



SYNOPSIS

Philo Vance, expert in solving crime mysteries, investigates the supposed suicide of Archer Coe. District Attorney Markham and Vance go to Coe's house, there, also Signor Grassi, a guest. The door of the death chamber is bolted from the inside. They force it. Coe is clothed in a dressing gown, but wears street shoes. Vance says it is murder. The medical examiner says Coe had been dead for hours when a bullet entered his head. He had been stabbed. The investigators find a wounded Scotch terrier in the house. Vance declares the animal should prove an important connecting link. Gamble says Brisbane Coe, Archer's brother, left for Chicago the previous afternoon, but his dead body is discovered in a coat closet in the Coe home. Vance interrogates the Chinese cook, Liang, and afterwards finds a bit of porcelain from a Chinese vase, with blood on it. Brisbane died from a stab in the back, as did Archer. Heath brings in the dagger which killed both men. Vance, searching Brisbane's coat, finds some waxed thread attached to a bent pin, and a darning needle.

CHAPTER VI—Continued

"What have you found?" demanded Markham. Vance held out his finger. "Blood!" he said. "And that was also near the davenport, only a few feet from where the Sung Ting yao stood. Both vases were used in this devilish plot. . . . A subtle conception—but the plan fell to pieces—"

"See here, Vance,"—Markham spoke quietly, trying to curb his annoyance—"just how were those vases used? And where did the blood on them come from?"

"As I see it, Markham, those two Sung Ting yao vases were used to divert suspicion from the real murderer and to focus it on another person; and they were employed as symbols in order to create a false motive."

"You mean we were to regard the crime as being connected with Archer's collection of Chinese ceramics?"

Vance nodded. "I feel sure of it. But in just what way I don't know. It would probably have been perfectly clear if there had not been a gross miscalculation on the murderer's part."

"We were, you think, supposed to find the blood in the vase? Where did that blood come from?"

"From Archer Coe's body!" Vance's answer sent a chill up my spine.

"But there was no external bleeding," Markham reminded him.

"True," Vance leaned against the back of the davenport and lighted a cigarette. "But there was blood on the dagger when it was withdrawn from between Archer's ribs. . . . As I see it, Markham, Archer was thrown into the fragile Sung Ting yao vase that was on the table there, in order to indicate—by a subtle and devious symbolism—the motive for the crime. But the steel and gold of the dagger broke the vase—it was of almost eggshell delicacy—and so the dagger was then placed in this other Sung Ting yao. In clearing up the broken pieces of the first vase, the murderer overlooked one small fragment."

"But why the substituted vase?"

"In order that no attention would be attracted by the glaring absence of the original one. If a valuable Sung Ting yao were missing, it might indicate another motive for the crime, and that motive would have confused the issue and diverted attention from the person the murderer wanted us to think was behind the crime."

"That's all very well, perhaps," Markham returned dubiously; "but we did not find the dagger in the other vase—"

"It was taken out and used to kill Brisbane."

"By the murderer of Archer?"

"Unquestionably. No one else would have known where the dagger was."

"But, Vance, that theory doesn't fit the facts. The sergeant found the dagger upstairs in Archer's room—with the door bolted on the inside. And Archer died hours before Brisbane was stabbed. Why, if the same person killed the dog in this case? Archer was already dead, and Brisbane was killed downstairs. Why should the dagger have been in Archer's bedroom chair?"

Vance smoked unhappily for some time before replying.

"That's what I can't make out," he admitted. "Brisbane was not stabbed until hours after Archer. The murderer could have been in Philadelphia by the time Brisbane was stabbed. He certainly wouldn't

have tarried here for several hours after disposing of Archer. The only explanation I have is that the murderer, after killing Archer and placing the dagger in the vase, returned to the house and killed Brisbane, too."

"Then, I ask you," the sergeant broke out, "how did the dagger get in the bolted room?—and who put the bullet through Archer's head, and why?"

"If I could answer those questions, Sergeant," Vance told him, "I could solve this whole insane problem."

"At this moment Wrede came down the stairs and walked past the library to the front door.

"Oh, I say, Mr. Wrede," Vance called out. "Could we speak to you a moment before you go?"

The man turned and came into the library. His face was flushed and there was a sullen, angry look in his eyes—a look almost murderous.

"You saw Miss Lake?" Vance asked pleasantly.

"The man gave a jerky nod. "And since speaking to her," Vance pursued languidly, "do you still feel that you have no suggestion to make as to a possible perpetrator of this double crime?"

A shrewd light came into the other's eyes, and he hesitated for several seconds. Then he said:

"Not at the moment. But it might be well if you temporarily concentrated your investigation on Mr. Grassi. I have just learned that Archer Coe had agreed to sell him a considerable section of his collection." Wrede hesitated. Then he added: "It may interest you to know, Mr. Vance, that my engagement with Miss Lake has been broken."

"Most distressing," Vance gave his attention to his cigarette. "But what could Archer's willingness to dispose of part of his collection have to do with his death? Even had Archer consented to dispose of certain pieces in the hope, let us say, of acquiring others, I still can't see what Mr. Grassi would have gained by his death."

"Archer may have regretted his decision after he had committed himself. . . ."

"I see your point, Mr. Wrede," Vance interrupted coldly. "But what of Brisbane?"

"Could not Brisbane's death have been an accident?"

"Yes—quite," Vance smiled thoughtfully. "I'm sure it was an accident—a most unfortunate accident. Last night was filled with the most amazing accidents. . . . But I shouldn't keep you from your lunch any longer."

Wrede bowed stiffly. He had no sooner closed the front door behind him than Vance called Gamble from the hall.

"Gamble, will you ask Mr. Grassi to come here."

Gamble went out, and Vance turned to Markham.

"I suspected from Wrede's manner that he had found his Latin rival with the young woman. There was probably a most painful scene.



A Look Almost Murderous.

and poor Wrede was given his conscience. It's very sad. He doesn't like Grassi—he doesn't at all like him. But I doubt if he really suspects him of killing Archer—though I'm sure Wrede doesn't put it beyond him—"

"Then why the insinuations?"

"More subtlety, Markham, Wrede thinks that, if we turn our attention to Grassi, we will push past the straw man, so to speak, and find somebody else."

"Whom, in the name of heaven?"

"Miss Lake, of course. Wrede has become vindictive and bitter. My asking him about Miss Lake as

a possible suspect put ideas in his head—he knows of the acute antagonism that has always existed between her and Archer. Therefore, when he was humiliated a moment ago in front of Grassi, he turned her over to us, as it were, with Grassi as a smoke screen."

Grassi entered the library. "I understand, sir," Vance addressed him. "that Mr. Archer Coe had consented to sell you certain items from his collection."

"Yes," the Italian replied; "that is true. I informed Mr. Wrede of the fact a moment ago. My reason for so doing was that Mr. Wrede practically ordered me out of the house—on the strength of his engagement to Miss Lake, I presume—and I informed him that my business here was not completed inasmuch as a considerable part of Mr. Coe's collection belonged technically to me. It was necessary for me to remain to arrange for packing and shipment."

"And what did Miss Lake say?"

"The Italian seemed loath to answer, but at length he said: "Miss Lake broke off her engagement with Mr. Wrede. And then she asked him to leave the house and remain away."

"I say, Mr. Grassi,"—Vance spoke suddenly—"do you think that Miss Lake killed her uncle?"

The Italian stared at Vance. "I—really, sir, I—"

"Thanks awfully for the effort," Vance remarked. "I can quite understand your feelings. But I should like to know why you didn't tell us before of Mr. Coe's agreement to dispose of some of his collection to you. Was the agreement written or verbal?"

"Written!" The man reached in his pocket and handed Vance a folded paper. "At my request Mr. Coe wrote that letter to me yesterday," he explained. "I wished to cable the news to Milan."

Vance unfolded the letter and read it, with Markham, Heath and me looking over his shoulder:

"Dear Signor Eduardo Grassi, "Dear Sir,

"In confirmation of our recent conversation, I hereby agree to sell to you, as a representative of the Museum of Antiquities at Milan, the following pieces in my private collection: . . ."

Then came a detailed list of forty or fifty items, including many of Archer Coe's most famous and valuable specimens of Chinese art. The date at the head of the document was October 10.

"Vance put the letter in his pocket. "We shall keep this for the present," he told Grassi. "It will be perfectly safe, and it will be returned to you anon. The authorities may wish to refer to it."

Grassi bowed in polite acquiescence.

"And now," Vance concluded, "I shall again ask you to wait in your own quarters until we send for you." Grassi went out, with obvious relief.

"Sergeant," Vance said, "could you get me a sheet of that note paper on Archer Coe's desk? And his fountain pen?"

The sergeant went upstairs and returned shortly with the paper and the pen.

After an inspection Vance said: "It is certainly Coe's note paper; and Archer's pen wrote the letter. . . . Most significant."

He returned Grassi's letter to his pocket and went toward the front door.

"Cheer up, old dear," he exhorted Markham. "It's not nearly so black as it seems. The clouds are beginning to disperse. We have all the data now and it's simply a matter of arranging them and interpreting them correctly."

"I wish I could feel so optimistic," grumbled Markham, following Vance into the vestibule.

Vance halted and, turning, regarded the perplexed Heath.

"Oh, by the way, Sergeant," he said; "one or two little favors—there's a good fellow. Will you check up at once on the—shall I say alibi?—of Miss Lake and Signor Grassi? And you might give this house another search. I'm dashed interested in a blunt instrument that might have been used for striking Archer and the wee Scottie. I noticed that in the fire set in the living room everything was intact in the rack but the poker."

Heath nodded. "I get you, sir. If there's a poker in this house, I'll lay hands on it."

"Stout fella!" Vance continued toward the front door.

"And speaking of dogs, sir," Heath added, "that guy Wrede told me he was very fond of the animals. Owned one before he moved."

"Ah!" Vance paused. "Did he mention the breed?"

"It was a Doberman Pinscher," Markham informed him.

"Now, that's deuced interesting," Vance murmured. "He's good, Sergeant, as to have the bolt on Archer's door fixed while we're lunching. I'll want it in perfect working order when I return."

The sergeant grinned broadly. "So that's on your mind, is it? . . . Sure, I'll have it fixed."

My cackle about dogs? . . . And while I'm on the subject, I want to tell you, Markham, that the little wounded Scottie Gamble discovered behind the library portieres is a beautiful specimen of what a Scottie should be. Poor little devil. I think I'll phone and see how she's getting along."

He went out and returned shortly to the table. He looked more cheerful.

"The doctor says she's not as badly hurt as he thought at first. She's eating. No fever. Be pretty normal by tomorrow."

He took a sip of wine. "And that means that I'll be pretty busy tomorrow. I'll have to



"I Can't See the Connection," Markham Began.

visit the American Kennel club and perhaps interview a few Scottie judges."

"I can't see the connection—," Markham began.

"But there is a connection," insisted Vance. "It is no coincidence that a wounded dog is in a strange hostile house at the exact time of a murder. And it's reasonable to assume that it was admitted to the house by the murderer, either accidentally or for a purpose. In either case it will be a definite clue. The ownership of the dog—and especially the address of the owner—will give us something pretty definite to work from. The migrations of the dog last night will throw much light on the movements of the person who came to the Coe house. From the dog's presence we may argue several very interesting and illuminating possibilities. First, that the dog did not arrive before the murderer, because Archer would have thrown her out—"

"But Archer might have been the person who injured her."

"If he had, he would not have left her behind the curtain beside the library door; he would have thrown her down the front steps to the street. . . ."

"But Brisbane?"

"Ah! If it had been Brisbane, then the dog was already in the house, or else she followed him in. If she was in the house and it was he who injured her, he was killed at almost the same instant; for if he had been able to, he, like Archer, would have put the dog outside. Therefore, in case the dog was there and Brisbane injured her, then it follows that the murderer didn't see her or left her there with some definite purpose in mind. As for the dog having followed Brisbane in, I think it highly unlikely. She might have followed some one—evidently a stranger—into the house, provided he had left the door open; but the murderer would scarcely have left the front door open—in fact, I imagine he would have taken pains to shut it securely. And the vicious injury given the dog seems to indicate that her presence in the house was not deliberate—that, in fact, the person who found her was surprised and, perhaps, frightened. Being afraid he would be seen if he turned her out, he acted impulsively and sought to kill her lest she should start barking and attract attention. My conclusion is that the dog's presence was not discovered until after the murder."

"Your reasoning is clear enough," Markham told him, "but I don't see in what way it is helpful to us."

"It eliminates certain possibilities; it narrows down certain movements of the murderer; and it leads to a specific interpretation of the two crimes—the murder of Archer and the murder of Brisbane."

"Forgive me if I cannot follow your esoteric ratiocinations."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Rigid Investigation

The Diamond Exchange in Antwerp probably uses more care in admitting new members than any other business in the world, owing to the great necessity for honesty and honor. For a year a photograph and description of the applicant must hang in police headquarters and the Exchange itself thoroughly investigates his past life. If no objection to him can be found during this time, he is admitted.—Collier's Weekly.

Rooster as Proxy Bridegroom

In order to complete a marriage by proxy, a pretty eighteen-year-old Cantonese girl selected a rooster to represent her fiance, Shih Kwang, who was living in Singapore. All of the elaborate ritual accompanying an old-fashioned Chinese marriage was observed while the beautiful bride received the congratulations of friends.

STRING HOLDER SUNBONNET GIRL

By GRANDMOTHER CLARK



Attractive String Holder

A ball of string is just as important in a kitchen as a pot holder or a fly swatter. String is used for many purposes, but where is it when you want it? This attractive string holder is always ready to serve you when hanging in its place somewhere on the kitchen wall. It is to be made up, and when finished looks like the picture shown above. Sunbonnet is made of bright colored prints. The face is painted. The ball of string is in the bonnet. String is used passing through a hole in mouth. A very catchy, useful, inexpensive gift.

Package No. A-7 contains percale in pretty patterns, lines stamped for cutting, painted face and foundation ready to be made up, also directions just how to do it.

Send 15 cents for this package. Address—Home Craft Co.—Dept. A., Nineteenth and St. Louis Ave., St. Louis, Mo.

Enclose a stamped address envelope when writing for any information.

Favor Women Anglers

Connecticut and Pennsylvania are the only two states in the Union to set apart one special fishing preserve for the exclusive use of women anglers. A number of women wardens have been engaged to oversee, aid and instruct, on request, the purely feminine clientele.

LITTLE IN LIFE, SO CHINESE MAN SINKS INTO AGE

"It would be interesting to discover why it is that the most fertile period intellectually in the average Chinese man seems to be between twenty-five and forty-five. He reaches his maturity early, and after forty-five, at a period when most western men are coming into their most rich mental and spiritual growth, the Chinese is sinking into age, still physically beautiful and even youthful, but yet age, because it is stagnant, cynical, weary, and therefore non-creative, in spite of sophistication, humor and charm."

"It is true that the generations press hard upon each other in China. A man is often a grandfather at forty, and to be a grandfather brings inevitably a certain state of mind."

"But I believe the secret of the difficulty lies in something deeper and more serious, perhaps, than even overpopulation. It is that there is nothing as yet which the intelligent Chinese finds worth really living for and, especially, for which he will suffer. He has enthusiasms, but they die quickly. He has no convictions of the great worth of anything—not of religion or of love or of art; not even of life, his own life or the life of others."

"He slips too easily into a dream wherein his days pass pleasantly, wherein he enjoys the peach blossoms of spring, the lotus of summer, the chrysanthemums of autumn, the light snows upon the bamboos in winter. If he is rich, his greatest vertiges are the flavor of a dish upon the table, the color and the texture of a piece of jade in his hand; if he is poor, then the hope of a gambling game, of a sleep in the sun. When death comes it is as unreal as life has been."—Pearl S. Buck, in Asia Magazine.

NUDISM OLD IN LONDON Nudism is not a novelty in London, according to records recently found there. They reveal that the cult has waxed and waned through the centuries. In 1733 a nocturnal meeting of the Naked society was held in a tavern near the Haymarket, but the organization was prompted more by religious and moral than by hygienic convictions. Records show that a similar society existed in the city in 1641.

Why Hospitals Use a Liquid Laxative

Hospitals and doctors have always used liquid laxatives. And the public is fast returning to laxatives in liquid form. Do you know the reasons?

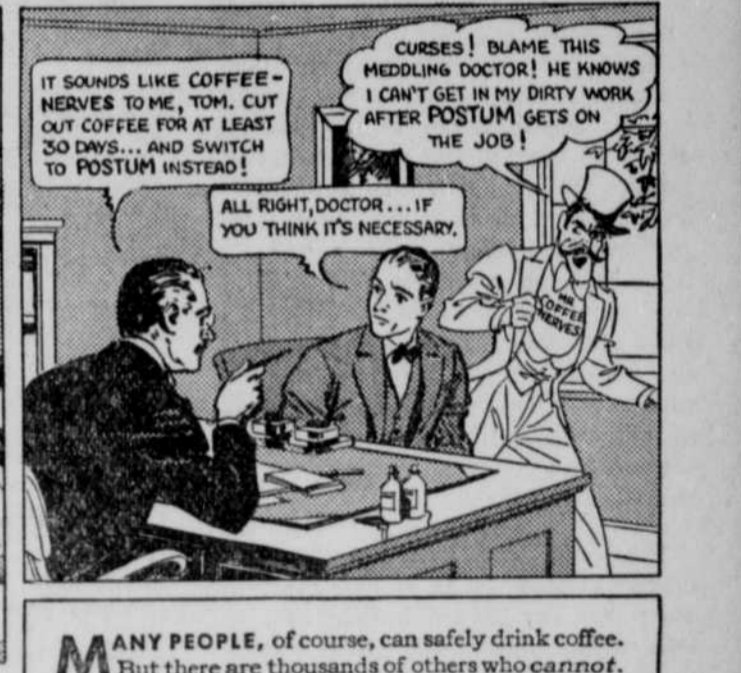
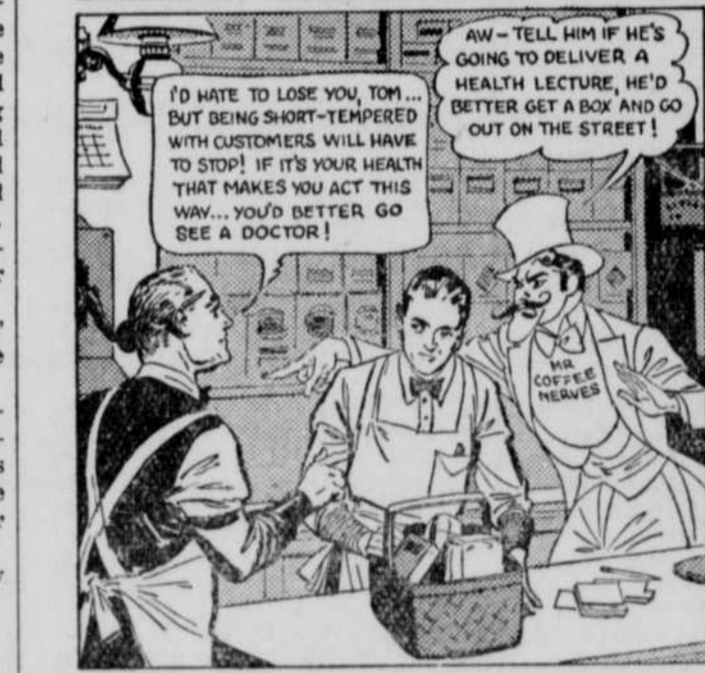
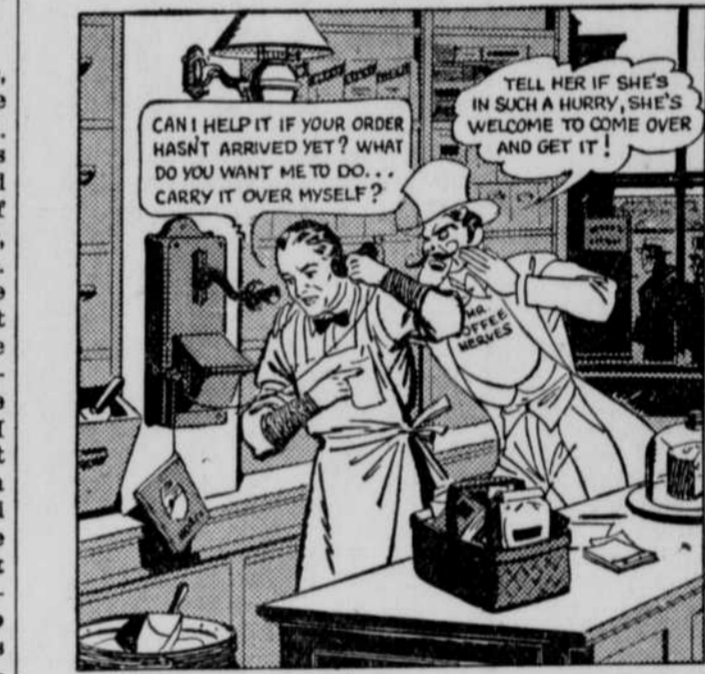
The dose of a liquid laxative can be measured. The action can thus be regulated to suit individual need. It forms no habit; you need not take a "double dose" a day or two later. Nor will a mild liquid laxative irritate the kidneys.

The right dose of a liquid laxative brings a more natural movement, and there is no discomfort at the time, or after.

The wrong cathartic may often do more harm than good. A properly prepared liquid laxative like Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin brings safe relief from constipation. It gently helps the average person's bowels until nature restores them to regularity. Dr. Caldwell's Syrup Pepsin is an approved liquid laxative which all druggists keep ready for use. It makes an ideal family laxative; effective for all ages, and may be given the youngest child.

Advertisement for Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment for Eczema. Text includes: 'Why Suffer with Itching, Burning ECZEMA when Cuticura Soap and Cuticura Ointment so quickly and effectively soothe and heal. Bathe freely with the Soap and warm water, dry gently, and anoint with the Ointment. It is surprising how quickly the irritation and itching stop and how, after a few treatments, the eczema disappears. There is nothing better for all forms of skin troubles.'

Mr. COFFEE-NERVES . . . he can't deliver the goods



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