

# THE GARDEN MURDER CASE

By S.S. VAN DINE

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### CHAPTER XIII

Vance seemed profoundly puzzled and said nothing for some time. Then he glanced up suddenly. "How much light was there in the room?" he asked.

"Only a dim shaded night-light by my bed."

"In that case, you might conceivably have mistaken an empty bottle for one filled with a colorless fluid."

"Yes, of course," the nurse returned reluctantly. "That must have been the case. Unless..." Her voice trailed off.

"Tell me, when did you discover that all the medicine was gone?" Vance asked.

"Shortly before Doctor Siefert arrived this morning. I moved the bottle when I was arranging the table, and realized it was empty."

"I think that will be all just now, Miss Beeton." Vance glanced at the girl solemnly and then turned away. "Really, y' know, I'm deuced sorry. But you'd better not plan on leaving here just yet. We will undoubtedly want to see you again today."

Heath, who had been waiting in the passageway for the girl's dismissal, came in to report that Siefert and Doremus had departed, and that Floyd Garden had made the arrangements for the removal of his mother's body.

"And what do we do now, Mr. Vance?" Heath asked.

"Oh, we carry on, Sergeant," Vance was unusually serious. "I want to talk to Floyd Garden first. Send him up. And call one of your men; but stay on the job downstairs yourself till he arrives. We may get this affair cleared up today."

"Footsteps sounded in the passageway, and Floyd Garden entered the study. He appeared deeply shaken. "I can't stand much today. What do you want?"

"We understand just how you feel," Vance said. "It was not my intention to bother you unnecessarily. But if we are to get at the truth, we must have your co-operation."

"Go ahead, then," Garden mumbled.

"We must have as many details as possible about last night. Did your expected guests come?"

Garden nodded cheerlessly. "Oh, yes. Zalia Graem, Madge Weatherly, and Kroon."

"Was there any one else here?"

"No, that was all."

"Which of your visitors arrived first?"

Garden took the pipe from his mouth and looked up swiftly.

"Zalia Graem. She came at half-past eight, I should say. Why?"

"Merely general facts," Vance replied indifferently. "And how long after Miss Graem came in did Miss Weatherly and Kroon arrive?"

"About half an hour. They came a few minutes after Miss Beeton had gone out."

Vance returned the man's steady scrutiny.

"What time did your guests depart?" he asked.

"A little after midnight. Speed brought in sandwiches about half-past eleven. Then we had another round of highballs."

"Miss Beeton had returned by then, of course?"

"Yes, long before that. I heard her come in about eleven."

"And after your guests had gone, what did you do?"

"I sat up for half an hour or so, had another drink and a pipe; then I shut up the front of the house and turned in."

Vance lighted another cigarette, took several deep inhalations on it, and settled himself deeper in the chair.

"To go back a bit," he said casually. "The sleeping medicine Doctor Siefert prescribed for your mother seems to constitute a somewhat crucial point in the situation. Did you have occasion to give her a dose of it while the nurse was out?"

Garden drew himself up sharply and set his jaw.

"No, I did not," he said through his teeth.

Vance took no notice of the change in the man's manner.

"The nurse, I understand, gave you explicit instructions about the medicine before she went out. Will you tell me exactly where this was?"

"In the hall," Garden answered with a puzzled frown. "Just outside the den door. I had left Zalia in the drawing-room and had gone to tell Miss Beeton she might go out for a while. I wanted to help her on with her coat. It was then she told me what to do in case the nurse were out and was confused."

"And when she had gone you returned to the drawing-room?"

"Yes, immediately." Garden still looked puzzled. "That's exactly what I did. And a few minutes later Madge and Kroon arrived."

"There was a short silence during which Vance smoked thoughtfully.

"Tell me, Garden," he said at length, "did any of your guests enter your mother's room last night?"

Garden's eyes opened wide: color came back into his face, and he sprang to his feet.

"Good God, Vance! Zalia was in mother's room!"

Vance nodded slowly. "Very interesting. Yes, quite... I say, do sit down. Light your beastly pipe, and tell us about it."

Garden hesitated a moment. He laughed harshly and resumed his seat.

"Damn it! You take it lightly enough," he complained. "That may be the whole explanation."

"One never knows, does one?" Vance returned indifferently. "Carry on."

Garden had some difficulty getting his pipe going again.

"It must have been about ten o'clock," he said at length. "The mater rang the little bell she keeps on the table beside her bed, and I was about to answer it when Zalia jumped up and said she would see what the mater wanted."

"And did you yourself go into your mother's room at any time during Miss Beeton's absence?"

"No, I did not!" Garden looked defiantly at Vance.

"And you're sure that no one else entered your mother's room during the nurse's absence?"

"Absolutely."

"And who was it," Vance went on, "that first suggested going home?"

Garden pondered the question.

"I believe it was Zalia."

Vance got up.

"Awwfully good of you, Garden, to let us bother you with these queries at such a time," he said kindly.

"We're deuced grateful... You won't be leaving the house today?"

Garden shook his head as he stood up.

"Hardly," he said. "I'll stay in with father. He's pretty well broken up."

Garden went morosely from the room.

When he had gone Vance stood for a moment in front of Markham, eyeing him with cynical good-nature.

"Not a nice case, Markham. As I said."

He moved toward the window and looked out. "But I have things pretty well in hand. The pattern is shaping itself perfectly. I've fitted together all the pieces, Markham—all but one. And I hold that piece too, but I don't know where it goes, or how it fits into the ensemble."

Markham looked up. "What's the piece that's bothering you, Vance?"

"Those disconnected wires on the buzzer. They bother me frightfully. I know they have a bearing on the terrible things that have been going on here... He turned from the window and walked up and down the room several times, his head down, his hands thrust deep into his pockets. "Why should those wires have been disconnected?" he murmured, as if talking to himself. "How could they have been related to Swift's death or to the shot we heard? There was no mechanism. No, I'm convinced of that. After all the wires merely connect two buzzers... a signal... a signal between upstairs and downstairs... a signal—a call—a line of communication..."

Suddenly he stopped his meditative pacing. He was now facing the door into the passageway and he stared at it as if it were something strange—as if he had never seen it before.

"Oh, my aunt!" he exclaimed. "My precious aunt! It was too obvious." He wheeled about to Markham, a look of self-reproach on his face. "The answer was here all the time," he said. "It was simple—and I was looking for complexities... The picture is complete now, Markham. Everything fits. Those disconnected wires mean that there's another murder contemplated."

He led the way downstairs. Heath was smoking gloomily in the lower hall.

"Sergeant," Vance said to him, "phone Miss Graem, Miss Weatherly, Kroon—and Hammie. Have them all here late this afternoon—say six o'clock."

"They'll be here, all right, Mr. Vance," Heath assured him.

"And Sergeant, as soon as you have taken care of this, telephone me. I want to see you this afternoon. I'll be at home. But wait here for Smith and leave him in charge. No one is to come here but those I've asked you to get, and no one is to leave the apartment. And, above all, no one is to be permitted to go upstairs either to the study or the garden... I'm staggerin' along now."

"I'll be phoning you by the time you get home, Mr. Vance."

Vance went to the front door, but paused with his hand on the knob. "I think I'd better speak to Garden about the gathering before I go. Where is he, Sergeant?"

"He went into the den when he came downstairs," Heath told him with a jerk of the head.

Vance walked up the hall and opened the den door. I was just behind him. As the door swung inward and Vance stepped over the threshold, we were confronted by an unexpected tableau. Miss Beeton and Garden were standing just in front of the desk, outlined against the background of the window. The nurse's hands were pressed to her face, and she was leaning against Garden, sobbing. His arms were about her.

At the sound of Vance's entry they drew away from each other quickly. The girl turned her head to us with a sudden motion, and I could see that her eyes were red and filled with tears. She caught her breath and, turning with a start, half ran through the connecting door into the adjoining bedroom.

"I'm frightfully sorry," Vance murmured. "Thought you were alone."

"Oh, that's all right," Garden returned, although it was painfully evident the man was embarrassed. "But I do hope, Vance, you won't misunderstand. Everything, you know, is in an emotional upheaval here. I imagine Miss Beeton had all she could stand yesterday and today, and when I found her in here she seemed to break down, and—put her head on my shoulder."

Vance raised his hand in good-natured indifference.

"Oh, quite, Garden. A harassed lady always welcomes a strong masculine shoulder to weep on. Most of them leave powder on one's lapel, don't y' know; but I'm sure Miss Beeton wouldn't be guilty of that... Dashed sorry to interrupt you, but I wanted to tell you before I went that I have instructed Sergeant Heath to have all your guests of yesterday here by six o'clock this afternoon. Of course, we'll want you and your father here, too. If you don't mind, you might help the sergeant with the phone numbers."

"I'll be glad in, Vance," Garden returned. "Anything special in mind?"

Vance turned toward the door.

"Yes, Oh, yes. Quite. I'm hoping to clear this matter up later on. Meanwhile I'm running along. Cheerio." And he went out, closing the door.

As we walked down the outer hall to the elevator, Vance said to Markham somewhat sadly: "I hope my plan works out, I don't particularly like it. But I don't like injustice, either..."

We had been some but a very short time when Sergeant Heath telephoned as he had promised. Vance went into the anteroom to answer the call and closed the door after him. A few minutes later he returned and, ringing for Currie, ordered his hat and stick.

"I'm running away for a while, old dear," he said to Markham. "In fact, I'm joining the doughy sergeant at the homicide bureau. But I sha'n't be very long. In the meantime, I've ordered lunch for us here."

"For Heaven's sake, Vance, what are you planning?"

"I'm planning to entice the murderer into making one more bet—a losing bet... Cheerio." And he was gone.

It was a little after half-past two when Vance returned to the apartment.

"Everything is in order," he announced as he came in. "There are no horses running today, of course, but nevertheless I'm looking forward to a big wager being laid this evening. If the bet isn't placed, we're in for it, Markham. Everyone will be present, however. The sergeant, with Garden's help, has got in touch with all those who were present yesterday, and they will foregather again in the Gardens' drawing-room at six o'clock... He glanced at his watch and, ringing for Currie, ordered our lunch.

"If we don't tarry too long at table," he said, "we'll be able to hear the second half of the Philharmonic programme. Melinoff is doing Grieg's piano concerto."

But Markham did not go with us to the concert. He pleaded an urgent political appointment at the Stuyvesant club, but promised to meet us at the Garden apartment at six o'clock.

Sergeant Heath was waiting for us when we reached the apartment.

"Everything's set, sir," he said to Vance; "I got it here."

Vance smiled a little sadly. "Excellent, Sergeant. Come into the other room."

Heath picked up a small package wrapped in brown paper, which he had evidently brought with him, and followed Vance into the bedroom. Ten minutes later they both came back into the library.

"So long, Mr. Vance," Heath said, shaking hands. "Good luck to you." And he lumbered out.

We arrived at the Garden apartment a few minutes before six o'clock. Detectives Hennessey and Burke were in the front hall.

Vance nodded to them and started up the stairs.

"Wait down here for me, Van," he said over his shoulder. "I'll be back in a moment."

# UNCOMMON AMERICANS

By Elmo Scott Watson Western Newspaper Union

### Earliest Rebel

IN FRONT of the statehouse in Boston stands the statue of a woman, with a Bible in her hand and a child snuggled against her. The inscription on the monument tells you that this woman was a "Courageous Exponent of Civil Liberty and Religious Tolerance." But 300 years ago Massachusetts wasn't calling her by any such complimentary names. In the year 1637 she was "that proud dame, that Athaliah," a "notorious Imposter," a "dayengerous Instrument of the Devil rayseed" up by Satan" and a "Breeder of Heresies." For she was Anne Hutchinson, the earliest rebel in this country.

She became a leader of a group of people who fell under the displeasure of the stern Puritans of Massachusetts Bay colony. Because these people held meetings in her house to discuss and criticize the sermons of the Puritan ministers, they finally placed her on trial for heresy, a trial that has been compared to that of Joan of Arc at Rouen.

Under their questioning, she proved herself more than a match for her prosecutors. But just at the moment when it seemed that she had defeated her accusers, she burst forth into a long speech describing God's revelations to her. Thus she convicted herself and her penalty was banishment from the colony.

But Anne Hutchinson was more than the first defender of religious freedom in America. She was our earliest feminist. The meetings held in her house, although primarily for religious discussion, were the forerunners of thousands of meetings since her day, wherever women gather together to improve themselves or the rest of the world. So her house became the "birthplace of the women's clubs of America."

After her banishment from Massachusetts Bay colony she went to that haven of religious freedom, the colony of Rhode Island, founded by Roger Williams. There she lived until 1642 when, left a widow, she took her brood of children (she had borne 14) to the Dutch colony of New York where later she and all of her children were killed. But she had not lived in vain for "civil liberty and religious toleration, the principles for which she suffered exile and death are written into the Constitution of the United States."

### The Nation's Jester

HE WAS baptised as Charles H. Farrar Browne but the whole nation once loved him and laughed with him under the name of Artemus Ward. Born in Maine in 1824, Browne served an apprenticeship in a print shop and then became a journeyman printer. Finally he wandered to Cleveland, Ohio, where he became a local reporter for the Cleveland Plain Dealer and invented the character of "Artemus Ward," supposed to be a traveling showman, writing to the paper to give information and to ask for it. Readers of that paper roared over "Artemus Ward's" bad spelling and humorous descriptions of his adventures and it was not long until Browne got a call from New York to become editor of Vanity Fair, a comic paper.

But this editorship did not last long for the wandering foot of the former journeyman printer soon began to assert itself. He published "Artemus Ward, His Book" which had a phenomenal sale. Then he took to the lecture platform and "Artemus Ward," until now a fictitious character, became a living reality to thousands of Americans.

One of Ward's devoted readers was President Lincoln and his book played a role in an historic scene at the White House during the Civil war. In September, 1862, Lincoln called a meeting of his cabinet members whom he astonished by reading excerpts from Ward's book. When they failed to join in his laughter, Lincoln threw down the book and said "Gentlemen, why don't you laugh? With the fearful strain that is upon me night and day, if I didn't laugh, I should die and you need the medicine as much as I do."

He then told them the real purpose of the meeting which was to read to them a paper he had prepared and which he proposed to issue when the time was ripe. That paper was the Emancipation Proclamation. When he had finished reading it, Secretary Stanton exclaimed "Mr. President, if reading chapters of Artemus Ward is a prelude to such a deed as this, the book should be filed among the archives of the nation, and the author canonized."

The author was never canonized but before he died in 1887, Artemus Ward had not only become America's favorite jester but he had won fame as a humorist in England and on other continents where he had made many converts.

# AROUND the HOUSE

Items of Interest to the Housewife

Season Lightly—Be careful when doubling a recipe not to double the seasoning. Use it sparingly at first, then add more if needed.

Eggs in Potatoes—Bake potatoes. Cut off tops, scoop out centers and season with butter, salt and a little pepper, mashing thoroughly. Half fill shells with potato mixture and drop a raw egg, salt, pepper, a little grated cheese and one teaspoon butter in each. Put back in hot oven for four minutes to set egg.

Eliminating Food Odors—A small quantity of charcoal in a container on the top shelf will help eliminate food odors from the refrigerator.

Hole in Tablecloth—If a small hole is burnt or worn in an otherwise good white tablecloth, it can be "mended" most effectively by stitching a motif in fine crochet over it and cutting away the spoiled fabric underneath. Add one or two more motifs so that the necessary one does not look odd. This is certainly more decorative than an obvious darn!

Keeps Cauliflower White—A tablespoon of sugar in the water in which cauliflower is cooked will keep it white.

Glazing Liquid for Cookies—A mixture of two tablespoons of sugar and one-fourth cup of milk makes a good glazing liquid for cookies. Apply on the surface of the dough with a pastry brush before baking the cookies.

Rhubarb and Figs—To one pound rhubarb, after peeling and cutting, add half pound good figs, cut into smallish pieces. Place in

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