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"SALADA" TEA

162

'Fresh from the gardens'

The Bishop Murder Case

A PHILO VANCE STORY

BY S. S. VAN DINE

SYNOPSIS.

An insane genius in New York breaks into a hideous orgy of crimes based on nursery rhymes. First the body of a man known as Cock Robin is found with an arrow through the heart. Then a young student, John Sprigg, is shot through the top of the head. The murderer writes mocking notes to the newspapers, signed The Bishop. District Attorney Markham is helpless to solve the crimes and asks the aid of Philo Vance, a wealthy young bachelor who dabbles in the solving of unusual mysteries.

The following people are associated with the case: Prof. Dillard, his niece Belle, and his protege Sigurd Arnesson, a professor in mathematics. John Pardee, a neighbor, with a passion for chess. Mrs. Drukker, known as Lady Mae, and her son Adolph, a cripple.

Vance convinced they are dealing with a super madman, visits the doctor who attends Mrs. Drukker in an effort to learn more about her and her son.

CHAPTER XVIII—(Cont'd.)

The next morning Markham, accompanied by Heath, called for Vance a little before ten o'clock.

"This thing can't go on," he declared, after the meagrest of greetings. "If any one knows anything, we've got to find it out. I'm going to put the screws on and damn the consequences!"

"By all means, chivy 'em." Vance himself appeared despondent. "I doubt if it'll help though. No ordin'ry procedure is going to solve this riddle. However, I've phoned Barstead. He says we may talk with Mrs. Drukker this morning. But I've arranged to see him first. I have a hankerin' to know more of the Drukker pathology. Hunchbacks, d' ye see, are not usually produced by falls."

We drove at once to the doctor's home and were received without delay. Doctor Barstead was a large comfortable man, whose pleasantness of manner impressed me as being the result of schooled effort.

Vance went straight to the point.

"We have reason to believe, doctor, that Mrs. Drukker and perhaps her son are indirectly concerned in the recent death of Mr. Robin at the Dillard house; and before we question either of them further we should like to have you tell us—as far as professional etiquette will permit—something of the neurological situation we are facing."

"Please be more explicit, sir." Dr. Barstead spoke with defensive aloofness.

"I am told," Vance continued, "that Mrs. Drukker regards herself as responsible for her son's kyphosis; but it is my understanding that such malformations as his do not ordinarily result from mere physical injuries.

Doctor Barstead nodded his head slowly.

"That is quite true."

"You have, of course, explained the situation to Mrs. Drukker."

"On many occasions. But I have had no success. The fact is, a terrific instinct of perverted martyrdom bids her cling to the notion that she is responsible for her son's condition. This erroneous idea has become an *idee fixe* with her. It constitutes her entire mental outlook, and gives meaning to the life of service and sacrifice she had lived for forty years."

"To what extent," asked Vance, "would you say this psychoneurosis has affected her mind?"

"That would be difficult to say; and it is not a question I would care to discuss. I may say this, however; she is undoubtedly morbid; and her values have become distorted. At times there have been—I tell you this in strictest confidence—signs of marked hallucinosis centering upon her son. His welfare has become an obsession with her. There is practically nothing she would not do for him."

"We appreciate your confidence, doctor. . . . And would it not be logical to assume that her upset condition yesterday resulted from some fear or shock connected with his welfare?"

"Undoubtedly. She has no emotional or mental life outside of him. But whether her temporary collapse was due to a real or imaginary fear, one cannot say. She has lived too long on the borderland between reality and fantasy."

There was a short silence, and then Vance asked:

"As to Drukker himself: would you regard him as wholly responsible for his acts?"

"Since he is my patient," returned Doctor Barstead, with frigid reproach, "and since I have taken no steps to sequester him, I consider your question an impertinence."

CHAPTER XIX.

Markham leaned over and spoke peremptorily.

"We haven't time to mince words, doctor. We're investigating a series of atrocious murders. Mr. Drukker is involved in those murders—to what extent we don't know. But it is our duty to find out."

The doctor's first impulse was to combat Markham; but he evidently thought better of it, for when he answered, it was in an indulgently matter-of-fact voice.

"I have no reason, sir, to withhold any information from you. But to question Mr. Drukker's responsibility is to impute negligence to me in the matter of public safety. Perhaps, however, I misunderstand this gentleman's question." He studied Vance for a brief moment. "There are, of course, degrees of responsibility," he went on, in a professional tone. "Mr. Drukker's mind is over-developed, as is often the case with kyphotic victims. All mental processes are turned inward, as it were; and the lack of normal physical reactions often tends to produce inhibitions and aberrancies. But I've noted no indications of this conditions in Mr. Drukker.

"What form do his recreations take?" Vance was politely casual.

Dr Barstead thought a moment.

"Children's games, I should say. Such recreations are not unusual with cripples. In Mr. Drukker's case it is what we might term a waking wish-fulfilment. Having had no normal childhood, he grasps at whatever will give him a sense of youthful rehabilitation. His juvenile activities tend to balance the monotony of his purely mental life."

"What is Mrs. Drukker's attitude toward his instinct to play?"

"She very correctly encourages it. I've often seen her leaning over the wall above the playground in Riverside Park watching him. And she always presides at the children's parties and dinners which he holds in his home."

We took our leave a few minutes later. As we turned into 76th Street, Heath, as if arousing himself from a bad dream, drew a deep breath and sat upright in the car.

"Did you get that about the kid games?" he asked, in an awe-stricken voice. "What's this case going to turn into?"

A curious sadness was in Vance's eyes as he gazed ahead toward the isty Jersey cliff's across the river.

Our ring at the Drukker house was answered by a portly German woman, who planted herself stolidly before us and informed us suspiciously that Mr. Drukker was too busy to see any one.

"You'd better tell him," however," said Vance, "that the District Attorney wishes to speak to him immediately."

His words produced a strange effect on the woman. He hands went to her face, and her massive bosom rose and fell convulsively. Then, as though panic-stricken, she turned and ascended the stairs. We heard her knock on a door; there was a sound of voices; and a few moments later she came back to inform us that Mr. Drukker would see us in his study.

As we passed the woman Vance suddenly turned and, fixing his eyes on her ominously, asked:

"What time did Mr. Drukker get up yesterday morning?"

"I—don't know," she stammered, thoroughly frightened. "Ja, ja, I know. At nine o'clock—like always."

Vance nodded and moved on.

Drukker received us, standing by a large table covered with books and sheets of manuscript. He bowed sombrely, but did not ask us to have chairs.

Vance studied him a moment, as if trying to read the secret that lay behind his restless, hollow eyes.

"Mr. Drukker," he began, "it is not our desire to cause you unnecess'ry trouble, but we have learned that you were acquainted with Mr. John Sprigg, who, as you probably know, was shot near here yesterday morning. Now, could you suggest any reason that any one might have had for killing him?"

Drukker drew himself up. Despite his effort at self-control there was a slight tremor in his voice as he answered.

"I knew Mr. Sprigg but slightly. I can suggest nothing whatever in regard to his death. . . ."

"There was found on his body a piece of paper bearing the Riemann-Christoffel tensor which you introduce in your book in the chapter on the finiteness of physical space." As Vance spoke he moved one of the typewritten sheets of paper on the table toward him, and glanced at it casually.

Drukker seemed not to notice the action. The information contained in Vance's words had rivetted his attention.

"I can't understand it," he said vaguely. "May I see the notation?"

Markham complied at once with his request. After studying the paper a moment Drukker handed it back; and his little eyes narrowed malevolently.

"Have you asked Arnesson about this? He was discussing this very subject with Sprigg last week."

"Oh, yes," Vance told him carelessly. "Mr. Arnesson recalled the incident, but couldn't throw any light on it. We thought perhaps you could succeed where he had failed."

"I regret I can't accommodate you." There was the suggestion of a sneer in Drukker's reply. "Any one might use the tensor. Weyl's and Einstein's works are full of it. It isn't copyrighted. . . . Why come to be about it?"

"It wasn't the tensor formula alone that led our roving footsteps to your door," said Vance lightly. "For instance, we have reason to believe that Sprigg's death is connected with Robin's murder. . . ."

Drukker's long hands caught the edge of the table, and he leaned orward, his eyes glittering excitedly.

"Connected — Sprigg and Robin? You don't believe that newspaper talk, do you? . . . It's a damned lie!" His face had begun to twitch, and his voice rose shrilly. "It's insane nonsense. . . There's no proof, I tell you—not a shred of proof!"

"Cock Robin and Johnny Sprigg, don't y' know," came Vance's soft insistent voice.

"That rot! That crazy rot—Has the world gone mad?" He swayed back and forth as he beat on the table with one hand, sending the papers flying in all directions.

Vance looked at him with mild surprise.

(To be continued.)

TALK

I don't like to talk with people who always agree with me. It is amusing to coquette with an echo a little while, but one soon tires of it.—O. W. Holmes.

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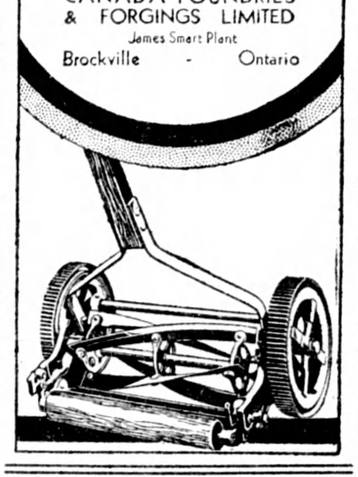

In a Public Park

Once on a time (the fairies tell me so)
The trees grew weary of green livery,
Saying, "Why should not" we the radiance know
Wherewith the dainty garden flowers glow:
Would we not wear such beauty splendidly?"

Then jacaranda, borrowing the blue
Of skies in summer, wore it, and was proud
A little while; but certain gumtrees knew
A better secret, and the long day through
Waited till color stained a sunset cloud.

Saffron and rose and crimson then were blent
Burning toward beauty with a gentle flame
And when adown the leafy lanes I went
I saw the wise trees crowned so, and content
To face the rifled skies and know no shame.

—Ethel Davies the Australasian.

DRAPERIES MADE NEW

"When we resumed housekeeping a month ago I found my draperies had become creased from packing. I hung them out on the line, hoping to remove the creases. Then I forgot them. The result was they became badly faded and sun-spotted.

"I was heartsick until the happy thought struck me to dye them. I just dyed them a deeper green, and as I used Diamond Dyes they look gorgeous and new. I have never seen easier dyes to use than Diamond Dyes. They give the most beautiful colors—when used either for tinting or dyeing—and never take the life out of cloth as other dyes do."

Mrs. J.F.T., Montreal.

He Wanted His Share

Midnight! Slowly the householder crept down the stairs. Suddenly he threw open the drawing-room door.

"Don't move!" he cried, pointing a gun at the man who crouched by the trophy case.

The burglar raised his hands.

"What's in that sack?" asked the householder.

The burglar lowered his hands and revealed a glittering array of silver cups and cutlery.

"Put them back on the sideboard at once," ordered the other.

"Lumme, guv-nor," cried the burglar, a pained look on his face, "not all of it! Be fair! 'Arf belongs to the 'ouse next door."

The language of friendship is not words, but meanings. It is an intelligence above language.—Henry D. Thoreau.

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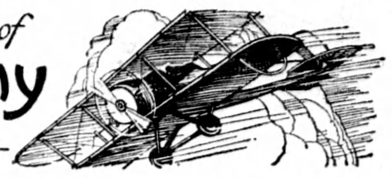

There is a race of men who are born with a gift of roving, and a thought that all lands are home. They'll hang their hats in an Esquimaux Igloo, or a chinese Emperor's palace, and settle down as complacently as a black cat on a warm hearth rug. Give them a stout old pair of shoes and a new highway, or an old boat and a salt wind to push the sail, and they'll find their way into the queerest places—with absolute surety that all will come out right in the end.

If you asked these men why they get along so well, they might tell you that this is just because they have found that folks are much the same anywhere. They would tell you that the little black boys in Africa and the brown boys in India—yes, and the yellow boys in China—like to play at the same kind of games as you do, and that Big Folks are just Little Folks grown up.

In China, for instance, there are about 400,000,000 people, mostly Chinese. Some are wise and learned, others are poor and ignorant. Some are kind and honest—others dangerous and wicked. There are other things, too, in China. There are great bamboo forests full of tigers, bears and wild animals. There are shady rivers where pirate junk ships lie in wait for plunder. There are gilded temples with the funniest little spires and turrets, and there are frowning, forbidden cities away up in the mountains, where the bravest white man dare not go.

One bright morning Scottie and I talked it over, and decided to go to China and meet with new adventures. Inside of a week we were on board a steamer bound for Shanghai, and our good plane safely crated. Talk about your rough weather. They screwed down the hatches and shut all the portholes, while great black seas crashed over the ship, driven before the blast of a screaming east wind.

Landing in Shanghai, we began to assemble our plane. Just as the job was finished, reports came in that fighting had broken out between two rival armies less than a hundred miles away. I asked Scottie if he would be interested in going to the front, and he wagged his tail and danced about.

We must confess that Scottie didn't like the Chinese very well at first. Once he had been captured by Chinese bandits, and since then had carried a grudge against the entire race. He mixed with them just as a lighted match mixes with a keg of gunpowder.

Knowing the grouch Scottie carried I shouldn't have taken him with me when I went to see General Lu to ask for a pass to the front.

General Lu was located in a palace in a small walled city. Walking into the room he greeted us with dignity, shaking hands with himself in the Chinese fashion. General Lu was an immense man—very tall and stout, and gorgeously dressed in silks. He was extremely impressive to me—but he didn't impress Scottie a bit.

Imagine my dismay, when right in the midst of the bow, Scottie growled, and, tearing the leash from my hand, made a jump at him.

The General was startled—then angry. Instinctively he shot out a velvet slippered foot to ward off Scottie's attack, but the terrier was all ready for such a move. He dodged—and quick as a flash, he caught the slipper in his teeth, shaking and tugging, and pulling for all he was worth—finally making off with it.

There are times when whatever one says it is the wrong thing, so I waited for the next move. I glanced up, expecting to see the General order us put out, or what not, and much to my surprise he was smiling. The situation was so ludicrous that it had appealed to his sense of humor.

That was indeed a relief, and I apologized fluently for Scottie's shortcomings. General Lu stood and smiled and didn't understand a word of it. Then the interpreter began to talk in Chinese. Suddenly General Lu spoke sharply. I waited in suspense—so much depended on his answer.

(To be continued).

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Sticking to its Number

The two rather racy-looking men met on the race course and their conversation turned to the topic of strange coincidences.

"The most amazing coincidence I ever remember happened last year," said Charles, the bigger man of the two.

"It was the eleventh day of the eleventh month, and I lived in a house with number eleven on the door, and I backed the eleventh horse in a race," explained Charles.

"And," broke in Henry, "the horse won, I suppose?"

"Nothing of the kind," came from his companion. "The beastly animal came in eleventh."

"What was that?" asked Henry eagerly.

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