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The Bishop Murder Case

A PHILO VANCE STORY

BY S. S. VAN DINE

SYNOPSIS.

A man known as Co. K Robin is shot with an arrow on the archery range beside the home of Prof. Dillard. The crime seems to be a mad man's dramatization of "Who Killed Co. K Robin?" District Attorney Markham is puzzled and calls in Philo Vance, well known as a bachelor who dabbles in the solving of unusual mysteries. Spurling (German for Sparrow) was the last seen with Robin. Both he and Robin were in love with Belle Dillard, the professor's niece. Sigurd Arnesson, a protégé of the professor, wishes all information on the case so he can solve it rath—actually. A neighbor, Fardes, shows an interest in the case. Mrs. Drukker, a neighbor with an unbalanced mind, believes her grown-up son to be still a baby. The son is a cripple with abnormal intellect, and a mathematician. Vance determines to question Drukker.

CHAPTER IX.

When we were again in the Dillard drawing room and Miss Dillard had left us to rejoin her uncle in the library, Vance, without preliminaries, proceeded to the business in hand. "I didn't care to worry your mother, Mr. Drukker, by questioning you in front of her, but inasmuch as you called her this morning shortly before Mr. Robin's death, it is necessary—as a mere routine procedure—that we seek whatever information you can give us." Drukker had seated himself near the fireplace. He now drew in his head cautiously, but made no answer. "You came here," continued Vance, "about half past nine, I believe, to call on Mr. Arnesson?" "Yes." "By way of the archery range and the basement door?" "I always come that way. Why walk around the block?" "But Mr. Arnesson was out this morning." Drukker nodded. "At the university?" "And, finding Mr. Arnesson away, you sat for a while in the library with Professor Dillard, I understand, discussing an astronomical expedition to South America." "The expedition of the Royal Astronomical Society to Sobral to test the Einsteinian deflection," amplified Drukker. "How long were you in the library?" "Less than half an hour." "And then?" "I went down to the archery room, and glanced at one of the magazines. There was a chess problem in it—a Zugzwang end-game that came up recently between Shapiro and Marshall—and I sat down and worked it out." "Just a moment, Mr. Drukker. A note of suppressed interest came into Vance's voice. "You're interested in chess?" "To a certain extent. I don't spend much time at it, however. The game is not purely mathematical, and it's insufficiently speculative to appeal to a wholly scientific mind." "Did you find the Shapiro-Marshall position?"

"That's right." "You saw nothing, by the way, that was in the least extraordinary when you were here this morning?" "I saw nothing except what I've told you." "And you're quite sure you heard your mother scream at about half past eleven?"

Vance did not move as he asked this question; but a slightly different note had crept into his voice, and it acted on Drukker in a startling manner. He heaved his squat body out in his chair and stood glaring down on Vance with menacing fury. His tiny round eyes flashed, and his lips worked convulsively. His hands, dangling before him, flexed and unflexed like those of a man in a paroxysm.

"What are you driving at?" he demanded, his voice a shrill falsetto. "I tell you I heard her scream. I don't care a damn whether she admits it or not. Moreover, I heard her walking in her room. She was in her room, understand, and I was in my room, between eleven and twelve. And you can't prove anything different. Furthermore, I'm not going to be cross-examined by you or anyone else as to what I was doing or where I was. It's none of your damned business—do you hear me?"

So insensate was his wrath that I expected any minute to see him hurl himself on Vance. Heath had risen and stepped forward, sensing the potential danger of the man. Vance, however, did not move. He continued to smoke languidly, and when the other's fury had been spent, he said quietly and without a trace of emotion:

"There's nothing more we have to ask you, Mr. Drukker. And really, y' know, there's no need to work yourself up. It merely occurred to me that your mother's scream might help to establish the exact time of the murder."

"What could her scream have to do with the time of Robin's death? Didn't she see you she saw nothing?" Drukker appeared exhausted, and leaned heavily against the table.

At this moment Professor Dillard appeared in the archway. Behind him stood Arnesson. "What seems to be the matter?" the professor asked. "I heard the noise here, and came down." He regarded Drukker coldly. "Hasn't Belle been through enough to-day without your frightening her this way?"

Vance had risen, but before he could speak Arnesson came forward and shook his finger in mock reprimand at Drukker.

"You really should learn control, Adolph. You take life with such abominable seriousness. You've worked in interstellar spatial magnitudes long enough to have some sense of proportion. Why attach so much importance to this pin-point of life on earth?"

Drukker was breathing stertorously. "These swine—" he began. "Oh, my dear Adolph!" Arnesson cut him short. "The entire human race are swine. Why particularize? . . . Come along. I'll see you home." And he took Drukker's arm firmly and led him downstairs.

"We're very sorry we disturbed you, sir," Markham apologized to Professor Dillard. "The man flew off the handle for some unknown reason. These investigations are not the pleasant things in the world; but we hope to be through before long."

"Well, make it as brief as you can, Markham. And do try to spare Belle as much as possible. Let me see you before you go."

When Professor Dillard had returned upstairs Markham asked Vance: "What do you make of Drukker?" "Decidedly not a pleasant character. Diseased physically and mentally. A congenital liar. But canny—oh, deuced canny. An abnormal brain—you often find it in cripples of this type. Sometimes it runs to real constructive genius, as with Steinmetz; but too often it takes to abstruse speculation along impractical lines, as with Drukker. Still, our little verbal give-and-take has not been without fruit. He's hiding something that he'd like to tell but doesn't dare."

"He's touchy on the subject of that hour between eleven and noon," said Markham.

"We're at least getting some luggage aboard," said Vance. "Our excitable mathematical wizard has opened up some very interesting lines of speculation. And Mrs. Drukker is fairly teemin' with possibilities."

"I'm here to tell you, Mr. Markham, that we're wasting our time," put in Heath. "What's the good of all these parleys? Spurling's the boy we want, and when my men bring him in and put him through a little sweating, we'll have enough material for an indictment. He was in love with the Dillard girl and was jealous of Robin—not only on account of the girl, but because Robin could shoot those red sticks straighter than he could. He had a scrap with Robin in this here room—the professor heard 'em at it."

"And," added Vance ironically, "his name means 'sparrow.' Quod erat demonstrandum—No, Sergeant; it's much too easy. It works out like a game of Canfield with the cards stacked; whereas this thing was planned much too carefully for suspicion to fall directly on the guilty person." (To be continued.)

"Your sister's a long time about making her appearance," suggested the caller. "Well," said the little brother, "she'd be a sight if she came down without making it."

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Fiber of Wood Pulp Is Good Cow-Feed

The Forest Product Laboratory, Madison, Wisconsin, has developed a process to convert fiber of wood pulp into suitable food for cattle. The food resulting from the treatment of the wood pulp with heat and chemicals has been made suitable for cows; and the cows like it. It is believed that in this way it will be possible to utilize the sawdust that up until this time has been practically a useless by-product of lumber camps.

Apparently the use of sawdust in this way does not cut down either the quantity or the quality of the milk from cows using this sort of fodder. According to chemists, it is perfectly feasible to convert sawdust into succulent dishes for human consumption also.

The errand boy was hogging a life-size tailor's dummy through the shopping crowds, when a tax-man noticed his embarrassment and lifted the helpful voice. "Urry up, Romeo," he shouted, "er father's after you!"

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Five Simple Rules to Remember If Lost

Fifty-seven men, women, and children were lost in the national forests of Oregon and Washington during the past summer, according to reports received by the regional forester in Portland, Oregon. We read in a press bulletin issued by the Forest Service (Washington):

Rangers know the country pretty well, and when an emergency arises, are the first to volunteer, and oftentimes put in many wearisome hours combing the mountainsides and canyons for lost persons. They do this willingly and cheerfully but they would try to acquire some of the woodsman's powers of close observation, calmness, and common sense, or at least stay with somebody who knows the country or is a good enough woodsman to act as a guide.

Among these fifty-seven lost persons were children, men, and women, including an old lady, a policeman, and a good many hunters, the reports show.

The Malheur forest in eastern Oregon reports ten lost persons, the largest number; the Olympic forest in Washington reports nine, while the Whitman, in the Blue Mountains, reports seven. The Fremont had six lost, mostly hunters, while the Mount Hood reports five. Fourteen out of the twenty-two national forests reported lost persons during 1931.

The forest rangers suggest the following simple and commonsense things to remember when lost in the woods or mountains:

1. Stop. Sit down and try to figure out where you are. Use your head and not your legs.
2. If caught by night, fog or storm, stop at once and make camp in a sheltered place. Build a fire in a safe spot. Gather plenty of dry fuel as soon as possible after selecting a stopping-place.
3. Don't wander about. Travel only down-hill.
4. If you are injured, choose a clear spot on a promontory, if possible, and build a signal smoke.
5. Don't yell; don't run; don't worry, and, above all, don't quit.

With the coming of winter snows to the high mountains will come reports of persons becoming lost, with the liability of suffering and death. Forest officers therefore emphasize the fact that people inexperienced with snow and low temperatures at high elevations should keep out of such localities unless accompanied by someone experienced in such conditions.

Brush Notes.

We use brushes of all kinds so much for our own toilet and well-grooming—we have nail brushes, hair brushes, eyelash and eyebrow brushes, clothes brushes hat brushes, and shoe brushes—that it is astonishing that we do not treat our homes to a special set of brushes, too.

There is much good work that a brush may do. With a brush you may accomplish satisfactorily much that a duster jibs at. Naturally the brush must vary according to the tasks it is required to perform.

A fairly stiff clothes brush kept specially for your upholstered chairs and settees will keep these remarkably free from dust. Cretonne covers will last clean very much longer if they are given a good brushing every time the room is turned out.

Carved furniture of any kind requires the services of a medium-sized soft-haired brush, such as is used for cleaning typewriters. This will work its way into all corners and keep the carving free from dust.

Any hangings or curtains, which by reason of their texture or heaviness cannot be washed or cleaned very frequently, will be kept in better order and need cleaning less often if they are well brushed at frequent intervals.

A smaller, soft-haired brush will be invaluable for your small pieces of china, while a nail brush is certainly necessary when you come to wash them. China that is at all delicate or of intricate design requires the attention of more than a duster, which often proves quite inadequate to cope with these, if you have no brush, is to twist a corner of your duster and poke out the dust gently, but this is not so good as using a brush.

Metalized Wood

A metalized wood is now available for commercial use. This metal wood consists of wood combined under pressure with molten lead, tin, and similar slow-melting metals or alloys. The treated wood may be cut and machined by the usual method and with about the same facility. Impregnating wood with metal improves the appearance and creates an attractive, out-of-the-ordinary finish. It is claimed that this product offers great possibilities for special bearings, of the oil-less type and for meeting special conditions where unusual pressure resistance requirements are called for.

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SODA WAFERS

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Silence
There is a time when silence is golden; there is also a time when silence is galling.—John R. Gunn.

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