



The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher: A Shocking Murder and the Undoing of a Great Victorian Detective

Kate Summerscale

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The dramatic story of the real-life murder that inspired the birth of modern detective fiction.

In June of 1860 three-year-old Saville Kent was found at the bottom of an outdoor privy with his throat slit. The crime horrified all England and led to a national obsession with detection, ironically destroying, in the process, the career of perhaps the greatest detective in the land.

At the time, the detective was a relatively new invention; there were only eight detectives in all of England and rarely were they called out of London, but this crime was so shocking, as Kate Summerscale relates in her scintillating new book, that Scotland Yard sent its best man to investigate, Inspector Jonathan Whicher.

Whicher quickly believed the unbelievable?that someone within the family was responsible for the murder of young Saville Kent. Without sufficient evidence or a confession, though, his case was circumstantial and he returned to London a broken man. Though he would be vindicated five years later, the real legacy of Jonathan Whicher lives on in fiction: the tough, quirky, knowing, and all-seeing detective that we know and love today...from the cryptic Sgt. Cuff in Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* to Dashiell Hammett's Sam Spade.

The Suspicions of Mr. Whicher is a provocative work of nonfiction that reads like a Victorian thriller, and in it Kate Summerscale has fashioned a brilliant, multilayered narrative that is as cleverly constructed as it is beautifully written.

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