The Bishop Murder Case

A PHILO VANCE STORY

BY S. S. VAN DINE

SYNOPSIS

A man known as Cock Robin is shot through the heart with an arrow. The body is found on the archery range beside the home of Prof. Dillard, where Robin was well known. The crime seems to be the intentional dramatization of the old nursery rhyme "Who killed Cock Robin?" District Attorney Markham is puzzled by the apparently senseless circumstances attending it and asks the aid of Philo Vance, wealthy young bachelor who dabbles in the solving of unusual mysteries. The police get on the trail of Sperling, the last man known to have been with Robin.

CHAPTER III.—(Cont'd.)

Heath gave a start.

"Right outside the window, in fact, Mr. Vance. It's in on the piano now, waiting for the finger-print men."

"The professor's sign-manual is all they'll find, I'm afraid." Vance opened his case and selected another cigarette. "And I'm rather inclined to believe that the arrow itself is innocent of prints."

Heath was scrutinizing Vance inquisitively.

"What made you think that the bow was found near the window, Mr. Vance?" he asked.

"It seemed the logical place for it; in view of the position of Mr. Robin's body, don't y' know."

"Shot from close range, you mean?"

Vance shook his head.

"No, Sergeant. I was referring to the fact that the deceased's feet are pointing toward the basement door, and that, though his arms are extended, his legs are drawn up. Is that the way you'd say a man would fall who'd been shot through the heart?"

Heath considered the point.

"No-o," he admitted. "He'd likely be more crumpled up; or, if he did fall over back, his legs would be straight out and his arms drawn in."

"Quite. And regard his hat. If he had fallen backwards it would be behind him, not at his feet.

"See here, Vance," Markham demanded sharply; "what's in your mind?"

"Oh, numberless things, but they all boil down to the wholly irrational notion that this defunct gentleman wasn't shot with a bow and arrow at all."

"Then why——"

"Exactly! Why the utter insanity of the elaborate stage-setting? My word, Markham! This business is ghastly."

As Vance spoke the basement door opened, and Dr. Doremus, shepherded by Detective Burke, stepped jauntily into the areaway. He greeted us breezily and shook hands all round. Then he fixed a fretful eye on Heath.

"By gad, Sergeant!" he complained, pulling his hat down to an even more rakish angle. I only spend three hours out of the twenty-four eating my meals; and you invariably choose those three hours to worry me with your confounded bodies. You're ruining my digestion." He looked about him petulantly and, on seeing Robin, whistled softly. "For gad's sake! A nice fancy murder you picked out for me this time!"

He knelt down and began running his practiced fingers over the body.

Markham stood for a moment looking on, but presently he turned to Heath.

"While the doctor's busy with his examination, Sergeant, I'll go upstairs and have a chat with Professor Dillard." Then he addressed himself to Doremus. "Let me see you before you go, doctor."

"Oh, sure." Doremus did not so much as look up. He had turned the body on one side, and was feeling the base of the skull.

CHAPTER IV.

When we reached the main hall Captain Dubois and Detective Bellamy, the finger-print experts from Headquarters, were just arriving. Detective Snitkin, who had evidently been watching for them, led them at once toward the basement stairs, and Markham, Vance and I went up to the second floor.

The library was a large, luxurious room at least twenty feet deep, occupying the entire width of the building.

Professor Dillard sat before the desk, one foot resting on a small tufted ottoman; and in a corner near the windows, huddled in a sprawling armchair, was his niece, a vigorous, severely tailored girl with strong, chiselled features of classic cast. The old professor did not rise to greet us, and made no apology for the omission. He appeared to take it for granted that we were aware of his disability. The introductions were perfunctory, though Markham gave a brief explanation of Vance's and my presence there.

"I regret, Markham," the professor said, when we had settled ourselves, "that a tragedy should be the reason for this meeting; but it's always good to see you. I suppose you will want to cross-examine Belle and me. Well, ask anything you care to."

Professor Bertrand Dillard was a man in his sixties slighly stooped from a sedentary studious life; clean-shaven, and with a marked brachycephalic head surmounted with thick white hair combed pompadour. His eyes, though small, were remarkably intense and penetrating; and the wrinkles about his mouth held that grim pursed expression which often comes with years of concentration on difficult problems. His features were those of the dreamer and scientist; and, as the world knows, this man's wild dreams of space and time and motion had been actualized into a new foundation of scientific fact. Even now his face reflected an introspective abstraction, as if the death of Robin were but an intrusion upon the inner drama of his thoughts.

Markham hesitated a moment before answering. Then he said with marked deference:

"Suppose, sir, you tell me just what you know of the tragedy. Then I'll put whatever questions I deem essential."

Professor Dillard reached for an old meerschaum pipe on the stand beside him. When he had filled and lighted it he shifted himself more comfortably in his chair.

"I told you practically everything I know over the telephone. Robin and Sperling called this morning about ten o'clock to see Belle. But she had gone to the courts to play tennis, so they waited in the drawing room downstairs. I heard them talking there together for half an hour or so before they went to the basement club-room. I remained here reading for perhaps an hour, and then, as the sunshine looked so pleasant, I decided to step out on the balcony at the rear of the house. I had been there about five minutes, I should say, when I chanced to look down on the archery range; and to my horrified amazement I saw Robin lying on his back with an arrow-shaft protruding from his breast. I hastened down as quickly as my gout would permit, but I could see at once that the poor fellow was dead; so I immediately telephoned to you. There was no one in the house at the time but old Pyne, the butler, and myself. The cook had gone marketing; Arnesson had left for the university at nine o'clock; and Belle was still out playing tennis. I sent Pyne to look for Sperling, but he was nowhere about; and I came back to the library here to wait for you. Belle returned shortly before your men arrived, and the cook came in a little later. Arnesson won't be back until after two."

"There was no one else here this morning—no strangers or visitors?"

The professor shook his head.

"Only Drukker, I believe you met him here once. He lives in the house at our rear. He often drops in—mostly, however, to see Arnesson; they have much in common. He's written a book on 'World Lines in Multi-dimensional Continua.' The man's quite a genius in his way; has the true scientific mind. . . . . But when he found that Arnesson was out he sat for a while with me discussing the Brazilian expedition of the Royal Astronomical Society. Then he went home."

"What time was this,"

"About half past nine. Drukker had already gone when Robin and Sperling called.

"Was it unusual, Professor Dillard," asked Vance, "for Mr. Arnesson to be away on Saturday mornings "

The old professor looked up sharply, and there was a brief hesitation before he answered.

"Not unusual exactly; although he's generally here on Saturdays. But this morning he had some important research work to do for me in the faculty library. . . Arnesson," he added, "is working with me on my next book."

There was a short silence; then Markham spoke.

"You said this morning that both Robin and Sperling were suitors for Miss Dillard's hand. . . ."

"Uncle!" The girl sat upright in her chair and turned angry, reproachful eyes upon the old professor. "That wasn't fair."

"But it was true, my dear." His voice was noticeably tender.

"It was true—in a way," she admitted. "But there was no need of mentioning it. You know, as well as they did, how I regarded them. We were good friends—that was all. Only last night, when they were here together, I told them—quite plainly—that I wouldn't listen to any more silly talk of marriage from either of them. They were only boys . . . and now one of them's gone. . . . Poor Cock Robin!" She strove bravely to stifle her emotion.

Vance raised his eyebrows and leaned forward.

"'Cock Robin'?"

"Oh, we all called him that. We did it to tease him, because he didn't like the nickname."

"The sobriquet was inevitable," Vance observed sympathetically. "And it was rather a nice nickname, don't y' know. The original Cock Robin was loved by 'all the birds of the air,' and they all mourned his passing." He watched the girl closely as he spoke.

"I know," she nodded. "I told him that once. And every one liked Joseph, too. You couldn't help liking him. He was so—so goodhearted and kind."

Vance again settled back in his chair; and Markham continued his questioning.

(To be continued.)

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Toronto—No period in the history of England equals in fascination the time of Queen Elizabeth, said Miss Ruth Home of the Royal Ontario Museum in speaking at a public meeting in the Household Science Building of the University of Toronto recently. The period was in Queen Elizabeth's reign that there appears the "Home of the English-speaking people with all its social, moral and economic significance. The Elizabethan house is a direct descendent of the one-roomed hut of primitive man and still retains many of its characteristics, such as the great hall, the entrance gate, the four courts, sloping roof and deceptive effect of being only a single story when in reality it is two storeys.

"Furniture was noted for its scarcity and grandeur. With richly decorated ceiling and panelled or tapestry walls with rushes upon the floor (principally noted for their uncleanness) there was no need for a great deal of furniture," she said. "The decorative ensemble was rich enough in itself and the very little furniture there was a great bed and two chairs for the master and mistress, a table or two for dinner, chests to hold their clothes, and the rest of the family could do without.

"Bess of Hardwick had to dismantle one house to furnish suitably another for the occupancy of Mary Queen of Scots and when Elizabeth went on a progress one castle was stripped to benefit others—even to the hinges and locks on the doors," Miss Home said.

The following notice is said to have recently been posted on a Scotch golf course: "Members are requested to refrain from picking up lost balls before they have stopped rolling.'

For Dry Skin—Minard's Liniment.

Discard the Term "Ptomaine Poison"

Physicians Now Hold That Suspected Food Becomes Infected Before Ingestion

The expression "ptomaine poisoning" has been for the most part abandoned in medical discussions and diagnosis during the last few years, says The Journal of the American Medical Association editorially. Ptomaine was the term introduced by Selmi about 1850 and applied to a group of basic substances, having alkalodial properties, which were obtained from decomposing proteins and were highly toxic to animals when injected. Presently, however, the rapidly developing knowledge of bacterial and their possible role in the gensis of disease directed attention to the microbiotic aspects of the subject.

"As Damon has pointed out," the writer continues, "since the studies were made that directed attention to the possibility that bacteria might be the etiologic agents in causing illness in man in cases that had previously been regarded as ptomaine poisoning, the bacteriologic investigations of many workers have widened our field of knowledge and shown that a variety of bacterial species are capable of growing in foodstuffs under widely different conditions nd that they must be held accountable for many, if not nearly all, cases of food poisoning formerly attributed to ptomaines.

"In fact, Damon notes further, at the present time improved methods of detection are more and more frequently indicating that infection of food is responsible for illness in those who consume it. It thus seems probable to Damon that practically all food poisoning, in which illness is not induced by a hypersensitiveness of the individual or by a metallic poison, or in which an alkaloid of vegetable origin is not involved, is due to infection.

"Thus the bacterial theory of food poisoning has generally supplanted the older and somewhat less specific ptomaine or chemical theory. Perhaps it would be more in accord with actual practice to say that investigators of cases of food poisoning, as the present nomenclature expresses it, seek the presence of pathogenic bacteria or their products in the food under suspicion.

"There are increasing indications that toxic material as well as noxious bacteri need to be taken into consideration. Indeed, this may in some ways represent a return to the older chemical theory, with the exception that the materies morbi is directly attributed to the metbolism of well defined and recognized micro-organisms.

"This is exemplified in the recent report of Jordan of the University of Chicago. Incriminated food secured during an outbreak of food poisoning contained a yellow staphylococcus in considerable abundance. This apparently produced a toxic substance in broth, as shown by the effect of the sterile filtrate, which, on being swallowed by a human volunteer, gave rise to nausea, diarrhea and prostration of the same character as that observed in the original outbreak.

"Furthermore, Jordan has now demonstrated that various strains of staphylococci of diverse orgin and different cultural characters are capable of generating in broth a substance which, when taken by mouth, produces gastro-intestinal disturbance. This substance is destroyed by boiling and is either destroyed or greatly weakened by being heated at from 60 to 65 C. for thirty minutes.

"It seems not unlikely to Jordan that bacteria of other groups may produce similar substances that are irritating to the human alimentary tract. From the standpoint of recognizing the immediately harmful factor in many instances of food poisoning, the development of toxic derivatives deserves new emphasis. It is fortunate that such toxic substances usually lose their potency when suitably heated."

"Say, Bill, you should pull down your blinds when you kiss your wife. I saw you last night." 'The joke's on you, Joe. I wasn't at home last night."

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ISSUE No. 48—'30

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Prince of Wales Now Studying Spanish

London—The Prince of Wales has been studying Spanish for several weeks in preparation for his trip to South America next spring, it was learned recently.

He has taken several lessons each week and has studied Latin-American conditions carefully.

His trip will last about three weeks.

Supplies

Screams came from the drawing-room.

Mrs. Cohen dashed to the scene.

"Vat's the matter?" she asked her husband.

"It's only little Issy," was the reply. "He vants a sailing boat."

"An' vat have you given him?" inquired Mrs. Cohen.

"Two little smacks."

The Maple Leaf

The battered veteran of the air, the Columbia, now owned by the Canadian trans-Atlantic fliers, Captain Errol Boyd and Lieut. Harry Connor, is the proud bearer of a new name. Capt. Boyd and Lieut. Connor state that from now on, the ship will be known as the Maple Leaf. May it be "The Maple Leaf Forever!"

Marking Places

If there are several in your family, put little stickers, with names of different members, both on the bathroom shelves and in the hall closet. They will soon learn their special places and disagreements will cease.

The honeymoon couple were about to alight from their taxi. "I feel so nervous, George," she whispered. "They are sure to know." But George was resourceful. "Here, he said, "you carry the bag!"

Tess——"Engaged to two men at once? Does breach of promise mean nothing to you?" Bess—"Rather! I'm trying to figure out how I can sue them both for it."

Cultivate Friendship

To write a convincing anatomy of friendship would be a long and difficult task; but the broad principle of friendship, as distinct from mere acquaintance, is mutual respect. Friendship with certain people is impossible. Though constant companionship may produce a fugitive intimacy, this will soon wither in the shadow of absence; nor can the broken threads be picked up where they were cast down, for they will be found to have vanished. Thus fades mere acquaintance.

Friendship is different; its possibility is more significant than its realization. You may cultivate acquaintance, but it is not necessary to cultivate friendship, because however far friends drift apart the same potencies will always attend their reunion.—Thomas Camborne.

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