



Death of a Chancellor

David Dickinson

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A case of murder in the cathedral Compton Minster is preparing to celebrate a very special anniversary in the year 1901 - a thousand years of Christian worship. But a few weeks before the main ceremonies, a high official of the cathedral, the chancellor, dies in mysterious circumstances, and no one except the doctor and the undertaker is allowed to view the corpse. It then transpires that the chancellor was one of England's richest men. When his sister suspects foul play, Lord Francis Powerscourt is asked to investigate. As Powerscourt paces the ancient cloisters and listens to evensong from the choir stalls, he begins to suspect that a terrible secret lies hidden in the cathedral, one that may have something to do with the anniversary. Then a chorister is strangled, his body found hanging on the great spit in the Vicars Hall kitchen. Powerscourt himself escapes death by a whisker, as does his wife, Lady Lucy, before he uncovers the astonishing secret of Compton Minster and unmasks a murderer.

Death of a Chancellor Details

Date : Published 2007 by Constable & Robinson (first published 2004)

ISBN : 9781845295394

Author : David Dickinson

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Mystery, Historical Mystery, Historical, Historical Fiction, Crime

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Sandra says

Enjoyable, but somewhat uneven, and with a quite silly premise. There are a few areas of emphasis in the plot that are diversions but never resolved. Like, it's never clear why, in the first few pages, two people cover up a murder. It's explained, mind you, just not in a satisfactory or plausible way.

But fun to read, engaging characters, a plot that moves along at a good clip, and certainly recommended for those who like extremely Anglican settings.

The deep anti-Catholicism was quite surprising and even appalling for such a recent book (2005). It seems the reformation is still quite current in the mind of author David Dickinson.

Spuddie says

I did quite enjoy this fourth entry in this historical series set in 1901 England. Lord Francis Powerscourt has just returned from months in the Boer War when he is approached by a woman who believes her brother was murdered and wishes Powerscourt to investigate. Not long after arriving in Compton, a second murder, this one obvious and grisly, happens and Powerscourt deduces that it is probably related to some goings-on at the Cathedral.

I must admit I wasn't as enamored of this book as the earlier ones in the series, possibly because there was a lot of churchy hoo-ha, but it was still a nice visit with Francis, Lady Lucy and the other recurring secondary characters.

Susan says

When the chancellor of an ancient cathedral, one of England's richest men, dies suddenly, his avaricious sister is suspicious enough to hire Lord Francis Powerscourt to investigate. Francis is sure that people are lying to him, but can he prove anything? At least he's on the spot when there's a murder within the cathedral grounds. He begins to suspect an improbable, unbelievable plot--but even if his theories are true, he won't know who the murderer is.

Julie says

I thought the historical references were interesting and cleverly woven into a mystery. However, the ending was quite abrupt and a bit far-fetched. In spite of the poor proofreading and the punctuation and omission errors, it was well written prose.

Abbey says

BOTTOM LINE: Several grisly deaths and rather a lot of treachery in a churchly setting power the plot, seasoned with enjoyable small town characters, ecclesiastic types, and the regular participants in this wonderful series. Powerscourt is a gentleman investigator with brains and wit who has many friends in high places, but isn't afraid to do his own leg-work. An excellent entry in the series, although a couple of scenes are rather gruesome.

#4 Lord Francis Powerscourt, 1901, cathedral town of Compton, England [historical mystery (Edwardian), classic style but not too cosy]

Lord Francis Powerscourt, Lady Lucy Powerscourt, Lord Johnny Fitzgerald, a devious bunch of clerics, an accommodating medico, a nosy reporter, a cavalry regiment, several choirboys, and a potential heiress who wants everybody to jump through hoops for her, liven things up at Compton Minster, as the small cathedral town prepares to celebrate its 1000 year anniversary. Well-plotted, although rather confusing due to the number of religious categories and bits of information scattered about, especially at the beginning. Worth plowing through for a while, though, as it became a quite absorbing story even though I still didn't understand the bits'n'pieces of ranks and titles. A bit of "too much information", or perhaps the readers in England easily grasp the Anglican hierarchy better than I could.

Overall a very enjoyable read, though, with no slackening of the quality throughout this wonderful series.

Jan says

This is the first time I have read a David Dickinson book, and luckily I got two for Christmas gifts.

Story: Lord Francis Powerscourt has been away at the Boar war in South Africa, he is a detective in his civilian life. On his return to his family he is hired to look into the death of a Chancellor of the Church of England. The Chancellors sister does not believe he died in his sleep and thinks murder is afoot!

While investigating the Chancellors death, three wills of the Chancellors turn up, who are the rightful benefactors? Then there are the gruesome murders in the little town of Compton, who is doing them, and who will be next? Why are there so many foreign Catholic servants in the houses of the Anglican church? What are the secrets they are hiding? Why are the Jesuits and the Civitas Dei involved in the local Anglican Cathedral, and who is making attempts on the Lord and Ladies lives? Good questions, all will be told within the pages. The only question I had at the ending is, all the work Lord Powerscourt puts in to these mysteries, and a lot of expense, I never figured out, who pays him for his time and expenses in the end!

Marilyn Pronovost says

One of the most strained plots and unconvincing stories with of a mystery that I have ever read. After this I won't be reading any other books in this series! The characters are predictable, the writing is okay, but the plot is poor. It seems like the author had three related ideas for a story and tried to see if he could make them work in one story. The result is a poor mystery using three poor subplots.

Nancy Ellis says

Powerscourt is at it again! He's called in to investigate the Chancellor's death which of course turns out to be murder (surprise!). While he's there in Compton, more murders of a most gruesome variety occur at the Abbey. It begins to look like a conspiracy....could it be a sinister papist plot??? As always, these books are delightful and fun to read.

LJ says

First Sentence: There was just one figure on the deck of the ship at four o'clock in the morning.

The Chancellor of the Cathedral at Compton has been found dead in his chamber by his servant. Together with the doctor and undertaker, they arrange for no one else to see the body. Upon discovering her brother was one of the richest men in England, The Chancellor's sister, married to a wastrel, hires Powerscourt to find out how her brother died and, if murdered, find the killer. After another death, Powerscourt comes to suspect the motives are very different than anything he's dealt with before.

Dickinson opened with an excellent opening that drew me into the story and the characters. He has a unique voice with almost a lightness to it that indicates just how much he enjoys his characters and writing his books.

Dickinson creates great characters; Powerscourt, whom the author allows occasional mental flights of fancy and wonderful wry humor; Johnnie Fitzgerald, the Irishman who loves wine and bird watching; William McKenzie, the tea-totaling Protestant Scotsman who can follow a suspect for days, and Powerscourt's beloved wife, Lucy. His secondary characters are equally strong, particularly Patrick and Anne.

The historical information may set one running to the internet, but one always finds that Dickinson's research holds true. The concise, but important, definitions of the various roles of the church figures, the information on the Reformation and the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1538 and learning the difference between the ritualists and the Evangelicals in the Anglican Church at this time are very helpful. One should caution that Catholics will probably not like this book.

The plot was excellent and built bit-by-bit; body-by-body. There is a very good balance of anticipation and horror and the revelations along with an excellent segment on the motives of murder. The ending was well done, particularly the thoughts and feelings Powerscourt had toward the killer.

While someone commented on there being anachronisms, I did not notice them. What I did notice was a very strong sense of time and place. This was an excellent book in a series which has become a favorite of mine and one highly recommend.

DEATH OF A CHANCELLOR (Hist Mys-Lord Francis Powerscourt-England-1901/Gaslight) - Ex
Dickinson, David - 4th in series
Constable & Robinson, Ltd., 2005, UK Hardcover - ISBN: 1841197785

? Irena ? says

4.5

I have to stop trying to decide what to think about these books. Every single time whatever I think in the beginning turns to something completely different in the best way possible. You may think what is going on and you are probably wrong.

Next, the author has yet to repeat the overall theme in his books. This one has religious overtones. Usually, right after people write the word religion they start justifying and explaining something or themselves. If you want to skip this wonderfully researched book that uses history of religion in such an interesting way, do so. Oh, and there is no shying away from unpleasant and uncomfortable things either.

Lord Powescourt is asked to investigate the death of a church official. His sister doesn't buy the story about his sudden natural death. We know he was murdered because the first thing that happens in the book is the butler finding his body and covering up the murder with the help of the doctor. I don't think I have ever hated a character as much as hated this woman. She is despicable. The author takes pity on us and sends her somewhere *away* pretty soon. That way Powerscourt can really investigate the weird events in Compton without him (and us) being annoyed and frustrated. And, as usual, as he investigates you learn a lot.

I am greedy and wanted a bit more from the ending. You know when someone hurts or does something bad to a character you like, you want to see them punished. An epilogue would have been perfect if only for reader's piece of mind. Some people who refused to help Lord Powerscourt even went as far to call him crazy. I would have liked to see those people being at least embarrassed.

Oh, well, you can't have everything and it doesn't make this story bad or anything.

I wish everyone involved were arrested and punished instead of almost rewarded by sending them elsewhere. That really made me angry. If the roles were reversed, I bet the other side would have find a neat way to do something nasty.

And I seriously doubt none of them connected the dots when it came to murders considering who was killed.

William says

As with the previous book in this series, the first half seemed to drag and then the plot picked up, but it never "grabbed me".

Jocelyn Harvey says

The third in this series (Lord Francis Powerscourt) for me and I've loved them all. Historical mysteries must be difficult to write - there's the issue of historical accuracy of course but even more important making the characters and the story interest and thrill the reader. Dickinson does so. I particularly like his ability to create a great cast of characters, some quite minor, others more important, who come alive as unique and

believable. He describes his people with great affection and gentle humour - I find myself reading the books with a constant grin on my face. This one, with the rather Monty Python-esque but murderous conflict between the Anglican and Roman Catholic faiths, somewhat stretches credulity, but still finished with an exciting and moving finale.

Michael says

The worst in the series so far with an incomprehensible muddled plot and a frankly ridiculous ending. These Lord Powerscourt books are generally uneven but in past books the dull sections have been eclipsed by all the whimsy, charm and adventure that Powerscourt and co generate. Everything seems subdued here, even Johnny Fitzgerald.

Janine says

This is a very interesting story. One of the most gruesome ways to get rid of a body - on a spittle. One of the people killed had my surname! BUT they were both killed to be silenced. Do I love this series? Yes

Cece says

Interesting premise, but plagued by shallow characterizations and a very flat, predictable ending.
