

Gossip



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Mrs. Jean P. Day, the wife of the man who killed Lt.-Col. Paul Ward Beck at Oklahoma City on April 4, apparently is blest with a comfortable complacency in disposition. It is unfortunate that the complacency does not appear equally balanced with mental calibre. She is quoted as saying—when the Coroner's jury acquitted her husband—"The evidence thoroughly vindicates me and has left my name stainless". The "evidence" was furnished by herself and husband. And after time and opportunity had been given to the two to confer and arrange that there be no discrepancy of statement. Also they offered themselves as witnesses—the law protecting them against subpoena—the only witness for the prosecution being dead!

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In the days we waited for the verdict of the coroner's jury I had hoped that Mrs. Day would awaken to the spirit of some kind of womanhood and acknowledge her part in the tragedy—where she assisted in the stage-setting that in its incipiency was intended to play up to her own vanity and insane jealousies of her husband. That, in her successes, the life of an Army officer paid the penalty of her play upon the susceptibilities of men was accidental as well as incidental. Paul Beck was not the man to desecrate the home of either friend or foe. He was alive with pretty speeches to women and as "Beckie"—his late wife—used to say "You know Paul can't bear to disappoint women, and is always ready with his flattery and compliments to give them what they expect!—and the chance to draw back and establish their virtue with 'How dare you—and I though you a perfect gentleman' when they bring on themselves a masculine outburst." Incidentally there are few women of worldly experience who have not heard "I am crazy about you—I must have you", and been the recipient of clutch or grasp of an arm, at which they laugh as they control their own situations. These outbursts are not taken seriously.

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Two years ago Doris Day, the daughter, was at school in Washington, D. C. The mother lived at the New Willard Hotel. Of the two, the mother was the more attractive and looked but little older than the daughter. She is dark and Spanish in style and dressed handsomely, and was particularly noticeable in rich reds which she affected a great deal. The tradespeople called her "Mrs. Oklahoma City" in a mild sarcasm, or pleasantry, because of her insistence upon having distinctive and individual "creations" from the New York houses who opened shops for the season.

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Pretty she was and admirers flocked about and flanked and circled her. No unkind gossip attended this attention—Washington is extremely cosmopolitan—but Mrs. Day's own deductions seemed to place her a bit on the defensive, and she took every occasion to speak of this man and that man as "a friend of my daughter, who is at school here." She seemed particularly sensitive about being misunderstood, but not to the extent of cutting out the attention. Army officers were constant bodyguards—from two or more up—and providing the safety from gossip and scandal through numbers. In this connection—of self-defense—and explanation—sitting in the corridor one evening she confided in me the jealousy and misery of her earlier married years.

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She told me of her mad love for her husband, and the trial she was to him and of the unhappiness she made for herself. Not that he gave her cause to doubt his fidelity, but that she placed herself so far his inferior that she was naturally jealous of her child, of his clients, of even his books. She imagined her husband enjoying the society of every woman more than her own. She was so miserable herself that she—for his very peace—made him into a cold, undemonstrative man toward herself as well as everybody else. He went into a shell, as it were, with his child his only safety-valve. She said she knew that he loved her passionately but that she could draw no demonstration from him. She called herself a "green country girl from Texas" who did not know how to meet her situations or shape her life. Her jealousy of him was killing her. Then they came into sudden wealth.

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↓ She determined to make of herself the most attractive woman he knew and to let him see that she was attractive to others. Her time came in this self-education in coming to Washington, and living at the Willard. She had gowns, hats, and jewels, furs from all the best houses, and the wealth grew as personal attractiveness and attentions increased and officers and secretaries floating about became the pawns in the game she played. When asked if her husband would really join and compete with the rest for her smiles and favors she smiled a wise smile, as if she would have to get things in order somewhat but spoke again of the majority of her acquaintances being "Doris's friends."

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When Judge Day arrived—that particular time two years ago—it was noticeable that he did not "cotton" to that corridor—the Peacock Alley of the hotel. Neither Mrs. Day nor the Judge himself were in evidence, only as they were entertaining and being entertained in the company of friends from their home State, and were passing through the corridor. Two years passing, the Army acquaintances of the Days has broadened through Aviation having a station at Fort Sill, the distance making a delightful flying trip.

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One newspaper report says that it was known that the Days had a violent quarrel an hour or so before the breaking up of the gathering that night. If this is true it is safe to conclude that Mrs. Day's jealousy got the best of her judgment again over some attention of her husband to some woman during the evening. And to me, knowing how mad she was to prove her attractions to other men to bring out expression from him, it is plausible, easy to believe, that the scene of Mrs. Day's struggling in the arms of a man—who happened to be Colonel Day—was staged for the husband to see; but the "green country girl from Texas" reckoned without her host—the bullet of a husband who is just as jealous as herself—the bullet so prone to fly in the West in the protection of "home, honor and women."

With curtains up, and house lighted, and the divan in front of the French windows, it was good for the setting of the scene but

altogether too *gauche* for a level-headed aviator to accept as a good place to steal a man's wife.

There are several sides to the facts that have most naturally not been told by the volunteer witnesses - the husband and wife responsible for the taking of Paul Beck's life. The Army should demand an honest investigation that the stain be taken from the officer's name. In doing this Mrs. Day herself might be substantially cleared. As the case stands today the Days will be shunned socially in both Army and civil circles.

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