

And the hilltop gardens yield this fragrant tea.

"SALADA" TEA

"Fresh from the gardens"



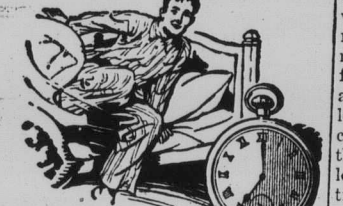
From the beginning Antony had seen this answer coming and had drawn back from it. For if Mark had been killed, it seemed such a cold-blooded killing. Was Cayley equal to it?

Bill would have said "No," because Bill wouldn't have killed anybody in cold blood himself, and because he took it for granted that other people behaved pretty much as he did. But Antony had no such illusions. Murders were done; murder had actually been done here, for there was Robert's dead body. Why not another murder?

Had Mark been in the office at all that afternoon? The only evidence

(other than Cayley's, which obviously did not count) was Elsie's. Elsie was quite certain that she had heard his voice. But then Bill had said that it was a very characteristic voice—an easy voice, therefore, to imitate. If Bill could imitate it so successfully, why not Cayley?

But perhaps it had not been such a cold-blooded killing, after all. Suppose Cayley had had a quarrel with his cousin that afternoon over the girl whom they were both wooing. Suppose Cayley had killed Mark, either purposely, in sudden passion, or accidentally, meaning only to knock him down. Suppose that this had happened in the passage, say about two o'clock. Suppose Cayley there, with the body at his feet, feeling already the rope round his neck; his mind darting for a way of escape; and suppose that suddenly and irrelevantly he remembers that Robert is coming to the house at three o'clock that afternoon—automatically he looks at his watch—in half an hour's time.



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And then the sudden inspiration! Robert dead in the office, Mark's body hidden in the passage—impossible to make Robert seem the murderer, but how easy to make Mark's, if Robert dead and Mark missing; why, it jumped to the eye at once. Mark had killed Robert accidentally; yet, that would be more likely—and then had run away. Sudden panic. . . (He looks at his watch again. Fifteen minutes, but plenty of time now. The thing arranges itself.)

Was that the solution, Antony wondered. It seemed to fit in with the facts as they knew them; but then, so did the other theory which he had suggested to Bill in the morning.

"Which one?" said Bill. "They were sitting in the corpse above the pond, from which the Inspector and his fishermen had now withdrawn. Bill had listened with open mouth to Antony's theory, and save for an occasional "By jove!" had listened in silence. "Smart man, Cayley," had been his only comment at the end.

"Which other theory?" "That Mark had killed Robert accidentally and had gone to Cayley for help, and that Cayley, having hidden him in the passage, locked the office door from the outside and hammered on it."

"Yes, but you were so dashed mysterious about that. I asked you what the point of it was, and you wouldn't say anything." He thought for a little, and then went on, "I suppose you



"See anything?" said Antony at last.

meant that Cayley deliberately killed Mark, and tried to make him look like a murderer?"

"I wanted to warn you that we should probably find Mark in the passage, alive or dead."

"And now you don't think so?" "No, I think that his dead body is there."

"Meaning that Cayley went down and killed him afterward—after you had come after the police had come?" "Well, that's what I shrink from, Bill. It's so horribly cold-blooded, Cayley may be capable of it, but I hate to think of it."

"But, dash it all, your other way is cold-blooded enough. According to you, he goes up to the office and deliberately shoots a man with whom he has no quarrel, whom he hasn't seen for fifteen years!"

"Yes, but to save his own neck. That makes a difference. And I think that Mark's dead body is in the passage now, and has been there since, say, half-past two yesterday afternoon. And tonight Cayley is going to hide it in the pond."

Bill pulled at the moss on the ground beside him, threw away a handful or two, and said slowly, "You may be right, but it's all guess-work, you know."

Antony laughed. "Good Lord, of course it is," he said. "And tonight we shall know if it's a good guess or a bad one."

Bill brightened up suddenly. "Tonight," he said. "I say, tonight's going to be rather fun. How do we work it?"

Antony was silent for a little. "Let's put ourselves in Cayley's place," said Antony, puffing slowly at his pipe. "He's got the body, or whatever it is, in the passage. What will he do next?"

"Come out again," said Bill helpfully. "Yes; but which end?"

Bill sat up with a start. "By jove, you mean that he will go out at the far end by the bowling-green?"

"Don't you think so? Just imagine him walking across the lawn in full view of the house, at midnight, with a body in his arms. He can get out by the bowling-green, and then come to the pond without ever being in sight of the house at all."

"You're right. Now, what's the next thing?"

"The next thing is to mark the exact place in the pond where he drops whatever he drops."

"So that we can fish it out again." "If we can see what it is, we shan't want to. The police can have a go at it tomorrow. But if it's something we can't identify from a distance, then we must try and get it out. To see whether it's worth telling the police about."

"Y—yes," said Bill, wrinkling his forehead. "Of course, the trouble with water is that one bit of it looks pretty much like the next bit. I don't know if that had occurred to you."

"It had," smiled Antony. "Let's come and have a look at it." They walked to the edge of the corpse, and lay down there in silence, looking at the pond beneath them.

"See anything?" said Antony at last.

"What?"



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"The fence on the other side."

"What about it?"

"Well, it's rather useful, that's all."

"Said Sherlock Holmes enigmatically," added Bill. "A moment later, his friend Watson had hurled him into the pond."

Antony laughed. "I love being Sherlock," he said. "It's very unfair of you not to play up to me."

"Why is that fence useful to my dear Holmes?" said Bill obediently.

"Because you can take a bearing on it. You see—"

"Yes, you needn't stop to explain to me what a bearing is."

"I wasn't going to. But you're lying here"—he looked up—"underneath this pine tree. Cayley comes out in the old boat and drops his parcel in. You take a line from here on to the boat, and mark it off on the fence there. Say it's the fifth post from the end. Well, then I take a line from my tree—we'll find one for me directly—and it comes to the twentieth post. Say, and where the two lines meet, there shall the eagles be gathered together. Q. E. D. And the taller eagle, Beverley by name, do his famous diving act. As performed nightly at the Hippodrome."

Bill looked at him uneasily.

"I say, really? It's beastly dirty water, you know."

"I'm afraid so, Bill. So it is written in the book of Jasher."

"Of course I knew that one of us would have to, but I hoped—oh, well, it's a warm night."

"Just the night for a bath," agreed Antony, getting up. "Well now, let's have a look for my tree."

They walked down to the margin of the pond and then looked back. Bill's tree stood up and took the evening, tall and unmistakable, fifty feet nearer to heaven than its neighbors. But it had its fellow at the other end of the cove, not quite so tall, perhaps, but equally conspicuous.

"That's where I shall be," said Antony, pointing to it. "Now, for my sake, count your posts accurately."

"Thanks very much, but I shall do it for my own sake," said Bill with whole night diving."

"Fix on the post in a straight line with you and the splash, and then count backward to the beginning of the fence."

"Right, old boy. Leave it to me. I can do this on my head."

"Well, that's how you will have to do the last part of it," said Antony with a smile.

He looked at his watch. It was nearly time to change for dinner. They started to walk back to the house together.

At midnight 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. (To be continued.)

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