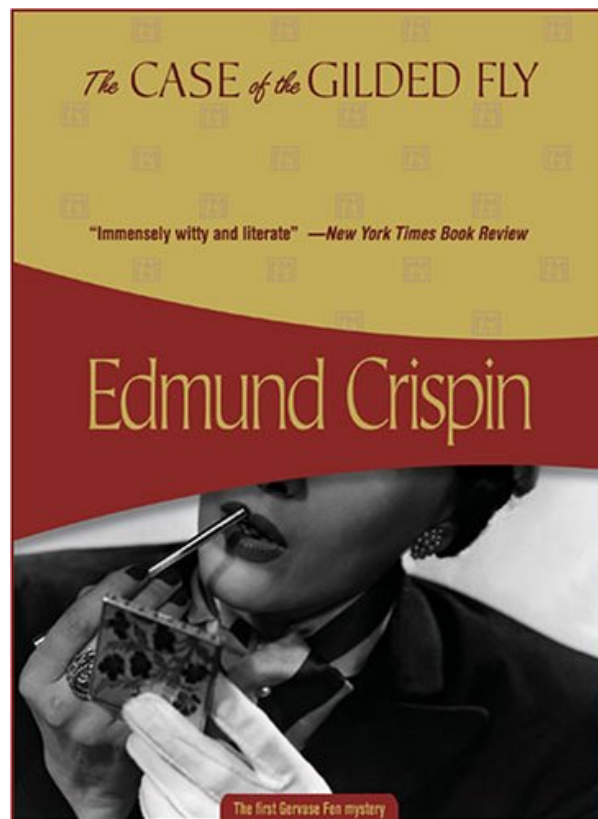
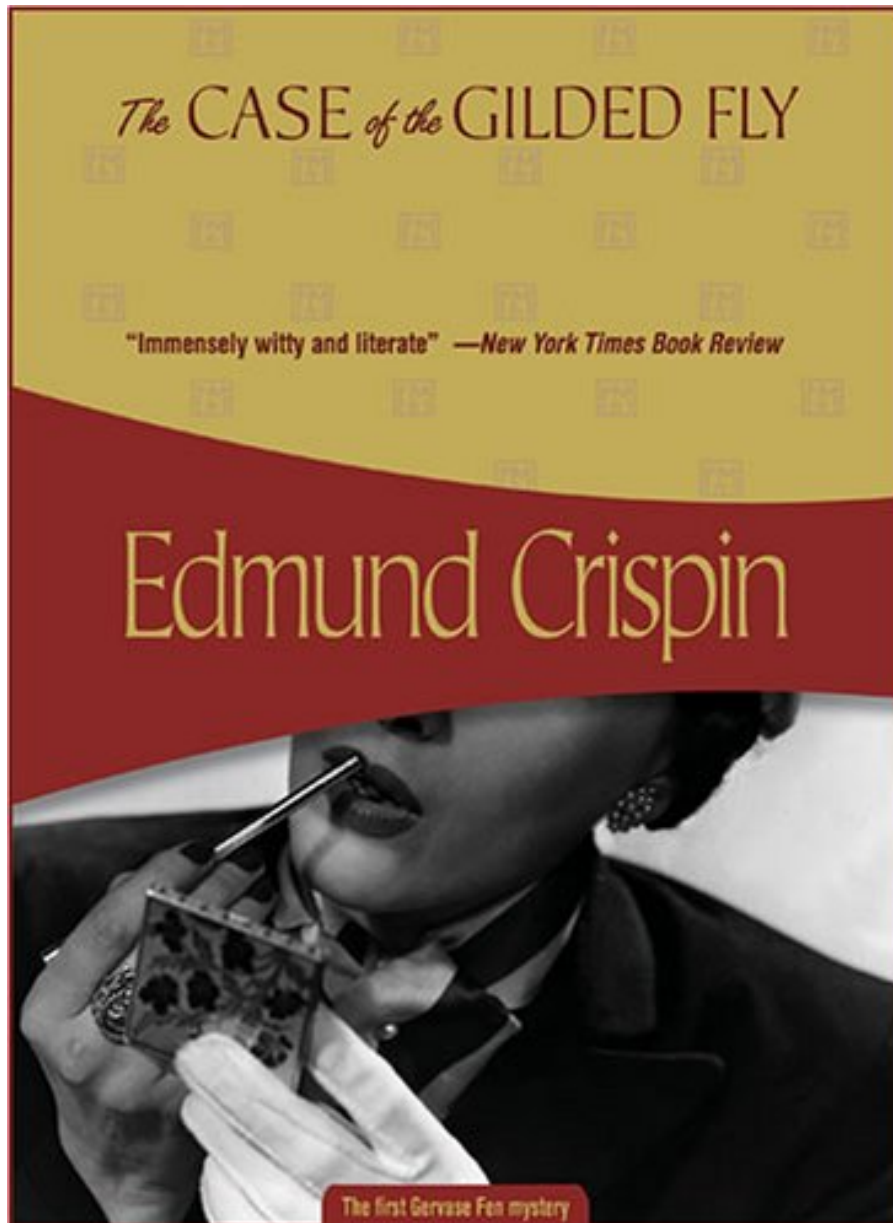


THE CASE OF THE GILDED FLY (THE FIRST GERVASE FEN MYSTERY) BY EDMUND CRISPIN



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Theater companies are notorious hotbeds of intrigue, and few are more intriguing than the company currently in residence at Oxford University. Center-stage is the beautiful, malicious Yseut, a mediocre actress with a stellar talent for destroying men. Rounding out the cast are more than a few of her past and present conquests, and the women who love them. And watching from the wings is Professor Gervase Fen?scholar, wit, and fop extraordinaire?who would rather solve crimes than expound on English literature. When Yseut is murdered, Fen finally gets his wish. *Gilded Fly*, originally published in 1944, was both Fen's first outing and the debut of the pseudonymous Crispin (in reality, composer Bruce Montgomery).

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Features

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Eloquent

By mary corso

I definitely learned some new vocabulary words reading this book. Luckily I read it on my iPad; in book form I would have needed a dictionary close by. I like a lot of background and detail, but the characters did not "come alive" for me as they do in a Georgette Heyer book. And I will never understand poetry. At least nothing deeper than the man from Nantucket. I had to take notes to keep track of the characters, and I referred to them often. Sigh.

19 of 20 people found the following review helpful.

I'm glad I decided to read this story again.

By J. Lesley

It has been a long time since I first read *The Case of the Gilded Fly* and I'm really glad that I found some time to sit down and enjoy it again after all these years. That is one of the things I love so much about these old, classic mysteries. No matter how much time has passed the story always seems just as exciting as it was the first time around. Modern mystery writers could do themselves a huge favor by immersing themselves in writings of the 1930's, 40's and 50's.

Gervase Fen is an Oxford don who specializes in English literature but really wants to work on murder cases. His longtime friend, Sir Richard Freeman, Chief Constable of Oxford, really wanted to study and critique English literature. These two made wonderful counterpoints because they both wanted to concentrate most on the thing the other did for a living. These two characters are wonderfully written by Edmund Crispin. Mainly, for me, because we get to see the best of both professions but given to us from the point of view of the character we would not necessarily expect.

The book opens in a most clever way. All the characters make the railway journey from London to Oxford within days of each other. Each is described during the train trip in wonderful detail concerning their reasons for going to Oxford and the reader is thoroughly acquainted with the characters by the time they all arrive at their destination. Because of the abrasive nature of one character, it is pretty obvious who the murder victim will be but Crispin takes his time leading up to the murder. By the time it happens, you are very much in sympathy with whoever decided to do this person in and Fen's quandry about whether or not to prove the person guilty is rather easy to understand. Because, Fen does know immediately who the murderer is. I, on the other hand, was not so quick off the mark. I had someone else chosen and resolutely hung on to that person until the bitter end.

Crispin has the Gervase Fen character utilize his vast knowlege of English literature very extensively. Sometimes, it can be somewhat confusing to someone (such as myself) who has only a basic smattering of knowlege of the subject. Still, one of the references did prompt me to do a little research to seek out the quote and read it in its entirety. I must confess that I find myself still scratching my head to try to decide if I think the (first) murder could have taken place in just that way. Wow, what a marksman! and on the spur of the moment too! Also, the motive for the first murder seemed to be rather weak for my taste. I would have liked for a weightier matter to have been the catalyst from which this malevolence sprang.

I love these old mysteries. I think they contain huge doses of character and charm. I really like to set aside uninterrupted time to fully involve myself in the atmosphere of the story. If this sounds like something you enjoy also, then Edmund Crispin could be just the author you are looking for. If you've already met Fen, Mrs. Fen and the little Fen consider going back for another time to a world which probably never existed anyplace outside mystery fiction but which I sincerely wish I had inhabited, even if just for a short time.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent

By Mary B.

This is typical Crispin, with the added joy of a glimpse into the inner workings of an English repertory company putting together a new play. I deducted a star because of Crispin's compulsive use of obscure words, but I must admit I like his books partly because of his precise, loving use of the English language. Without the Kindle's instant access to the dictionary, it'd be irritating, and even with the dictionary you don't always get a definition because the words are so very obscure. Other than that, it's a by-the-numbers Golden Age mystery that should satisfy fans who love Christie, etc.

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