

The Girl Behind the \$15,000,000 "Crash"



While Bevan and Jeanne sat drinking cocktails, Mrs. Bevan, highly excited, rushed into the room. "You have a choice of two things," she shouted, "flight or suicide."

Why English Royalty and High Society Fear the Return to London of Gerard L. Bevan, Alleged Defaulting Financier, and Ask How Mlle. Jeanne Pertuisot Came Into Her 5,000,000 Franc Fortune.

By Ferdinand Tuohy.
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MEMBERS of the Royal Household in Buckingham Palace and Cabinet Ministers in Whitehall—and others right high in the English social firmament—are reputed to be trembling at the prospect of an early return to London of Gerard Lee Bevan, alleged defaulting financier to the tune of \$15,000,000.

Valiant efforts had been made to the end that Bevan should disappear into the void and never more be heard of.

Every string in Mayfair was pulled, every ounce of influence employed that the amazing affairs of the London City and Equitable Insurance Company, of whom Bevan was Chairman and virtual uncontrolled dictator, might never be aired in the public courts, since, individual considerations apart, these are hardly appropriate times for the masses to hear how their betters played the fool with their money. The English masses have already had one bad shock recently in the wholesale swindling, carried out at their expense, of Horatio Bottomley, but Bottomley was not of society—posed rather as one of their own number—so the masses kept under their class ire.

It is different with Bevan. Bevan surrounded himself with titled directors and the whole atmosphere of the great concern over which he presided with such incredible consequences was ultra-fashionable. Not that the well-to-do and socially elect have not suffered severely, also, in the crash. Take the case of Mrs. George Keppell, quondam close friend of King Edward, and who is stated to have lost her all

and to have retired to Italy to try out the sire vice the sterling.

And then there is that other heavy loser, the King's Chamberlain, he who looks after the royal purse at present so depleted, Sir Douglas Dawson. Latterly, by the marriage of Princess Mary to the richest bachelor in England (worth twelve million dollars) and by the union of Louis of Battenberg to the richest heiress in England (worth thirty million dollars) King George has managed to improve his precarious financial situation, yet it is said that, acting on the advice of his Chamberlain, he too invested heavily in Bevan's concern.

From his cell in Vienna, where he awaits extradition to England, Bevan proclaims himself guiltless of crime, avers that the crash was due to unfortunate investments, yet it is hardly the failure of the London, City and

Equitable so much as the efforts to hush up that failure which will stamp the Bevan case in police annals. There has not been a parallel since the Oscar Wilde case. Wilde was given a clear twelve hours to run and quit England. Instead, as relates Thomas Marlowe, editor of the Daily Mail and then a young reporter on Wilde's trail, "Wilde refused to go. He simply sat the whole afternoon drinking champagne in his hotel. That evening he was arrested."

Bevan, on the other hand, ran—or



rather flew—when given the opportunity. For a month or more he had known that the cat was out of the bag, that the gigantic losses that he had incurred were known, and that some sort of action must result against him, but he felt certain that his prominent and influential directors, themselves involved as having exhibited gross negligence, would hesitate to go to any extreme, and so he lived calmly and luxuriously on at the Carlton Hotel, London—with the lady in the case.

For, of course, there is a lady in the Bevan case—as a matter of fact there are two, if not several—but there is only one real, fatal woman, without whom there might have been no Bevan crash and no resulting scandal of suppression.

Mlle. Jeanne Pertuisot, pretty, petite and very feminine, belongs to a class long associated with the fashionable spas and watering places of Europe. It is difficult precisely to class that class other than by calling it the "beautiful lady" class. Gorgeously groomed, you see them, pom in hand, or carrying a painting wolfhound, now automobiling through the Bois de Boulogne, now sunning themselves at Cannes or Monte Carlo, now piling on the bills at baccarat at Deauville now taking the cure at Vichy. The chief thing you notice about the "beautiful lady" class is that it is almost always alone, and demands and obtains a subservience from hotel servants utterly unprocurable by others of the sex who may have tread a narrow, crooked and unprofitable path. Not that our "beautiful lady" is not the last expression of behavior, having learned and

learned from Grand Dukes and Belongs since wandering from the food in a Breton village.

It was during her round of the chic resorts, at Vichy in 1915, that Jeanne Pertuisot met Gerard Lee Bevan, and until the day of his flight from justice in February last she remained his dear friend. She was, in fact, with him at the Carlton Hotel, London, on the evening when Bevan was told to fly. "We had adjoining rooms," she narrates, "and were sitting having a cocktail before dinner when Mrs. Bevan rushed into the room. I had never met her—she was living apart from her husband—but she knew of me. She seemed very excited and shouted at Monsieur Bevan: 'You have a choice of two things, flight or suicide.'"

Monsieur Bevan was quite calm

and telephoned for an aeroplane to be ready at Croissy early next morning. He asked me to go with him and we both flew across to Paris next day. All he had was \$1,500. I left him that day, he going to Vienna and I returning to my house in the Etoile quarter.

Jeanne does not deny that when she met Bevan her fortune amounted to less than \$50,000, whereas to-day, in addition to possessing a villa at Biarritz and a mansion in Paris, she owns a large number of shares in the Claridge Hotel in the Champs Elysees and a bankroll of 5,000,000 francs—in fact, Jeanne owns up to being a most successful "beautiful lady." She says simply: "Monsieur Bevan was very good to me."

What Monsieur Bevan did was to tour her round France for years, lavishing money and attention on her while he might have more profitably been attending to the un-fortunate investments of the London, City and Equitable. The most costly

Jewels and furs of the Rue de la Paix, automobiles, an apartment and later a "hotel particulier" or a mansion, came the way of beautiful Jeanne, who did not, either, seem to object to her friend Bevan cultivating a simultaneous acquaintance with a second beautiful lady. Mademoiselle Madeleine Vernier—indeed, the three used to meet at Jeanne Pertuisot's apartment. The other day Mrs. Lee Bevan, arriving in Paris all in a flutter, proceeded to charge Jeanne with filching the inheritance of Bevan's daughter Shelia, but Jeanne came through the ordeal with flying colors and even demanded an apology, declaring that she knew nothing, absolutely nothing of Bevan's financial transactions and that she had not seen him or heard a word from him since the day last February when they alighted at the Bourget aerodrome, coming from London (unlike "beautiful lady" number two, Madeleine Vernier, who, financed by Bevan's brother Ivor, travelled to Innsbruck and joined the fugitive there).

So whatever happens to King George, or to Lloyd George, to the King's Chamberlain or to Lord Ribblesdale (married to an Astor) or to Austen Chamberlain, leader of the House of Commons and brother-in-law of Mrs. Bevan, or to all the rest of the illustrious folk more or less directly or indirectly enmeshed in the scandal of allowing Gerard Lee Bevan to escape and then of failing to follow him up, as Scotland Yard could have done successfully had they been permitted to by the "hidden hand" —whatever befall these high and mighty but very human mortals, our beautiful lady Jeanne Pertuisot, of the pearls and the Paris mansion, the wolfhound and the Rolls-Royce, the baccarat table and the Biarritz villa, is not worrying a bit about the affairs of the London City and Equitable.

