

The GARDEN MURDER CASE

by S. S. VAN DINE

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CHAPTER XIV—Continued

Zalia Graem glared defiantly at Vance.

"I asked Mrs. Garden what I could do for her, and she requested me to fill the water glass on the little table beside her bed. I went into the bathroom and filled it; then I arranged her pillows and asked her if there was anything else she wanted. She thanked me and shook her head; and I returned to the drawing-room."

"Thank you," murmured Vance, nodding to Miss Graem and turning to the nurse. "Miss Beeton," he asked, "when you returned last night, was the bedroom window which opens on the balcony bolted?"

The nurse seemed surprised at the question. But when she answered, it was in a calm, professional tone.

"I didn't notice. But I know it was bolted when I went out."

He turned leisurely to Floyd Garden. "I say, Garden when you left the drawing-room yesterday afternoon, to follow Swift on your errand of mercy, as it were, after he had given you his bet on Equanimity, where did you go with him?"

"I led him into the dining-room." The man was at once troubled and aggressive. "I argued with him for a while, and then he came out and went down the hall to the stairs. I watched him for a couple of minutes, wondering what else I might do about it, for, to tell you the truth, I didn't want him to listen in on the race upstairs. I was pretty damned sure Equanimity wouldn't win, and he didn't know I hadn't placed his bet. I was rather worried about what he might do. For a minute I thought of following him upstairs, but changed my mind."

Vance lowered his eyes to the desk and was silent for several moments, smoking meditatively.

"I'm frightfully sorry, and all that," he murmured at length, without looking up; "but the fact is, we don't seem to be getting any farther. There are plausible explanations for everything and everybody. Assuming—merely as a hypothesis—that anyone here could be guilty of the murder of Swift, of the apparent attempt to murder Miss Beeton, and of the possible murder of Mrs. Garden, there is nothing tangible to substantiate an individual accusation. The performance was too clever, too well conceived, and the innocent persons seem unconsciously and involuntarily to have formed a conspiracy to aid and abet the murderer."

Vance looked up and went on.

"Moreover, nearly everyone has acted in a manner which conceivably would make him appear guilty. There have been an amazing number of accusations. Mr. Kroon was the first victim of one of those unsubstantiated accusations. Miss Graem has been pointed out to me as the culprit by several persons. Mrs. Garden last night directly accused her son. In fact, there has been a general tendency to involve various people in the criminal activities here. From the human and psychological point of view the issue has been both deliberately and unconsciously clouded, until the confusion was such that no clear-cut outline remained. And this created an atmosphere which perfectly suited the murderer's machinations, for it made detection extremely difficult and positive proof almost impossible. . . . And yet," Vance added, "some one in this room is guilty."

He rose dejectedly. I could not understand his manner: it was so unlike the man as I had always known him. All of his assurance seemed gone. Then he swung round quickly, and his eyes swept angrily about the room, resting for a brief moment on each one present.

"Furthermore," he said with a staccato stress on his words, "I know who the guilty person is!"

There was an uneasy stir in the room and a short tense silence which was broken by Doctor Siefert's cultured voice.

"If that is the case, Mr. Vance—and I do not doubt the sincerity of your statement—I think it your duty to name that person."

Vance regarded the doctor thoughtfully for several moments before answering. Then he said in a low voice: "I think you are right, sir." Again he paused and, lighting a fresh cigarette, moved restlessly up and down in front of the window. "First, however," he said stopping suddenly, "there's something upstairs I wish to look at again—to make sure. You will all please remain here for a few minutes." And he moved swiftly toward the door. At the threshold he hesitated and turned to the nurse. "Please

come with me, Miss Beeton, I think you can help me."

The nurse rose and followed Vance into the hall. A moment later we could hear them mounting the stairs.

Fully five minutes passed, and then the tense silence of the room was split by a woman's frenzied and terrifying cry for help, from somewhere upstairs. As we reached the hallway the nurse came stumbling down the stairs, holding with both hands to the bronze railing. Her face was ghastly pale.

"Mr. Markham! Mr. Markham!" she called hysterically. "Oh, my God! The most terrible thing has happened!"

She had just reached the foot of the stairs when Markham came up to her. She stood clutching the railing for support.

"It's Mr. Vance!" she panted excitedly. "He's—gone!"

A chill of horror passed over me, and everyone in the hall seemed stunned.

In broken phrases, interspersed with gasping sobs, the nurse was explaining to Markham.

"He went over—Oh, God, it was terrible! He said he wanted to ask me something, and led me out into the garden. He began questioning me about Doctor Siefert, and Professor Garden, and Miss Graem. And while he talked he moved over to the parapet—you remember where he stood last night. He got up there again, and looked down. I was frightened—the way I was yesterday. And then—and then—while



"Miss Beeton, I Think You Can Help Me."

I was talking to him—he bent over, and I could see—oh, God—he had lost his balance." She stared at Markham wild-eyed. "I reached toward him . . . and suddenly he wasn't there any more . . . He had gone over!"

Her eyes lifted suddenly over our heads and peered past us transfixed. A sudden change came over her. Her face seemed contorted into a hideous mask. Following her horrified gaze, we instinctively turned and glanced up the hallway toward the drawing-room . . .

There, near the archway, looking calmly toward us, was Vance.

"I told you last night, Miss Beeton," he was saying, his eyes resting sternly on the nurse, "that no gambler ever quits with his first winning bet, and that in the end he always loses." He came forward a few steps. "You won your first gamble, at long odds, when you murdered Swift. And your poisoning of Mrs. Garden with the barbital also proved a winning bet. But when you attempted to add me to your list of victims, because you suspected I knew too much—you lost. That race was fixed—you hadn't a chance."

The nurse, who had been staring at Vance as if petrified, suddenly relaxed her hold on the stair railing, and her hands went to her face in a gesture of hopelessness and despair.

"Yes!" she cried at Vance; "I tried to kill you. Why shouldn't I? You were about to take everything—everything—away from me."

She turned quickly and ran up the stairs. Almost simultaneously Vance dashed forward.

"Quick, quick!" he called out. "Stop her before she gets to the garden."

But before any of us realized the significance of his words, Vance was himself on the stairs. Heath and Smitkin were just behind him, and the rest of us, stupefied, followed. As I came out on the roof, I could see Miss Beeton running toward the far end of the garden, with Vance immediately behind her. Twilight had nearly passed, and a deep dusk had settled over the city. As the girl leaped up on the parapet at the same point where Vance had stood the night before, she was like a spectral silhouette against the faintly glowing sky. And then she disappeared down into the deep shadowy abyss, just before Vance could reach her.

CHAPTER XV

A half hour later we were all seated in the den again. Heath and the detectives had gone out immediately after the final catastrophe to attend to the unpleasant details occasioned by Miss Beeton's suicide.

Vance was once more in the chair at the desk. The tragic termination of the case seemed to have saddened him. He smoked gloomily

for a few minutes. Then he spoke.

"I asked all of you to stay because I felt you were entitled to an explanation of the terrible events that have taken place here, and to hear why it was necessary for me to conduct the investigation in the manner I did. To begin with, I knew from the first that I was dealing with a very shrewd and unscrupulous person."

"I was inclined to suspect Miss Beeton almost from the first, for, although everyone here had, through some act, drawn suspicion upon himself, only the nurse had the time and the unhampered opportunity to commit the initial crime. She was entirely unobserved when she put her plan into execution; and so thoroughly familiar was she with every arrangement of the household, that she had no difficulty in timing her every step so as to insure this essential privacy."

"Subsequent events and circumstances added irresistibly to my suspicion of her. For instance, when Mr. Floyd Garden informed me where the key to the vault was kept, I sent her to see if it was in its place, without indicating to her where its place was, in order to ascertain if she knew where the key hung. Only someone who knew exactly how to get into the vault at a moment's notice could have been guilty of killing Swift."

"Incidentally, one of my great difficulties in the case has been to act in such a way, at all times, that her suspicions would not be aroused at any point."

"Her motive was not clear at first," Vance explained, "and, unfortunately, I thought that by Swift's death alone she had accomplished her purpose. But after my talk with Doctor Siefert this morning, I was able to understand fully her whole hideous plot. Doctor Siefert pointed out definitely her interest in Floyd Garden, although I had had hints of it before. For instance, Floyd Garden was the only person here about whom she spoke to me with admiration. Her motive was based on a colossal ambition—the desire for financial security, ease and luxury; and mixed with this over-weening desire was a strange twisted love. These facts became clear to me only today."

Vance glanced at young Garden. "It was you she wanted," he continued. "And I believe her self-assurance was such that she did not doubt for a minute that she would be successful in attaining her goal."

Garden sprang to his feet.

"Good God, Vance!" he exclaimed. "You're right. I see the thing now. She has been making up to me for a long time; and, to be honest with you, I may have said and done things which she could have construed as encouragement—'God help me!' He sat down again in dejected embarrassment."

"No one can blame you," Vance said kindly. "She was one of the shrewdest women I have ever encountered. But the point of it all is, she did not want you—she wanted the Garden fortune as well. That's why, having learned that Swift would share in the inheritance, she decided to eliminate him and leave you the sole beneficiary. But this murder did not, by any means constitute the whole of her scheme."

Vance again addressed us in general.

"Her whole terrible plot was clarified by some other facts that Doctor Siefert brought out this morning during my talk with him. The death, either now or later, of Mrs. Garden was also an important ingredient of that plot; and Mrs. Garden's physical condition had, for some time, shown certain symptoms of poisoning. Of late these symptoms have increased in intensity. Doctor Siefert informed me that Miss Beeton had been a laboratory assistant to Professor Garden during his experiments with radio-active sodium, and had often come to the apartment here for the purpose of typing notes and attending to other duties which could not conveniently be performed at the university. Doctor Siefert also informed me that she had actually entered the household here about two months ago, to take personal charge of Mrs. Garden's case. She had, however, continued to assist Professor Garden occasionally in his work and naturally had access to the radio-active sodium he had begun to produce."

Vance turned his eyes to Professor Garden.

"And you too, sir," he said, "were, as I see it, one of her intended victims. When she planned to shoot Swift I believe she planned a double murder—that is, you and Swift were to be shot at the same time. But, luckily, you had not returned to your study."

"But—but," stammered the professor, "how could she have killed me and Woody too?"

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Nature Esteemed by Chinese
Nature is close to the life of every Chinese, says Nature Magazine. All the feathered folk that go to make up the finishing touches for the charm of the out-of-doors are held in high regard by the laborer, the student, the water-shop keeper. More than mere incidents in the complete scheme of all things natural and of the earth, they were long ago given a rank of high importance in Chinese literature, art, and science. Perhaps, too, that is the secret of the abundance of bird life in China, in spite of the fact that the country has suffered periodic cycles of famine and scarcity since the dawn of history. Evidently this love has been so sincere that the birds have been preserved

Washington Digest

National Topics Interpreted
By WILLIAM BRUCKART
NATIONAL PRESS BLDG. WASHINGTON, D. C.

Washington.—The government's silver policy again is attracting attention. Several things have caused it. First among these things is the matter of rising prices for foods and other necessities of life, but attention seems to have centered on the silver question again as a result of the Treasury's newly arranged agreement to trade some of its gold for some of the Chinese silver.

Probably the silver question is not as widely discussed as it might be because it is a complex subject and there are not too many people who understand it and its implications. I cannot refrain at this time, however, from recalling that when the silver act of 1934 was passed, I wrote in these columns a prediction that the country sooner or later would regret that legislation. I repeat the statement now and I do not believe it will be long until the average citizen will recognize what the silver policy is doing to most of us. I mean by that, it will not be long until Mr. John Q. Public will understand that the silver policy has a lot to do with the high prices he is paying for his pound of bacon, his slice of beefsteak or a thousand and one items that he buys at the grocery store. He will feel it, too, when he seeks to buy a new suit of clothes or a new pair of shoes. There can be no argument about it: The affect of inflation brought about by a perfectly ridiculous silver policy is upon us.

Early in July, the Chinese minister of finance visited Washington and called personally at the Treasury to express the appreciation of the Chinese government for the satisfactory conclusion of negotiations that enable the Chinese to give the American Treasury silver for gold. It was the usual diplomatic courtesy. At the same time, however, the visit of the Chinese minister served to awaken America to the fact that the Treasury has been going along, buying silver from foreign countries in order to maintain an arbitrary price which the Washington administration contended should be the world price for silver. This price is forty-five cents an ounce and it is a most profitable price for silver producers in Mexico and Canada and some other foreign countries. It is not as profitable, however, as the price the Treasury pays to American producers—which is seventy-seven and one-half cents an ounce.

But, one may ask, what has this thing to do with the cost of beefsteak, ham and eggs or shoes? I hope I may be able to explain it as I have watched the picture unfold and to explain it in a manner that those unacquainted with high finance may see the thing in its true light.

First of all, the policy of the administration that has brought billions of gold into the Treasury to be stored as so much dead weight has resulted in many thousands of shares of stock in American corporations or their bonds being bought by foreigners who gave gold in payment. President Roosevelt early in his administration insisted that gold should not be in circulation as money. Consequently, the Treasury has so much gold that it has had to build separate storehouses to protect it. Now, we are sending some of that gold to China in trade for China's silver. I think most everyone will agree that the silver is just as useless because we have no need for it in our currency structure. People do not want to carry silver dollars around in their pockets.

Assuming that the exchange was simply an even trade of two objects, neither of which was usable to us, one probably could dismiss the matter with a wave of the hand. Regrettably, such is not the case. The additional silver frankly is adding to our troubles because of the Silver Act of 1934 which permits the Treasury to issue currency—silver one-dollar bills—against it.

So, instead of being sterilized and stored away in vaults, the silver accession results in a prompt increase in the amount of currency in circulation. That action tends to increase the excess reserve—unused money—of the banking system. As this money becomes available for circulation, its value necessarily and obviously is cheapened. Or, to say it another way, the things you buy with money become of greater value because it takes more of these pieces of currency to buy the same quantity of food or clothes or shoes.

Authorities will disagree with the above statement to the extent that all kinds of currency have not been expanded (which means inflated) by the issuing of silver certificates. That is true. But we must be realistic and recognize that

a silver certificate occupies exactly the same place in our currency structure as does a bill that is backed by gold or one that is issued by the Federal Reserve banks. Therefore, it seems to me to be a fair statement to say that the whole currency structure is tainted by this deluge of silver certificates now and heretofore coming from the Treasury. And it is equally a fact that prices of every kind are going to increase exactly in accordance or in ratio with the new money that is put out from the Treasury.

I do not know how long it will be until the voters wake up to the necessity for repeal of the silver act. It probably will not be long before there is a wave of public indignation against the policy if the average person realizes that the program is actually a tax upon the American public. Surely, if the silver policy were labeled, "tax to support the silver program," the attitude of the country would change overnight. That really should be the name of the Silver Act of 1934 because that is its effect. The tax results from the fact that the Treasury is paying foreign producers as well as American producers prices for silver that are higher than the value of the silver warrants. This means that any article of silver that you buy in a store costs you more than it would if silver producers abroad and in the United States were not being subsidized. The additional cost is a tax on every buyer just as much as though you had paid the tax directly into the Treasury.

It may be interesting to know that the Treasury has issued nearly eight-hundred million in silver certificates. In addition something like seven million silver dollars have been coined, and these still remain in the package in which they were wrapped at the mints. Besides all these, there is silver bullion that cost \$375,000,000 piled up in the Treasury. Silver certificates can be issued against this.

The silver act of 1934 provided that the Treasury could buy one dollar's worth of silver to three dollars' worth of gold for what is called reserve purposes. On the basis of the gold now held, the Treasury can buy under that law a total of \$4,125,000,000 in silver. At the present time Treasury records show we have silver reserves amounting to around \$2,600,000,000. These figures show, or ought to show, how much inflation lies ahead—how much higher prices may go—unless something is done to restore a sound currency policy in the United States.

Some Democrats who are not too friendly with Postmaster General Jim Farley, along with the Republicans in congress, are having fun these days with the Democratic national committee. They are also succeeding, it appears, in making President Roosevelt's political seat uncomfortably warm. Nothing will fill many newspaper columns of attack and defense as the politicians shoot back and forth.

To review the situation, it should be recalled that the Democratic National committee found itself in debt to the tune of about \$650,000 at the end of the 1936 campaign. Some bright mind in the Democratic National committee conceived the idea of selling Democratic campaign handbooks to corporations at \$250 per book, or more, as a means of raising money.

To make the book attractive, a single sheet bearing the autograph of Franklin Delano Roosevelt was inserted. Hundreds of corporations were solicited, and hundreds bought the books—theoretically, because of the autograph of the President. Mr. Roosevelt stated he did not know he was autographing the blank sheets for the purpose for which they were used.

Republican Leader Snell, of New York, introduced a resolution in the house of representatives, proposing an investigation of the sale of these books to corporations. He contended that it was a violation of the corrupt practices act.

Mr. Snell remained determined, however, and sought to harass the New Deal further by asking Attorney General Cummings for an official opinion. At the same time, he read on the floor of the house a long list of corporations who had bought the "souvenirs" of the 1936 campaign, together with a list of prices they had paid.

These facts cut deeply into the Democrats who are seeking to protect Chairman Farley and the Democratic National committee wiggled and squirmed. Nevertheless, Mr. Snell may as well have butted his head against a stone wall since he got no further than Representative Rayburn, the house Democratic leader, would have gotten, if Mr. Snell had been majority, instead of minority, leader.

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What Irvin S. Cobb Thinks about

This Business of Golf.
OAKLAND, CALIF.—As I sit writing this, I look out where elderly gentlemen, intent on relaxing, may be seen tensing themselves up tighter than a cocked wolf-trap, and then staggering toward the clubhouse with every nerve standing on end and screaming for help and highballs.

I smile at them, for I am one who has given up golf. You might even go so far as to say golf gave me up. I tried and tried, but I never broke a typhoid patient's temperature chart—never got below 102.

I spent so much time climbing into sand-traps and out again that people began thinking I was a new kind of hermit, living by preference in bunkers—the old man of the link beds, they'd be calling me next.

And I used to slice so far into the rough that, looking for my ball, I penetrated jungles where the foot of man hadn't trod since the early mound builders. That's how I added many rare specimens to my collection of Indian relics.

But the last straw was when a Scotch professional, after morbidly watching my form, told me that at any rate there was one thing about me which was correct—I did have on golf stockings!

Congressional Boldness.

WARNING to pet lovers: If you own guinea pigs or tame rabbits or trained seals or such-like gentle creatures, try to keep the word from them that some of the majority members of the lower branch of congress actually threatened to defy their master's voice.

The senate always has been known as the world's greatest deliberative body—and, week by week and month by month don't those elder statesmen know how to deliberate! But these last few years the house has earned the reputation of being the most docile legislative outfit since Aesop's King Stork ruled over the Aynod of the frogs.

So should the news ever spread among the lesser creatures, hitherto so placid and biddable, that an example had been set at Washington, there's no telling when the Belgian hares will start rampaging and the singing mice will begin acting up rough and the grubworms will gang against the big old woodpecker.

Professional Orators.

WE HAVE in Southern California a professional orator who long ago discovered that the most dulcet music on earth was the sound of his own voice. He'll speak anywhere at the drop of the hat and provide the hat.

What's worse, this coast-defender of ours labors under the delusion that, if he shouts at the top of his voice, his eloquence will be all the more forceful. The only way to avoid meeting him at dinner is to eat at an owl wagon. But the other night, at an important banquet, he strangely was missing from the array of speakers at the head table. One guest turned in amazement to his neighbor:

"Where's Blank?" he inquired, naming the absentee.

"Didn't you hear?" answered the other. "He busted a couple of ear drums."

"Whose?" said the first fellow.

Foes of Nazidom.

THE YERKON Rabbi Stephen Wise of New York has been reasonably outspoken in his views on Nazi treatment of his own co-religionists and the practitioners of other faiths as well. And one of the most venerable prelates of the Catholic church in Europe, while discussing the same subject, hasn't exactly pulled his punches, either.

So what? A friend just back from abroad tells me that in Berlin he heard a high government officer fiercely denounce these two distinguished men. About the mildest thing the speaker said about them was that both were senile. Somehow or other, the speech wasn't printed in the German papers—maybe by orders from on high.

Well, far be it from this innocent bystander to get into religious arguments and besides I have no first-hand knowledge as to the Christian clergyman's state of health, although, judging by his utterances, there's nothing particularly wrong with his mind. But I do know Rabbi Wise, and, if he's in his dotage, so is Shirley Temple. And I risk the assertion that he would be perfectly willing to have one foot in the grave if he could have the other on Herr Hitler's neck.

IRVIN S. COBB
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