"SALADA" TEA

211

The Tea that comes to you,
"Fresh from the Gardens"

The Bishop Murder Case

A PHILO VANCE STORY

BY S. S. VAN DINE

SYNOPSIS.

An orgy of crimes based on nursery rhymes takes place in New York. A man known as Cock Robin is found with an arrow through his heart. Then another, John Sprigg, is shot through the top of the head. The murderer sends mocking notes signed The Bishop. The following people are associated with the case: Prof. Dillard, his niece Belle (with whom Robin was in love, his protege Sigurd Arnesson (who also hopes to marry Belle). John Pardee, with a passion for chess. Mrs. Drukker and her son Adolph. Mrs. Drukker is mentally unbalanced and thinks Adolph is yet a child. She tells how some one visited her room and left a chess bishop the previous night. District Attorney Markham has called in Philo Vance, a rich young bachelor who dabbles in mysteries, to help him solve the case.

CHAPTER XXI.

An astounding change came over Mrs. Menzel. Her face paled; her lips trembled; and she clinched her hands with a spasmodic gesture. She tried to take her staring eyes from Vance, but some quality in his gaze held her.

"Where were you, Mrs. Menzel?" the question was repeated sharply.

"I was here—" she began; then stopped abruptly and cast an agitated glance at Heath, who was watching her fixedly.

"You were in the kitchen?"

She nodded. The power of speech seemed to have deserted her.

"And you saw Mrs. Drukker return from the Dillards'?"

Again she nodded.

"Exactly," said Vance. "And he came in the rear way, by the screen porch, and went upstairs. . . And he didn't know that you saw him through the kitchen door. . . . And later he inquired regarding your whereabouts at that hour. . . . And when you told him you had been in the kitchen he warned you to keep silent about it. . . And then you learned of Mr. Robin's death a few minutes before you saw him enter here. . . . And yesterday, when Mrs. Drukker told you to say he had not risen until nine and you heard that some one else had been killed near here, you became suspicious and frightened. . . . That's correct, is it not, Mrs. Menzel?"

The woman was sobbing audibly in her apron. There was no need for her to reply, for it was obvious that Vance had guessed the truth.

Heath took his cigar from his mouth and glared at her ferociously.

"So! You were holding out on me," he bellowed, thrusting forward his jaw. "You lied to me when I questioned you the other day. Obstructing justice, were you?"

She gave Vance a look of frightened appeal.

"Mrs. Menzel, Sergeant," he said "had no intention of obstructing justice. And now that she has told us the truth, I think we may overlook her perfectly natural deception in the matter." Then before Heath had time to reply he turned to the woman and asked in a matter-of-fact tone: "Do you lock the door leading to the screen porch every night?"

"Ja—every night." She spoke listlessly: the reaction from her fright had left her apathetic.

"You are sure you locked it last night?"

"At half past nine—when I went to bed."

Vance stepped across the little passageway and inspected the lock.

"It's a snap-lock," he observed, on returning. "Who has a key to the door?"

"I have a key. And Mrs. Drukker—she has one, too."

"You're sure no one else has a key?"

"No one except Miss Dillard. . . ."

"Miss Dillard?" Vance's voice was suddenly resonant with interest. "Why should she have one?"

"She's had it for years. She's like a member of the family—over here two and three times a day. When I go out I lock the back door; and her having a key saves Mrs. Drukker the trouble of coming down and letting her in."

"Quite natural," Vance murmured. Then: "We shan't bother you any more, Mrs. Menzel." He strolled out on the little rear porch.

When the door had been closed behind us he pointed to the screen door that opened into the yard.

"You'll note that this wire mesh has been forced away from the frame, permitting one to reach inside and turn the latch. Either Mrs. Drukker's key or Miss Dillard's—probably the latter—was used to open the door of the house."

Heath nodded: this tangible aspect of the case appealed to him. But Markham was not paying attention. He stood in the background smoking with angry detachment. Presently he turned resolutely and was about to re-enter the house when Vance caught his arm.

"No, no, Markham! That would be abominable technique. Curb your ire. You're so dashed impulsive, don't y' know."

"But, damn it, Vance!" Markham shook off the other's hand. "Drukker lied to us about going out the Dillard gate before Robin's murder—"

"Of course he did. I've suspected all along that the account he gave us of his movements that morning was a bit fanciful. But it's useless to go upstairs now and hector him about it. He'll simply say that the cook is mistaken."

Markham was unconvinced.

"But what about yesterday morning? I want to know where he was when the cook called him at half past eight. Why should Mrs. Drukker be so anxious to have us believe he was asleep?"

"She, too, probably went to his room and saw that he was gone. Then when she heard of Sprigg's death her febrile imagination became overheated, and she proceeded to invest him with an alibi. But you're only inviting trouble when you plan to chivy him about the discrepancies in his tale."

"I'm not so sure." Markham spoke with significant gravity. "I may be inviting a solution to this hideous business."

Vance did not reply at once. He stood gazing down at the quivering shadows cast on the lawn by the willow trees. At length he said in a low voice:

"We can't afford to take that chance. If what you're thinking should prove to be true, and you should reveal the information you've just received, the little man who was here last night might prowl about the upper hall again. And this time he might not be content to leave his chessman outside the door!"

A look of horror came into Markham's eyes.

"You think I might be jeopardizing the cook's safety if I used her evidence against him at this time?"

"The terrible thing about this affair is that, until we know the truth, we face danger at every turn. Vance's voice was heavy with discouragement. "We can't risk exposing any one. . ."

The door leading to the porch opened, and Drukker appeared on the threshold, his little eyes blinking in the sunlight. His gaze came to rest on Markham, and a crafty, repulsive smile contorted his mouth.

"I trust I am not disturbing you," he apologized, with a menacing squint, "but the cook has just informed me that she told you she saw me enter here by the rear door on the morning of Mr. Robin's unfortunate death."

"Oh, my aunt!" murmured Vance, turning away and busying himself with the selection of a fresh cigarette. "That tears it."

Drukker shot him an inquisitive look, and drew himself up with a kind of cynical fortitude.

"And what about it, Mr. Drukker?" demanded Markham.

"I merely desired to assure you," the man replied, "that the cook is in error. She has obviously confused the date,—you see, I come and go so often by this rear door. On the morning of Mr. Robin's death, as I explained to you, I left the range by the 75th Street gate and, after a brief walk in the park, returned home by the front way. I have convinced Grete that she is mistaken."

Vance had been listening to him closely. Now he turned and met the other's smile with a look of bland ingenuousness.

"Did you convince her with a chessman, by any chance?"

Drukker jerked his head forward and sucked in a rasping breath. His twisted frame became taut; the muscles about his eyes and mouth began to twitch; and the ligaments of his neck stood out like whipcord. For a moment I thought he was going to lose his self-control; but with a great effort he steadied himself.

"I don't understand you, sir." There was the vibrancy of an intense anger in his words. "What has a chessman to do with it?"

"Chessmen have various names," suggested Vance softly.

"Are you telling me about chess?" A venomous contempt marked Drukker's manner, but he managed to grin. "Various names, certainly. There's the king and queen, the rook, the knight—" He broke off. "The bishop! . . ." He lay his head against the casement of the door and began to cackle mirthlessly. "So! That's what you mean? The bishop! . . . You're a lot of imbecile children playing a nonsense game."

"We have excellent reason to believe," said Vance, "that the game is being played by some one else—with the chess bishop as the principal symbol."

"Don't take my mother's vagaries too seriously," he admonished. "Her imagination often plays tricks on her."

"Ah! And why do you mention your mother in this connection?"

"You've just been talking to her. And your comments sound very much like some of her harmless halucinations."

"Your mother may have perfectly good grounds for her beliefs."

"Rot!"

"Ah, well," sighed Vance, "we shan't debate the point. But it might help us, Mr. Drukker, if we knew where you were between eight and nine yesterday morning."

"I was working in my study. For several months I've been working on a modification of the etherstring theory."

"It's of no great importance," Vance spoke carelessly. "Sorry we discommoded you today." Then, as we were leaving, he turned. "Mrs. Menzel is under our protection. It would pain us deeply if anything should happen to her."

The moment we were out of hearing Vance turned to Heath: "Sergeant, that German *Hausfrau* may have put hr head in a noose. You'd better have a good man watch the Drukker house tonight from the rear."

(To be continued.)

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Quiet Rooms

Montlucon, July.—I was looking for rooms in a hotel near the railway. As the landlady and I went along a corridor upstairs, I said I hoped the noise of trains could not be heard in the bedrooms. "One hears nothing," she answered positively. She opened the door of a room, and a tremendous engine-shriek met us, seeming to drive us both back from the threshold. She shut the door, and tried another one, and we were met instantly by another tremendous engine shriek. She burst out laughing. I laughed too. If she had not proved her sense of humor I might have walked straight out of the hotel. But her sense of humor kept a customer with a sense of humor. I got quiet rooms at the back.—Arnold Bennett, in "Journal of Things New and Old."

"THESE HARD TIMES"

"The hard times and scarcity of money makes it more important than ever to economize. One way I save on clothes is by renewing the color of faded or out-of-style dresses, coats, stockings, and underwear. For dyeing, or tinting, I always use Diamond Dyes. They are the most economical ones by far because they never fail to produce results that make you proud. Why, things look better than new when redyed with Diamond Dyes. They never spot, streak, or run. They go on smoothly and evenly, when in the hands of even a ten year old child. Another thing, Diamond Dyes never take the life out of cloth or leave it limp as some dyes do. They deserve to be called 'the world's finest dyes!'"

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The Song of the Robin

By E. CHESTER ALLEN

The slender rowans are grey and bare,
But there's promise of May in the April air,
The grass grows green by the garden gate,
And a robin calls to his tardy mate,
From the highest peak of the rowan trees.
To his mate who is coming over southern seas—
"Come! Come! Dearie, dearie!
Come to me quick. I am weary, weary!
Come to me! Come to me!
Quick! Quick!"

A soft green covers the rowan trees;
There's a touch of June in the late May breeze;
And the turquoise eggs are snugly laid
In a nest 'neath the lilac's scented shade.
But the robin calls from the rowans high,
When the rain-clouds drift from the eastern sky—
"Quick! Quick! Cover them, cover them!
Close! Close! Hover them, Hover them!
Cover them! Cover them!
Quick! Quick!"

The rowans are decked with coral red;
And the lilac blooms are long, long dead.
The autumn skies are cool and clear;
But the clay-built nest is empty and drear;
And the robin's note is tender and low,
Tense with the fear of the frost and snow—
"Haste! Haste! Come with me, come with me!
South! South! Follow me, follow me!
Follow me! Follow me!
Quick! Quick!"

TO-DAY

Not to-morrow, but to-day, calls for the best that is in us. Life is made up of daily performances. The nobler, sweeter and purer our activities the better for ourselves and for others.

The ADVENTURES of CAPTAIN JIMMY and his Dog SCOTTIE

What came before: Captain Jimmy and Scottie are flying over China. They are lost in the darkness between the lines of two fighting armies, with men from both sides in their plane. Suddenly one of the Chinese attacks Captain Jimmy.

For a moment I was paralysed. My fierce attacker raised his weapon to strike. Then before I could move, a thin spare form hurled itself at my assailant, careless of the dangerous knife point. It was one of the three men we had rescued from the tree on the day before. I held my breath, amazed that the timid, shrinking Chinese should display such nerve. Springing to help him, I hit the big fellow on the chin with all my strength.

By this time the plane was in a spin, and we were so near the ground that there was no way but to land. I had lost all sense of direction for the moment, and had no way of telling whether we were over enemy territory or not.

Scarcely had the wheels stopped rolling before an excited Chinese sentry showed up and challenged us.

"Ask him where we are?" I directed the interpreter.

"Him say much bad Chinese bloy—him belong enemy!"

"Tell him I belong enemy, too." I said.

"He say, you clazy—you make muchee noise—wakee Colonel—getee velly mad—shootee bang—all done."

By which I gathered we were in the enemy camp, that the Colonel would hear the plane, get mad at being disturbed, and have us shot. Not a very encouraging prospect.

Then a Chinese sergeant and a squad of soldiers appeared out of the inky darkness. When he saw the three deserters from his camp he raised a terrible rumpus. First he accused us of stealing his men, then after a long pow-wow with the three, they evidently convinced him that they had been taken prisoner, and we had helped them to escape. Anyway he took them back—and probably they were far better off in their own army than among the enemy.

So much for the three captives, but our own position was extremely dangerous. Something had to be done quickly, or soon we would all be marched to headquarters.

"Tell the sergeant that I brought this plane to give General Ming." I said. "Tell him to march two soldiers ahead and keep the road clear."

Then I turned the searchlight on and taxied along the road behind the two soldiers. After a few minutes the road straightened out for a stretch of a quarter of a mile or so. Now was our chance!

In an instant I snapped on the searchlight and opened the throttle full. With a roar the plane fairly leaped forward and rushed down the road on the two soldiers who fled in panic.

Bang—Bang—went the rifles of the soldiers who followed us, and a few bullets ripped through the wings; but we were gathering speed rapidly. A moment more and we were in the air, free as a bird.

Gas was running low, however, so we headed back for our own lines, with the help of our searchlight we picked out a railway line. Spiraling down, we bumped to a stop on the rough ground and scrambled out. While the unknown Chinaman who had tried to knife me followed cautiously.

Guess who it was. The last person I ever expected to see—Colonel Tien of General Lu's Army. A fine chap—that Colonel Tien. Three times I had to knock him out to make him behave.

Then he explained that he thought I was trying to take him over to the enemy camp. In that case I could understand why he was so desperate, for it would have gone hard with Colonel Tien to be caught by the enemy.

Far to the north of us a locomotive whistled. A little clump of bushes grew beside the railway track, and toward these we pushed and tugged our plane, to get it out of sight. Another few minutes more and a freight train rounded the curve stopping not over two hundred yards from our hiding place.

(To be continued)

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Size of U.S. Dogs Reduced in Decade

Pure-Bred Ones Increasing in Number as Mongrels Decrease

Washington.—There is about one dog to every 26 human beings in the United States, the Department of Commerce has found out.

The movement of population from the country to the city during the past decad has not resulted in decreasing the dog population, but has changed its makeup by reducing the size of dogs and increasing the number of pure-bred animals to make up for the decrease in the number of just plain dogs.

The department has discovered that the well known fox terrier maintains a high degree of popularity, because it is small and does well in cities.

Men are not so keen for the Pekingese, Chow and Pomeranian, and they prefer the terrier as "a lot of dog in a small package."

A popular novelist says that while lying awake at night, he has several times hit upon an idea that has resulted in a full-length novel. Insomnia can be a terrible thing.—The Humorist.

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