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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 Sprigg, 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 of 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.

Vance learns that Drukker lied as to his whereabouts on the morning of Robin's death. While the case seems strong against Drukker, Vance believes him innocent and decides to threaten him in order to learn the facts that he has been holding back.

CHAPTER XXVI.—(Cont'd.)

Markham sat tapping indecisively on the desk, his head enveloped as he puffed nervously on his cigar. At last he set his chin firmly and turned to Heath.

"Bring Drukker here at nine o'clock tomorrow morning. You'd better take a wagon and a John Doe warrant in case he offers any objection." His face was grim and determined. "Then I'll find out what he knows—and act accordingly.

The conference broke up immediately. It was after five o'clock, and Markham and Vance and I rode uptown together to the Stuyvesant Club. We dropped Arnesson at the subway, and he took leave of us with scarcely a word. His garrulous cynicism seemed entirely to have deserted him. After dinner Markham pleaded fatigue, and Vance and I went to the Metropolitan and heard Geraldine Farrar in "Louise."

The next morning broke dark and misty. Currie called us at half past seven, for Vance intended to be present at the interview with Drukker; and at eight o'clock we had breakfast in the library before a light grate fire. We were held up in the traffic on our way down-town, and though it was quarter after nine when we reached the District Attorney's office, Drukker and Heath had not yet arrived.

Vance settled himself comfortably in a large leather-upholstered chair and lighted a cigarette.

"I feel rather bucked this morning," he remarked. "If Drukker tells his story, and if the tale is what I think it is, we'll know the combination of the lock."

His words had scarcely been uttered when Heath burst into the office and, facing Markham without a word of greeting, lifted both arms and let them fall in a gesture of hopeless resignation.

"Well, sir, we ain't going to question Drukker this morning—or no other time," he blurted "He fell offa that high wall in Riverside Park right near his house last night, and broke his neck. Wasn't found till seven o'clock this morning. His body's down at the morgue now. . . . Fine breaks we get!" He sank disgustedly into a chair.

Markham stared at him unbelievingly.

"You're sure?" he asked, with startled futility.

"I was up there before they moved the body. One of the local men phoned me about it just as I was leaving the office. I stuck around and got all the dope I could."

"What did you learn?" Markham was fighting against an overwhelming sense of discouragement.

"There wasn't much to find out. Some kids in the park found the body about seven o'clock this morning—lots of kids around it being Saturday; and the local men hopped over and called a police surgeon. The doc said Drukker musta fallen off the wall about ten o'clock last night—killed instantly. The wall at that spot—right opposite 76th Street—is all of thirty feet above the playground. The top of it runs along the bridle path; and it's a wonder more people haven't broke their necks there. Kids are all the time walking along the stone ledge."

"Has Mrs. Drukker been notified?"

"No. I told 'em I'd attend to it. But I thought I'd come here first and see what you wanted done about it."

Markham leaned back dejectedly.

"I don't see that there's much of anything we can do."

"It might be well," suggested Vance, "to inform Arnesson. He'll probably be the one who'll have to look after things. . . . My word, Markham! I'm beginning to think that this case is a nightmare, after all. Drukker was our principal hope, and at the very moment when there's a chance of our forcing him to speak, he tumbles off of a wall—" Abruptly he stopped. "Off a wall! . . ." As he repeated these words he leapt to his feet. "*A hunchback falls off a wall! . . . . . A hunchback! . . .*"

We stared at him as if he had gone out of his mind; and I admit that the look on his face sent a chill over me. His eyes were fixed, like those of a man gazing at a malignant ghost. Slowly he turned to Markham, and said in a voice that I hardly recognized:

"It's another mad melodrama—another Mother Goose rhyme. . . . . 'Humpty Dumpty' this time!"

The astonished silence that followed was broken by a strained harsh laugh from the Sergeant.

"That's stretching things, ain't it, Mr. Vance?"

"It's preposterous!" declared Markham, studying Vance with genuine concern. "My dear fellow, you've let this case prey on your mind too much. Nothing has happened except that a man with a hump has fallen from the coping of a wall in the park. It's unfortunate at just this time." He went to Vance and put his hand on his shoulder. "Let the Sergeant and me run this show—we're used to these things. Take a trip and get a good rest. Why not go to Europe as you generally do in the spring?"

"Oh, quite-quite." Vance sighed and smiled wearily. "The sea air would do me world of good, and all that. Bring me back to normal, what?—build up the wreck of this once noble brain. . . . I give up! The third act in this terrible tragedy is played almost before your eyes, and you serenely ignore it."

"Your imagination has got the better of you," Markham returned, with the patience of a deep affection. "Don't worry about it any more. Have dinner with me tonight. We'll talk it over then."

At this moment Swacker looked in, and spoke to the Sergeant.

"Quinan of The World is here. Wants to see you."

Markham swung about.

"Bring him in here!"

Quinan entered, waved us a cheery salutation, and handed the Sergeant a letter.

"Another *billet-doux*—received this morning. What privileges do I get for being so big-hearted?"

Heath opened the letter as the rest of us looked on. At once I recognized the paper and the faint blue characters of the elite type. The note read:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall;
All the king's horses and all the king's men
Cannot put Humpty Dumpty together again.

Then came that ominous signature, in capitals: THE BISHOP.

When Heath had got rid of Quinan with promises such as would have gladdened any reporter's heart, there were several minutes of tense silence in the office. "The Bishop" had been at his grisly work again; and the case had now become a terrible triplicate affair, with the solution apparently further off than ever.

Vance, who was pacing sombrely up and down gave voice to his troubled emotions:

"It's damnable, Markham—it's the essence of unutterable evil. . . . Don't you see the wickedness of it? Those children found Humpty Dumpty—their Humpty Dumpty, with whom they had played—lying dead at the foot of the famous wall—a Humpty Dumpty they could touch and weep over, broken and twisted and never more to be put together. . . ."

He paused by the window and looked out. The mist had lifted and a faint diffusion of spring sunlight lay over the gray stones of the city. The golden eagle on the New York Life Building glistened in the distance.

"I say; one mustn't get sentimental," he remarked with a forced smile, turning back to the room. "It decomposes the intelligence and stultifies the dialectic processes. Now that we know Drukker was not the capricious victim of the law of gravity, but was given a helpin' hand in his departure from this world, the sooner we become energetic, the better, what?"

His change of mood roused the rest of us from our gloomy apathy. Markham reached for the telephone and made arrangements with Inspector Moran for Heath to handle the Drukker case. Then he called the Medical Examiner's office and asked for an immediate *post-mortem* report.

Markham moved restlessly.

"Several men from your department, Sergeant, were supposed to be keeping an eye on the Drukker and Dillard houses. Did you talk to any of them this morning?"

"I didn't have time, sir."

"What did the Medical Examiner have to say?"

"Only that it looked like an accident; and that Drukker had been dead about ten hours. . . ."

Vance interpolated a question.

"Did he mention a fractured skull in addition to the broken neck?"

"Well, sir, he didn't exactly say the skull was fractured, but he did state that Drukker had landed on the back of his head. I guess it'll prove to be a fracture all right—same like Robin and Sprigg."

"Undoutbedly. The technique of our murderer seems to be simple and efficacious. He strikes his victims on the vault, either stunning them or killing them outright, and then proceeds to cast them in the roles he has chosen for them in his puppet-plays. Drukker was no doubt leaning over the wall, perfectly exposed for such an attack. It was misty, and the setting was somewhat obscured. Then came the blow, a slight heave, and Drukker fell noiselessly over the parapet—the third sacrificial offering on the altar of old Mother Goose."

(To be continued.)

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What New York Is Wearing

BY ANNABELLE WORTHINGTON

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If you're looking for a wearable day dress—here it is. It may be worn for every hour of the day. It has lots of good style about it, and yet is so exceedingly simple in line.

It was originally in a crepe silk print in rather vivid blue coloring.

It would also be fascinatingly lovely in skipper blue plain flat washable crepe.

Any of the new supple crepy woolens could also be used.

A chiffon print or lace is decidedly smart for a more dressy model.

Style No. 3114 may be had in sizes 14, 16, 18, 20 years, 36, 38 and 40 inches bust.

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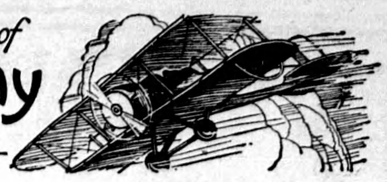
The ADVENTURES of CAPTAIN JIMMY and his Dog SCOTTIE



What came before: After many adventures flying over China, Captain Jimmy and his friend Jed Stone seek to recover the plane which Captain Jimmy was forced to land in enemy territory. They plan a night raid on the army camp to secure food and gasoline.

Under the cover of darkness I made my way quietly toward the big tent. If our plan succeeded we would soon have enough gas and oil for our plane—if it failed, we wouldn't need any.

While I softly crept along, taking advantage of every shadow, Jed Stone was busy arriving at what he figured was the proper place to carry out his part of the plan. He dismounted, threw the bridle reins over the horse's head and probably hoped the animal would be there when he got back. Together, Scottie and he crawled close to where a lone soldier was walking his post.

Jed Stone and Scottie edged up, bit by bit, until they were right in back of a hummock and not over fifty feet from him. He was a nervous sort of soldier. Every now and then he'd turn quickly and peer out into the darkness; then he'd step along quickly as though he wanted to get away from there in a hurry. Many a good Chinese soldier is afraid of dragons in the dark. This China boy must have been sure there was a big, bad dragon on his trail for he was surely nervous.

At the end of his post he turned and started back. Scottie stood tensed, scarcely breathing. He sensed the excitement and he strained against his collar which Lieutenant Stone held tightly gripped.

The sentry was just in front of them when Jed Stone let go of Scottie's collar. "Go get him," he whispered, and Scottie was off like a rifle bullet. At the first jump, that sentry stopped dead in his tracks, the hair standing up on his head. He was frozen still in his tracks.

Somewhere out in front in the darkness there was a sound of scurrying. Something was about to pounce on him, to grab him, but that soldier couldn't move, neither could he utter a sound. (I'll bet that you, yourself, have before now had just such a frightful nightmare.)

From out of the unknown inky blackness it came. Not till Scottie sank his teeth into his leg did that soldier cry out. He couldn't—his vocal cords were paralysed.

But then he yelled sudden murder, pulled the trigger of his gun and was bowled over, all in the same instant.

Sentries from all over camp were running—firing as they came. Between shots I gave a shrill whistle and Scottie came up, zigzagging his way pell mell for Sunday across the camp, spreading destruction at every leap.

Excitement was working up to fever heat when out rode an under officer on horseback. He had jumped on a horse and with only a halter to guide him had ridden out into the melee with goodness knows what idea in his head.

An enthusiastic soldier fired and, with better luck than usual, shot away the officer's hat. Pandemonium broke loose. Then while it was getting too hot around that corner for Lieutenant Stone, he slipped off into the darkness to find his horse. The horse had deserted at the first shot, however, so he walked on, carefully avoiding soldiers, back to our plane.

(To be continued.)

Note:—Any of our young readers writing to "Captain Jimmy", 2010 Star Bldg., Toronto, will receive his signed photo free.

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Trade-Wind

Breath of the seas, of the four-way seas
Balm of the tropic isles
Wafture of ease, of the month-long ease
Roll of the magic miles,—
The trade-wind blows from the end of days
Soft and silken and rare
Curling the crests of the blue-white sprays
Playing my sleeves and hair.

Blow, ye trade-winds, blow,
The ship is swinging low;
Blow, ye trade-winds blow,
Around the world we go.

Dreams of the mains, of the blue-thin mains
Sighted from tar-patched sails
Call of the lanes, of the long salt lanes
Flavor of old sea-tales,—
Down the tropic and far on the Line
Safe past the doldrum calms
The trades bring word of the rover brine
And reefs thin-ringed with palms.

Blow, ye trade-wind, blow,
With music soft and low;
Blow, ye trade-wind, blow,
Over the earth we go.

Athwart the lines the world-winds roam—
The freighted ships are sailing home.
—L. H. Bailey, in "Wind and Weather."

Diagnosis Wrong Treatment Correct

"Let me kiss those tears away, sweetheart," he begged tenderly.

She fell into his arms and he was very busy for a few moments.

But the tears flowed on.

"Will nothing stop them?" he asked breathlessly.

"No," she murmured. "It's hay fever, but go on with the treatment."
—Nova Scotia Medical Bulletin.

"So Edith has caught that young fellow who rescued her while skating. He seemed awfully shy."
"Yes; she had to break the ice."

Something Wrong

The shabby visitor placed his hat upon a chair, and, drawing a booklet from his pocket, approached the business man.

"I can tell you," he said, "how to become a great success—how to win independence for life."

"Three seconds gone from the minute I'm giving you," said the business man.

"I have here,' 'the visitor went on, "an infallible memory system. Master it, and you will master the world. You will not forget to post the letter your wife gave you this morning, and you can do without that worsted on your finger."

"My trouble," said the business man, "is that I can't find a reliable system for forgetting things I want to. Your minute's up."

Sadly the visitor departed, but two minutes later he returned to the office breathless and excited.

"I forgot my hat!" he said.

Silkworm Imported For California Tests

Lindsay, Calif.—Mattea Bruno, a fruit grower, has started what he hopes will become the silk industry of California.

Bruno sent to Italy and obtained eggs of the silkworm which he fed and since has attended diligently. A native of a part of Italy where silkworms have been grown for centuries, Bruno is familiar with the work and has been successful with his first small crop of cocoons.

He says weather in the San Joaquin Valley is very similar to that of his native country where the silkworms are cultivated, and points out that mulberry trees, the leaves of which form the food for the silk worm, are easily grown here.

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