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 Tuyl. There is a quarrel, and Blackstock shoots Van Tuyl 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 becomes free, but Blackstock has married Katherine Thaxter and fled. 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. Coast informs her that her husband murdered Van Tuyl. Coast sees Blackstock and some Chinamen burying a man. They fire at him, but he is rescued by Appleyard, who gets him to the Echo in safety, and there he reveals that he is a secret service man.

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

"The window was open—it was warm enough for that—and because of the fog I could stand quite near and see what was taking place inside without being seen. . . . It was a goodish sized room, one of three under a single roof, by all appearances, and stuffed full of apparata of various kinds. There was a big gas-motor singing away at one end, running a dynamo. Right near the window was a heavy table with all the paraphernalia of a wireless station.

"There was a young man standing right by the table, evidently just out of his chair. He was taking off the telephone headpiece when I first saw him. He looked to be under thirty, and wore red hair and a good coat of sunburn; and he was mad clean through—mad at another man who was standing just inside a doorway leading to another room. That door was closed. The second man was evidently just out of bed; he had a crash bathrobe belted round him, with his pyjamas showing underneath, and beefy, naked ankles running into bedroom slippers. They were having it hot and heavy, ripping out at each other straight from the shoulder.

"I don't know—didn't hear—what started the row, and it ended just after I came within hearing. The younger chap was saying—he had a bit of a brogue: 'Don't let that trouble you, Mister Black. I'll have you know I wired for a relief last night, while you were at dinner, and the minute he sets foot on this damned island, I leave it; nor will I be resting till I've turned in my report at the home office. Put that in your pipe, now.'

"Black (as he called him) seemed to lose control of himself for an instant. He sort of lurched forward, his hands working as if he was going to throw himself at the younger man's throat; then he caught up, thinking better of it, as if he knew the other fellow had grabbed his chair by the back and stood ready to brain him with it; which he couldn't have known, for it turned out he was blind. 'If I had my sight,' he said, 'and could lay hands on you, Power, I'd break every bone in your body.'

"That staked Mr. Power to an ugly laugh—the kind of a laugh that's calculated to make the other chap's blood boil. 'Divvil a doubt of that,' says he; 'but well you know I'd stop at nothing to protect myself against a brute like you, Mr. Black. And what's more' (I thought he tried to hold his tongue, but couldn't; this last seemed fairly to burst out of him) 'I warn you if ever again I see you lay finger on that unhappy woman, your wife, I'll murder you with the first weapon that comes handy. Remember that.'

"Black was white with rage by this time; I don't think he could have held in much longer. As it happened, just then the door behind him opened, and a woman in a dressing-gown stepped into the room. She was ghastly pale, frightened to death, but otherwise just about the prettiest woman I ever laid eyes on. She said just one word in a pitiful voice—'Douglas'—and touched her husband's arm; but I saw her eyes were praying Power to go. He saw it too.

"'Very well, then,' he said with a little bow to the woman. 'I'll be going now.'

"'And you needn't come back,' said the man he called Black. 'I'll do without you until your successor comes.'

"'That suits me to a T,' says Power. 'Good morning, Mrs. Black; I'm sorry we woke you up.'

"Black listened to his footsteps, with that weird expression the deaf and blind have, for some seconds after I had lost the sound of them; then he shook himself and said to the woman in a pretty steady voice, considering how hot he had just been: 'Get back to bed, Kate. I'll stay up the rest of the night. That matter's settled; you needn't worry any more.' I thought his voice sounded not unkind, but it was plain his temper ruled the man.

"His wife hesitated, but seemed afraid to cross him. She said something I didn't catch, and went back, closing the door.

"I was of two minds, whether to follow Power (if I could) or wait and see what next, and while I was debating it, Black returned, pulling on his coat. He'd managed to get into his clothing in a surprisingly short time. He went straight to the door, jerked it open, and slammed out, taking the same path as Power. I followed, judging my distance at discretion.

"The path led us directly to the farmhouse. Unfortunately I was a bit overcautious, and so permitted Black to get too far ahead. By the time I caught up, something had happened I didn't quite see through, at first. I heard the gate click behind Black, then his footsteps as he pounded across the stoop, and an instant later voices followed by a sound of shuffling, scuffling feet. But when I found him again he was alone—sitting alone in the kitchen, the only lighted room in the house. He had drawn a chair up to the table and sat square to it, his feet solidly on the floor, his hands spread out flat. I could see him quite plainly through the open door. He just sat there, staring at the blank wall opposite (of course, he couldn't see anything, for that matter) and never moved a muscle through what seemed to me an eternity.

Were Having It Hot and Heavy.

"I daresay this lasted over ten minutes: it seemed hours. Then suddenly it came—what we'd both been waiting for—like a thunderclap for unexpectedness, only more awful. I fancied I heard, first, a thin, far shout; at any rate, Black threw back his head, as if he had heard something. The next instant the air seemed to shudder with the most terrible, indescribably harrowing scream of mortal agony . . .

"Then silence again—nothing more. Beyond that preliminary start, Black hadn't moved. He sat on, just as he was, though he understood as well as I, and better, what had happened off there in the darkness: that Power, suspecting Black's intentions, had made a break to get away by boat, but had been overhauled by somebody instructed by Black—overhauled and murdered. . . . And he could sit there, unstirring, with that on his conscience . . .!

"After a while I heard something moving in the barnyard and dodged back into hiding—into the shadows. Then a man passed between me and the light, like a ghost, trotting along noiselessly. He jogged up to the house and into the kitchen: as he entered, Black swung round sharply. This new arrival was a Chinaman—a low-caste coolie, I judged. I couldn't hear what they said—they spoke in undertones—but I managed to catch a word or two, among them 'boat:' which fitted in with my suspicions. At once Black got up—heavily, as if very tired—and went through the house and out by the front door; I tagged along, of course. He went directly back to the wireless station, sat down at the operating table, and gave another marvelous exhibition of what a blind man can accomplish, with instinct reinforcing the sense of touch.

"He threw in the motor cut-off switch, to begin with, and the motor started on the spark, just as some automobile engines will. Then he monkeyed with the detecter for a while, listening. Nothing doing, apparently—though he may have been getting the range for New York. The next thing, he disconnected the receiving apparatus, threw the current in through the starting box and primary switch, and began calling the New York office of the Standard Wireless, stopping now and then to listen for their response. Presently that came through, and he told 'em to stand ready to take an important message for Voorhis, the second vice-president: they were to get him on the telephone at once—wake him up and insist on an instant answer. . . . You'll have gathered that I number in the list of my many and varied accomplishments the ability to read Morse by ear; once upon a time I was a regular telegraph operator.

"The message was: 'Power has left without warning, taking boat to row to Vineyard. Absence just discovered. Send trustworthy substitute immediately. When may I expect him? All quiet here; island fog-bound.'

"The reply came through within twenty minutes—which was pretty quick work. Of course I couldn't hear it; I only knew it was being received.

"Just as Black gave the O. K. signal and shut off the motor and dynamo, the door opened again, and his wife spoke to him. She said, almost timidly: 'Douglas . . . is anything the matter?' He said in a rough, surly tone: 'Everything's the matter. That ass, Power, has stolen one of the boats and left the island. I've just asked Voorhis to send some one in his place. He says there's a man on the way; it seems Power sent in his resignation yesterday evening.' Those were his words, in effect—as nearly as I can remember them. He added something offensive about that being the finish of that flirtation and that he'd thank her to leave the next operator alone. She said: 'Oh-h!'—as if he'd hit her with a whip. Then he got up and announced that he was going to the farmhouse to get some breakfast. It was then just getting a little light. He said she needn't hurry, that he would probably be at the beach by the time she came to breakfast—wanted to find out which boat Power had taken. Then he went away, and the woman shut the door again. . . .

"This time I let Black take his road alone; I'd other fish to fry. I could hear his wife moving about in the other part of the building and judged she was dressing; but she took an interminable time to it. . . . In the course of the next century or two, however, she came out, dressed, and took the path to the farmhouse. I let her go, timed myself as close as I could, and dodged into the wireless room. It was taking a chance; I knew that if Black returned my life wouldn't be worth a picayune; but I had to know Voorhis's message. . . .

"I started the motor and called New York. When they answered I gave Black's signal and demanded a repetition of the message. That was taking another chance: the operator at the other end might recognize the difference in our styles of sending and refuse me. But he may have been sleepy; at all events he obliged without comment. Voorhis had wirelessed: 'Power gave notice he was leaving yesterday evening. New man on way, should reach New Bedford this morning, island by evening, conditions favoring. Name, John Handyside. He is in my confidence.' . . . At least that was the substance of it. . . .

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Beware First False Step.

He who is false to present duty breaks a thread in the loom and will find the flaw when he may have forgotten the cause.—Henry Ward Beecher

MADE UNITED GERMANY

HONOR ACCORDED AUTHOR OF "DIE WACHT AM RHEIN."

Town of Tuttlingen, Birthplace of Max Schneckenburger, Is Preparing to Erect Monument to Its Famous Citizen.

Neidingen, Gutmadingen, Geisingen, Immendingen, Mohringen, Tuttlingen—all these are passed before reaching our first camp. But of these Tuttlingen is our darling. We have not passed a village that could have made us happy for many days; each with its ruined castles, its medieval tower, its steep gables, its colored tiles, cheery peasants; but, writes Poultney Bigelow in "From the Black Forest to the Black Sea," all this, and more, too, is united in Tuttlingen. This little town also has its feudal castle, its ruined battlements, its legends, and its quaint gables; but it has more than this—it has the proud distinction of having educated the poet who made United Germany. The war-song that has made all Germans merge their local differences in one great purpose—the common fatherland; that united Bavarians and Prussians, Saxons and Wurtemburgers, in 1870; that brought victory over the French, and an imperial crown to the house of Hohenzollern—that song is "Die Wacht am Rhein," written at the age of twenty-one, by a lad whose schooling was obtained in Tuttlingen. It is needless to say that his name is Max Schneckenburger.

The people of Tuttlingen are now raising the money needed to place here a worthy monument to the man who has made their town famous. They have placed a square pedestal upon the bank of the stream as a mute invitation to help on the noble work. Of course, we brought our mite from across the Atlantic, and promised to stir our friends up also. In Tuttlingen is a committee of the leading citizens, who are prepared to receive and acknowledge contributions.

Little is known of Schneckenburger. He died in 1849, when only thirty years of age. His father blackened boots and lifted trunks in a village tavern near Tuttlingen, but was obviously of superior character, for he eventually became a small merchant and married well. Max was, too, poor; but in Tuttlingen he was thoroughly schooled and then sent to Switzerland, where the post of errand boy was given him in a grocery store. His short life was one of hard work and small earnings, far from his beloved fatherland, and seeing of the world only what appeared in the course of trips made as a commercial traveler. His widow assures us that a day never passed that Schneckenburger did not kneel in prayer for his fatherland, and his motto, chosen at the age of fifteen, was this word alone, "Deutsch." In 1840 he wrote "Die Wacht am Rhein" as an indignant protest against the French pretentions of that time, but the battles of Gravelotte and Sedan had been fought before his country was made to know the source of their inspiration. Schneckenburger is another of the many names that humanity loves to honor, but which, alas! humanity discovers long after its honor has ceased to be of any material consequence.

Got Rid of His Creditor.

Lespes, the French journalist, known as "Timothee Trimm," was once disagreeably intruded on by a creditor, who announced his intention of not departing until he was paid. The creditor planted himself on a chair, and Lespes beheld him, with consternation, draw bread and cheese from his pockets, as though to fortify himself against events. Several hours glided by; Lespes had resumed his writing and finished an article. The creditor showed no signs of moving. Suddenly Lespes rose, and with bits of newspaper began carefully blocking all the apertures through which air could come into the room. He then made preparations for lighting a charcoal fire; but before applying the match, pasted on the wall, just opposite the creditor's eyes, a paper thus laconically worded: "Take notice that we died of our own will." "What are you doing?" exclaimed the creditor, uneasily. "Your society would render life intolerable, so we are going to commit suicide together," answered Timothee tranquilly. It is needless to say that the creditor decamped.

Art of Happiness.

Happiness is about the most misunderstood thing on this earth. People believe that they know just what it is, and invariably answer that they are striving for it daily. Yet the average person's hazy idea of happiness consists of a palace, six automobiles, three or four houseboats, an army of servants, tons of stuff to eat and drink, and a full-sized mint of money.

If one would only figure out wherein lies his happiness he would be better armed for the fight. The trouble is that we do not know what we want. And that is why we struggle along, day after day, in a leisurely, careless manner. There is an idea hovering over us that there is a bright future ahead, and we stop our thoughts there.

First determine what you want. Plan how to get it. And then fight for it. Happiness will be realized in the struggle, and when you finally get what you want supreme hapiness will be yours.

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