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"SALADA" GREEN TEA 193

'Fresh from the gardens'

The Bishop Murder Case

A PHILO VANCE STORY

BY S. S. VAN DINE

SYNOPSIS

A man known as Cock Robin is found with an arrow in his heart; another, Johnny Spiggs, is found with a bullet through the top of his head. District Attorney Markham calls in Philo Vance, who claims the murders are founded on nursery rhymes and are the work of a maniac.

Those associated with the case are: Prof. Dillard, his niece Belle, and his protege Sigurd Arnesson, also a professor in mathematics. John Pardee, a neighbor with a passion for chess; Mrs Drukker and her son Adolph. Mrs. Drukker is mentally unbalanced and Adolph is a cripple with a super-brain.

Mrs. Drukker tells how the murderer paid her a terrifying visit the previous night. Vance learns that Adolph Drukker lied as to his whereabouts on the morning of Robin's death. Vance questions Prof. Dillard again.

CHAPTER XXII.—(Cont'd.)

"Drukker tells me," commented Vance, "that you twitted him on his inability to work out a modification of the quantum theory in regard to light interference."

The old man smiled ruefully.

"Yes. I know that such a criticism would spur him to a maximum effort. The fact is, Drukker is on the track of something revolutionary. He has already worked out some very interesting theorems. . . But I'm sure this isn't what you gentlemen came here to discuss. What can I do for you, Markham? Or, perhaps you came to give me news."

"Unfortunately we have no news. We have come to solicit aid again. . ." Markham hesitated as if uncertain how to proceed; and Vance assumed the role of questioner.

"The situation has changed somewhat since we were here yesterday. One or two matters have arisen, and there is a possibility that our investigation would be facilitated if we knew the exact movements of the members of your household last night. These movements, in fact, may have influenced certain factors in the case."

The professor lifted his head in some surprise, but made no comment. He said merely: "That information is very easily given. To what members do you refer?"

"To no member specifically," Vance hastened to assure him.

"Well, let me see. . ." He took out his old meerschaum pipe and began filling it. "Belle and Sigurd and I had dinner alone at six o'clock. At half past seven Drukker dropped in, and a few minutes later Pardee called. Then at eight Sigurd and Belle went to the theatre, and at half past ten Drukker and Pardee went away. I myself turned in shortly after eleven, after locking up the house—I'd let Pyne and Beedle go to bed early. And that's about all I can tell you."

"Do I understand that Miss Dillard and Mr Arnesson went to the theatre together?"

"Yes. Sigurd rarely patronizes the theatre, but whenever he does he takes Belle along. He attends Ibsen's plays for the most part. He's a devout disciple of Ibsen's, by the way. His American upbringing hasn't in the least tempered his enthusiasm for things Norwegian. At heart he's quite loyal to his native country. He's as well grounded in Norwegian literature as any professor at the University of Oslo; and the only music he really cares for is Grieg's. When he goes to concerts or the theatre you're pretty sure to find that the programs are liberally Norwegian.

"It was an Ibsen play, then, he attended last night?"

"'Rosmersholm,' I believe. There's a revival of Ibsen's dramas at present in New York."

Vance nodded. "Walter Hampden's doing them. Did you see either Mr. Arnesson or Miss Dillard after they returned from the theatre?"

"No; they came in rather late, I imagine. Belle told me this morning they went to the Plaza for supper after the play. However, Sigurd will be here at any minute, and you can learn the details from him." Though the professor spoke with patience, it was plain that he was annoyed by the apparently irrelevant nature of the interregation.

"Will you be good enough, sir," pursued Vance, "to tell us the circumstances connected with Mr. Drukker's and Mr. Pardee's visit here after dinner?"

"There was nothing unusual about their call. They often drop in during the evening. The object of Drukker's visit was to discuss with me the work he had done on his modification of the quantum theory; but when Pardee appeared the discussion was dropped. Pardee is a good mathematician, but advanced physics is beyond his depth."

"Did either Mr. Drukker or Mr. Pardee see Miss Dillard before she went to the theatre?"

CHAPTER XXIII.

Professor Dillard took his pipe slowly from his mouth, and his expression became resentful.

"I must say," he replied testily, "that I can see no valid object in my answering such questions. However," he added, in a more indulgent tone, "if the domestic trivia of my household can be of any possible assistance to you, I will of course be glad to go into detail." He regarded Vance a moment. "Yes, both Drukker and Pardee saw Belle last night. All of us, including Sigurd, were together in this room for perhaps half an hour before theatre time. There was even a casual discussion about Ibsen's genius, in which Drukker annoyed Sigurd greatly by maintaining Hauptmann's superiority."

"Then at eight o'clock, I gather, Mr. Arnesson and Miss Dillard departed, leaving you and Mr. Pardee and Mr. Drukker alone here."

"That is correct."

"And at half past ten, I think you said, Mr. Drukker and Mr. Pardee went away. Did they go together?"

"They went down-stairs together," the professor answered, with more than a suggestion of tartness. "Drukker, I believe, went home; but Pardee had an appointment at the Manhattan Chess Club."

"It seems a bit early for Mr. Drukker to have gone home," mused Vance, "especially as he had come to discuss an important matter with you and had had no adequate opportunity to do so up to the time of his departure."

"Drukker is not well." The professor's voice was again studiously patient. 'As I've told you, he tires easily. And last night he was unusually played out. In fact, he complained to me of his fatigue, and said he was going immediately to bed."

"Yes . . . . quite in keeping," murmured Vance. "He told us a little while ago that he was up working at six yesterday morning."

"I'm not surprised. Once a problem has posed itself in his mind he work on it incessantly. Unfortunately he has no normal reactions to counter-balance his consuming passion for mathematics. There have been times when I've feared for his mental stability."

Vance, for some reason, steered clear of this point.

"You spoke of Mr. Pardee's engagement at the Chess Club last night," he said, when he had carefully lighted a fresh cigarette. "Did he mention the nature of it to you?"

Professor Dillard smiled with patronizing lenity.

"He talked about it for an hour. It appears that a gentleman named Rubinstein—a genius of the chess world, I understand, who is now visiting this country—had taken him on for three exhibition games. The last one was yesterday. It began at two o'clock and was postponed at six. It should have been played off at eight, but Rubinstein was the lion of some dinner down-town; so the hour set for the play-off was eleven. Pardee was on tenter-hooks, for he had lost the first game and drawn the second; and if he could have won last night's game he would have broken even with Rubinstein. He seemed to think he had an excellent chance according to the way the game stood at six o'clock; although Drukker disagreed with. . . . He must have gone directly from here to the club, for it was fully half past ten when he and Drukker went out."

"Rubinstein's a strong player," observed Vance. A new note of interest, which he strove to conceal, had come into his voice. "He's one of the grand masters of the game. He defeated Capablanca at San Sebastian in 1911, and between 1907 and 1912 was considered the logical contender for the world's title held by Doctor Lasker. . . Yes, it would have been a great feather in Pardee's cap to have beaten him. Indeed, it was no small compliment to him that he should have been matched with Rubinstein. Pardee, despite the fame of his gambit, has never been ranked as a master. Have you heard the result of last night's game, by the by?"

Again I noted a faint tolerant smile at the corners of the professor's mouth. He gave the impression of looking down benevolently on the foolish capers of children from some great intellectual height.

"No," he answered, "I didn't inquire. But my surmise is that Pardee lost; for when Drukker pointed out the weakness of his adjourned position, he was more positive than usual. Drukker by nature is cautious, and he rarely expresses a definite opinion on a problem without having excellent grounds for so doing."

Vance raised his eyebrows in some astonishment.

"Do you mean to tell me that Pardee analyzed his unfinished game with Drukker and discussed the possibilities of its ending? Not only is such a course unethical, but any player would be disqualified for doing such a thing."

"I'm unfamiliar with the punctilio of chess," Professor Dillard returned acidly; "but I am sure Pardee would not be guilty of a breach of ethics in that regard. And, as a matter of fact, I recall that when he was engaged with the chessmen at the table over there and Drukker stepped up to look on, Pardee requested him to offer no advice. The discussion of the position took place some time later, and was kept entirely to generalities. I don't believe there was a mention of any specific line of play."

(To be continued.)

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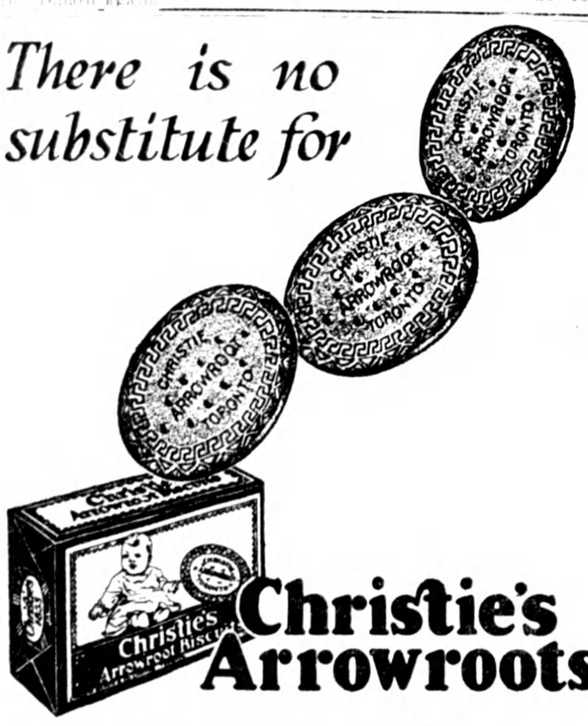

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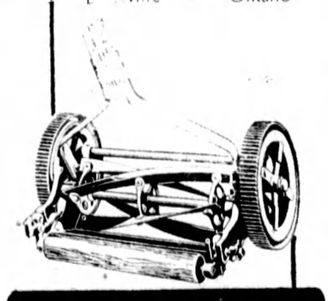

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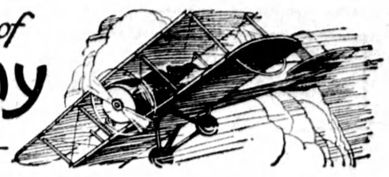

What came before: Captain Jimmy and Scottie became lost in the darkness while flying over the Chinese war zone. On landing, they are captured by Chinese bandits. Captain Jimmy escapes and plans to set free the remainder of his party.

Cautiously I moved toward the camp. The fires had burned to embers and now and then flamed up fitfully. Certainly the outlaws wouldn't be looking for an escaped prisoner prowling around their tents at that hour.

Rolled near the largest of the fires, lay the figure of a man. Carefully I crawled nearer. A small twig broke under my knee and I stopped, motionless, not even breathing for a minute or two.

As I wiggled closer I could make out his features — Sure enough, it was poor old Fu Hsu (Foo Soo) the interpreter. He was cramped and so cold and scared. I held up a finger in a warning, and worked myself along to a point where I could cut his bonds with a jack knife.

"All asleep?" I whispered.

He nodded. Quietly we crept away toward the cool spring. The fresh, cold water revived him wonderfully. He drank as though he never intended to stop. Then I questioned him.

"What happened to Scottie? The dog. Bow-wow?"

"Blandit hit him on the head—dog he bite blandit. Tie dog to tree. No idea where doggie.'

"And the Colonel?" I asked.

"Colonel, he blandit, now. He Cook," whispered the interpreter.

"He'll probably make a better bandit than a Colonel."

Meanwhile, a plan had been forming in my mind. Quietly we picked our way to where the Burros were hitched. We tied a dozen of them together so they would lead in a line. The other burros we cut loose, so it would take time for the bandits to catch them and get on our trail.

Taking the halter of the lead burro, I headed down the valley that led through the cleft in the mountains. Fu brought up the rear with two more burros—their lead ropes tied around his waist for fear he might drop it! He was the most hopeless Chinese I ever saw.

Loose stones began rolling, and the burros instead of walking on their tip toes, seemed to stamp along on their heels. You know how loud everything sounds when you want to be quiet, and it certainly seemed as if the noise we were making must wake the whole camp.

Finally we came to the narrow defile. Beyond that notch there was a bit of a plateau. It was here that the bandit guard would be.

The bandits had just risen to their feet at the sound of our burros coming through the pass. Plainly they were puzzled. Had we come riding out into them like a whirlwind, they would have understood, and started firing on us. But here was a string of burros peacefully wending their way into the light of their camp fire.

Leaning forward from the neck of my burro, I pricked the last of the string with my jack-knife. With a shrill cry he jumped against the next one ahead, who in turn rushed the next. In a moment they were in headlong flight.

They scattered right and left among the bandits, and when a burro failed to bowl one over, the rope caught his feet and tripped him. Then, in the midst of the uproar, we dashed out yelling. The rout was complete. We just waited long enough to grab a rifle and went on a mad scramble down the mountain side.

Mile after mile we rode at breakneck pace. Far back up the valley the whole bandit camp were in hot pursuit. When my burro showed signs of slackening speed, I thumped him in the ribs and off he went again amid a shower of dust and loose stones.

Rounding a corner we came suddenly to a railroad track, where five or six decrepit old freight cars stood, and a rickety old engine. We could hear the hoofs of the outlaws' burros pounding down the valley as we reached the cars. I leaned over and grabbed Fu by the slack of his pants. As I heaved to pull him in, a dark body came hurtling in, caught me amidships, and over we all went in a pile on the floor.

(To be continued)

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Checking Up on Son.—Mother—"Why are you reading that book on the education of children?" Son—"To see if you are bringing me up properly."—Utica Press.

Issues have a way of disappearing after election and never coming up for decision.—Calvin Coolidge.

Not the eye but the spirit furnishes the best proof of theories.—Albert Einstein.

No Hard Feelings.—Lady—"Have you ever been offered work?" Tramp—"Only once, madam. Aside from that, I've met with nothing but kindness."—Hudson Star.

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