## Preparing yourself for a story

It is always a good idea to prepare yourself, mentally, before starting a story.

- Look at the title. What does it tell you about the story? What do you expect the story to be about?
- If there is a summary, read it. This will help you follow the story.
- Quickly read the first few paragraphs and answer these questions:  
Where is it set?

## Keeping a record

When you have looked in your dictionary, decide if the word is interesting or useful to you. If it is, make a note of it, and write down its definition. Make a note of the sentence where you found it in the story, then write one or two more examples of your own. Only do this for those words you think you will need to use in the future.

Here is an example of how you might record the word *lull*.

<i>'with just murmur enough to lull one to repose'</i>
<i>Lull - to make you feel relaxed enough to go to sleep</i>
<i>e.g. The quiet sound of the waves lulled me to sleep</i>
<i>The mother sang to her baby to lull it to sleep</i>

## Literary analysis

The *Literary analysis* section is written to encourage you to consider the stories in more depth. This will help you to appreciate them better and develop your analytical skills. This section is particularly useful for those students who are studying, or intending to study, literature in the medium of English. Each section includes literary terms with which you may or may not be familiar.

## Macmillan Readers website

For more help with understanding these literary terms, and to find Answer keys to all the exercises and activities, visit the Macmillan Readers website at [www.macmillanenglish.com/readers](http://www.macmillanenglish.com/readers). There you will also find a wealth of resources to help your language learning in English, from listening exercises to articles on academic and creative writing.

# The genre of Mystery

## What is mystery?

A mystery is something that is kept secret or remains unexplained or unknown. It is a question still unanswered, perhaps unanswerable. We talk about *the mysteries of the universe*, for example, to describe things in nature that we still do not understand. Famous mysteries include unexplained phenomena, missing people, strange creatures and unsolved crimes. The Bermuda triangle is the name given to an area in the Atlantic Ocean where an unusual number of ships and planes have disappeared over the years. Tales of large beasts, such as the Yeti in Nepal and Bigfoot in North America, make up a part of our cultural mythology. Shadowy figures such as Jack the Ripper, the unidentified London murderer of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, continue to hold their appeal many, many years after the events. All these stories, true and mythical, can be described as mysteries.

Alfred Hitchcock, the famous film director and master of mystery and suspense, provides a suitable definition of mystery in terms of fiction: 'A mystery is something that the public are trying to discover ... it's an intellectual process.' When we read or watch a mystery, we are being challenged to explain something about the story that is not obvious or easy to understand.

## Why do we like mystery stories?

A sense of mystery in fiction has always appealed to readers. It works on our desire to take on intellectual challenges, to test our intelligence, and we enjoy it when our theories are confirmed or our curiosity is satisfied. There is also a side of us that enjoys not knowing, and some writers refuse to give us the satisfaction of a neat answer to a mystery. Instead they leave us in the dark, allowing the questions to stay with us long after we have finished the story.

We are attracted to the unknowable. Einstein said that 'the most beautiful thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the source of all true art and science.'

The label *mystery story* means different things to different people. The nature of the mystery differs with each story in this collection and the way the writers deal with mystery varies. Some solve it completely, others leave questions unanswered.

## Types of mystery

### Puzzles

Two of the stories in this book pose questions for the reader to solve for themselves. Their writers, like many mystery writers, seem to want to play with us and challenge us to think by setting an intellectual puzzle, or game, with questions that we have to answer by thinking carefully.

This type of mystery has a well-established history, going back to popular tales in literature's distant past. In Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, written in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, 'The Franklin's Tale' ends with a question for its listeners to answer. Many religious stories illustrate moral problems with short stories that require the audience to reflect on or discuss their meaning.

### Supernatural mysteries

Unexplained events in real life are a popular source of inspiration for mystery writers, who may choose to explain them logically or via supernatural means. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, one of whose stories appears in this collection, provides a good example in another tale he wrote which tries to explain the famous disappearance of the entire crew of a ship, the *Mary Celeste*. He invents a rational, although extremely improbable, story to fill in the gaps surrounding the ghost ship's strange last voyage. Countless books and TV dramatizations give their own versions of popular myths, in such formats as *The X Files* and *The Twilight Zone*. In many cases, the explanations for events are supernatural, or ghostly, in nature, or rely on extremely unrealistic phenomena such as aliens and magic powers.

In this sense, then, many horror stories fall under the category of mystery as well. (There is a Macmillan Literature Collection devoted to this particular genre, *Horror Stories*).

### Psychological mysteries

Sometimes the most interesting mysteries can be found in people's motives and behaviour. In two of the stories in this collection, the mystery exists inside the mind of a central character. The question is: what makes people act in a particular way?

The human mind and its inner workings are a more recent area for literature to explore. An early example is *The Turn of the Screw* by a pioneer of this sub-genre, the American author, Henry James. In it the exact nature of the horror that haunts the main character is never

determined. The children in the story seem to be able to see ghosts, but are they real, or are they just in the disturbed mind of the narrator? We never find out. A Hollywood film, *The Sixth Sense*, about a boy who sees dead people, is a good illustration of the sub-genre. Several events take place that the main character cannot understand until he realizes a horrifying truth. *The Sixth Sense* exemplifies how very popular the psychological mystery has become in the last century or so.

### Whodunnits

The *mystery* label often refers to stories in which a crime remains unsolved until the main character, a detective who uses his or her intelligence and logic, eventually discovers the criminal's identity. These are known as 'whodunnits' (who-done-it?). The criminal is revealed only at the very end of the story, allowing the reader plenty of time to come up with their own theories and guesses.

Agatha Christie is perhaps the most famous writer of mysteries of this type, and nearly all of her novels star a detective or amateur 'sleuth' who picks up clues through the story and by the end is able to confidently state who the criminal is, how they did it and why. The reader is given the satisfaction of discovering the truth at the end. The mystery has been solved.

(There is a Macmillan Literature Collection devoted to this particular genre, *Crime Stories*.)

### Conspiracies

The collection starts with a story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes. In many ways it is a whodunnit, but it can also be considered a political thriller or conspiracy (a secret plan by a group of people to do something bad or illegal).

The assassination in 1963 of the US President John F. Kennedy is perhaps the best-known true news story that has driven people to try to uncover conspiracies behind the crime. Although Conan Doyle's tale of conspiracy is fictional, it has all the makings of a real-life thriller.

If there is one thing that all mystery stories have in common, it is that they ask us to think about what we are reading in a critical way, almost as if we were the detectives ourselves.



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# The Lost Special

by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

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## About the author

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is best known as the creator of the great fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes. As well as the Sherlock Holmes stories, he also wrote science fiction and horror stories, historical novels, and political pamphlets<sup>1</sup>. He led a full and public life, travelling widely and often, and he was greatly admired and respected in his own lifetime. Throughout his life he was interested in explaining the unexplainable, and finding solutions to all kinds of problems: real life criminal cases, political issues and even the question of whether there is life after death.

Arthur Ignatius Conan Doyle was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1859 into a large Catholic family. His mother was Irish. She remained an important figure throughout his life, encouraging him in his writing career. His father was from England, and when he was nine, Arthur was sent away to school there, where he was very unhappy. After finishing school, he studied medicine. In his spare time, he began to write stories, which were published in various magazines.

After serving for a short time as a ship's doctor, he started working in private medical practice, first in Southsea, on the south coast of England, and then later in London. But business was slow, he had very few patients and he had to write stories to supplement his income.

In 1887 his first long work was published, *A Study in Scarlet*. This was the first of several Sherlock Holmes novels. The second, *The Sign of the Four* (1890), was followed by his first short story that featured Sherlock Holmes, *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1891). Other stories soon followed as regular monthly features in *The Strand Magazine*.

During the same period, he also wrote a series of successful historical novels. He soon realized that he could make more money writing than working as a doctor and he decided to write full-time.

However, in 1900, he went to South Africa to work as a field doctor during the Boer War. He wrote an account of the war, *War in South*

*Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*, defending the role of the British forces in South Africa. In the same year he was given a knighthood for his services to his country, and became Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

In the 1900s he became interested in politics. He stood for parliament twice, but was not elected. He supported the movement for women's rights and wrote a book, *The Crime of the Congo*, describing the horrors in that country. He also investigated two crimes that had already been solved by the police. In both investigations, Conan Doyle discovered that the police had been wrong and, as a result, two innocent men were freed from prison.

Conan Doyle married twice. His first marriage was to Louisa Hawkins, with whom he had two children, Mary and Kingsley. In the 1890s Louisa became very ill and he nursed her for nearly ten years before she died in 1906.

He was married again in 1907, to the much younger Jean Leckie, who he had known for many years. The two travelled to the United States and Europe.

Conan Doyle suffered many tragedies in his personal life, not only with the loss of his first wife, but also during and after the First World War of 1914-1918, when he lost his father, his son, his brother, two nephews and two brothers-in-law. These losses affected him greatly and he became very depressed. He wrote less and spent more time studying spiritualism and scientific research into the existence of life after death. He died of a heart attack in 1930 at the age of 71.

He is remembered for his literary achievements, his character and his public service, and his tombstone reads: 'Steel blue, Blade straight, Arthur Conan Doyle, Knight, patriot, physician and man of letters'.

## About the story

*The Lost Special* was first published in 1898 in *The Strand Magazine*, where many of Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes stories had previously been published. Although Holmes is not mentioned by name in the story, it includes a letter printed in *The Times* newspaper written by 'an amateur reasoner of some celebrity', who is assumed to be the great fictional detective. The story later appeared in the 1923 collection, *Tales of Terror and Mystery*.

<sup>1</sup> short books about political or social problems

## Background information

### The age of steam

At the end of the nineteenth century, people could move from place to place more quickly than they had dreamed of doing just a few decades earlier, thanks to steam power. A system of railways that covered much of the world was integrated with regular ocean crossings on steam-powered ships, or 'steamers'. You could climb aboard an express train in the north of England and arrive in London in just a few hours. It was even possible in those days to hire your own private train, called a 'special', provided you could pay for it, of course. This is what the 'special' referred to in the title is.

The railway was important from a cultural point of view in nineteenth-century Britain. When new lines were opened for the smaller towns and villages, people celebrated with parties and live music. Young boys dreamed of riding in the cabin of a steam engine. Britain had a large empire at that time, with Queen Victoria at its head, and the railway represented the power and modernity of British life to the rest of the world. It was so central to Victorian life that it even affected the way time was perceived. For the first time in ordinary people's lives, an awareness of the exact time became crucial if they didn't want to miss their connection. 'Railway time' became the standard by which clocks were set throughout Britain.

It was not just people who travelled by train; coal and iron was transported on the railways from the ironworks and coal mines (or 'collieries') to the great industrial cities and ports. The mystery of the lost special takes place on and around the main line between Liverpool, in the industrial north of England, and London.

### The telegraph

Like people, information was moving faster than ever. Britain stood at the centre of an extensive telecommunications network known as the 'electrical telegraph'. Even though it was only about forty years old, it connected Britain to every corner of its empire and the world. It was the Victorian equivalent of the telephone system. Electrical cables were laid along railway tracks and even under oceans to join stations, cities and continents so that messages, or 'telegrams', could be sent, or 'wired', almost instantaneously. Simple electrical signals were created by a telegraph operator at one end of the line using a special language of long and short sounds called Morse code. An operator many miles

away would receive and decode the sounds back into English. Like text messages today, messages had to be short, and special forms of writing known as 'telegraphese' were developed to keep the number of words to a minimum. Examples of telegrams appear in the story.

## Summary

**It may help you to know something about what happens in the story before you read it. Don't worry, this summary does not tell you how the story ends!**

This story concerns the apparently impossible disappearance of a train as it travels from Liverpool to London. It is in the form of a report which is written eight years after the train goes missing. It contains a variety of different texts: letters, a police report, telegrams and a confession. The story teller says that the reason he is summarising the case is to show the facts as clearly as he can.

A foreign gentleman and his assistant arrive at Liverpool railway station and ask to speak to the station superintendent. They have urgent business in Paris and demand a special train to take them to London as soon as possible. The superintendent agrees and organizes a train, which leaves Liverpool at half past four. It is expected in Manchester before six o'clock but a telegram arrives on the superintendent's desk at a quarter past six stating that the special has not arrived there. The superintendent sends telegrams to stations between Liverpool and Manchester and discovers from the replies that the train has disappeared completely. More searching by the local station masters finds no signs of the missing train but they do find the train driver lying dead next to the rail.

Further investigations reveal nothing, and despite the public interest in the mystery, no one can come up with a good explanation. What could possibly have happened to the special train from Liverpool to London?

The case goes cold ...

Then, eight years later, the answer to the mystery arrives from a completely unexpected source. A famous murderer waiting to be executed in a prison in southern France has a confession to make. Why reveal the secret so long after the event, and why now?

## Pre-reading activities

### Key vocabulary

This section will help you familiarize yourself with some of the more specific vocabulary used in the story. You may want to use it to help you before you start reading, or as a revision exercise after you have finished the story.

#### On the railway

1 The mystery concerns a missing train and a busy railway line. Look at the words in bold in the sentences below. Which words describe:

a) trains? b) parts of trains? c) people? d) parts of the railway?

- 1 He had missed the London **express**. A **special** must be provided.
- 2 He left the **superintendent's** office and joined his companion.
- 3 The powerful **engine** was attached to its **tender**, and had two **carriages** and a **guard's van** behind.
- 4 The **guard** of the train was James McPherson, who had been some years in the service of the company. The **stoker**, William Smith, was new.
- 5 And yet there is no **siding** between the two stations. The **special** must have run off the **metals**.
- 6 We will have a wire from Kenyon or Barton Moss soon to say that they have found her at the bottom of an **embankment**.
- 7 The reason no one saw the train is that the line runs through a deep **cutting**.
- 8 There are twelve ironworks and collieries which have **small-gauge lines** which run **trolley-cars** down to the main line.
- 9 A gang of railway **platelayers** were working along the line.
- 10 Now it was just a case of completing a junction with the line and arranging the **points** as they had been before.

2 Match the words in bold in the sentences above with their definitions (a–q) below.

#### Words describing trains

- a) a privately hired train for one specific journey
- b) a train that gets to its destination quickly by not stopping at many stations on the way

#### Words describing parts of a train

- c) the part of the train where the guard travels, usually at the back
- d) the part of a train that carries the coal and water for a steam engine
- e) the vehicles that are joined together to make a train for passengers (the American word is 'car')
- f) the vehicles that are joined together to carry goods such as coal and iron
- g) a vehicle that pulls a train which is powered by steam, electricity or diesel

#### Words describing people

- h) someone whose job is to check tickets, announce the stations, and look after the passengers (an old-fashioned British word. The American word is 'conductor')
- i) someone on a train whose job is to add coal to the boiler to provide power to the engine
- j) someone who lays and repairs railway tracks.
- k) someone who is in charge of something, for example a hospital, railway, or school

#### Words describing parts of the railway

- l) the metal tracks of the railway
  - m) a short railway track connected to a main line
  - n) railways with narrow rails for smaller trains
  - o) a sloping wall of earth or stone beside a road, railway or river
  - p) a section of railway track that moves between two sets of track so that a train can cross from one to the other
  - q) a passage cut through rock to allow a road or railway to pass through
- 3 Which of the words above do you think can no longer be used to refer to modern railways or rail travel?

#### Ways of describing difficulty believing something

The characters are confused and amazed by the disappearance of the train and find it hard to understand what has happened. This is expressed in a number of ways, some of which are shown in bold below.

- 4 Look at the vocabulary and definitions in the box below, and then use the words in bold to complete the sentences that follow.



## Main themes

Before you read the story, you may want to think about some of its main themes. The questions will help you think about the story as you are reading it for the first time. There is more discussion of the main themes in the *Literary analysis* section after the story.

### Rational explanation

The story teller is very concerned with the facts of the case. He is precise in the smallest details, such as the fact that the special left the station 'at four thirty-one exactly by the station clock'. There is confidence that there is a rational explanation and that this explanation may be discovered providing that all the facts of the case are known. Emotions have no place in this story, then, and would only get in the way of the most important part of the story: the facts.

#### 7 As you read the story, ask yourself:

- a) Whose emotions does the story teller ignore? Whose does he discuss? Why?
- b) Does the story teller ever let his emotions show at all? How do you think he feels about the missing train?
- c) Is the final explanation for the mystery rational, in your opinion? If so, why? If not, why not?

### Hindsight

The story is set eight years after the disappearance of the train. In a case as mysterious as this, it is impossible to know which details are important and which are irrelevant – unless you know what happened, of course. Hindsight is the opportunity to judge or understand past events using knowledge that you have gained since then. So we can say that the story teller includes many details that he might have ignored because in hindsight they are crucial to the solving of the mystery.

#### 8 As you read the story, ask yourself:

- a) With hindsight, do you think you could have predicted the answer to the mystery?
- b) Do you think the investigators could have done anything to solve the mystery more quickly?



## The Lost Special

by Sir Arthur Conan Dyle

The confession of Herbert de Lernac, now lying under sentence of death at Marseilles, has thrown a light upon<sup>2</sup> one of the most inexplicable crimes of the century – an incident which is, I believe, absolutely unprecedented in the criminal **annals** of any country. Although there is a reluctance to discuss the matter in official circles, and little information has been given to the Press, there are still indications that the statement of this arch-criminal is corroborated by the facts, and that we have at last found a solution for a most astounding business. As the matter is eight years old, and as its importance was somewhat obscured by a political crisis which was engaging the public attention at the time, it may be as well to state the facts as far as we have been able to ascertain them. They are collated from the Liverpool papers of that date, from the proceedings at the **inquest** upon John Slater, the engine-driver, and from the records of the London and West Coast Railway Company, which have been courteously put at my disposal. Briefly, they are as follows:

On the 3rd of June, 1890, a gentleman, who gave his name as Monsieur Louis Caratal, desired an interview with Mr James Bland, the superintendent of the London and West Coast Central Station in Liverpool. He was a small man, middle-aged and dark, with a **stoop** which was so marked that it suggested some deformity of the spine. He was accompanied by a friend, a man of **imposing** physique, whose deferential manner and constant attention showed that his position was one of dependence. This friend or companion, whose name did not transpire, was certainly a foreigner, and probably from his swarthy<sup>3</sup> complexion, either a Spaniard or a South American.

<sup>2</sup> old-fashioned: on

<sup>3</sup> mainly literary: someone who is swarthy has dark skin



One peculiarity was observed in him. He carried in his left hand a small black, leather dispatch box<sup>4</sup>, and it was noticed by a sharp-eyed clerk in the central office that this box was fastened to his wrist by a strap. No importance was attached to the fact at the time, but subsequent events endowed it with some significance. Monsieur Caratal was shown up to Mr Bland's office, while his companion remained outside.

Monsieur Caratal's business was quickly dispatched. He had arrived that afternoon from Central America. Affairs of the utmost importance demanded that he should be in Paris without the loss of an unnecessary hour. He had missed the London express. A special must be provided. Money was of no importance. Time was everything. If the company would speed him on his way, they might make their own terms.

Mr Bland struck the electric bell, summoned Mr Potter Hood, the traffic manager, and had the matter arranged in five minutes. The train would start in three-quarters of an hour. It would take that time to ensure that the line should be clear. The powerful engine called Rochdale (No. 247 on the company's register) was attached to two carriages, with a guard's van behind. The first carriage was solely for the purpose of decreasing the inconvenience arising from the oscillation<sup>5</sup>. The second was divided, as usual, into four compartments, a first-class, a first-class smoking, a second-class, and a second-class smoking. The first compartment, which was nearest to the engine, was the one allotted to the travellers. The other three were empty. The guard of the special train was James McPherson, who had been some years in the service of the company. The stoker, William Smith, was a new **hand**.

Monsieur Caratal, upon leaving the superintendent's office, rejoined his companion, and both of them manifested extreme impatience to be off. Having paid the money asked, which amounted to fifty pounds five shillings<sup>6</sup>, at the usual special rate

4 *old-fashioned*: a case used for carrying important documents

5 *normally scientific*: a repeated movement from side to side at a steady speed; here the regular rocking motion of the train

6 *old-fashioned*: a small unit of money that was used in the UK until 1971

of five shillings a mile, they demanded to be shown the carriage, and at once took their seats in it, although they were assured that the better part of an hour must elapse before the line could be cleared. In the meantime a singular coincidence had occurred in the office which Monsieur Caratal had just quitted.

A request for a special is not a very uncommon circumstance in a rich commercial centre, but that two should be required upon the same afternoon was most unusual. It so happened, however, that Mr Bland had hardly dismissed the first traveller before a second entered with a similar request. This was a Mr Horace Moore, a gentlemanly man of military appearance, who alleged that the sudden serious illness of his wife in London made it absolutely imperative that he should not lose an instant in starting upon the journey. His distress and anxiety were so evident that Mr Bland did all that was possible to meet his wishes. A second special was out of the question, as the ordinary local service was already somewhat deranged<sup>7</sup> by the first. There was the alternative, however, that Mr Moore should share the expense of Monsieur Caratal's train, and should travel in the other empty first-class compartment, if Monsieur Caratal objected to having him in the one which he occupied. It was difficult to see any objection to such an arrangement, and yet Monsieur Caratal, upon the suggestion being made to him by Mr Potter Hood, absolutely refused to consider it for an instant. The train was his, he said, and he would insist upon the exclusive use of it. All argument failed to overcome his ungracious objections, and finally the plan had to be abandoned. Mr Horace Moore left the station in great distress, after learning that his only course was to take the ordinary slow train which leaves Liverpool at six o'clock. At four thirty-one exactly by the station clock the special train, containing the crippled<sup>8</sup> Monsieur Caratal and his gigantic companion, steamed out of the Liverpool station. The line was at that time clear, and there should have been no stoppage before Manchester.

7 *old-fashioned, uncommon*: disrupted, disturbed

8 *old-fashioned, offensive*: physically disabled, especially unable to walk