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The Bishop Murder Case

A PHILO VANCE STORY
BY S. S. VAN DINE

SYNOPSIS
A man known as Cook Robin is found with an arrow in his heart; another, Johnny Sprigg, is found with a bullet through the top of his head. Detective Markham calls in Philo Vance, who claims the murders are founded on nursery rhymes and are the work of a madman.

Those associated with the case are: Prof. Dillard, his niece Belle, and his protégé 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.

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. He learns Pardee played chess the previous night and that he and Drukker had a heated argument. Belle Dillard and Arnesson had gone to the theatre.

CHAPTER XXIV.
At that moment the front door opened and Arnesson came in. He stared at us in mock astonishment; then he caught sight of Belle Dillard. "Hallo, sis," he called to her pleasantly. "In the hands of the general, I see." He flashed us an amused look. "Why the conclave? This house is becoming a regular police station. Hunting for clues of Sprigg's murderer? Ha! Bright youth done away with by his jealous professor, and that sort of thing, eh? ... Hope you chaps haven't been putting Diana the Huntress through a third degree."

"Nothing of the kind," the girl spoke up. "They've been most considerate. And I've been telling them what an old fogey you are—bringing me home at half past twelve."

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ISSUE No. 22—'31

"I'd like to cast an eye on this black bishop. Where is it?"
Vance reached in his pocket and held out the chessman. Arnesson took it eagerly. His eyes glittered for a moment. He turned the piece over in his hand, and then gave it back.

"You seem to recognize this particular bishop," said Vance dulcely. "You're quite correct. It was borrowed from your chess set in the library."

Arnesson nodded a slow affirmative. "I believe it was." Suddenly he turned to Markham and an ironic leer came over his lean features. "Was that why I was to be kept in the dark? Under suspicion am I? Shades of Pythagoras! What penalty attaches to the heinous crime of distributing chessmen among one's neighbors?"

Markham got up and walked toward the hall.

"You are not under suspicion, Arnesson," he answered, with no attempt to conceal his ill-humor. "The bishop was left at Mrs. Drukker's at exactly midnight."

"And I was half an hour too late to qualify. Sorry to have disappointed you."

"Let us hear if your formula works out," said Vance, as we passed out of the front door. "We've a little visit to pay to Mr. Pardee now."

"Pardee? Oh! Calling in a chess expert on the subject of bishops, eh? I see your reasoning—it at least has the virtue of being simple and direct."

He stood on the little porch and watched us, like a japhis gargoyle, as we crossed the street.

Pardee received us with his customary quiet courtesy. The tragic, frustrated look which was a part of his habitual expression was even more pronounced than usual; and when he drew up chairs for us in his study his manner was that of a man whose interest in life had died, and who was merely going through the mechanical motions of living.

"We have come here, Mr. Pardee," Vance began, "to learn what we can of Sprigg's murder in Riverside Park yesterday morning. We have excellent reasons for every question we are about to ask you."

Pardee nodded resignedly. "I shall not be offended at any line of interrogation you take. After reading the papers I realize just how unusual a problem you are facing."

"First, then, please inform us where you were yesterday morning between seven and eight."

A faint flush overspread Pardee's face, but he answered in a low, even voice:

"I was in bed. I did not rise until nearly nine."

"Is it not your habit to take a walk in the park before breakfast?" (I knew this was sheer guess-work on Vance's part, for the subject of Pardee's habits had not come up during the investigation.)

"That is quite true," the man replied, without a moment's hesitation. "But yesterday I did not go—I had worked rather late the night before."

"When did you first hear of Sprigg's death?"

"At breakfast. My cook repeated the gossip of the neighborhood. I read the official account of the tragedy in the early edition of the evening Sun."

"And you saw the reproduction of the Bishop note, of course, in this morning's paper. What is your opinion of the affair, Mr. Pardee?"

"I hardly know." For the first time his lack-lustre eyes showed signs of animation. "It's an incredible situation. The mathematical chances are utterly opposed to such a series of inter-related events being coincidental."

"Yes," Vance concurred. "And speaking of mathematics: are you at all familiar with the Riemann-Christoffel tensor?"

"I know of it," the man admitted. "Drukker uses it in his book of world lines. My mathematics, however, are not of the physicist's type. Had I not become enamored of chess?" he smiled sadly. "I would have been an astronomer. Next to manoeuvring the factors in a complicated chess combination, the greatest mental satisfaction one can get, I think, is plotting the heavens and discovering new planets. I even keep a five-inch equatorial telescope in a pent-house on my roof for amateur observations."

"You were, I understand, at the Dillard's last Thursday when Mr. Arnesson was discussing this tensor with Drukker and Sprigg?"

"Yes, I recall that the subject came up then."

"How well did you know Sprigg?"

"Only casually. I had met him with Arnesson once or twice."

"Sprigg, also, it seems, was in the habit of walking in Riverside Park before breakfast," observed Vance negligently. "Ever run into him there, Mr. Pardee?"

The man's eyelids quivered slightly, and he hesitated before answering. "Never," he said finally.

Vance appeared indifferent to the denial. He rose and, going to the front window, looked out.

"I thought one might be able to see into the archery range from here. But I note that the angle cuts off the view entirely."

"Yes, the range is quite private. There's even a vacant lot opposite the wall, so that no one can see over it. . . . Were you thinking of a possible witness to Robin's death?"

"That, and other things," Vance returned to his chair. "You don't go in for archery, I take it."

"It's a trifle too strenuous for me. Miss Dillard once tried to interest me

The ADVENTURES of CAPTAIN JIMMY and his Dog SCOTTIE

What came before As Captain Jimmy and his new found friend Jed Stone race away from the Chinese bandits in an old railway locomotive. Jed tells how his brother had been captured by outlaws, and of his vain search.

The crew had luckily jumped, and taking no further chances, promptly fled.

"I guess we had better get out of here before someone blames us for all this," chuckled Jed Stone. "First thing you'll know some one or other will want their old engine back—let's go."

It seemed best to leave the freight cars right there. As quickly as I could, I uncoupled the engine, climbed into the cab and opened the throttle. After roaring along for a few miles an idea occurred to Jed Stone. "How about cutting the telegraph wires?"

True enough, in a few minutes the crew might decide to return and telegraph ahead, and then there'll be a whole parcel of Chinese troops waiting for us, asking where we found the engine. We slowed down to a stop. In a moment I climbed out and cut the wires.

We were still in enemy territory, many, many miles from Shanghai. Somehow we must get to our airplane and get going. Every moment's delay meant just that much less chance of rescuing Jed Stone's brother, Guy.

Too late! There was an ear-splitting crash and it just felt as if some big giant had kicked the locomotive right out from under us. It seemed as if she were going to turn right over, but somehow it held to the rails.

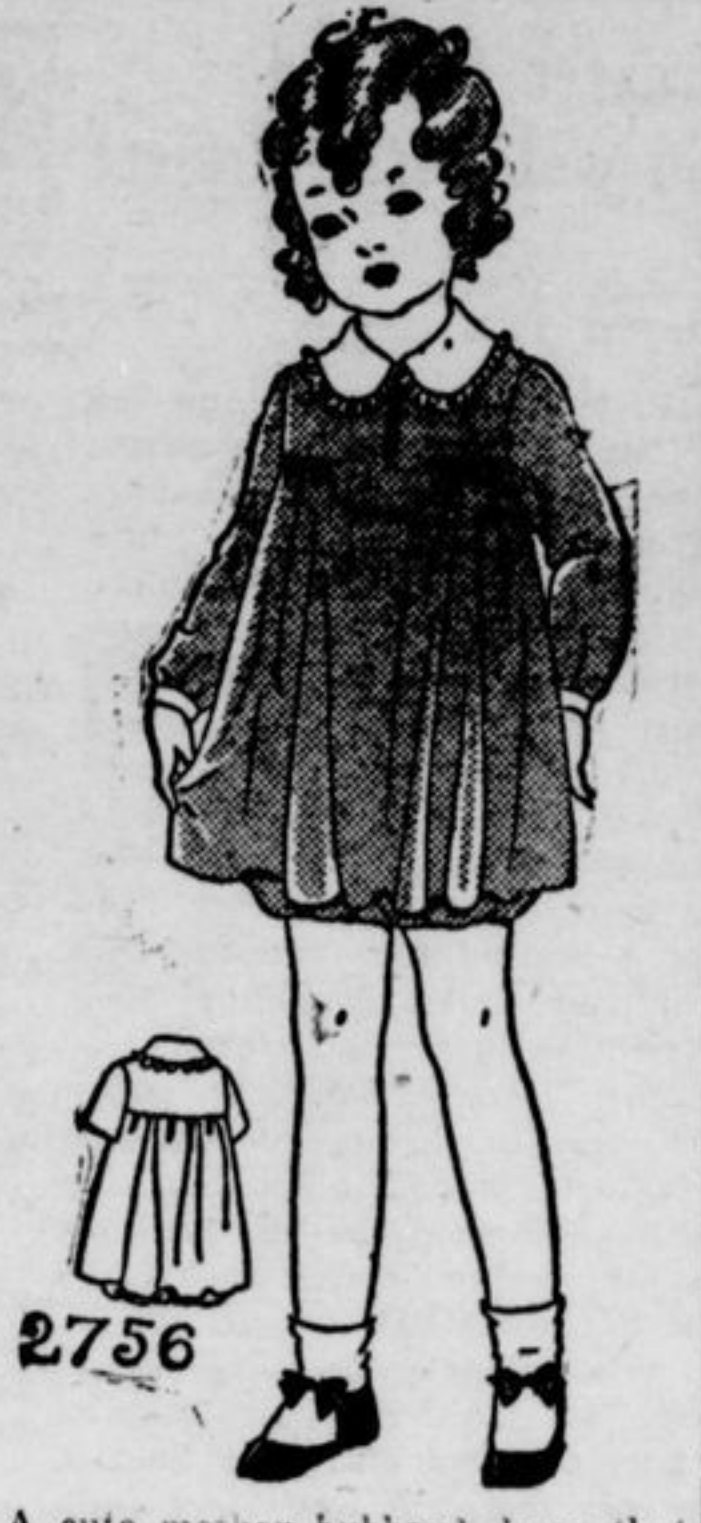
Looking back we saw a wreck indeed. The engine had plowed into the rear of our train of ten freight cars. The first three were a mass of splinters, the next two were crossed ways on the track. The engine itself, after causing all that trouble had jumped the track, and now lay on its side in the ditch steaming and fussing at a great rate.

The tracks looked as if a cyclone had just passed by. Rails were torn up, and ties scattered around.

The country was flat and uninteresting. Most of the timber had been cut away years before, and the ground almost barren of vegetation. Mile after mile passed by, and after a time we began to see an occasional soldier walking along the tracks. Then a large wood began to appear on our left, stretching away to the horizon.

(To be continued.)

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Poland Is Land of Hospitality

After all, interesting as sightseeing and street-loitering are in Poland, my greatest joy was in knowing Poles. They are the most courteous people I've ever met, with the most beautiful manners. I don't mean that I noticed this among the aristocracy only; I don't mean that I myself met always with such politeness, from all classes of people. They're courteous to each other—the men take off their hats to other men, a woman shakes hands with a woman, a child of four or five, speaks to all the children and all the nurses when he leaves a group in the park. And along with their courtesy they're hospitable to the nth degree. The slightest excuse and they invite you to dinner or tea, or to stay at their homes. I could have spent another fifteen months in Poland, if I'd accepted all my invitations. In one little town I expected to stay three or four hours, just between trains, but found my hostess had made plans for four days. When I spoke of leaving a country house on Thursday, the niece exclaimed, "Thursday! But you've just come! My aunt expects you to stay a fortnight, if not a month. I'm here for a month, and some of the guests for two." They've made hospitality a heart; they thank you for coming long; you half feel you're doing the favor instead of receiving it.

I think one reason they are model hosts is because Poles are modest. My introductions told, of course, something about me, but alas! they told me little or nothing about my hosts. Often and often I wished I didn't have to ask so many questions, that they'd voluntarily tell me more. Eight months after I'd been her guest, I happened to learn that my first hostess had been a pupil of Mme. Curie-Skłodowska in Paris, her most promising pupil, the discoverer of radium said; again that she'd done some notable work in mathematics; and it was only because it came up in another connection that she casually referred to her translation of Shakespeare's sonnets (into Polish!). If you had such records and a foreign guest, would you keep absolutely still about your achievements?

Nor was she an exception to the rule. I arrived in Warsaw to find that a friend had arranged for me to live in a Polish household, Paul L.'s (Paul means Mrs. and Pan Mr. as nearly as I can put it in England.) I had a pleasant talk with her and answered her questions about my writing and my plans for Poland; of herself not a word. But when later in the day I gave this address at the bank and the American Embassy and to half a dozen persons, they asked, "Is it Suzanna Paul L. who writes poetry as well as novels?" And I was, though I had to ask her point-blank to confirm it—Grace Humphrey, in "Poland the Unexplored."

Remember this—that there is a proper dignity and proportion to be observed in the performance of every act of life.—Marcus Aurelius.

"I spent a season in Hollywood and I didn't like any of the actresses enough to buy them a soda."—Joseph Hergeshelmer.

"The trouble with most people is they treat sin as if it were a cream puff instead of a rattlesnake."—Billy Sunday.

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Unnecessary Sympathy

P. L. EISNOR

Edgar was a fascinating child, with appealing blue eyes and a little darling rose-bud of a mouth. Sometimes he said the curliest things. Of course his mother was his adoring slave.

One day, having secretly taken a knife from the pantry, he was out in the yard making a sailboat when suddenly his mother's heart almost stood still at the sound of loud wailing. She rushed downstairs and was outside in a few seconds.

"Oh, Edgar, what have you done, my darling?" she gasped.

He held out to her a little finger, from which a few drops of bright red blood were trickling.

"The bad knife—cut my finger," he told her, between his sobs.

She picked him up in her arms and carried him into the house.

"Oh, my poor little baby, my poor mind, love, mother'll fix it."

Wiping the cut was carefully bandaged, Edgar's mother made him some candy, and kept murmuring over him commiseratingly until the child was sure he had been grievously hurt.

Next day, while playing in a little field nearby, he was stung by a wasp. Again, a great fuss was made over him.

Edgar's uncle Reginald happened to be visiting at his sister's that day. He watched the proceedings quietly, but when the boy had been put to bed, he turned to his sister.

"Kate," he said gravely, "how long do you want to keep that lad of yours a baby?"

Kate's blue eyes opened very wide. "What do you mean, Reg?" she demanded indignantly. "I'm not keeping him a baby."

"He is old enough to be a brave boy, but if you continue coddling him and pitying him every time he gets a little bruise, he'll always be a baby."

"But, Reg," protested the mother, instantly on the defensive, "you don't understand. That sting might have caused something serious if I hadn't attended to it at once. And he's still very little, and of course it must have hurt him."

"Very true," her brother admitted. "I think it quite right to attend to any little injury. But it is not necessary to make the child think he has been seriously injured whenever he gets a little bump or to teach him to come running to you for pity. All children have to get their share of bumps and bruises. Teach him to take them manfully."

Kate thought this over. "Perhaps you are right, Reg. I wouldn't want my boy to grow up to be a 'molly-coddle.' I'll just try your way for a while. When he hurts himself, I'll see that he gets looked after, but I won't say anything to make him think it is at all serious."

For a few weeks after that, Edgar did not understand his mother's apparent lack of sympathy and cried the more because of it, but after a time he grew accustomed to her his little mishaps and soon she found that he no longer shed tears or ran to her every time he bruised his knee or scratched his arm.

Real sympathy is always very desirable, but in training children to be brave and courageous, the mother should be very careful to be as casual as possible when the little boy or girl comes running in with a cut finger. It is not necessary to remain entirely unmoved when a child is hurt, but as little comment as possible regarding the injury, with always a ready smile of appreciation when pain or discomfort is borne bravely, is the wisest course.—Issued by the National Kindergarten Association, 8 West 40th Street, New York City. These articles are appearing weekly in our columns.

England's Unique Railway Exhibition

One of England's unique organizations, the Model Railway Club, recently held a novel exhibition in celebration of its coming of age. The exhibitors, who ranged from army officers and butchers to clergymen, school children and farm workers, submitted two-ounce engines, carefully wrought to the minutest detail—one model travelled forty-two miles on its track five-eighths of an inch in gauge. One of the most interesting models at this year's exhibition was the work of a 13-year-old boy. This was a tiny restaurant car, complete even to a plate under the kitchen tap.

Most of the craftsmen became interested in their hobby at an early age. The interest is not confined to England. This year L'Association Française des Amis des Chemins de Fer sent over exhibits and its secretary accompanied them.

The exhibition was held at Central Hall, Westminster, London, and was crowded from the opening with children and older connoisseurs—all apparently equally anxious for a ride on the model railway with its ninety-foot track.

Mrs. Neigh: "But isn't your son rather young to join the Army?"
Mrs. Bore: "Well, he is young, but then, you see, he is only going to join the infantry."