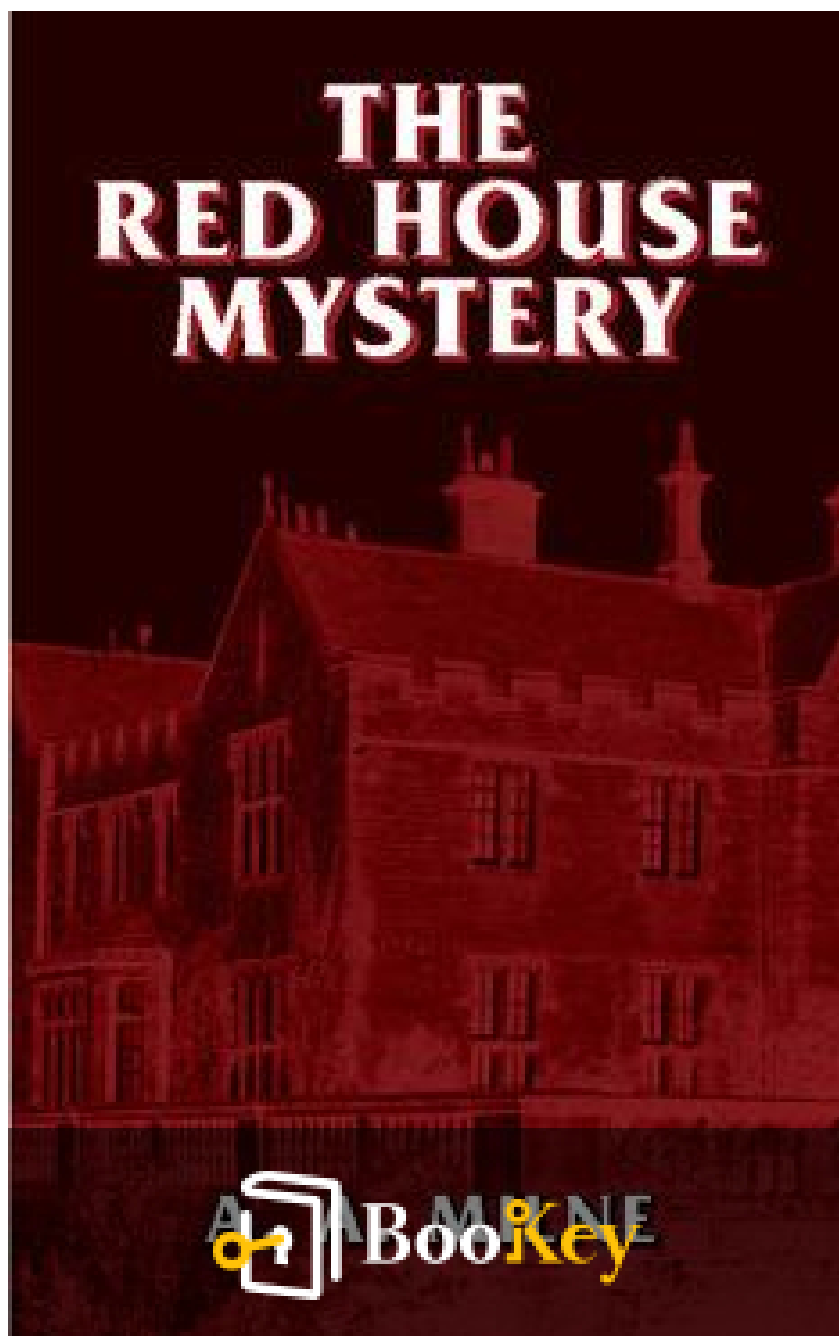


The Red House Mystery PDF (Limited Copy)

A.A. Milne



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The Red House Mystery Summary

A Whimsical Whodunit in a Secluded Manor.

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About the book

"The Red House Mystery" by A.A. Milne invites readers into a captivating tapestry of intrigue and suspense, where the serene facade of a country mansion is shattered by murder. The tale unfolds as the charming and perceptive amateur detective, Antony Gillingham, and his resourceful friend, Bill, delve into the enigma surrounding the death of a wealthy man, unearthing secrets that linger in the shadows of the eponymous red house. With sharp wit and a keen eye for detail, Milne crafts not just a mystery, but an exploration of human nature, loyalty, and the sometimes murky waters of truth and deception. As you navigate through red herrings and clever deductions, you'll find yourself on the edge of your seat, questioning everything and delighting in the unfolding drama. Will justice prevail, or will the red house keep its secrets buried forever? Dive in to uncover the mystery and savor the thrill of discovery!

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About the author

A.A. Milne, primarily celebrated for his beloved children's stories featuring the iconic character Winnie-the-Pooh, was an esteemed English author and playwright born on January 18, 1882, in London. Milne's literary career began in the early 20th century, during which he contributed a variety of works ranging from humorous essays to serious plays, but it was his enchanting tales for children that immortalized his name. With a background in academic literature from Cambridge and a stint in World War I as an officer and journalist, Milne's diverse experiences enriched his storytelling ability. Aside from his whimsical tales in the Hundred Acre Wood, Milne also penned the engaging mystery novel 'The Red House Mystery', showcasing his versatility as a writer and his flair for crafting intriguing narratives that captivated readers of all ages.

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Chapter 16: MRS. NORBURY CONFIDES IN DEAR MR. GILLINGHAM

Chapter 17: MR. BEVERLEY TAKES THE WATER Cayley seemed very fond of them that night. After dinner was over, he suggested a stroll outside. They walked up and down the gravel in front of the house, saying very little to each other, until Bill could stand it no longer. For the last twenty turns he had been slowing down hopefully each time they came to the door, but the hint had always been lost on his companions, and each time another turn had been taken. But in the end he had been firm. "What about a little billiards?" he said, shaking himself free from the others. "Will you play?" said Antony to Cayley. "I'll watch you," he said, and he had watched them resolutely until the game, and then another game after that; had been played. They went into the hall and attacked the drinks. "Well, thank heaven for bed," said Bill; putting down his glass. "Are you coming?" "Yes," said Antony, and finished his drink. He looked at Cayley. "I've just got one or two little things to do," said Cayley. "I shan't be long following you." "Well, good night, then." "Good night." "Good night," called Bill from half-way up the stairs. "Good night, Tony." "Good night." Bill looked at his watch. Half-past eleven. Not much chance of anything happening for another hour. He pulled open a drawer and wondered what to wear on their expedition. Grey flannel trousers, flannel shirt, and a dark coat; perhaps a sweater, as they might be lying out in the copse for some time. And good idea a towel. He would want it later on, and meanwhile he could wear it round his waist. Tennis-shoes.... There Everything was ready. Now then for the dummy figure. He looked at



his watch again before getting into bed. Twelve-fifteen. How long to wait before Cayley came up? He turned out the light, and then, standing by the door in his pyjamas, waited for his eyes to become accustomed to the new darkness.... He could only just make out the bed in the corner of the room. Cayley would want more light than that if he were to satisfy himself from the door that the bed was occupied. He pulled the curtains a little way back. That was about right. He could have another look later on, when he had the dummy figure in the bed. How long would it be before Cayley came up? It wasn't that he wanted his friends, Beverley and Gillingham, to be asleep before he started on his business at the pond; all that he wanted was to be sure that they were safely in their bedrooms. Cayley's business would make no noise, give no sign, to attract the most wakeful member of the household, so long as the household was really inside the house. But if he wished to reassure himself about his guests, he would have to wait until they were far enough on their way to sleep not to be disturbed by him as he came up to reassure himself. So it amounted to the same thing, really. He would wait until they were asleep.... until they were asleep asleep.... With a great effort Bill regained the mastery over his wandering thoughts and came awake again. This would never do. It would be fatal if he went to sleep.... if he went to sleep.... to sleep.... And then, in an instant, he was intensely awake. Suppose Cayley never came at all! Suppose Cayley was so unsuspecting that, as soon as they had gone upstairs, he had dived down into the passage and set about his business. Suppose, even now, he was at the pond, dropping into it that secret of his. Good heavens, what fools they had



been! How could Antony have taken such a risk? Put yourself in Cayley's place, he had said. But how was it possible? They weren't Cayley. Cayley was at the pond now. They would never know what he had dropped into it. Listen!.... Somebody at the door. He was asleep. Quite naturally now. Breathe a little more loudly, perhaps. He was asleep.... The door was opening. He could feel it opening behind him.... Good Lord, suppose Cayley really was a murderer! Why, even now he might be - no, he mustn't think of that. If he thought of that, he would have to turn round. He mustn't turn round. He was asleep; just peacefully asleep. But why didn't the door shut? Where was Cayley now? Just behind him? And in his hand no, he mustn't think of that. He was asleep. But why didn't the door shut? The door was shutting. There was a sigh from the sleeper in the bed, a sigh of relief which escaped him involuntarily. But it had a very natural sound a deep breath from a heavy sleeper. He added another one to it to make it seem more natural. The door was shut. Bill counted a hundred slowly and then got up. As quickly and as noiselessly as possible he dressed himself in the dark. He put the dummy figure in the bed, arranged the clothes so that just enough but not too much of it was showing, and stood by the door looking at it. For a casual glance the room was just about light enough. Then very quietly, very slowly he opened the door. All was still. There was no light from beneath the door of Cayley's room. Very quietly, very carefully he crept along the passage to Antony's room. He opened the door and went in. Antony was still in bed. Bill walked across to wake him up, and then stopped rigid, and his heart thumped against his ribs. There was somebody else in the room. "All



right, Bill," said a whispering voice, and Antony stepped out from the curtains. Bill gazed at him without saying anything. "Rather good, isn't it?" said Antony, coming closer and pointing to the bed. "Come on; the sooner we get out now, the better." He led the way out of the window, the silent Bill following him. They reached the ground safely and noiselessly, went quickly across the lawn and so, over the fence, into the park. It was not until they were out of sight of the house that Bill felt it safe to speak. "I quite thought it was you in bed," he said. "I hoped you would. I shall be rather disappointed now if Cayley doesn't call again. It's a pity to waste it." "He came all right just now?" "Oh, rather. What about you?" Bill explained his feelings picturesquely. "There wouldn't have been much point in his killing you," said Antony prosaically. "Besides being too risky." "Oh!" said Bill. And then, "I had rather hoped that it was his love for me which restrained him." Antony laughed. "I doubt it.... You didn't turn up your light when you dressed?" "Good Lord, no. Did you want me to?" Antony laughed again and took him by the arm. "You're a splendid conspirator, Bill. You and I could take on anything together." The pond was waiting for them, more solemn in the moonlight. The trees which crowned the sloping bank on the far side of it were mysteriously silent. It seemed that they had the world very much to themselves. Almost unconsciously Antony spoke in a whisper. "There's your tree, there's mine. As long as you don't move, there's no chance of his seeing you. After he's gone, don't come out till I do. He won't be here for a quarter of an hour or so, so don't be impatient." "Righto," whispered Bill. Antony gave him a nod and a smile, and they walked off to their posts. The minutes



went by slowly. To Antony, lying hidden in the undergrowth at the foot of his tree, a new problem was presenting itself. Suppose Cayley had to make more than one journey that night? He might come back to find them in the boat; one of them, indeed, in the water. And if they decided to wait in hiding, on the chance of Cayley coming back again, what was the least time they could safely allow? Perhaps it would be better to go round to the front of the house and watch for his return there, the light in his bedroom, before conducting their experiments at the pond. But then they might miss his second visit in this way, if he made a second visit. It was difficult. His eyes were fixed on the boat as he considered these things, and suddenly, as if materialized from nowhere, Cayley was standing by the boat. In his hand was a small brown bag. Cayley put the bag in the bottom of the boat, stepped in, and using an oar as a punt-pole, pushed slowly off. Then, very silently, he rowed towards the middle of the pond. He had stopped. The oars rested on the water. He picked up the bag from between his feet, leant over the nose of the boat, and rested it lightly on the water for a moment. Then he let go. It sank slowly. He waited there, watching; afraid, perhaps, that it might rise again. Antony began to count.... And now Cayley was back at his starting-place. He tied up the boat, looked carefully round to see that he had left no traces behind him, and then turned to the water again. For a long time, as it seemed to the watchers, he stood there, very big, very silent, in the moonlight. At last he seemed satisfied. Whatever his secret was, he had hidden it; and so with a gentle sigh, as unmistakable to Antony as if he had heard it, Cayley turned away and vanished again as quietly as he had come.



Antony gave him three minutes, and stepped out from the trees. He waited there for Bill to join him. "Six," whispered Bill. Antony nodded. "I'm going round to the front of the house. You get back to your tree and watch, in case Cayley comes again. Your bedroom is the left-hand end one, and Cayley's the end but one? Is that right?" Bill nodded. "Right. Wait in hiding till I come back. I don't know how long I shall be, but don't be impatient. It will seem longer than it is." He patted Bill on the shoulder, and with a smile and a nod of the head he left him there. What was in the bag? What could Cayley want to hide other than a key or a revolver? Keys and revolvers sink of themselves; no need to put them in a bag first. What was in the bag? Something which wouldn't sink of itself; something which needed to be helped with stones before it would hide itself safely in the mud. Well, they would find that out. There was no object in worrying about it now. Bill had a dirty night's work in front of him. But where was the body which Antony had expected so confidently or, if there were no body, where was Mark? More immediately, however, where was Cayley? As quickly as he could Antony had got to the front of the house and was now lying in the shrubbery which bordered the lawn, waiting for the light to go up in Cayley's window. If it went up in Bill's window, then they were discovered. It would mean that Cayley had glanced into Bill's room, had been suspicious of the dummy figure in the bed, and had turned up the light to make sure. After that, it was war between them. But if it went up in Cayley's room- There was a light. Antony felt a sudden thrill of excitement. It was in Bill's room. War! The light stayed there, shining vividly, for a wind had come up, blowing the



moon behind a cloud, and casting a shadow over the rest of the house. Bill had left his curtains undrawn. It was careless of him; the first stupid thing he had done, but - The moon slipped out again.... and Antony laughed to himself in the bushes. There was another window beyond Cayley's, and there was no light in it. The declaration of war was postponed. Antony lay there, watching Cayley into bed. After all it was only polite to return Cayley's own solicitude earlier in the night. Politeness demanded that one should not disport oneself on the pond until one's friends were comfortably tucked up. Meanwhile Bill was getting tired of waiting. His chief fear was that he might spoil everything by forgetting the number "six." It was the sixth post. Six. He broke off a twig and divided it into six pieces. These he arranged on the ground in front of him. Six. He looked at the pond, counted up to the sixth post, and murmured "six" to himself again. Then he looked down at his twigs. One-two-three-four-five-six-seven. Seven! Was it seven? Or was that seventh bit of a twig an accidental bit which had been on the ground anyhow? Surely it was six! Had he said "six" to Antony? If so, Antony would remember, and it was all right. Six. He threw away the seventh twig and collected the other six together. Perhaps they would be safer in his pocket. Six. The height of a tall man - well, his own height. Six feet. Yes, that was the way to remember it. Feeling a little safer on the point, he began to wonder about the bag, and what Antony would say to it, and the possible depth of the water and of the mud at the bottom; and was still so wondering, and saying, "Good Lord, what a life!" to himself, when Antony reappeared. Bill got up and came down the slope to meet him. "Six," he said firmly.



"Sixth post from the end." "Good," smiled Antony. "Mine was the eighteenth - a little way past it." "What did you go off for?" "To see Cayley into bed." "Is it all right?" "Yes. Better hang your coat over the sixth post, and then we shall see it more easily. I'll put mine on the eighteenth. Are you going to undress here or in the boat?" "Some here, and some in the boat. You're quite sure that you wouldn't like to do the diving yourself?" "Quite, thanks." They had walked round to the other side of the pond. Coming to the sixth post of the fence, Bill took off his coat and put it in position, and then finished his undressing, while Antony went off to mark the eighteenth post. When they were ready, they got into the boat, Antony taking the oars. "Now, Bill, tell me as soon as I'm in a line with your two marks." He rowed slowly towards the middle of the pond. "You're about there now," said Bill at last. Antony stopped rowing and looked about him. "Yes, that's pretty well right." He turned the boat's nose round until it was pointing to the pine-tree under which Bill had lain. "You see my tree and the other coat?" "Yes," said Bill. "Right. Now then, I'm going to row gently along this line until we're dead in between the two. Get it as exact as you can - for your own sake." "Steady!" said Bill warningly. "Back a little.... a little more.... a little more forward again.... Right." Antony left the oars on the water and looked around. As far as he could tell, they were in an exact line with each pair of landmarks. "Now then, Bill, in you go." Bill pulled off his shirt and trousers, and stood up. "You mustn't dive from the boat, old boy," said Antony hastily. "You'll shift its position. Slide in gently." Bill slid in from the stern and swam slowly round to Antony. "What's it like?" said Antony. "Cold. Well, here's



luck to it." He gave a sudden kick, flashed for a moment in the water, and was gone. Antony steadied the boat, and took another look at his landmarks. Bill came up behind him with a loud explosion. "It's pretty muddy," he protested. "Weeds?" "No, thank the Lord." "Well, try again. Bill gave another kick and disappeared. Again Antony coaxed the boat back into position, and again Bill popped up, this time in front of him. "I feel that if I threw you a sardine," said Antony, with a smile, "you'd catch it in your mouth quite prettily." "It's awfully easy to be funny from where you are. How much longer have I got to go on doing this?" Antony looked at his watch. "About three hours. We must get back before daylight. But be quicker if you can, because it's rather cold for me sitting here." Bill flicked a handful of water at him and disappeared again. He was under for almost a minute this time, and there was a grin on his face when it was visible again. "I've got it, but it's devilish hard to get up. I'm not sure that it isn't too heavy for me. "That's all right," said Antony. He brought out a ball of thick string from his pocket. "Get this through the handle if you can, and then we can both pull." "Good man." He paddled to the side, took one end of the string and paddled back again. "Now then." Two minutes later the bag was safely in the boat. Bill clambered in after it, and Antony rowed back. "Well done, Watson," he said quietly, as they landed. He fetched their two coats, and then waited, the bag in his hand, while Bill dried and dressed himself. As soon as the latter was ready, he took his arm and led him into the copse. He put the bag down and felt in his pockets. "I shall light a pipe before I open it," he said. "What about you?" "Yes." With great care they filled and lit their pipes. Bill's hand



was a little unsteady. Antony noticed it and gave him a reassuring smile. "Ready?" "Yes." They sat down, and taking the bag between his knees, Antony pressed the catch and opened it. "Clothes!" said Bill. Antony pulled out the top garment and shook it out. It was a wet brown flannel coat. "Do you recognize it?" he asked. "Mark's brown flannel suit." "The one he is advertised as having run away in?" "Yes. It looks like it. Of course he had a dashed lot of clothes." Antony put his hand in the breast-pocket and took out some letters. He considered them doubtfully for a moment. "I suppose I'd better read them," he said. "I mean, just to see -" He looked inquiringly at Bill, who nodded. Antony turned on his torch and glanced at them. Bill waited anxiously. "Yes. Mark.... Hallo!" "What is it?" "The letter that Cayley was telling the Inspector about. From Robert. 'Mark, your loving brother is coming to see you - ' Yes, I suppose I had better keep this. Well, that's his coat. Let's have out the rest of it." He took the remaining clothes from the bag and spread them out. "They're all here," said Bill. "Shirt, tie, socks, underclothes, shoes - yes, all of them." "All that he was wearing yesterday?" "Yes." "What do you make of it?" Bill shook his head, and asked another question. "Is it what you expected?" Antony laughed suddenly. "It's too absurd," he said. "I expected - well, you know what I expected. A body. A body in a suit of clothes. Well, perhaps it would be safer to hide them separately. The body here, and the clothes in the passage, where they would never betray themselves. And now he takes a great deal of trouble to hide the clothes here, and doesn't bother about the body at all." He shook his head. "I'm a bit lost for the moment, Bill, and that's the fact." "Anything else



there?" Antony felt in the bag. "Stones and - yes, there's something else." He took it out and held it up. "There we are, Bill." It was the office key. "By Jove, you were right." Antony felt in the bag again, and then turned it gently upside down on the grass. A dozen large stones fell out - and something else. He flashed down his torch. "Another key," he said. He put the two keys in his pocket, and sat there for a long time in silence, thinking. Bill was silent, too, not liking to interrupt his thoughts, but at last he said: "Shall I put these things back?" Antony looked up with a start. What? Oh, yes. No, I'll put them back. You give me a light, will you?" Very slowly and carefully he put the clothes back in the bag, pausing as he took up each garment, in the certainty, as it seemed to Bill, that it had something to tell him if only he could read it. When the last of them was inside, he still waited there on his knees, thinking. "That's the lot," said Bill. Antony nodded at him. "Yes, that's the lot," he said; "and that's the funny thing about it. You're sure it is the lot?" "What do you mean?" "Give me the torch a moment." He took it and flashed it over the ground between them. "Yes, that's the lot. It's funny." He stood up, the bag in his hands. "Now let's find a hiding-place for these, and then -" He said no more, but stepped off through the trees, Bill following him meekly. As soon as they had got the bag off their hands and were clear of the copse, Antony became more communicative. He took the two keys out of his pocket. "One of them is the office key, I suppose, and the other is the key of the passage cupboard. So I thought that perhaps we might have a look at the cupboard." "I say, do you really think it is?" "Well, I don't see what else it can be." "But why should he want to throw it away?" "Because it



has now done its work, whatever it was, and he wants to wash his hands of the passage. He'd throw the passage away if he could. I don't think it matters much one way or another, and I don't suppose there's anything to find in the cupboard, but I feel that we must look." "Do you still think Mark's body might be there?" "No. And yet where else can it be? Unless I'm hopelessly wrong, and Cayley never killed him at all." Bill hesitated, wondering if he dare advance his theory. "I know you'll think me an ass -" "My dear Bill, I'm such an obvious ass myself that I should be delighted to think you are too." "Well, then, suppose Mark did kill Robert, and Cayley helped him to escape, just as we thought at first. I know you proved afterwards that it was impossible, but suppose it happened in a way we don't know about and for reasons we don't know about. I mean, there are such a lot of funny things about the whole show that well, almost anything might have happened." "You're quite right. Well?" "Well, then, this clothes business. Doesn't that seem rather to bear out the escaping theory? Mark's brown suit was known to the police. Couldn't Cayley have brought him another one in the passage, to escape in, and then have had the brown one on his hands? And thought it safest to hide it in the pond?" "Yes," said Anthony thoughtfully. Then: "Go on." Bill went on eagerly: "It all seems to fit in, you know. I mean even with your first theory - that Mark killed him accidentally and then came to Cayley for help. Of course, if Cayley had played fair, he'd have told Mark that he had nothing to be afraid of. But he isn't playing fair; he wants to get Mark out of the way because of the girl. Well, this is his chance. He makes Mark as frightened as possible, and tells him that his only hope is to run away.



Well, naturally, he does all he can to get him well away, because if Mark is caught, the whole story of Cayley's treachery comes out." "Yes. But isn't it overdoing it rather to make him change his underclothes and everything? It wastes a good deal of time, you know." Bill was pulled up short, and said, "Oh!" in great disappointment. "No, it's not as bad as that, Bill," said Antony with a smile. "I daresay the underclothes could be explained. But here's the difficulty. Why did Mark need to change from brown to blue, or whatever it was, when Cayley was the only person who saw him in brown?" "The police description of him says that he is in a brown suit." "Yes, because Cayley told the police. You see, even if Mark had had lunch in his brown suit, and the servants had noticed it, Cayley could always have pretended that he had changed into blue after lunch, because only Cayley saw him afterwards. So if Cayley had told the Inspector that he was wearing blue, Mark could have escaped quite comfortably in his brown, without needing to change at all." "But that's just what he did do," cried Bill triumphantly. "What fools we are!" Antony looked at him in surprise, and then shook his head. "Yes, yes!" insisted Bill. "Of course! Don't you see? Mark did change after lunch, and, to give him more of a chance of getting away, Cayley lied and said that he was wearing the brown suit in which the servants had seen him. Well, then he was afraid that the police might examine Mark's clothes and find the brown suit still there, so he hid it, and then dropped it in the pond afterwards." He turned eagerly to his friend, but Antony said nothing. Bill began to speak again, and was promptly waved into silence. "Don't say anything more, old boy; you've given me quite enough to think about. Don't



let's bother about it to-night. We'll just have a look at this cupboard and then get to bed." But the cupboard had not much to tell them that night. It was empty save for a few old bottles. "Well, that's that," said Bill. But Antony, on his knees with the torch in his hand, continued to search for something. "What are you looking for?" asked Bill at last. "Something that isn't there," said Antony, getting up and dusting his trousers. And he locked the door again.

CHAPTER XVIII. GUESS-WORK

The inquest was at three o'clock; thereafter Antony could have no claim on the hospitality of the Red House. By ten o'clock his bag was packed, and waiting to be taken to the "George." To Bill, coming upstairs after a more prolonged breakfast, this early morning bustle was a little surprising. "What's the hurry?" he asked. "None. But we don't want to come back here after the inquest. Get your packing over now and then we can have the morning to ourselves." "Righto." He turned to go to his room, and then came back again. "I say, are we going to tell Cayley that we're staying at the 'George'?" "You're not staying at the 'George,' Bill. Not officially. You're going back to London." "Oh!" "Yes. Ask Cayley to have your luggage sent in to Stanton, ready for you when you catch a train there after the inquest. You can tell him that you've got to see the Bishop of London at once. The fact that you are hurrying back to London to be confirmed will make it seem more natural that I should resume my interrupted solitude at the 'George' as soon as you have gone." "Then where do I sleep to-night?" Officially, I suppose, in Fulham Place; unofficially, I suspect, in my bed, unless they've got another spare room at the 'George.' I've put your confirmation robe - I mean your pyjamas and brushes and



things - in my bag, ready for, you. Is there anything else you want to know? No? Then go and pack. And meet me at ten-thirty beneath the blasted oak or in the hall or somewhere. I want to talk and talk and talk, and I must have my Watson." "Good," said Bill, and went off to his room. An hour later, having communicated their official plans to Cayley, they wandered out together into the park. "Well?" said Bill, as they sat down underneath a convenient tree. "Talk away." "I had many bright thoughts in my bath this morning," began Antony. "The brightest one of all was that we were being damn fools, and working at this thing from the wrong end altogether." "Well, that's helpful." "Of course it's very hampering being a detective, when you don't know anything about detecting, and when nobody knows that you're doing detection, and you can't have people up to cross-examine them, and you have neither the energy nor the means to make proper inquiries; and, in short, when you're doing the whole thing in a thoroughly amateur, haphazard way. "For amateurs I don't think we're doing at all badly," protested Bill. "No; not for amateurs. But if we had been professionals, I believe we should have gone at it from the other end. The Robert end. We've been wondering about Mark and Cayley all the time. Now let's wonder about Robert for a bit." "We know so little about him." "Well, let's see what we do know. First of all, then, we know vaguely that he was a bad lot - the sort of brother who is hushed up in front of other people." "Yes." "We know that he announced his approaching arrival to Mark in a rather unpleasant letter, which I have in my pocket." "Yes." "And then we know rather a curious thing. We know that Mark told you all that this black sheep was coming. Now, why did he tell



you?" Bill was thoughtful for a moment. "I suppose," he said slowly, "that he knew we were bound to see him, and thought that the best way was to be quite frank about him." "But were you bound to see him? You were all away playing golf." "We were bound to see him if he stayed in the house that night." "Very well, then. That's one thing we've discovered. Mark knew that Robert was staying in the house that night. Or shall we put it this way - he knew that there was no chance of getting Robert out of the house at once." Bill looked at his friend eagerly. "Go on," he said. "This is getting interesting." "He also knew something else," went on Antony. "He knew that Robert was bound to betray his real character to you as soon as you met him. He couldn't pass him off on you as just a travelled brother from the Dominions, with perhaps a bit of an accent; he had to tell you at once, because you were bound to find out, that Robert was a wastrel." "Yes. That's sound enough." "Well, now, doesn't it strike you that Mark made up his mind about all that rather quickly?" "How do you mean?" "He got this letter at breakfast. He read it; and directly he had read it he began to confide in you all. That is to say, in about one second he thought out the whole business and came to a decision to two decisions. He considered the possibility of getting Robert out of the way before you came back, and decided that it was impossible. He considered the possibility of Robert's behaving like an ordinary decent person in public, and decided that it was very unlikely. He came to those two decisions instantaneously, as he was reading the letter. Isn't that rather quick work?" "Well, what's the explanation?" Antony waited until he had refilled and lighted his pipe before



answering. "What's the explanation? Well, let's leave it for a moment and take another look at the two brothers. In conjunction, this time, with Mrs. Norbury." "Mrs. Norbury?" said Bill, surprised. "Yes. Mark hoped to marry Miss Norbury. Now, if Robert really was a blot upon the family honour, Mark would want to do one of two things. Either keep it from the Norburys altogether, or else, if it had to come out, tell them himself before the news came to them indirectly. Well, he told them. But the funny thing is that he told them the day before Robert's letter came. Robert came, and was killed, the day before yesterday - Tuesday. Mark told Mrs. Norbury about him on Monday. What do you make of that?" "Coincidence," said Bill, after careful thought. "He'd always meant to tell her; his suit was prospering, and just before it was finally settled, he told her. That happened to be Monday. On Tuesday he got Robert's letter, and felt jolly glad that he'd told her in time." "Well, it might be that, but it's rather a curious coincidence. And here is something which makes it very curious indeed. It only occurred to me in the bath this morning. Inspiring place, a bathroom. Well, it's this - he told her on Monday morning, on his way to Middleston in the car." "Well?" "Well." "Sorry, Tony; I'm dense this morning." "In the car, Bill. And how near can the car get to Jallands?" "About six hundred yards." "Yes. And on his way to Middleston, on some business or other, Mark stops the car, walks six hundred yards down the hill to Jallands, says, 'Oh, by the way, Mrs. Norbury, I don't think I ever told you that I have a shady brother called Robert,' walks six hundred yards up the hill again, gets into the car, and goes off to Middleston. Is that likely?" Bill frowned heavily. "Yes, but I don't see



what you're getting at. Likely or not likely, we know he did do it." "Of course he did. All I mean is that he must have had some strong reason for telling Mrs. Norbury at once. And the reason I suggest is that he knew on that morning - Monday morning, not Tuesday - that Robert was coming to see him, and had to be in first with the news. "But - but -" "And that would explain the other point - his instantaneous decision at breakfast to tell you all about his brother. It wasn't instantaneous. He knew on Monday that Robert was coming, and decided then that you would all have to know." "Then how do you explain the letter?" "Well, let's have a look at it." Antony took the letter from his pocket and spread it out on the grass between them. "Mark, your loving brother is coming to see you to-morrow, all the way from Australia. I give you warning, so that you will be able to conceal your surprise but not I hope your pleasure. Expect him at three or thereabouts." "No date mentioned, you see," said Antony. "Just to-morrow. "But he got this on Tuesday." "Did he?" "Well, he read it out to us on Tuesday." "Oh, yes! he read it out to you. Bill read the letter again, and then turned it over and looked at the back of it. The back of it had nothing to say to him. "What about the postmark?" he asked. "We haven't got the envelope, unfortunately." "And you think that he got this letter on Monday." "I'm inclined to think so, Bill. Anyhow, I think - I feel almost certain - that he knew on Monday that his brother was coming." "Is that going to help us much?" "No. It makes it more difficult. There's something rather uncanny about it all. I don't understand it." He was silent for a little, and then added, "I wonder if the inquest is going to help us. "What about last night? I'm



longing to hear what you make of that. Have you been thinking it out at all?"

"Last night," said Antony thoughtfully to himself. "Yes, last night wants some explaining." Bill waited hopefully for him to explain. What, for instance, had Antony been looking for in the cupboard? "I think," began Antony slowly, "that after last night we must give up the idea that Mark has been killed; killed, I mean, by Cayley. I don't believe anybody would go to so much trouble to hide a suit of clothes when he had a body on his hands. The body would seem so much more important. I think we may take it now that the clothes are all that Cayley had to hide." "But why not have kept them in the passage?" "He was frightened of the passage. Miss Norris knew about it." "Well, then, in his own bedroom, or even, in Mark's. For all you or I or anybody knew, Mark might have had two brown suits. He probably had, I should think." "Probably. But I doubt if that would reassure Cayley. The brown suit hid a secret, and therefore the brown suit had to be hidden. We all know that in theory the safest hiding-place is the most obvious, but in practice very few people have the nerve to risk it." Bill looked rather disappointed. "Then we just come back to where we were," he complained. "Mark killed his brother, and Cayley helped him to escape through the passage; either in order to compromise him, or because there was no other way out of it. And he helped him by telling a lie about his brown suit." Antony smiled at him in genuine amusement. "Bad luck, Bill," he said sympathetically. "There's only one murder, after all. I'm awfully sorry about it. It was my fault for -" "Shut up, you ass. You know I didn't mean that." "Well, you seemed awfully disappointed." Bill said nothing for a little, and



then with a sudden laugh confessed. "It was so exciting yesterday," he said apologetically, "and we seemed to be just getting there, and discovering the most wonderful things, and now -" "And now?" "Well, it's so much more ordinary." Antony gave a shout of laughter. "Ordinary!" he cried. "Ordinary! Well, I'm dashed! Ordinary! If only one thing would happen in an ordinary way, we might do something, but everything is ridiculous." Bill brightened up again. "Ridiculous? How?" "Every way. Take those ridiculous clothes we found last night. You can explain the brown suit, but why the under clothes. You can explain the underclothes in some absurd way, if you like - you can say that Mark always changed his underclothes whenever he interviewed anybody from Australia - but why, in that case, my dear Watson, why didn't he change his collar?" "His collar?" said Bill in amazement. "His collar, Watson." "I don't understand." "And it's all so ordinary," scoffed Antony. "Sorry, Tony, I didn't mean that. Tell me about the collar." "Well, that's all. There was no collar in the bag last night. Shirt, socks, tie - everything except a collar. Why?" "Was that what you were looking for in the cupboard?" said Bill eagerly. "Of course. 'Why no collar?' I, said. For some reason Cayley considered it necessary to hide all Mark's clothes; not just the suit, but everything which he was wearing, or supposed to be wearing, at the time of the murder. But he hadn't hidden the collar. Why? Had he left it out by mistake? So I looked in the cupboard. It wasn't there. Had he left it out on purpose? If so, why? - and where was it? Naturally I began to say to myself, 'Where have I seen a collar lately? A collar all by itself?' And I remembered what, Bill?" Bill frowned heavily to himself, and shook his head. Don't ask



me, Tony. I can't - By Jove!" He threw up his head, "In the basket in the office bedroom!" "Exactly." "But is that the one?" "The one that goes with the rest of the clothes? I don't know. Where else can it be? But if so, why send the collar quite casually to the wash in the ordinary way, and take immense trouble to hide everything else? Why, why, why?" Bill bit hard at his pipe, but could think of nothing to say. "Anyhow," said Antony, getting up restlessly, "I'm certain of one thing. Mark knew on the Monday that Robert was coming here." CHAPTER XIX. THE INQUEST The Coroner, having made a few commonplace remarks as to the terrible nature of the tragedy which they had come to investigate that afternoon, proceeded to outline the case to the jury. Witnesses would be called to identify the deceased as Robert Ablett, the brother of the owner of the Red House, Mark Ablett. It would be shown that he was something of a ne'er-do-well, who had spent most of his life in Australia, and that he had announced, in what might almost be called a threatening letter, his intention of visiting his brother that afternoon. There would be evidence of his arrival, of his being shown into the scene of the tragedy a room in the Red House, commonly called "the office" - and of his brother's entrance into that room. The jury would have to form their own opinion as to what happened there. But whatever happened, happened almost instantaneously. Within two minutes of Mark Ablett's entrance, as would be shown in the evidence, a shot was heard, and when - perhaps five minutes later - the room was forced open, the dead body of Robert Ablett was found stretched upon the floor. As regards Mark Ablett, nobody had seen him from the moment of his going into the room, but



evidence would be called to show that he had enough money on him at the time to take him to any other part of the country, and that a man answering to his description had been observed on the platform of Stanton station, apparently waiting to catch the 3.55 up train to London. As the jury would realize, such evidence of identity was not always reliable. Missing men had a way of being seen in a dozen different places at once. In any case, there was no doubt that for the moment Mark Ablett had disappeared. "Seems a sound man," whispered Antony to Bill. "Doesn't talk too much." Antony did not expect to learn much from the evidence - he knew the facts of the case so well by now - but he wondered if Inspector Birch had developed any new theories. If so, they would appear in the Coroner's examination, for the Coroner would certainly have been coached by the police as to the important facts to be extracted from each witness. Bill was the first to be put through it. "Now, about this letter, Mr. Beverley?" he was asked when his chief evidence was over. "Did you see it at all?" "I didn't see the actual writing. I saw the back of it. Mark was holding it up when he told us about his brother." "You don't know what was in it, then?" Bill had a sudden shock. He had read the letter only that morning. He knew quite well what was in it. But it wouldn't do to admit this. And then, just as he was about to perjure himself, he remembered: Antony had heard Cayley telling the Inspector. "I knew afterwards. I was told. But Mark didn't read it out at breakfast." "You gathered, however, that it was an unwelcome letter?" "Oh, yes!" "Would you say that Mark was frightened by it?" "Not frightened. Sort of bitter - and resigned. Sort of 'Oh, Lord, here we are again!'" There was a titter here and



there. The Coroner smiled, and tried to pretend that he hadn't. "Thank you, Mr. Beverley." The next witness was summoned by the name of Andrew Amos, and Antony looked up with interest, wondering who he was. "He lives at the inner lodge," whispered Bill to him. All that Amos had to say was that a stranger had passed by his lodge at a little before three that afternoon, and had spoken to him. He had seen the body and recognized it as the man. "What did he say?" "Is this right for the Red House?' or something like that, sir. "What did you say?" "I said, 'This is the Red House. Who do you want to see?' He was a bit rough-looking, you know, sir, and I didn't know what he was doing there." "Well?" "Well, sir, he said, 'Is Mister Mark Ablett at home?' It doesn't sound much put like that, sir, but I didn't care about the way he said it. So I got in front of him like, and said, 'What do you want, eh?' and he gave a sort of chuckle and said, 'I want to see my dear brother Mark.' Well, then I took a closer look at him, and I see that p'raps he might be his brother, so I. said, 'If you'll follow the drive, sir, you'll come to the house. Of course I can't say if Mr. Ablett's at home.' And he gave a sort of nasty laugh again, and said, 'Fine place Mister Mark Ablett's got here. Plenty of money to spend, eh?' Well, then I had another look at him, sir, because gentlemen don't talk like that, and if he was Mr. Ablett's brother - but before I could make up my mind, he laughed and went on. That's all I can tell you, sir." Andrew Amos stepped down and moved away to the back of the room, nor did Antony take his eyes off him until he was assured that Amos intended to remain there until the inquest was over. "Who's Amos talking to now?" he whispered to Bill. "Parsons. One of the gardeners. He's



at the outside lodge on the Stanton road. They're all here to-day. Sort of holiday for em. "I wonder if he's giving evidence too," thought Antony. He was. He followed Amos. He had been at work on the lawn in front of the house, and had seen Robert Ablett arrive. He didn't hear the shot not to notice. He was a little hard of hearing. He had seen a gentleman arrive about five minutes after Mr. Robert. "Can you see him in court now?" asked the Coroner. Parsons looked round slowly. Antony caught his eye and smiled. "That's him," said Parsons, pointing. Everybody looked at Antony. "That was about five minutes afterwards?" "About that, sir." "Did anybody come out of the house before this gentleman's arrival?" "No, sir. That is to say I didn't see 'em." Stevens followed. She gave her evidence much as she had given it to the Inspector. Nothing new was brought out by her examination. Then came Elsie. As the reporters scribbled down what she had overheard, they added in brackets "Sensation" for the first time that afternoon. "How soon after you had heard this did the shot come?" asked the Coroner. "Almost at once, sir." "A minute?" "I couldn't really say, sir. It was so quick." "Were you still in the hall?" "Oh, no, sir. I was just outside Mrs. Stevens' room. The housekeeper, sir." "You didn't think of going back to the hall to see what had happened?" "Oh, no, sir. I just went in to Mrs. Stevens, and she said, 'Oh, what was that?' frightened-like. And I said, 'That was in the house, Mrs. Stevens, that was.' Just like something going off, it was." "Thank you," said the Coroner. There was another emotional disturbance in the room as Cayley went into the witness-box; not "Sensation" this time, but an eager and, as it seemed to Antony, sympathetic interest. Now they were



getting to grips with the drama. He gave his evidence carefully, unemotionally - the lies with the same slow deliberation as the truth. Antony watched him intently, wondering what it was about him which had this odd sort of attractiveness. For Antony, who knew that he was lying, and lying (as he believed) not for Mark's sake but his own, yet could not help sharing some of that general sympathy with him. "Was Mark ever in possession of a revolver?" asked the Coroner. "Not to my knowledge. I think I should have known if he had been." "You were alone with him all that morning. Did he talk about this visit of Robert's at all?" "I didn't see very much of him in the morning. I was at work in my room, and outside, and so on. We lunched together and he talked of it then a little." "In what terms?" "Well-" he hesitated, and then went on. "I can't think of a better word than 'peevishly.' Occasionally he said, 'What do you think he wants?' or 'Why couldn't he have stayed where he was?' or 'I don't like the tone of his letter. Do you think he means trouble?' He talked rather in that kind of way. "Did he express his surprise that his brother should be in England?" "I think he was always afraid that he would turn up one day." "Yes.... You didn't hear any conversation between the brothers when they were in the office together?" "No. I happened to go into the library just after Mark had gone in, and I was there all the time." "Was the library door open?" "Oh, yes." "Did you see or hear the last witness at all?" "No." "If anybody had come out of the office while you were in the library, would you have heard it?" "I think so. Unless they had come out very quietly on purpose." "Would you call Mark a hasty-tempered man?" Cayley considered this carefully before answering.



"Hasty-tempered, yes," he said. "But not violent-tempered." "Was he fairly athletic? Active and quick?" "Active and quick, yes. Not particularly strong." "Yes.... One question more. Was Mark in the habit of carrying any considerable sum of money about with him?" "Yes. He always had one 100 pound note on him, and perhaps ten or twenty pounds as well." "Thank you, Mr. Cayley." Cayley went back heavily to his seat. "Damn it," said Antony to himself, "why do I like the fellow?" "Antony Gillingham!" Again the eager interest of the room could be felt. Who was this stranger who had got mixed up in the business so mysteriously? Antony smiled at Bill and stepped up to give his evidence. He explained how he came to be staying at the "George" at Waldheim, how he had heard that the Red House was in the neighbourhood, how he had walked over to see his friend Beverley, and had arrived just after the tragedy. Thinking it over afterwards he was fairly certain that he had heard the shot, but it had not made any impression on him at the time. He had come to the house from the Waldheim end and consequently had seen nothing of Robert Ablett, who had been a few minutes in front of him. From this point his evidence coincided with Cayley's. "You and the last witness reached the French windows together and found them shut?" "Yes." "You pushed them in and came to the body. Of course you had no idea whose body it was?" "No." "Did Mr. Cayley say anything?" "He turned the body over, just so as to see the face, and when he saw it, he said, 'Thank God.' Again the reporters wrote 'Sensation.'" "Did you understand what he meant by that?" "I asked him who it was, and he said that it was Robert Ablett. Then he explained that he was afraid at first it



was the cousin with whom he lived - Mark." "Yes. Did he seem upset?"

"Very much so at first. Less when he found that it wasn't Mark." There was a sudden snigger from a nervous gentleman in the crowd at the back of the room, and the Coroner put on his glasses and stared sternly in the direction from which it came. The nervous gentleman hastily decided that the time had come to do up his bootlace. The Coroner put down his glasses and continued. "Did anybody come out of the house while you were coming up the drive?" "No." "Thank you, Mr. Gillingham." He was followed by Inspector Birch. The Inspector, realizing that this was his afternoon, and that the eyes of the world were upon him, produced a plan of the house and explained the situation of the different rooms. The plan was then handed to the jury. Inspector Birch, so he told the world, had arrived at the Red House at 4.42 p.m. on the afternoon in question. He had been received by Mr. Matthew Cayley, who had made a short statement to him, and he had then proceeded to examine the scene of the crime. The French windows had been forced from outside. The door leading into the hall was locked; he had searched the room thoroughly and had found no trace of a key. In the bedroom leading out of the office he had found an open window. There were no marks on the window, but it was a low one, and, as he found from experiment, quite easy to step out of without touching it with the boots. A few yards outside the window a shrubbery began. There were no recent footmarks outside the window, but the ground was in a very hard condition owing to the absence of rain. In the shrubbery, however, he found several twigs on the ground, recently broken off, together with other evidence that



some body had been forcing its way through. He had questioned everybody connected with the estate, and none of them had been into the shrubbery recently. By forcing a way through the shrubbery it was possible for a person to make a detour of the house and get to the Stanton end of the park without ever being in sight of the house itself. He had made inquiries about the deceased. Deceased had left for Australia some fifteen years ago, owing to some financial trouble at home. Deceased was not well spoken of in the village from which he and his brother had come. Deceased and his brother had never been on good terms, and the fact that Mark Ablett had come into money had been a cause of great bitterness between them. It was shortly after this that Robert had left for Australia. He had made inquiries at Stanton station. It had been market-day at Stanton and the station had been more full of arrivals than usual. Nobody had particularly noticed the arrival of Robert Ablett; there had been a good many passengers by the 2.10 train that afternoon, the train by which Robert had undoubtedly come from London. A witness, however, would state that he noticed a man resembling Mark Ablett at the station at 3.53 p.m. that afternoon, and this man caught the 3.55 up train to town. There was a pond in the grounds of the Red House. He had dragged this, but without result.... Antony listened to him carelessly, thinking his own thoughts all the time. Medical evidence followed, but there was nothing to be got from that. He felt so close to the truth; at any moment something might give his brain the one little hint which it wanted. Inspector Birch was just pursuing the ordinary. Whatever else this case was, it was not ordinary. There was something uncanny about it. John Borden was giving



evidence. He was on the up platform seeing a friend off by the 3.55 on Tuesday afternoon. He had noticed a man on the platform with coat collar turned up and a scarf round his chin. He had wondered why the man should do this on such a hot day. The man seemed to be trying to escape observation. Directly the train came in, he hurried into a carriage. And so on. "There's always a John Borden at every murder case, said Antony to himself. "Have you ever seen Mark Ablett?" "Once or twice, sir." "Was it he?" "I never really got a good look at him, sir, what with his collar turned up and the scarf and all. But directly I heard of the sad affair, and that Mr. Ablett was missing, I said to Mrs. Borden, 'Now I wonder if that was Mr. Ablett I saw at the station?' So then we talked it over and decided that I ought to come and tell Inspector Birch. It was just Mr. Ablett's height, sir." Antony went on with his thoughts.... The Coroner was summing up. The jury, he said, had now heard all the evidence and would have to decide what had happened in that room between the two brothers. How had the deceased met his death? The medical evidence would probably satisfy them that Robert Ablett had died from the effects of a bullet-wound in the head. Who had fired that bullet? If Robert Ablett had fired it himself, no doubt they would bring in a verdict of suicide, but if this had been so, where was the revolver which had fired it, and what had become of Mark Ablett? If they disbelieved in this possibility of suicide, what remained? Accidental death, justifiable homicide, and murder. Could the deceased have been killed accidentally? It was possible, but then would Mark Ablett have run away? The evidence that he had run away from the scene of the crime was strong. His cousin had seen



him go into the room, the servant Elsie Wood had heard him quarrelling with his brother in the room, the door had been locked from the inside, and there were signs that outside the open window some one had pushed his way very recently through the shrubbery. Who, if not Mark? They would have then to consider whether he would have run away if he had been guiltless of his brother's death. No doubt innocent people lost their heads sometimes. It was possible that if it were proved afterwards that Mark Ablett had shot his brother, it might also be proved that he was justified in so doing, and that when he ran away from his brother's corpse he had really nothing to fear at the hands of the Law. In this connexion he need hardly remind the jury that they were not the final tribunal, and that if they found Mark Ablett guilty of murder it would not prejudice his trial in any way if and when he was apprehended.... The jury could consider their verdict. They considered it. They announced that the deceased had died as the result of a bullet-wound, and that the bullet had been fired by his brother Mark Ablett. Bill turned round to Antony at his side. But Antony was gone. Across the room he saw Andrew Amos and Parsons going out of the door together, and Antony was between them. CHAPTER XX. MR. BEVERLEY IS TACTFUL The inquest had been held at the "Lamb" at Stanton; at Stanton Robert Ablett was to be buried next day. Bill waited about outside for his friend, wondering where he had gone. Then, realizing that Cayley would be coming out to his car directly, and that a farewell talk with Cayley would be a little embarrassing, he wandered round to the yard at the back of the inn, lit a cigarette, and stood surveying a torn and weather-beaten poster on the stable wall.



"GRAND THEATRICAL ENTER" it announced, to take place on "Wednesday, Decem." Bill smiled to himself as he looked at it, for the part of Joe, a loquacious postman, had been played by "William B. Beverl," as the remnants of the poster still maintained, and he had been much less loquacious than the author had intended, having forgotten his words completely, but it had all been great fun. And then he stopped smiling, for there would be no more fun now at the Red House. "Sorry to keep you waiting," said the voice of Antony behind him. "My old friends Amos and Parsons insisted on giving me a drink." He slipped his hand into the crook of Bill's arm, and smiled happily at him. "Why were you so keen about them?" asked Bill a little resentfully. "I couldn't think where on earth you had got to." Antony didn't say anything. He was staring at the poster. "When did this happen?" he asked. "What?" Antony waved to the poster. "Oh, that? Last Christmas. It was rather fun." Antony began to laugh to himself. "Were you good?" "Rotten. I don't profess to be an actor." "Mark good?" "Oh, rather. He loves it." "Rev. Henry Stutters - Mr. Matthew Cay," read Antony. "Was that our friend Cayley?" "Yes." "Any good?" "Well, much better than I expected. He wasn't keen, but Mark made him." "Miss Norris wasn't playing, I see." "My dear Tony, she's a professional. Of course she wasn't." Antony laughed again. "A great success, was it?" "Oh. rather!" "I'm a fool, and a damned fool," Antony announced solemnly. "And a damned fool," he said again under his breath, as he led Bill away from the poster, and out of the yard into the road. "And a damned fool. Even now -" He broke off and then asked suddenly, "Did Mark ever have much trouble with his teeth?"



"He went to his dentist a good deal. But what on earth -" Antony laughed a third time. "What luck!" he chuckled. "But how do you know?" "We go to the same man; Mark recommended him to me. Cartwright, in Wimpole Street." "Cartwright in Wimpole Street," repeated Antony thoughtfully. "Yes, I can remember that. Cartwright in Wimpole Street. Did Cayley go to him too, by any chance?" "I expect so. Oh, yes, I know he did. But what on earth -" "What was Mark's general health like? Did he see a doctor much?" "Hardly at all, I should think. He did a lot of early morning exercises which were supposed to make him bright and cheerful at breakfast. They didn't do that, but they seemed to keep him pretty fit. Tony, I wish you'd -" Antony held up a hand and hushed him into silence. "One last question," he said. "Was Mark fond of swimming?" "No, he hated it. I don't believe he could swim. Tony, are you mad, or am I? Or is this a new game?" Antony squeezed his arm. "Dear old Bill," he said. "It's a game. What a game! And the answer is Cartwright in Wimpole Street." They walked in silence for half a mile or so along the road to Waldheim. Bill tried two or three times to get his friend to talk, but Antony had only grunted in reply. He was just going to make another attempt, when Antony came to a sudden stop and turned to him anxiously. "I wonder if you'd do something for me," he said, looking at him with some doubt. "What sort of thing?" "Well, it's really dashed important. It's just the one thing I want now. Bill was suddenly enthusiastic again. "I say, have you really found it all out?" Antony nodded. "At least, I'm very nearly there, Bill. There's just this one thing I want now. It means your going back to Stanton. Well, we haven't come far; it won't take you



long. Do you mind?" "My dear Holmes, I am at your service." Antony gave him a smile and was silent for a little, thinking. "Is there another inn at Stanton-fairly close to the station?" "The 'Plough and Horses' - just at the corner where the road goes up to the station - is that the one you mean?" "That would be the one. I suppose you could do with a drink, couldn't you?" "Rather!" said Bill, with a grin. "Good. Then have one at the 'Plough and Horses.' Have two, if you like, and talk to the landlord, or landlady, or whoever serves you. I want you to find out if anybody stayed there on Monday night." "Robert?" said Bill eagerly. "I didn't say Robert," said Antony, smiling. "I just want you to find out if they had a visitor who slept there on Monday night. A stranger. If so, then any particulars you can get of him, without letting the landlord know that you are interested -" "Leave it to me," broke in Bill. "I know just what you want." "Don't assume that it was Robert - or anybody else. Let them describe the man to you. Don't influence them unconsciously by suggesting that he was short or tall, or anything of that sort. Just get them talking. If it's the landlord, you'd better stand him a drink or two." "Right you are," said Bill confidently. "Where do I meet you again?" "Probably at the 'George.' If you get there before me, you can order dinner for eight o'clock. Anyhow we'll meet at eight, if not before." "Good." He nodded to Antony and strode off back to Stanton again. Antony stood watching him with a little smile at his enthusiasm. Then he looked round slowly, as if in search of something. Suddenly he saw what he wanted. Twenty yards farther on a lane wandered off to the left, and there was a gate a little way up on the right-hand side of it. Antony walked to the gate, filling



his pipe as he went. Then he lit his pipe, sat on the gate, and took his head in his hands. "Now then," he said to himself, "let's begin at the beginning." It was nearly eight o'clock when William Beverley, the famous sleuth-hound, arrived, tired and dusty, at the "George," to find Antony, cool and clean, standing bare-headed at the door, waiting for him. "Is dinner ready?" were Bill's first words. "Yes." "Then I'll just have a wash. Lord, I'm tired." "I never ought to have asked you," said Antony penitently. "That's all right. I shan't be a moment." Half-way up the stairs he turned round and asked, "Am I in your room?" "Yes. Do you know the way?" "Yes. Start carving, will you? And order lots of beer." He disappeared round the top of the staircase. Antony went slowly in. When the first edge of his appetite had worn off, and he was able to spare a little time between the mouthfuls, Bill gave an account of his adventures. The landlord of the "Plough and Horses" had been sticky, decidedly sticky - Bill had been unable at first to get anything out of him. But Bill had been tactful; lorblessyou, how tactful he had been. "He kept on about the inquest, and what a queer affair it had been, and so on, and how there'd been an inquest in his wife's family once, which he seemed rather proud about, and I kept saying, 'Pretty busy, I suppose, just now, what?' and then he'd say, 'Middlin',' and go on again about Susan - that was the one that had the inquest - he talked about it as if it were a disease - and then I'd try again, and say, 'Slack times, I expect, just now, eh?' and he'd say 'Middlin' again, and then it was time to offer him another drink, and I didn't seem to be getting much nearer. But I got him at last. I asked him if he knew John Borden - he was the man who said he'd seen Mark at the station. Well,



he knew all about Borden, and after he'd told me all about Borden's wife's family, and how one of them had been burnt to death - after you with the beer; thanks - well, then I said carelessly that it must be very hard to remember anybody whom you had just seen once, so as to identify him afterwards, and he agreed that it would be 'middlin' hard,' and then -" "Give me three guesses," interrupted Antony. "You asked him if he remembered everybody who came to his inn?" "That's it. Bright, wasn't it?" "Brilliant. And what was the result?" "The result was a woman." "A woman?" said Antony eagerly. "A woman," said Bill impressively. "Of course I thought it was going to be Robert - so did you, didn't you? - but it wasn't. It was a woman. Came quite late on Monday night in a car - driving herself - went off early next morning." "Did he describe her?" "Yes. She was middlin'. Middlin' tall, middlin' age, middlin' colour, and so on. Doesn't help much, does it? But still - a woman. Does that upset your theory?" Antony shook his head. "No, Bill, not at all," he said. "You knew all the time? At least, you guessed?" "Wait till to-morrow. I'll tell you everything to-morrow." "To-morrow!" said Bill in great disappointment. "Well, I'll tell you one thing to-night, if you'll promise not to ask any more questions. But you probably know it already." "What is it?" "Only that Mark Albett did not kill his brother." "And Cayley did?" "That's another question, Bill. However, the answer is that Cayley didn't, either." "Then who on earth -" "Have some more beer," said Antony with a smile. And Bill had to be content with that. They were early to bed that evening, for both of them were tired. Bill slept loudly and defiantly, but Antony lay awake, wondering. What was



happening at the Red House now? Perhaps he would hear in the morning; perhaps he would get a letter. He went over the whole story again from the beginning - was there any possibility of a mistake? What would the police do? Would they ever find out? Ought he to have told them? Well, let them find out; it was their job. Surely he couldn't have made a mistake this time. No good wondering now; he would know definitely in the morning. In the morning there was a letter for him. CHAPTER XXI. CAYLEY'S APOLOGY "My Dear Mr. Gillingham, "I gather from your letter that you have made certain discoveries which you may feel it your duty to communicate to the police, and that in this case my arrest on a charge of murder would inevitably follow. Why, in these circumstances, you should give me such ample warning of your intentions I do not understand, unless it is that you are not wholly out of sympathy with me. But whether or not you sympathize, at any rate you will want to know - and I want you to know - the exact manner in which Ablett met his death and the reasons which made that death necessary. If the police have to be told anything, I would rather that they too knew the whole story. They, and even you, may call it murder, but by that time I shall be out of the way. Let them call it what they like. "I must begin by taking you back to a summer day fifteen years ago, when I was a boy of thirteen and Mark a young man of twenty-five. His whole life was make-believe, and just now he was pretending to be a philanthropist. He sat in our little drawing-room, flicking his gloves against the back of his left hand, and my mother, good soul, thought what a noble young gentleman he was, and Philip and I, hastily washed and crammed into collars, stood in



front of him, nudging each other and kicking the backs of our heels and cursing him in our hearts for having interrupted our game. He had decided to adopt one of us, kind Cousin Mark. Heaven knows why he chose me. Philip was eleven; two years longer to wait. Perhaps that was why. "Well, Mark educated me. I went to a public school and to Cambridge, and I became his secretary. Well, much more than his secretary as your friend Beverley perhaps has told you: his land agent, his financial adviser, his courier, his - but this most of all - his audience. Mark could never live alone. There must always be somebody to listen to him. I think in his heart he hoped I should be his Boswell. He told me one day that he had made me his literary executor - poor devil. And he used to write me the absurdest long letters when I was away from him, letters which I read once and then tore up. The futility of the man! "It was three years ago that Philip got into trouble. He had been hurried through a cheap grammar school and into a London office, and discovered there that there was not much fun to be got in this world on two pounds a week. I had a frantic letter from him one day, saying that he must have a hundred at once, or he would be ruined, and I went to Mark for the money. Only to borrow it, you understand; he gave me a good salary and I could have paid it back in three months. But no. He saw nothing for himself in it, I suppose; no applause, no admiration. Philip's gratitude would be to me, not to him. I begged, I threatened, we argued; and while we were arguing, Philip was arrested. It killed my mother - he was always her favourite - but Mark, as usual, got his satisfaction out of it. He preened himself on his judgment of character in having chosen me and not Philip



twelve years before! "Later on I apologized to Mark for the reckless things I had said to him, and he played the part of a magnanimous gentleman with his accustomed skill, but, though outwardly we were as before to each other, from that day forward, though his vanity would never let him see it, I was his bitterest enemy. If that had been all, I wonder if I should have killed him? To live on terms of intimate friendship with a man whom you hate is dangerous work for your friend. Because of his belief in me as his admiring and grateful protege and his belief in himself as my benefactor, he was now utterly in my power. I could take my time and choose my opportunity. Perhaps I should not have killed him, but I had sworn to have my revenge - and there he was, poor vain fool, at my mercy. I was in no hurry. "Two years later I had to reconsider my position, for my revenge was being taken out of my hands. Mark began to drink. Could I have stopped him? I don't think so, but to my immense surprise I found myself trying to. Instinct, perhaps, getting the better of reason; or did I reason it out and tell myself that, if he drank himself to death, I should lose my revenge? Upon my word, I cannot tell you; but, for whatever motive, I did genuinely want to stop it. Drinking is such a beastly thing, anyhow. "I could not stop him, but I kept him within certain bounds, so that nobody but myself knew his secret. Yes, I kept him outwardly decent; and perhaps now I was becoming like the cannibal who keeps his victim in good condition for his own ends. I used to gloat over Mark, thinking how utterly he was mine to ruin as I pleased, financially, morally, whatever way would give me most satisfaction. I had but to take my hand away from him and he sank. But again I was in no hurry. "Then he



killed himself. That futile little drunkard, eaten up with his own selfishness and vanity, offered his beastliness to the truest and purest woman on this earth. You have seen her, Mr. Gillingham, but you never knew Mark Ablett. Even if he had not been a drunkard, there was no chance for her of happiness with him. I had known him for many years, but never once had I seen him moved by any generous emotion. To have lived with that shrivelled little soul would have been hell for her; and a thousand times worse hell when he began to drink. "So he had to be killed. I was the only one left to protect her, for her mother was in league with Mark to bring about her ruin. I would have shot him openly for her sake, and with what gladness, but I had no mind to sacrifice myself needlessly. He was in my power; I could persuade him to almost anything by flattery; surely it would not be difficult to give his death the appearance of an accident. "I need not take up your time by telling you of the many plans I made and rejected. For some days I inclined towards an unfortunate boating accident in the pond - Mark, a very indifferent swimmer, myself almost exhausted in a gallant attempt to hold him up. And then he himself gave me the idea, he and Miss Norris between them, and so put himself in my hands; without risk of discovery, I should have said, had you not discovered me. "We were talking about ghosts. Mark had been even more vain, pompous and absurd than usual, and I could see that Miss Norris was irritated by it. After dinner she suggested dressing up as a ghost and frightening him. I thought it my duty to warn her that Mark took any joke against himself badly, but she was determined to do it. I gave way reluctantly. Reluctantly, also, I told her the secret of the passage. (There is



an underground passage from the library to the bowling-green. You should exercise your ingenuity, Mr. Gillingham, in trying to discover it. Mark came upon it by accident a year ago. It was a godsend to him; he could drink there in greater secrecy. But he had to tell me about it. He wanted an audience, even for his vices.) "I told Miss Norris, then, because it was necessary for my plan that Mark should be thoroughly frightened. Without the passage she could never have got close enough to the bowling-green to alarm him properly, but as I arranged it with her she made the most effective appearance, and Mark was in just the state of rage and vindictiveness which I required. Miss Norris, you understand, is a professional actress. I need not say that to her I appeared to be animated by no other feeling than a boyish desire to bring off a good joke - a joke directed as much against the others as against Mark. "He came to me that night, as I expected, still quivering with indignation. Miss Norris must never be asked to the house again; I was to make a special note of it; never again. It was outrageous. Had he not a reputation as a host to keep up, he would pack her off next morning. As it was, she could stay; hospitality demanded it; but never again would she come to the Red House - he was absolutely determined about that. I was to make a special note of it. "I comforted him, I smoothed down his ruffled feathers. She had behaved very badly, but he was quite right; he must try not to show how much he disapproved of her. And of course she would never come again - that was obvious. And then suddenly I began to laugh. He looked up at me indignantly. "Is there a joke?" he said coldly. "I laughed gently again. "I was just thinking," I said, 'that it would be rather amusing if



you - well, had your revenge. "My revenge? How do you mean?" "Well, paid her back in her own coin." "Do you mean try and frighten her?" "No, no; but dressed up and pulled her leg a bit. Made her look a fool in front of the others." I laughed to myself again. 'Serve her jolly well right.' "He jumped up excitedly. "By Jove, Cay!" he cried. 'If I could! How? You must think of a way. "I don't know if Beverley has told you about Mark's acting. He was an amateur of all the arts, and vain of his little talents, but as an actor he seemed to himself most wonderful. Certainly he had some ability for the stage, so long as he had the stage to himself and was playing to an admiring audience. As a professional actor in a small part he would have been hopeless; as an amateur playing the leading part, he deserved all that the local papers had ever said about him. And so the idea of giving us a private performance, directed against a professional actress who had made fun of him, appealed equally to his vanity and his desire for retaliation. If he, Mark Albett, by his wonderful acting could make Ruth Norris look a fool in front of the others, could take her in, and then join in the laugh at her afterwards, he would indeed have had a worthy revenge! "It strikes you as childish, Mr. Gillingham? Ah, you never knew Mark Ablett. "How, Cay, how?" he said eagerly. "Well, I haven't really thought it out," I protested. 'It was just an idea.' "He began to think it out for himself. "I might pretend to be a manager, come down to see her - but I suppose she knows them all. What about an interviewer?" "It's going to be difficult," I said thoughtfully. 'You've got rather a characteristic face, you know. And your beard - ' "I'd shave it off," he snapped. "My dear Mark!" "He looked away, and mumbled, 'I've



been thinking of taking it off, anyhow. And besides, if I'm going to do the thing, I'm going to do it properly.' "'Yes, you always were an artist,' I said, looking at him admiringly. "He purred. To be called an artist was what he longed for most. Now I knew that I had him. "'All the same,' I went on, 'even without your beard and moustache you might be recognizable. Unless, of course -' I broke off. "'Unless what?' "'You pretend to be Robert.' I began to laugh to myself again. 'By Jove!' I said, 'that's not a bad idea. Pretend to be Robert, the wastrel brother, and make yourself objectionable to Miss Norris. Borrow money from her, and that sort of thing.' "He looked at me, with his bright little eyes, nodding eagerly. "'Robert,' he said. 'Yes. How shall we work it?' "There was really a Robert, Mr. Gillingham, as I have no doubt you and the Inspector both discovered. And he was a wastrel and he went to Australia. But he never came to the Red House on Tuesday afternoon. He couldn't have, because he died (unlamented) three years ago. But there was nobody who knew this, save Mark and myself, for Mark was the only one of the family left, his sister having died last year. Though I doubt, anyhow, if she knew whether Robert was alive or dead. He was not talked about. "For the next two days Mark and I worked out our plans. You understand by now that our aims were not identical. Mark's endeavour was that his deception should last for, say, a couple of hours; mine that it should go to the grave with him. He had only to deceive Miss Norris and the other guests; I had to deceive the world. When he was dressed up as Robert, I was going to kill him. Robert would then be dead, Mark (of course) missing. What could anybody think but that Mark had killed Robert? But you see how important



it was for Mark to enter fully into his latest (and last) impersonation. Half-measures would be fatal. "You will say that it was impossible so do the thing thoroughly enough. I answer again that you never knew Mark. He was being what he wished most to be - an artist. No Othello ever blacked himself all over with such enthusiasm as did Mark. His beard was going anyhow - possible a chance remark of Miss Norbury's helped here. She did not like beards. But it was important for me that the dead man's hands should not be the hands of a manicured gentleman. Five minutes playing upon the vanity of the artist settled his hands. He let the nails grow and then cut them raggedly. 'Miss Norris would notice your hands at once,' I had said. 'Besides, as an artist -' "So with his underclothes. It was hardly necessary to warn him that his pants might show above the edge of his socks; as an artist he had already decided upon Robertian pants. I bought them, and other things, in London for him. Even if I had not cut out all trace of the maker's name, he would instinctively have done it. As an Australian and an artist, he could not have an East London address on his underclothes. Yes, we were doing the thing thoroughly, both of us; he as an artist, I as a - well, you may say murderer, if you like. I shall not mind now. "Our plans were settled. I went to London on the Monday and wrote him a letter from Robert. (The artistic touch again.) I also bought a revolver. On the Tuesday morning he announced the arrival of Robert at the breakfast-table. Robert was now alive - we had six witnesses to prove it; six witnesses who knew that he was coming that afternoon. Our private plan was that Robert should present himself at three o'clock, in readiness for the return of the golfing-party



shortly afterwards. The maid would go to look for Mark, and having failed to find him, come back to the office to find me entertaining Robert in Mark's absence. I would explain that Mark must have gone out somewhere, and would myself introduce the wastrel brother to the tea-table. Mark's absence would not excite any comment, for it would be generally felt - indeed Robert would suggest it - that he had been afraid of meeting his brother. Then Robert would make himself amusingly offensive to the guests, particularly, of course, Miss Norris, until he thought that the joke had gone far enough. "That was our private plan. Perhaps I should say that it was Mark's private plan. My own was different. "The announcement at breakfast went well. After the golfing-party had gone off, we had the morning in which to complete our arrangements. What I was chiefly concerned about was to establish as completely as possible the identity of Robert. For this reason I suggested to Mark that, when dressed, he should go out by the secret passage to the bowling-green, and come back by the drive, taking care to enter into conversation with the lodge-keeper. In this way I would have two more witnesses of Robert's arrival - first the lodge-keeper, and secondly one of the gardeners whom I would have working on the front lawn. Mark, of course, was willing enough. He could practise his Australian accent on the lodge-keeper. It was really amusing to see how readily he fell into every suggestion which I made. Never was a killing more carefully planned by its victim. "He changed into Robert's clothes in the office bedroom. This was the safest way - for both of us. When he was ready, he called me in, and I inspected him. It was extraordinary how well he looked the part. I suppose



that the signs of his dissipation had already marked themselves on, his face, but had been concealed hitherto by his moustache and beard; for now that he was clean-shaven they lay open to the world from which we had so carefully hidden them, and he was indeed the wastrel which he was pretending to be. "By Jove, you're wonderful," I said. "He smirked, and called my attention to the various artistic touches which I might have missed. "Wonderful," I said to myself again. 'Nobody could possibly guess.' "I peered into the hall. It was empty. We hurried across to the library; he got into the passage and made off. I went back to the bedroom, collected all his discarded clothes, did them up in a bundle and returned with them to the passage. Then I sat down in the hall and waited. "You heard the evidence of Stevens, the maid. As soon as she was on her way to the Temple in search of Mark, I stepped into the office. My hand was in my side-pocket, and in my hand was the revolver. "He began at once in his character of Robert - some rigmarole about working his passage over from Australia; a little private performance for my edification. Then in his natural voice, gloating over his well-planned retaliation on Miss Norris, he burst out, 'It's my turn now. You wait.' It was this which Elsie heard. She had no business to be there and she might have ruined everything, but as it turned out it was the luckiest thing which could have happened. For it was the one piece of evidence which I wanted; evidence, other than my own, that Mark and Robert were in the room together. "I said nothing. I was not going to take the risk of being heard to speak in that room. I just smiled at the poor little fool, and took out my revolver, and shot him. Then I went back into the library and waited - just as



I said in my evidence. "Can you imagine, Mr. Gillingham, the shock which your sudden appearance gave me? Can you imagine the feelings of a 'murderer' who has (as he thinks) planned for every possibility, and is then confronted suddenly with an utterly new problem? What difference would your coming make? I didn't know. Perhaps none; perhaps all. And I had forgotten to open the window! "I don't know whether you will think my plan for killing Mark a clever one. Perhaps not. But if I do deserve any praise in the matter, I think I deserve it for the way I pulled myself together in the face of the unexpected catastrophe of your arrival. Yes, I got a window open, Mr. Gillingham, under your very nose; the right window too, you were kind enough to say. And the keys - yes, that was clever of you, but I think I was cleverer. I deceived you over the keys, Mr. Gillingham, as I learnt when I took the liberty of listening to a conversation on the bowling-green between you and your friend Beverley. Where was I? Ah, you must have a look for that secret passage, Mr. Gillingham. "But what am I saying? Did I deceive you at all? You have found out the secret - that Robert was Mark - and that is all that matters. How have you found out? I shall never know now. Where did I go wrong? Perhaps you have been deceiving me all the time. Perhaps you knew about the keys, about the window, even about the secret passage. You are a clever man, Mr. Gillingham. "I had Mark's clothes on my hands. I might have left them in the passage, but the secret of the passage was now out. Miss Norris knew it. That was the weak point of my plan, perhaps, that Miss Norris had to know it. So I hid them in the pond, the inspector having obligingly dragged it for me first. A couple of keys joined them, but I kept



the revolver. Fortunate, wasn't it, Mr. Gillingham? "I don't think that there is any more to tell you. This is a long letter, but then it is the last which I shall write. There was a time when I hoped that there might be a happy future for me, not at the Red House, not alone. Perhaps it was never more than an idle day-dream, for I am no more worthy of her than Mark was. But I could have made her happy, Mr. Gillingham. God, how I would have worked to make her happy! But now that is impossible. To offer her the hand of a murderer would be as bad as to offer her the hand of a drunkard. And Mark died for that. I saw her this morning. She was very sweet. It is a difficult world to understand. "Well, well, we are all gone now - the Abletts and the Cayleys. I wonder what old Grandfather Cayley thinks of it all. Perhaps it is as well that we have died out. Not that there was anything wrong with Sarah - except her temper. And she had the Ablett nose - you can't do much with that. I'm glad she left no children. "Good-bye, Mr. Gillingham. I'm sorry that your stay with us was not of a pleasanter nature, but you understand the difficulties in which I was placed. Don't let Bill think too badly of me. He is a good fellow; look after him. He will be surprised. The young are always surprised. And thank you for letting me end my own way. I expect you did sympathize a little, you know. We might have been friends in another world - you and I, and I and she. Tell her what you like. Everything or nothing. You will know what is best. Good-bye, Mr. Gillingham. "MATTHEW CAYLEY. "I am lonely to-night without Mark. That's funny, isn't it?"

CHAPTER XXII. MR. BEVERLEY MOVES ON "Good Lord!" said Bill, as he put down the letter. "I thought you'd say that," murmured Antony. "Tony,



do you mean to say that you knew all this?" "I guessed some of it. I didn't quite know all of it, of course. "Good Lord!" said Bill again, and returned to the letter. In a moment he was looking up again. "What did you write to him? Was that last night? After I'd gone into Stanton?" "Yes." "What did you say? That you'd discovered that Mark was Robert?" "Yes. At least I said that this morning I should probably telegraph to Mr. Cartwright of Wimpole Street, and ask him to -" Bill burst in eagerly on the top of the sentence. "Yes, now what was all that about? You were so damn Sherlocky yesterday all of a sudden. We'd been doing the thing together all the time, and you'd been telling me everything, and then suddenly you become very mysterious and private and talk enigmatically - is that the word? about dentists and swimming and the 'Plough and Horses,' and well, what was it all about? You simply vanished out of sight; I didn't know what on earth we were talking about." Antony laughed and apologized. "Sorry, Bill. I felt like that suddenly. Just for the last half-hour; just to end up with. I'll tell you everything now. Not that there's anything to tell, really. It seems so easy when you know it - so obvious. About Mr. Cartwright of Wimpole Street. Of course he was just to identify the body." "But whatever made you think of a dentist for that?" "Who could do it better? Could you have done it? How could you? You'd never gone bathing with Mark; you'd never seen him stripped. He didn't swim. Could his doctor do it? Not unless he'd had some particular operation, and perhaps not then. But his dentists could at any time, always - if he had been to his dentist fairly often. Hence Mr. Cartwright of Wimpole Street." Bill nodded thoughtfully and went back again to the letter.



"I see. And you told Cayley that you were telegraphing to Cartwright to identify the body?" "Yes. And then of course it was all up for him. Once we knew that Robert was Mark we knew everything." "How did you know?" Antony got up from the breakfast table and began to fill his pipe. "I'm not sure that I can say, Bill. You know those problems in Algebra where you say, 'Let x be the answer,' and then you work it out and find what x is. Well, that's one way; and another way, which they never give you any marks for at school, is to guess the answer. Pretend the answer is 4 - well, will that satisfy the conditions of the problem? No. Then try 6; and if 6 doesn't either, then what about 5? - and so on. Well, the Inspector and the Coroner and all that lot had guessed their answer, and it seemed to fit, but you and I knew it didn't really fit; there were several conditions in the problem which it didn't fit at all. So we knew that their answer was wrong, and we had to think of another - an answer which explained all the things which were puzzling us. Well, I happened to guess the right one. Got a match?" Bill handed him a box, and he lit his pipe. "Yes, but that doesn't quite do, old boy. Something must have put you on to it suddenly. By the way, I'll have my matches back, if you don't mind." Antony laughed and took them out of his pocket. "Sorry.... Well then, let's see if I can go through my own mind again, and tell you how I guessed it. First of all, the clothes." "Yes?" "To Cayley the clothes seemed an enormously important clue. I didn't quite see why, but I did realize that to a man in Cayley's position the smallest clue would have an entirely disproportionate value. For some reason, then, Cayley attached this exaggerated importance to the clothes which Mark was wearing on that



Tuesday morning; all the clothes, the inside ones as well as the outside ones. I didn't know why, but I did feel certain that, in that case, the absence of the collar was unintentional. In collecting the clothes he had overlooked the collar. Why?" "It was the one in the linen-basket?" "Yes. It seemed probable. Why had Cayley put it there? The obvious answer was that he hadn't. Mark had put it there. I remembered what you told me about Mark being finicky, and having lots of clothes and so on, and I felt that he was just the sort of man who would never wear the same collar twice." He paused, and then asked, "Is that right, do you think?" "Absolutely," said Bill with conviction. "Well, I guessed it was. So then I began to see an x which would fit just this part of the problem - the clothes part. I saw Mark changing his clothes; I saw him instinctively dropping the collar in the linen-basket, just as he had always dropped every collar he had ever taken off, but leaving the rest of the clothes on a chair in the ordinary way; and I saw Cayley collecting all the clothes afterwards - all the visible clothes - and not realizing that the collar wasn't there." "Go on," said Bill eagerly. "Well, I felt pretty sure about that, and I wanted an explanation of it. Why had Mark changed down there instead of in his bedroom? The only answer was that the fact of his changing had to be kept secret. When did he change? The only possible time was between lunch (when he would be seen by the servants) and the moment of Robert's arrival. And when did Cayley collect the clothes in a bundle? Again, the only answer was 'Before Robert's arrival.' So another x was wanted - to fit those three conditions." "And the answer was that a murder was intended, even before Robert arrived?" "Yes. Well now, it couldn't be



intended on the strength of that letter, unless there was very much more behind the letter than we knew. Nor was it possible a murder could be intended without any more preparation than the changing into a different suit in which to escape. The thing was too childish. Also, if Robert was to be murdered, why go out of the way to announce his existence to you all - even, at the cost of some trouble, to Mrs. Norbury? What did it all mean? I didn't know. But I began to feel now that Robert was an incident only; that the plot was a plot of Cayley's against Mark - either to get him to kill his brother, or to get his brother to kill him - and that for some inexplicable reason Mark seemed to be lending himself to the plot." He was silent for a little, and then said, almost to himself, "I had seen the empty brandy bottles in that cupboard." "You never said anything about them" complained Bill. "I only saw them afterwards. I was looking for the collar, you remember. They came back to me afterwards; I knew how Cayley would feel about it.... Poor devil!" "Go on," said Bill. "Well, then, we had the inquest, and of course I noticed, and I suppose you did too, the curious fact that Robert had asked his way at the second lodge and not at the first. So I talked to Amos and Parsons. That made it more curious. Amos told me that Robert had gone out of his way to speak to him; had called to him, in fact. Parsons told me that his wife was out in their little garden at the first lodge all the afternoon, and was certain that Robert had never come past it. He also told me that Cayley had put him on to a job on the front lawn that afternoon. So I had another guess. Robert had used the secret passage - the passage which comes out into the park between the first and second lodges. Robert, then, had been in the



house; it was a put-up job between Robert and Cayley. But how could Robert be there without Mark knowing? Obviously, Mark knew too. What did it all mean?" "When was this?" interrupted Bill. "Just after the inquest - after you'd seen Amos and Parsons, of course?" "Yes. I got up and left them, and came to look for you. I'd got back to the clothes then. Why did Mark change his clothes so secretly? Disguise? But then what about his face? That was much more important than clothes. His face, his beard - he'd have to shave off his beard - and then - oh, idiot! I saw you looking at that poster. Mark acting, Mark made-up, Mark disguised. Oh, priceless idiot! Mark was Robert.... Matches, please." Bill passed over the matches again, waited till Antony had relit his pipe, and then held out his hand for them, just as they were going into the other's pocket. "Yes," said Bill thoughtfully. "Yes.... But wait a moment. What about the 'Plough and Horses'?" Antony looked comically at him. "You'll never forgive me, Bill," he said. "You'll never come clue-hunting with me again." "What do you mean?" Antony sighed. "It was a fake, Watson. I wanted you out of the way. I wanted to be alone. I'd guessed at my x, and I wanted to test it - to test it every way, by everything we'd discovered. I simply had to be alone just then, So -" he smiled and added, "Well, I knew you wanted a drink." "You are a devil," said Bill, staring at him. "And your interest when I told you that a woman had been staying there -" "Well, it was only polite to be interested when you'd taken so much trouble." "You brute! You - you Sherlock! And then you keep trying to steal my matches. Well, go on." "That's all. My x fitted." "Did you guess Miss Norris and all that?" "Well, not quite. I didn't realize that Cayley had



worked for it from the beginning - had put Miss Norris up to frightening Mark. I thought he'd just seized the opportunity." Bill was silent for a long time. Then, puffing at his pipe, he said slowly, "Has Cayley shot himself?" Antony shrugged his shoulders. "Poor devil," said Bill. "It was decent of you to give him a chance. I'm glad you did." "I couldn't help liking Cayley in a kind of way, you know." "He's a clever devil. If you hadn't turned up just when you did, he would never have been found out." "I wonder. It was ingenious, but it's often the ingenious thing which gets found out. The awkward thing from Cayley's point of view was that, though Mark was missing, neither he nor his body could ever be found. Well, that doesn't often happen with a missing man. He generally gets discovered in the end; a professional criminal; perhaps not - but an amateur like Mark! He might have kept the secret of how he killed Mark, but I think it would have become obvious sooner or later that he had killed him." "Yes, there's something in that.... Oh, just tell me one thing. Why did Mark tell Miss Norbury about his imaginary brother?" "That's puzzled me rather, too, Bill. It may be that he was just doing the Othello business - painting himself black all over. I mean he may have been so full of his appearance as Robert that he had almost got to believe in Robert, and had to tell everybody. More likely, though, he felt that, having told all of you at the house, he had better tell Miss Norbury, in case she met one of you; in which case, if you mentioned the approaching arrival of Robert, she might say, 'Oh, I'm certain he has no brother; he would have told me if he had,' and so spoil his joke. Possibly, too, Cayley put him on to it; Cayley obviously wanted as many people as possible to know about



Robert." "Are you going to tell the police?" "Yes, I suppose they'll have to know. Cayley may have left another confession. I hope he won't give me away; you see, I've been a sort of accessory since yesterday evening. And I must go and see Miss Norbury." "I asked," explained Bill, "because I was wondering what I should say to - to Betty. Miss Calladine. You see, she's bound to ask." "Perhaps you won't see her again for a long, long time," said Antony sadly. "As a matter of fact, I happen to know that she will be at the Barringtons. And I go up there to-morrow." "Well, you had better tell her. You're obviously longing to. Only don't let her say anything for a day or two. Ill write to you." "Righto!" Antony knocked the ashes out of his pipe and got up. "The Barringtons," he said. "Large party?" "Fairly, I think." Antony smiled at his friend. "Yes. Well, if any of 'em should happen to be murdered, you might send for me. I'm just getting into the swing of it."

Chapter 18: MR. BEVERLEY TAKES THE WATER

Chapter 19: GUESS-WORK

Chapter 20: THE INQUEST

Chapter 21: MR. BEVERLEY IS TACTFUL

Chapter 22: CAYLEY'S APOLOGY

Chapter 23: MR. BEVERLEY MOVES ON

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Chapter 1 Summary: MRS. STEVENS IS FRIGHTENED

In the drowsy heat of a summer afternoon, the Red House is enveloped in a lazy calm, with the faint buzz of bees and the coo of pigeons all around. Inside, Audrey Stevens, the attractive parlourmaid, is busy refitting her hat while chatting with her aunt, Mrs. Stevens, the cook-housekeeper. Their conversation reveals a mix of light-hearted banter and curiosity about Mr. Mark Ablett, the house's bachelor owner, who has unexpectedly mentioned that his brother from Australia will be visiting that afternoon—a detail neither woman had known before.

As their discussion unfolds, Mrs. Stevens insists she has never seen Mr. Mark's brother in her five years of service, which piques Audrey's interest and speculation. She imagines what it would be like if her beau, Joe Turner, were to vanish for fifteen years like Mr. Mark's brother has. Their playful tone shifts subtly when they delve into the brother's mysterious absence, with Mrs. Stevens suggesting that a man who disappears for so long likely has his reasons—though she leaves the specifics to the imagination.

The atmosphere changes when Audrey nervously encounters Mr. Robert Ablett, Mark's brother, who arrives looking rough and distinctly different from his dapper sibling. His brusque demeanor surprises her, contrasting sharply with her expectations. He demands to see Mark, leading to an



awkward exchange that underscores the tension between them. Audrey leads him to the office, but upon discovering Mark isn't there, she seeks him out.

While searching for Mark, Audrey runs into Mr. Cayley, Mark's cousin, who distracts her with his reading and hints that Mark might be in the garden's "Temple." However, her search proves fruitless, leaving her slightly anxious as she contemplates the odd demeanor of Robert.

Back inside, Audrey catches sight of her housemate, Elsie, who seems alarmed by strange noises echoing from inside the house—noises that some suggest might be linked to Robert. The fear escalates when angry shouts from inside demand to be let in, causing panic among the women. Mrs. Stevens, in a flurry of anxiety, begs them not to open the door, leading to a sense of impending danger hanging in the air.

This chapter sets the stage for mystery and suspense, intertwining the trivial matters of domestic life with the looming threat introduced by Robert's arrival. The dialogue-rich narrative captures the essence of everyday life against a backdrop of rising tension, hinting at deeper secrets and unexpected developments ahead.



Chapter 2 Summary: MR. GILLINGHAM GETS OUT AT THE WRONG STATION

In Chapter II of "The Red House Mystery," we dive into the life of Mark Ablett, a man whose past and character evoke a mix of intrigue and caution among those who know him. Mark, the son of a clergyman, was helped by a wealthy benefactor who sponsored his education after his father's death. Though his early years were clouded by financial struggles, once his patron died, Mark granted himself the freedom to pursue art and culture, funding various artistic endeavors and assisting his young cousin, Matthew Cayley, who now manages his affairs at The Red House.

Their breakfast gathering sets the stage for the type of social dynamic that Mark enjoys—surrounded by guests who cannot reciprocate his generosity. Among them is the silent Major Rumbold, the jovial Bill Beverly, and the earnest Ruth Norris. Tension brews when Mark receives an unexpected letter from his brother, Robert, who has been absent for years. His revelation disrupts the casual banter, sparking unease as guests contemplate the implications of this family reunion. Mark's annoyance at the sudden appearance of Robert hints at a strained familial relationship.

Meanwhile, we meet Antony Gillingham, a charismatic figure who arrives at the nearby Woodham station, ready for a carefree holiday. He is intrigued by the world and prefers to observe people rather than travel to exotic locales.



Antony's encounter with the inn's landlord leads him to discover The Red House—causing a delightful stir, as he has a connection with Bill Beverly. With curiosity sparking within him, he decides to visit Mark's residence, setting the stage for potential drama.

As we transition to the house, the contrast between the tranquil, picturesque rural setting and the mysterious, locked door that Antony encounters hints at underlying tensions and unfolding mysteries. This chapter deepens our understanding of Mark's character and hints at complicated relationships, all while introducing us to a vibrant protagonist in Antony Gillingham—a character who seems poised to unravel the mysteries shrouding The Red House and its inhabitants.

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Chapter 3: TWO MEN AND A BODY

In Chapter 3 of "The Red House Mystery," we are thrown into a suspenseful moment as Cayley and Antony react to a gunshot sound that is heard from a locked room. Cayley, visibly shaken, tries to force the door open, suspecting something terrible has occurred inside. Antony, however, proposes a simpler solution - to break a nearby window to gain entry. As they do, the intrigue mounts with Antony feeling a mix of excitement and dread.

Once inside, they discover a body lying on the floor; it's Robert Ablett, Mark's brother, who has been shot in the head. Cayley, relieved that it's not Mark, reveals his connection to the victim and his cousin. As Antony processes the grim scene, he becomes aware of Cayley's anxiety and the gravity of the situation. They confirm the death and realize they must involve the police, but Cayley struggles with denial, suggesting it might have been a suicide.

Their conversation reveals Cayley's distress about Mark's potential involvement, as he struggles with the implications. Antony, calm and

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Chapter 4 Summary: THE BROTHER FROM AUSTRALIA

In Chapter 4 of "The Red House Mystery," a group of guests at The Red House, including the Major, Mrs. Calladine, and her daughter Betty, are initially planning to enjoy a relaxed afternoon of golf. However, Mrs. Calladine stands firm on their schedule, noting that Mark Ablett (the host) wouldn't want them around too long with the arrival of his brother, Robert, who is coming from Australia. As they compromise for a quick nine holes of golf, Bill, one of the guests, enthusiastically greets Antony, who unexpectedly arrives with troubling news.

Antony delivers the shocking announcement that Robert Ablett has been found dead in the house, causing immediate tension and concern among the guests. Antony explains that the incident occurred just moments before his arrival, and Mr. Cayley, a friend of Mark, has sent him to convey the sad news. The guests, initially stunned, express their support for Mark and refuse to leave immediately, feeling it's important to stay by his side during this tragic event. Mrs. Calladine insists on seeing Mark to express their condolences while the Major suggests taking the women back to London that night for safety and comfort.

As the conversations unfold, we learn more about Robert's troubled past as an outcast and possibly disgraced brother of Mark. Through the interactions,



the theme of familial relations and the impact of past actions begins to surface. The chapter shifts to focus on Antony and Cayley's conversation with Inspector Birch, who begins to investigate the circumstances surrounding Robert's death. Cayley provides key details, revealing that Robert had a history of trouble and had only been in touch with Mark sporadically over the years, usually asking for money.

The inspector questions Cayley about Robert's arrival and the tense relationship he had with Mark. We gradually learn that an argument might have broken out, leading to the tragic event. Cayley suggests that Robert arrived with the intention of causing trouble. The tension builds as his account of hearing a loud bang—the gunshot—adds an element of urgency to the investigation.

Antony, who has entered the fold as a keen observer, shares his own perceptions, showcasing his acute awareness of the unfolding situation. This chapter weaves together themes of mystery, family dynamics, and the unsettling ripple effects of sudden tragedy, setting the stage for the complex investigation that is about to develop around Robert's unexpected death. The shock, confusion, and underlying camaraderie among the guests paint a vivid tableau of human emotion in the face of crisis, leaving readers eager to see how the story unfolds.



Chapter 5 Summary: MR. GILLINGHAM CHOOSES A NEW PROFESSION

In Chapter 5 of "The Red House Mystery," the tension continues to rise following the shocking events of the previous chapter. Inspector Birch arrives on the scene to investigate the death of Robert, which everyone suspects was a result of his brother Mark's actions. Antony Gillingham prepares to leave but is told by the inspector that he will need to interview the servants alone to avoid alarming them further. This sets the stage for a series of testimonies that reveal the various opinions and gossip surrounding the incident.

Audrey, the housekeeper, is caught up in a web of speculation about the family dynamics, recalling how she immediately sensed something was off with Robert upon his arrival. Meanwhile, Elsie and the other staff provide snippets of overheard conversations that paint Mark in a dubious light. Elsie recounts a dramatic claim she heard Mark make, indicating he had the upper hand in a confrontation—an assertion heightened by the zealous claims of her fellow servants who enjoy the theater of the situation.

Throughout these interactions, Antony is quietly observing and piecing together details that don't quite add up. He notes the odd behavior of Cayley, who had seemed more concerned for Mark's safety than that of Robert, and wonders why they took the longest route around the house when they ran to



investigate the gunshot. Antony's thoughtful deliberation leads him to consider all angles of the scenario, indicating his budding determination to take on the role of a detective himself.

As Inspector Birch gathers the testimony, it becomes clear to Antony that everyone involved is influenced by their biases. This gives him a unique advantage since he has no preconceptions about either Mark or Robert. He resolves to become the 'private sleuthhound' of the situation, realizing that he is in a better position to uncover the truth, free from the prejudices that cloud the minds of the others.

The chapter highlights themes of perception versus reality, the influence of bias on truth-seeking, and the complexities of human relationships, all while building suspense around the mystery of what truly happened on that fateful day in the Red House. As Antony engages with his new role, readers are left intrigued by the tangled motives and possible truths that lie ahead.



Chapter 6: OUTSIDE OR INSIDE?

In Chapter 6 of "The Red House Mystery," the atmosphere is charged with lingering tension after a recent tragedy. The remaining guests bid farewell to Cayley, each expressing their sentiments differently, which sets the stage for the unfolding mystery. Bill, eager to understand the situation, joins Antony on a garden seat, where he learns about the investigation into a murder and the arrival of an inspector who seems more focused on trivial details than the crime itself. Bill is excited to stay with Antony, while Antony reveals that they'll potentially face more complications soon, hinting at an inquest.

As the chapter progresses, Cayley approaches and informs them that the inspector is seeking a warrant for the arrest of Mark, Cayley's cousin, deepening the intrigue. The conversation between the three characters shifts towards speculating about the nature of the crime, particularly whether Mark's actions were accidental or deliberate. Cayley expresses his belief that it was an accident, but Antony raises questions about the significance of the key to the billiard-room, suggesting it might be a pivotal element.

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Chapter 7 Summary: PORTRAIT OF A GENTLEMAN

In Chapter 7 of "The Red House Mystery," Antony and Bill wander through a lush park, engaging in a conversation that unveils their thoughts on their host, Mark. Bill reveals he appreciates Mark's hospitality but hints that it can feel overbearing. Mark likes to arrange activities for his guests, which can sometimes stifle spontaneity. Bill shares an amusing story about how a ghost prank pulled by a guest, Miss Norris, upset Mark, revealing his childish temperament when things don't go as planned.

As they speak, Bill attempts to describe Mark more honestly, painting him as someone who is vain and self-important yet entertaining in his own way. Despite their light-hearted banter, Antony presses for more serious insights, leading Bill to momentarily question Mark's character in the shadow of the recent murder. Bill insists he cannot believe Mark would commit such an act, as he lacks the stature for it, depicting him as someone who might act rashly in a fit of temper rather than with malicious intent.

Their dialogue shifts focus to Cayley, Mark's loyal friend, who is portrayed as a protective figure but somewhat distant from the other guests. Bill notes that Cayley often feels lost without Mark's direction, which adds another layer to their complex relationship.

As they reach the village, Antony contemplates the need for further



investigation and decides to stay at the inn a bit longer. He is determined to keep a watchful eye on Cayley, convinced he knows more than he admits regarding the murder, and considers switching his accommodations after the inquest to maintain his independence from Mark and Cayley. The chapter masterfully blends humor with growing tension, highlighting themes of loyalty, the complexities of friendship, and the thin line between hospitality and control. As they return to The Red House, the atmosphere thickens with the weight of secrets waiting to be uncovered.

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Chapter 8 Summary: "DO YOU FOLLOW ME, WATSON?"

In Chapter 8 of "The Red House Mystery," we find Antony and his friend Bill in a state of contemplation regarding the mysterious events of the day. The chapter opens with Antony preparing for dinner and reflecting on the peculiar circumstances surrounding their visit to the Red House. Their conversation begins with Bill poking fun at Antony's earlier theory about keys, which leads to a deeper discussion about their investigation.

As they gather for dinner with Cayley, another character who remains somewhat elusive, the atmosphere is casual despite the underlying tension triggered by the day's events. The topic of keys comes up again, highlighting the uncertainty and confusion over their placement – some outside, some inside – which only adds to the mystique of the situation. Cayley, dismissive and cautious, indicates he isn't convinced by any of the theories being pondered, hinting at a deeper knowledge of the situation at hand.

After dinner, Antony and Bill escape outside for some privacy, aiming to discuss their observations and suspicions. The pairing of Antony as the astute observer and Bill as the enthusiastic but often naive questioner mirrors the dynamic of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson. Antony shares a unique talent for remembering details unconsciously, which he demonstrates in a playful yet profound conversation about his ability to recall the number of



steps in a familiar location. This insight into Antony's mind reveals a character who blends keen observation with a humble sense of incredulity.

As they converse, Antony expresses his suspicion regarding Cayley, suggesting that he knows more than he lets on about the death of Robert, the victim in the mystery. They delve into various theories on how Cayley could be involved, but Antony dismisses the simpler narratives that could exonerate him, proposing instead that Cayley is intentionally misleading them for reasons yet unclear.

The chapter embodies themes of observation, deduction, and the intricate web of relationships that complicate the investigation. It captures the close friendship between Antony and Bill, as they playfully navigate the tension of their growing suspicions while weaving through the unsettling atmosphere of the Red House. The banter serves both to lighten the mood and to enhance the sense of unease as they confront the unknown, leaving readers intrigued by the unfolding mystery and eager for more revelations. As they conclude their conversation, Antony is left pondering new possibilities, setting the stage for the next chapter.



Chapter 9: POSSIBILITIES OF A CROQUET SET

In Chapter 9 of "The Red House Mystery," the conversation between the two characters, Bill and Antony, takes a fascinating turn as they delve into the mysteries surrounding a ghostly apparition and a notable incident involving a character named Mark. The chapter kicks off with Bill noticing a sudden spark of inspiration in Antony, who is pondering the appearance of a ghost named Miss Norris. Bill, however, is dismissive and seems let down that Antony's thought process revolves around ghosts when there are more pressing matters, particularly the unsolved aspect of Robert's fate.

As they banter about the logistics of how Miss Norris could have materialized on the park lawn without being seen, they realize they've missed some critical points regarding her unexpected appearance. This discussion reveals layers of their friendship, with Antony questioning Bill's assumptions and prompting him to think critically about the events surrounding them. Bill soon becomes quite animated by the idea of a secret passage leading to the house that might explain how Miss Norris vanished. His excitement is contagious as they explore the shed where croquet

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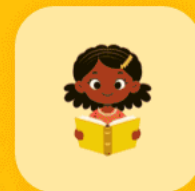
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Chapter 10 Summary: AS IF I WERE SITTING ON THE GRASS BEHIND YOU, BUT GO ON TALKING."

In Chapter 10 of "The Red House Mystery," the characters Antony and Bill engage in a high-stakes investigation that draws them deeper into the enigmatic events surrounding them. As the chapter begins, Bill is passionately discussing his theories about their mutual acquaintance, Mark, with Antony listening attentively. Their camaraderie is palpable, but Antony is distracted by the sounds he heard near a nearby shed. He quietly decides to investigate, thinking that someone might be eavesdropping on their conversation.

Cautiously, he moves closer to the shed, where his suspicions are confirmed when he spots Cayley's head emerging from one of the croquet boxes. Antony is thrilled with the discovery, marveling at the cleverness of Cayley's hiding place, but he knows he must remain discreet about what he has seen. He rejoins Bill, feigning nonchalance as he suggests they take a break and play a game together, while inwardly calculating their next steps.

As they play bowls, Bill is eager and animated, but Antony is focused and deliberate, reflecting his heightened awareness of the unfolding mystery. Their conversation reveals Antony's burgeoning suspicion of Cayley, who he believes is not the trustworthy friend he appears to be. Despite Bill's excitement, Antony is particularly interested in understanding Cayley's



motives and the context of Miss Norris's involvement—a character shrouded in mystery herself.

The tension builds as they head back to the house, and Bill expresses his desire to explore the shed further, but Antony convinces him to wait until tomorrow. Cayley's arrival interrupts them, and they feign casualness as they return to the house, with Bill oblivious to the gravity of the situation.

As Antony reflects on the evening's events in bed, he connects the dots between Cayley's behavior and the urgency to remove Miss Norris from the scene. He theorizes that she must know about a secret passage related to the circumstances of Robert's death. This realization deepens the intrigue, raising questions about what Miss Norris might reveal if given the opportunity.

Antony's thoughts echo his growing resolve to unravel the mystery, pondering the roles each character plays within this tangled web of deception. The night ends with him contemplating the hidden truths potentially lying within the Red House, as curiosity and suspicion swirl around Cayley and the ominous presence of Miss Norris. The chapter closes with Antony falling asleep, his mind racing with possibilities, hinting at the unfolding drama yet to come.



Chapter 11 Summary: MR. GILLINGHAM TALKS NONSENSE

In Chapter 11 of "The Red House Mystery" by A.A. Milne, Antony wakes up in good spirits, eager to discuss the ongoing investigation into the mysterious disappearance of Mark Ablett. Over breakfast with his host, Cayley, he learns that the inspector plans to drag the lake—actually a pond—for clues about Mark, who might have drowned himself. The conversation reveals Antony's skepticism about the ease of Mark's potential escape and the reliability of Cayley's information. Cayley appears indifferent, though Antony senses a deeper tension as he suspects that Cayley may not be telling the whole truth.

Bill, an energetic companion, joins Antony at breakfast, bringing a mix of humor and distractions. Their banter lightens the mood, but underlying Antony's playful demeanor is a keen analytical eye. After breakfast, Antony speaks with Elsie, a maid who overheard Mark and Robert's conversation before the latter was found dead. Her testimony becomes crucial, suggesting Mark had a motive for confrontation, but Antony contemplates the implication of her words, pondering the real dynamics at play.

Echoing thoughts of suspicion, Antony theorizes about a secret passage related to Robert's death, believing that Mark may have discovered it recently. He considers that Cayley could be hiding significant truths, and his



investigative instinct drives him forward. Wanting to explore the secret passage discreetly, he engages Bill in the discussion, illustrating their partnership dynamic. They plan a course of action, hinting at the complexities and possible dangers ahead.

As they stroll to the pond, Antony's musings indicate he feels a sense of urgency. He doubts Mark's death by drowning, speculating that if Mark wanted to end his life, he would have taken more drastic measures. The chapter opens up a mix of intrigue, humor, and foreboding, with Antony feeling a compelling need to unravel the mystery before involving the authorities too deeply. Ultimately, the tone balances lighthearted camaraderie with underlying curiosity and tension, setting the stage for further revelations.

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Chapter 12: THE REVEREND THEODORE USSHER

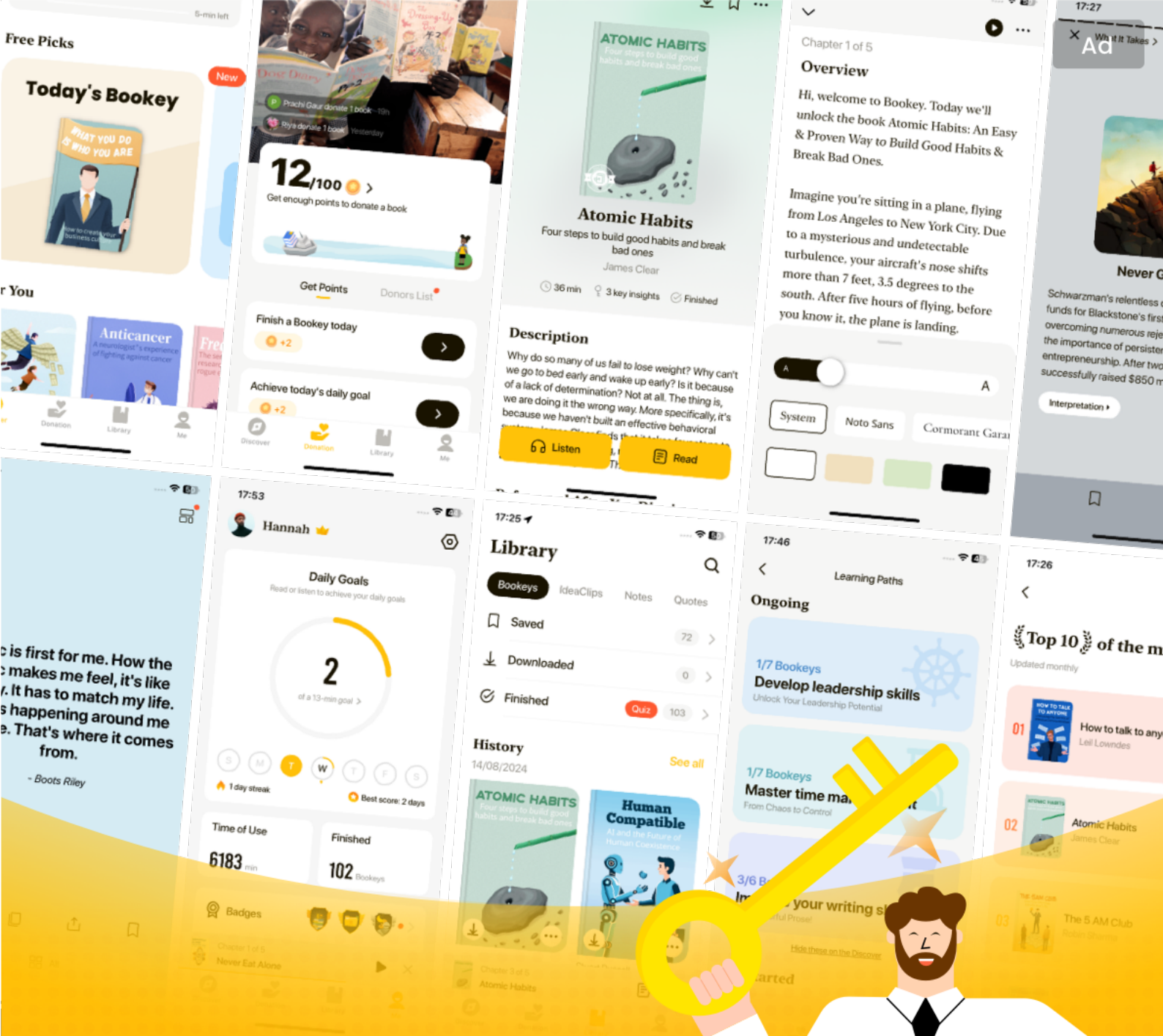
In Chapter 11 of "The Red House Mystery," the protagonists, Antony and Bill, are deep in their investigation of a hidden passage within Mark's library. They realize the urgency of their search, as they may not have much time to uncover its secrets. Antony, ever the analytical thinker, proposes they explore the library since it's less likely to be disturbed, and they rule out other areas of the house as potential starting points for the passage.

As they enter the library, Antony's curiosity about the bookshelves shines through. He engages Bill in conversation about various genres, skillfully stalling while they carefully assess the room for any hidden compartments. After some deliberation, they narrow their focus to a shelf of dusty sermon books belonging to Mark's father, particularly intrigued by a tome called "The Narrow Way" by the Reverend Theodore Ussher.

In a moment of excitement, Antony devises a plan to gently pull the bookshelf, leading them to discover the secret passage way hidden behind it. The astonishment and thrill of their discovery bring a spark to their

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Chapter 13 Summary: A SHADOW ON THE WALL

In Chapter 12 of "The Red House Mystery" by A.A. Milne, Inspector Birch is fervently working on the case surrounding Mark's disappearance. He has sent a detailed description of Mark to London and is probing into the family's background, particularly focusing on Robert, Mark's brother, who has abruptly returned from Australia. Birch finds little conclusive evidence but believes Mark may have left town on the 4:20 train amidst a busier-than-normal market day in Stanton, making it harder for anyone to have noticed.

As Birch plans to drag the local pond in hopes of uncovering evidence, Antony Gillingham and his friend Bill find the Inspector's approach a bit futile but engage with him lightheartedly. Antony, however, feels uneasy about Cayley's involvement in the situation. He suspects that Cayley might be orchestrating a diversion by directing the police's attention to the pond, possibly hiding something more crucial elsewhere.

With the inspector busy with the pond, Antony decides to revisit the scene of the tragedy that had occurred the day before, where Robert's body had been found. He wants to capture the events as they played out and to assess Cayley's actions during that fateful moment. As he retraces his steps, he becomes suddenly aware of a significant detail he had missed: a shadow on the wall that seemed to shift in a way that implied Cayley had closed the



door quietly after entering the room. This realization sparks a deeper train of thought for Antony, leading him to suspect that Cayley was hiding something important.

As the chapter unfolds, Antony becomes increasingly convinced that he must uncover what Cayley was doing and why he was being so secretive. The sense of intrigue grows as he prepares to challenge the narrative and search for the truth behind Cayley's actions, setting the stage for an impending confrontation that blurs the lines between law, loyalty, and deception.



Chapter 14 Summary: THE OPEN WINDOW

In Chapter 14 of "The Red House Mystery," the tension escalates as Antony and Bill continue to unravel the mysteries surrounding the murder of Robert and the involvement of Cayley. Antony's deductive instincts kick in as he realizes that Cayley likely opened the window to create a false trail for Mark, who was involved in the incident. The implications of this discovery lead Antony to reassess the sequence of events, particularly how Mark could have possibly escaped after the shooting.

Antony envisions a scenario where Mark, panicked after shooting Robert—likely by accident—doesn't flee but seeks Cayley's guidance. This paints Cayley as a manipulative figure who orchestrates the situation to benefit them both. As Antony articulates this theory to Bill, they ponder the whereabouts of Mark, questioning whether he might be hiding in a secret passage.

The chapter balances suspense and unfolding logic as Antony grapples with the complexities of the murder. While Bill is excited about the adventure of exploring a secret passage, Antony feels the weight of the situation, understanding the gravity of their inquiry into murder and deceit. The themes of friendship, trust, and the search for truth deepen, with Bill embodying youthful enthusiasm and Antony representing the more cautious wisdom borne from experience.



As they prepare to investigate further, their exchange showcases their dynamic—Bill's eagerness contrasts with Antony's need for careful contemplation. The air is thick with anticipation, danger, and the thrill of a looming revelation, building a rich narrative that keeps readers engaged. With unresolved questions hanging over them, the chapter sets the stage for the next steps in their investigation, promising more thrills and deeper insights into the characters involved.

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Chapter 15: MR. BEVERLEY QUALIFIES FOR THE STAGE

In Chapter 15 of "The Red House Mystery," the excitement builds as Antony and Bill continue their investigation into the mysterious goings-on in the house. Bill has just returned from relaying that Cayley is still at the pond, and their urgency propels them to explore a hidden passageway. They discover an opening in the library that leads down into darkness, where Antony takes the lead, leaving Bill anxiously waiting above. As Antony embarks on this descent, Bill is suddenly caught off guard when Cayley enters the library, prompting him to think quickly and cover up his friend's secretive activities.

Bill's crafty acting skills come into play as he pretends to read in order to avoid suspicion, all while anxiously awaiting Antony's return. Amidst Cayley's inquisitiveness, which raises Bill's concerns about being discovered, the atmosphere is taut with tension. The scene shifts as Bill tries to subtly communicate with Antony through a series of taps on the bookshelf, urging him to stay cautious. When Antony eventually reappears,

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Chapter 16 Summary: MRS. NORBURY CONFIDES IN DEAR MR. GILLINGHAM

In Chapter 15 of "The Red House Mystery," Antony Gillingham and Bill are making their way to Jallands, a quaint farmhouse belonging to Mrs. Norbury. As they walk, Antony exhibits a curious tendency to look back as if trying to memorize the path, hinting at a deeper awareness of the situation surrounding them. Bill, intrigued, engages him in conversation, leading to a revelation that Cayley, a man entwined in the mystery they're investigating, is likely heading to the library, suggesting he might be covering up something significant while they're occupied elsewhere.

Upon arriving at Jallands, they meet Angela Norbury, whom Bill initially judges on superficial standards but whom Antony finds genuinely beautiful. Mrs. Norbury expresses her distress over the news of Mark Ablett's troubles, revealing her hopes for a future engagement between Mark and Angela, which complicates matters further. While Mrs. Norbury is keen to discuss her daughter's potential match with Mark, she also harbors suspicions toward Cayley, describing him as untrustworthy.

Antony listens intently as Mrs. Norbury reveals her thoughts about her daughter's suitors and her disdain for Cayley, suggesting that there's more beneath the surface regarding familial relationships and hidden motives. Their discussion hints at underlying tensions and possible jealousies,



particularly around Mark's engagement. Mrs. Norbury's attitude reveals her desire for a secure future for her daughter, influencing her thoughts about Mark, who does not yet have a concrete commitment, unlike the persistent Cayley.

As the chapter unfolds, Anthony's insights and keen observations lead him to suspect that Cayley has a motive against Mark, further unraveling the mystery. The chapter ends on a contemplative note, with Antony and Bill reflecting on Jallands's charm and the enigmatic nature of their surroundings, bringing a sense of foreboding as they prepare for the night ahead. The chapter effectively builds suspense, deepens character relationships, and poses questions about trust, loyalty, and hidden agendas.

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Chapter 17 Summary: MR. BEVERLEY TAKES THE WATER Cayley seemed very fond of them that night. After dinner was over, he suggested a stroll outside. They walked up and down the gravel in front of the house, saying very little to each other, until Bill could stand it no longer. For the last twenty turns he had been slowing down hopefully each time they came to the door, but the hint had always been lost on his companions, and each time another turn had been taken. But in the end he had been firm. "What about a little billiards?" he said, shaking himself free from the others. "Will you play?" said Antony to Cayley. "I'll watch you," he said, and he had watched them resolutely until the game, and then another game after that; had been played. They went into the hall and attacked the drinks. "Well, thank heaven for bed," said Bill; putting down his glass. "Are you coming?" "Yes," said Antony, and finished his drink. He looked at Cayley. "I've just got one or two little things to do," said Cayley. "I shan't be long following you." "Well, good night, then." "Good night." "Good night," called Bill from half-way up the stairs. "Good night, Tony." "Good night." Bill looked at his watch. Half-past eleven. Not much chance of anything happening for another hour. He pulled open a drawer and wondered what to wear on their expedition. Grey flannel trousers, flannel shirt and a dark coat; perhaps a sweater, as they might



companion, Bill Beverley, begin their day with breakfast at the Red House. Despite the backdrop of a looming inquest into the death of Robert Ablett, Antony maintains a lighthearted demeanor, engaging in witty banter with Bill and their host, Cayley. Throughout their conversation, Antony subtly probes Cayley about Mark Ablett, who is presumed missing and may have drowned himself in a pond.

Later, an excited Bill suggests they play billiards, which has been a source of amusement for them. Following their game, Cayley bids them goodnight, and his demeanor raises Antony's suspicions about his involvement in Robert's death. As the night unfolds, Antony remains troubled by the possibility of discovering secrets in the mysterious passage linking the library to the bowling-green.

Antony proposes a plan to Bill for later that evening: they intend to follow Cayley as he presumably disposes of something in the pond. While they wait for an opportunity, their conversations blend humor with serious reflections on the events that transpired the previous day.

The chapter captures a blend of suspense and lightheartedness. Despite the dark undercurrents of death and deception, the camaraderie between Antony and Bill adds a layer of levity to their plight as amateur detectives. As they prepare for their nocturnal adventure to uncover the truth, the tension builds, leaving readers curious about what will unfold next.



Chapter 18: MR. BEVERLEY TAKES THE WATER

In Chapter 18 of "The Red House Mystery," tension mounts as Bill and Antony navigate the intrigue surrounding their host, Cayley. After a quiet dinner, Cayley suggests a stroll, but Bill, restless, proposes a game of billiards. When the evening wraps up, Bill prepares for a secret outing, waiting anxiously for Cayley to retire. He sets up a dummy in his bed to deceive Cayley and slips into the shadows, eager to uncover the truth about the mysterious pond.

Antony surprises Bill by entering his room, revealing he had planned his own vigil. Together, they stealthily approach the pond, where they suspect Cayley is hiding something incriminating in the water. As Cayley arrives, the boys remain hidden, watching intently as he deposits a suspicious brown bag into the pond, which sinks slowly, heightening their anxiety. After Cayley leaves, the two make their approach to discover what lies beneath the murky surface.

With resolute determination, Bill dives into the cold water, retrieving the bag

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Chapter 19 Summary: GUESS-WORK

In Chapter 19 of "The Red House Mystery," the story unfolds as the characters prepare for the inquest at three o'clock. Antony has already packed his bag, and his friend Bill, having enjoyed a more leisurely breakfast, is surprised by the rush. Antony informs Bill that he'll be heading back to London while Bill's luggage will be sent to Stanton. They plan to enjoy the morning together before the inquest.

Once outside in the park, Antony shares a realization that prompts a shift in their investigative focus from Mark, who is a central figure, to his brother Robert, who has recently died. He suggests that their previous assumptions may have been misguided because they hadn't fully explored Robert's character and his relationship with Mark. They delve into their suspicions about Mark's preemptive warnings about Robert and the circumstances surrounding Robert's arrival.

Antony pieces together moments from the previous days, suggesting Mark knew about Robert coming to visit before he received the letter. Bill contemplates this but struggles to understand its significance until Antony emphasizes Mark's rapid decision-making when he received the letter, hinting at deeper implications regarding Mark's state of mind and possible motives.



Their conversation deepens as they consider how Mark might have tried to manage perceptions about Robert's arrival in light of his dubious reputation, especially in relation to Mrs. Norbury, whom Mark hoped to impress. Antony argues that Mark's decision to tell Mrs. Norbury about Robert beforehand indicates a possible urgency because he knew Robert was coming soon.

As they analyze the oddities surrounding the investigation, Antony critiques Cayley's behavior regarding hidden clothes that may link to the murder. They discuss the significance of the missing collar among Mark's belongings, which symbolizes crucial evidence that contradicts Cayley's narrative.

The chapter is filled with the intellectual banter between Antony and Bill, as they navigate through clues, forming hypotheses and deepening the mystery of the case. This section encapsulates themes of deception, familial dynamics, and the complexities of uncovering the truth in human relationships, all while maintaining an air of clever deduction and camaraderie. The curiosity and excitement the characters feel about piecing the mystery together keep the reader engaged, making the investigation about much more than just the facts of the case.



Chapter 20 Summary: THE INQUEST

In Chapter 19 of "The Red House Mystery," the inquest into Robert Ablett's death unfolds, revealing a tapestry of suspense and intrigue. The Coroner sets the stage, painting a picture of the tragic circumstances surrounding the death of Robert, who had returned from Australia, seemingly with ill intentions towards his brother, Mark Ablett. Witnesses begin to share their accounts, establishing a timeline of Robert's arrival and the fatal events that ensued shortly after Mark entered a room referred to as "the office."

Bill Beverley provides evidence, carefully navigating questions about a letter from Robert that Mark had deemed unwelcome. His responses hint at family tensions without revealing too much, clever enough not to divulge that he had read the letter. Andrew Amos, a lodge worker, shares a peculiar encounter with Robert, noting his rough demeanor but ultimately allowing him access to the house. The following witness, Stevens, offers nothing groundbreaking but adds to the narrative surrounding the atmosphere of fear within the house.

Then, the air thickens with tension when the enigmatic Cayley takes the stand. His demeanor both captivates and unnerves Antony as he skillfully eludes questions about his own knowledge of Mark's habits, all while providing hints that something is amiss. Antony's curiosity peaks, as does the audience's when he steps up to testify. His evidence aligns with Cayley's



accounts, leading them to a moment of chilling revelation when Cayley expresses relief upon identifying the deceased as Robert, not Mark. This raises questions about Cayley's true feelings and motives, prompting speculation among the crowd.

Inspector Birch then steps in, providing clinical insights into the crime scene while the jury listens intently. He unveils details about Robert's past and the brothers' fraught relationship, suggesting possible motives for murder. As more witnesses relay their observations, a pattern emerges indicating Mark's potential culpability in the tragic turn of events, despite the absence of a clear weapon or evidence of suicide.

As the inquest nears its conclusion, the Coroner carefully summarizes the evidence, allowing the jury to deliberate on the harrowing question: Who truly pulled the trigger? The tension in the room escalates as they contemplate the implications of their findings. Ultimately, the jury returns with a verdict blaming Mark for Robert's death, leaving a heavy cloud of suspicion and dread hanging over all involved.

Amidst the chaos, Antony senses something deeper at play, his instincts ignited as he observes Andrew Amos and another witness exiting the courtroom. The chapter closes, leaving us eager to uncover the secrets that lie ahead, and the audience is left pondering the fine line between guilt and innocence in this complex web of relationships and motives.

Event	Description
Inquest Begins	The Coroner opens the inquest into Robert Ablett's death, revealing the tragic circumstances of his return from Australia.
Witness Testimonies	Witnesses provide accounts of Robert's arrival and the events leading to the incident, highlighting family tensions.
Bill Beverley's Evidence	Bill discusses a controversial letter from Robert that Mark rejected, without disclosing he read it.
Andrew Amos' Encounter	A lodge worker recounts a strange meeting with Robert and notes his rough demeanor.
Stevens' Testimony	Stevens provides bland statements that contribute to the atmosphere of fear in the house.
Cayley's Testimony	Cayley intrigues the audience as he skillfully dodges questions, hinting at deeper motives.
Antony's Contribution	Antony corroborates Cayley's testimony, leading to a troubling realization regarding the identities involved.
Inspector Birch's Insights	The Inspector reveals details about Robert's past and the brothers' conflict, suggesting murder motives.
Jury Deliberation	The jury weighs evidence pointing toward Mark's involvement in Robert's death, despite the lack of a weapon.
Verdict	The jury finds Mark culpable for Robert's death, leaving a tense atmosphere amongst those present.
Antony's Instincts	Antony feels something significant is unresolved as he observes interactions among witnesses.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The complexity of human relationships and the shadows they cast on our lives

Critical Interpretation: In the intricate tapestry of life, much like the chaos of the inquest, you will find that the relationships you forge with family and friends can spark a web of motives and connections that are both profound and perilous. This chapter serves as a reminder to approach your interactions with awareness; understanding that even the most benign relationships can harbor unspoken tensions.

Reflecting on this complexity can inspire you to cultivate deeper empathy and communication within your circles, encouraging openness and clarity. Acknowledging the shadows that linger in relationships empowers you to navigate them thoughtfully, ultimately leading to more fortified bonds and a more authentic life.



Chapter 21: MR. BEVERLEY IS TACTFUL

In Chapter 21 of "The Red House Mystery," we find Bill and Antony grappling with the aftermath of an inquest held at the "Lamb" in Stanton, where the tragic death of Robert Ablett is the central concern. Bill waits outside the inn, reminiscing about a past theatrical performance where he hilariously botched a role. Eager to catch up with Antony, who is accompanied by friends, Bill engages in a light-hearted conversation that turns serious as Antony's curiosity about health, swimming, and a mutual acquaintance, Mark, hints that he is piecing together something important.

Antony expresses a sense of urgency, asking Bill to return to Stanton for clues regarding a mysterious stranger who might have visited the "Plough and Horses" inn on the night before Robert's death. Bill's enthusiasm for the task shines through as he promises to discreetly gather information about the guest's identity without leading the innkeeper to suggest anything specific. Feeling energized, Bill heads back, leaving Antony deep in thought, hinting at a methodical investigation.

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Chapter 22 Summary: CAYLEY'S APOLOGY

In Chapter 21 of "The Red House Mystery," Cayley writes a long, reflective letter to Mr. Gillingham, detailing the circumstances surrounding the death of Mark Ablett. He begins by acknowledging the precarious situation he finds himself in, where Gillingham seems poised to inform the police about his discoveries. Cayley offers to share the truth of what happened, framing it in a way that justifies his actions as necessary rather than malicious.

He takes readers back to his youth, recalling how Mark Ablett, his wealthy cousin, adopted him when he was just thirteen. Mark's pretentiousness and need for adoration become apparent as Cayley reflects on their relationship. Mark educated him and provided a life of privilege, but he also stifled Cayley's sense of self-worth. Over the years, Cayley harbored resentment, especially after Mark rejected his pleas for financial help when Cayley's brother Philip fell into trouble. This betrayal deepened their rift, transforming Cayley's admiration into animosity.

Cayley describes a turning point as Mark's drinking escalated, causing him to spiral into self-destructive behavior. Surprisingly, Cayley found himself wanting to intervene, realizing that Mark's downfall would also extinguish Cayley's hope for revenge. Ultimately, an incident involving Mark's attempted humiliation of the actress Ruth Norris leads Cayley to devise a plan for Mark's death. He exploits Mark's vanity and desperation for



revenge, persuading him to impersonate their deceased brother Robert—an idea that appeals to Mark’s artistic sensibilities.

As the plan unfolds, Cayley takes meticulous steps to ensure that Mark’s death appears accidental after he is dressed and positioned to meet the guests. However, just as Cayley executes the fatal act, Gillingham’s unexpected arrival throws a wrench into his plans, forcing him to act quickly to maintain his façade.

Cayley’s narration reveals his internal conflict; while he rationalizes his actions as protective, the moral implications of murder loom large. He oscillates between portraying himself as a victim of Mark’s cruelty and accepting his role as the orchestrator of the murder. Ultimately, the chapter concludes on a note of resignation, as Cayley reflects on the futility of his revenge and the tragic end of both the Ablett and Cayley families.

The themes of vanity, betrayal, and the complexity of human relationships resonate throughout this chapter. Cayley’s character development transitions from a bitter subordinate to a calculating murderer, illustrating the dark consequences of envy and resentment. The narrative is both a confession and a plea for understanding, leaving readers to ponder the ethical boundaries of loyalty and revenge.



Critical Thinking

Key Point: The futility of revenge

Critical Interpretation: As you navigate your own life's challenges, remember the truth that Cayley grapples with: revenge often leads to a cycle of destruction, not satisfaction. Instead of seeking retribution for wrongs done to you, consider embracing forgiveness. Letting go of anger not only frees you from the burdens of resentment but also opens the door to healing and personal growth.

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Chapter 23 Summary: MR. BEVERLEY MOVES ON

In Chapter 22 of "The Red House Mystery," the tension escalates as Antony and Bill delve deeper into the mystery surrounding Mark and Robert. Bill is stunned to learn that Antony had some insight into the connections between the two men, prompting him to demand clarity about Antony's hidden thoughts and observations. As they sit at the breakfast table, Antony explains his reasoning step-by-step, comparing his deduction process to solving algebra problems.

He reveals that Mr. Cartwright, a dentist, is crucial in confirming the identity of the body, as he would be the only one capable of doing so with certainty. The conversation shifts to the peculiarities of Mark's disappearance and attire, particularly the absence of his collar, which Antony theorizes was placed in the linen basket by Mark himself. This leads them to consider the events surrounding Robert's arrival and the idea that a murder plot was already in the works, implying that Cayley had orchestrated a plan involving both brothers.

Antony meticulously retraces his mental steps, recalling oddities like Robert's route to the house and the significance of the secret passage. Bill listens intently, piecing together the clues that indicate a potential conspiracy against Mark. The notion that Robert's existence was a mere facade, designed perhaps to lure Mark into a trap, becomes clear as they discuss



their findings.

As the discussion continues, Antony reflects on the motivations behind Mark's revelation of a fictional brother to Miss Norbury, suspecting that it was part of a larger deception. The chapter culminates with Antony's decision to involve the police, acknowledging his own complicity in the unfolding drama since his arrival. Bill prepares to confront his feelings for Betty, illustrating the personal stakes intertwined with the mystery.

Ultimately, the chapter masterfully intertwines character development with thematic elements of deception, identity, and moral complexity, leaving the reader on the edge of their seat as Antony prepares to pursue the truth, while Bill faces the emotional repercussions of the tangled relationships within the narrative.

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