

SERIAL STORY

No Man's Land
A ROMANCE
By Louis Joseph Vance
Illustrations by Ray Walters

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SYNOPSIS.

Garrett Coast, a young man of New York City, meets Douglas Blackstock, who invites him to a card party. He accepts, although he dislikes Blackstock, the reason being that both are in love with Katherine Thaxter. Coast fails to convince her that Blackstock is unworthy of her friendship. At the party Coast meets two named Dundas and Van Tui. There is a quarrel, and Blackstock shoots Van Tui dead. Coast struggles to wrest the weapon from him, thus the police discover them. Coast is arrested for murder. He is convicted, but as he begins his sentence, Dundas names Blackstock as the murderer and kills himself. Coast purchases a yacht and while sailing sees a man thrown from a distant boat. He rescues the fellow who is named Appleyard. They arrive at a lonely island, known as No Man's Land. Coast starts out to explore the place and comes upon some deserted buildings. He discovers a man dead. Upon going further and approaching a house he sees Katherine Thaxter, who explains that her husband, under the name of Black, has bought the island. He is blind, a wireless operator and has a station there.

CHAPTER IX.—(Continued.)

She held her answer, quivering with indignation. That he should dare—! Yet there were two things in his attitude to calm her: an impersonal note, puzzling, and a simple dignity that left little foothold for resentment.

As for Coast, momentarily while she did not reply, the issue hung in the balance, whether he should speak or no; whether enlighten her forthwith or leave her (were she happy in her marriage) in her fool's Paradise. He felt himself a prey to discordant impulses, pride and generosity counselling him, each with a double tongue.

"I hold your happiness above all else," he resumed as the pause lengthened—"far above my own, Katherine. That is why I ask you: are you happy?"

"I have no regrets," she told him steadily.

"That doesn't answer me."

Her eyes wavered beneath his searching glance. She turned away and stared off into the vacancy of the fog.

"How is one to tell?" she said presently. "Isn't happiness difficult to define? A thing of comparative values? . . . I am content, that much I know. I have discovered something in life higher than the gratification of self; I have learned that to serve means more than to be served. I married the man I loved; he needs me now, could hardly do without me; I am a help to him in his work; he would probably be unable to continue it without my assistance. . . . I have my cares, as he has his, as you have yours. Who has not? . . . But a year is a long time; I have learned much since . . ." She took a deep breath. "Yes," she concluded evenly: "I think I may say I am happy, Garrett."

But she kept her face averted.

"And this?" he asked, stepping to her side and lightly touching her bare forearm with his finger.

Just below her left elbow four marks, like bluish stripes set close together, stood out like weals upon her delicate skin, where the flesh had been bruised by the cruel pressure of a man's strong fingers.

At his touch she recoiled with a half-stifled cry, her face blazing. "Don't—don't!" she gasped, trying with faltering fingers to pull down the sleeve. But realizing that it was too late, that he had already seen, she recovered, suddenly leaving the sleeve as it was.

"I'm sorry," said Coast soberly: "I didn't mean to touch you. I didn't think—had forgotten what—that I may not expect you to forget. Only that is his mark, Katherine."

"Well," she flashed defiantly, "and what if it is? Is he, or am I, answerable to you? Can he not touch me?"

But his undeviating and penetrating gaze disconcerted her; her anger rang unconvincing even to herself. "It was an accident," she finished lamely. "One of the servants angered him—they are Chinese and stupid—and in his blindness he mistook me for the man and caught my arm."

"It must have hurt," said Coast, trying to believe her.

waver from her, whatever her mood or circumstance. Whether she suffered him or as now sedulously discountenanced him, his queen could do no wrong.

With a sigh, inaudible, he went to the gate.

"There's nothing I can serve you in, Katherine?"

"Nothing—only go away."

"Then good-by." He shrugged slightly, lifted his cap and put himself outside the doorway.

"But, Garrett—"

He stopped. She moved down to the fence.

"Garrett," she begged, breathless with the anxiety roused by an unsuspected latent fear, "promise me something . . ."

He looked down into her sweet face, plaintive with appeal. "Name it," said he.

"If by any chance you should meet him—Douglas—I'm not sure, where he is—don't please—"

"I'll be careful," he assured her. "Don't worry; I shant let him know who I am. If possible, I'll keep out of his way."

Her eyes were eloquent of inexpressible relief. "Thank you," she faltered, keenly alive to the trite inadequacy of the words. "And, Garrett, you're not—not angry with me?"

"Angry? With you?"

She was twisting her hands together. "I can't seem to forget," she said in a tremor. "I've tried—I only wish I might—but I can't, I can't. Remember that, if I see unkind."

"You haven't been unkind to the man who shot Van Tui," he said, in spite of himself.

She did not seem to hear, or, if she heard, to read the riddle in his enigmatic answer. "It isn't that alone," she protested; "that, perhaps, I could forget in time. You weren't yourself:

able!" And the desire to . . . in his arms and stop her lips with kisses was like a pain. "I never dreamed that man could be so low, so vile!" she said; and he wished himself beneath the foot she stamped. "I hate you!" she told him; and beneath his breath he whispered over and over: "I love you, I love you!"

"I ask nothing," he said, when she had to stop, as much for lack of words as breath, "more than that you think it over. You've told me what you think of me—and I daresay you're somewhat justified. But think it over; you owe me and you owe yourself that. Weigh the worst you knew of me before Van Tui was shot against what you have learned of Blackstock since you married him; then judge between us. Try to think which would be the more likely to lose his temper because of a drunken man's maudlin insolence. At best you'll admit it's his word against mine, Dundas's word deciding. And one way or another Dundas was a perjurer: first his testimony convicted me, then his testimony set me free."

"What do you mean by that?" she demanded, impressed in spite of herself.

"Dundas," he explained patiently, "committed suicide in the Tombs a few days ago, after signing a confession that he had testified falsely at my trial. On the strength of that confession I was pardoned by the Governor. You understand?"

Her face was ghastly. "You bought that confession," she asserted between set teeth.

He smiled painfully. "I presume I might have anticipated that. . . . 'You aren't deny you bought it!'"

"From a man contemplating suicide?"

"That silenced her. Her poor, distraught wits would frame no retort to



She Kept Her Face Averted.

Douglas has always insisted you were not. But O Garrett, Garrett; it was unmanly, it was unworthy of you to try to shield yourself by accusing him! That I can't forget, that I'm afraid I shall never learn to forgive. Why, Garrett, why did you permit that man Warburton to do it?"

He heard her out in pitiful patience, too deeply moved for anger or resentment to have any place in the conflict of his thoughts.

"As to that," he said, his tone colorless, "I would ask you to suspend judgment if you hadn't already pronounced it. But I leave you this to consider: one of two men only could have killed Van Tui. Dundas except by mutual consent; Blackstock admits and I admit he didn't do it. There remain Blackstock and myself, neither of whom could have been convicted on the other's unsupported evidence."

"You are cowardly to say this to me, when he's not here!"

But he had a level and emotionless look with which to meet the impassioned scorn she showed him.

"Perhaps; but don't forget I asked only the opportunity to say as much to him. . . . Has it ever occurred to you that Dundas, not your husband, sent me to Sing Sing—that, had Dundas been in my pay, Blackstock would now be occupying the cell I occupied?"

He had himself well in hand. Otherwise she must have seen how deeply moved he was. Simply to watch her and not give way was almost more than he could endure. His eyes kindled and his face blazed, and his heart ached—with his love for her, the longing that he must never voice. But she did not see.

She was answering him; her words came in a torrent, stumbling over one another; her voice vibrant with unutterable contempt sounded in his hearing like the hymning of angels.

"Oh," she cried in loathing—"insuffer-

his inexorable logic. Pulled this way and that by doubts, each more terrible than the fellow, she could no more than stare and stare at him with eyes blank in a face like parchment.

His heart bled for her in his misery. If he could he would have unsaid all that he had said, to ease her suffering. "I feel like a dog," he told her contritely; "to have told you this . . . I meant not to, but I couldn't help it. Think and judge between us, Katherine."

"It is a lie!" she wailed. "You have lied to me—everything you have said was lies—all lies. I don't believe you. . . . But you have poisoned my life for me! Truth or lies: what am I to believe? . . . I am the most wretched of women, and you have made me so. Why couldn't you leave me in peace? Why must you have come to make me suffer so? How am I to know what is true, what false? . . . Oh, you are monstrous! You are cruel, cruel! If only you would go and let me forget! Go, go, and let me be!"

In his remorse, reluctant to leave her so, he tried to comfort her with broken protestations that even he knew were rank with insincerity; nor would he willingly have gone before she grew more composed. But at length, despairing, he yielded to her unending importunity, and bowing his head, went his way in a daze of misery as black and dense as the relentless, sullen fog.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The Ruling Passion.

"Yes, the elevator fell six stories." "Everybody screamed and prayed, of course?"

"No. There would have been absolute silence if it hadn't been for the elevator boy."

"What did he do?"

He shrieked "Going down," as we passed each floor."

FROM THE STATE CAPITAL
Information and Gossip From Harrisburg.

Road Amendment.

Farmers of Pennsylvania were urged to consider the advantages of co-operative buying organizations and to support the proposed constitutional amendment to permit the State to borrow \$50,000,000 for the construction of good roads, by speakers before the meeting of the State Board of Agriculture here. Agricultural development was declared by others to be one of the greatest needs of Pennsylvania and a committee was named to urge its claims upon the General Assembly of 1913.

Not for years have so many progressive agricultural ideas been brought to the attention of the board. Instead of discussions on subjects, which have been plowed up time and time again, the papers and reports sounded like those of a scientific body. Chemistry statistics and other matters not ordinarily heard of in such gatherings formed the bulk of the discourse.

The Sproul main highway law received the heartiest commendation, and J. C. Weller, of Rockwood, in his report on road laws, declared that the farmers of the State should support it without hesitancy, because of the great benefits it would bring and the stimulus to local road building.

State construction of highways on a definite plan and State aid for others were declared preferable to the "dirt roads" law, which was criticised as being too slow and not getting results so satisfactorily as the other highway laws. Mr. Weller brought to his hearers' attention the suggestion of a tax on natural resources for road building.

Lancaster County Farmers' Co-operative Association, which has two warehouses and has been in dividend-paying condition for several years, was outlined by J. Aldus Herr in a paper in which he declared that co-operation would be the means of saving many dollars to farmers in making purchases.

The Lancaster Association started in business five years ago and now has 1,000 members.

Judge James A. Beaver, who discussed agricultural developments, praised the railroads for what they were doing to instruct farmers in modern methods. President E. E. Sparks, of State College, praised the school code for the attention given to agricultural education, and John Hamilton, former State Secretary of Agriculture, declared Pennsylvania should employ experts to study Belgian methods and those in vogue in parts of Canada, and then have them instruct the farmers.

W. Theodore Wittman, of Allentown, declared that more poultry was being raised in Pennsylvania than ever before and that the reason why the prices remain high was because the supply did not begin to reach the demand.

Term Of Auditor General.

Steps are now being considered whereby the question of the length of Auditor General A. E. Sisson's term may be determined in advance of the State Convention of the Republicans, which has been called for May 1 in this city, and a plan of procedure probably will be announced in a few days. The Auditor General's term was lengthened from three to four years by the constitutional amendments ratified by the people in 1905, the election being the same as that at which General Sisson was elected. It has been contended by some that the amendments extended his term as he did not assume office until May, 1910, but others hold that the provision could not become operative until the Auditor General's successor was chosen. Owing to the general importance of the office and the wide effect of any trouble over the term on State business a desire to have the question settled has been manifested.

No Opposition To Focht's Nomination.

Republican leaders of the eight counties in the Seventeenth Congressional District met here and after a discussion of the Congressional situation, declared that Congressman B. K. Focht, of Lewisburg, would not be opposed for renomination. Mr. Focht recently announced himself for a third term and reports made showed no candidate, who is thinking of entering the field against him. The Democrats probably will nominate Focht's fellow-townsman, Representative Frank L. Dershem.

Matches Not a Poison.

In an opinion given to the State Pharmaceutical Board, Deputy Attorney General William M. Hargest holds that matches made with phosphorus are not poisons within the meaning of the general poison act.

To Withdraw State Police.

The sub-stations of the State Police Department will be withdrawn within a few days and the men will be concentrated in the barracks until the end of the present quarter. The change has been necessary because of the higher cost of living for the men and of hay for the horses. The contingent fund, which helps the department out in its sub-stations, is exhausted for his quarter and until April no men will be sent out except for emergencies.

TERMS.—The terms of subscription to the *Advertiser* are one dollar per year in advance.

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