

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 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 Tui. Coast rescues Blackstock and some Chinamen carrying 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 and has been watching the crowd on the island, suspecting they are criminals. Coast is anxious to fathom the mysteries of No Man's Land, and is determined to save Katherine. Appleyard believes that Black and his gang make a shield of the wireless station to conduct a smuggling business.

CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

The other vessel was entering the mouth of the channel, at the moment that Coast put the helm over and brought the Echo's green starboard eye into view. A mile or so lay between them. Appleyard lifted the hatch and opened the throttle full, before setting out the port light.

A shower of spray swept over the Echo's counter as she bucked the tide. "That's the stuff," said the little man. "Now they're wondering what particular variety of darn fools we are. Hold her as she stands—steady."

Two throaty blasts from an automatic whistle floated down the wind. "What'd I tell you?" chuckled Appleyard. "She's slowed down all ready," he announced, although Coast was unable to discern any change in the speed of the nearing craft. "It hurts to do this." The little man jerked the whistle lever and uttered a single, prolonged, derisive blast. "Lord! they must be cousin's a blue streak!"

By this time the Echo had worked well up into the channel, the other vessel being about midway through. To a second signal, a solitary blast, Appleyard replied with two, in utter defiance of every rule and regulation for the prevention of collisions at sea. A husky shout of wrath answered this manifestation of landlubberly foolishness. Appleyard responded with three short barks of the whistle, the same signifying what was obviously untrue—that he had reversed his engine and was running full-speed astern; for at the same moment, in obedience to his low-toned command—"Starboard, starboard your helm!"—Coast again put the wheel over and the Echo swung smartly on her heel, showing her port light and making as if to cut across the other's bows at a moment when they were but a few lengths apart.

There was an instant of suspense as the boats drew swiftly together. Coast held his breath and prepared to jump should the threatened happen; it seemed certain that the sharp stem of the motor cruiser would crash into the catboat's side. Even Appleyard lost something of his customary aplomb and betrayed the strain upon his nerves.

"Sit tight—sit tight!" he whispered between his closed teeth. "Don't give an inch—they've got to—they don't dare—ah!"

The last was a sigh of relief as the cruiser swerved sharply in toward Pasque, shot forward a couple of lengths and brought up suddenly with a churning screw—hard and fast aground.

A moment later the Echo rounded gracefully to port within two yards of her stern; and simultaneously Appleyard, leaning far out over the combing, made an exceedingly cunning cast with a coil of line which Coast had laid in against the possibility of a broken halyard. The flying loops settled accurately into the water, just above the foam kicked up by the cruiser's propeller, and in another instant its motor stopped with a strangled gasp.

Out of the cloud of profanity that smoked up from the cruiser's cockpit flew first one heavy sponner, then another. Both splashed heavily alongside the Echo. Not until they had drawn well out of range did Coast and Appleyard rise from the shelter of the combings.

"So far, splendid," commented Appleyard soberly, staring astern. "I

reckon that, between the furrow they ploughed in that shoal and several yards of good hempen rope gumming up the shaft and screw, they'll bide where they are a wee. Till the storm blows over any way. It ought to take a good diver or a marine railway to free that shaft. . . . Now, if you'll give me the wheel, we'll go about and get ready for business. That was child's play, alongside of what's to come. Get the sail up, please."

For a space thereafter Coast had his hands full; the Echo was swinging out of the channel, past the hollow, despondent clanging bell, and the wind had found her with a swoop of fury and a wolfish howl. By the time he had trimmed the main-sheet the catboat was sweeping onward at a rate little short of incredible.

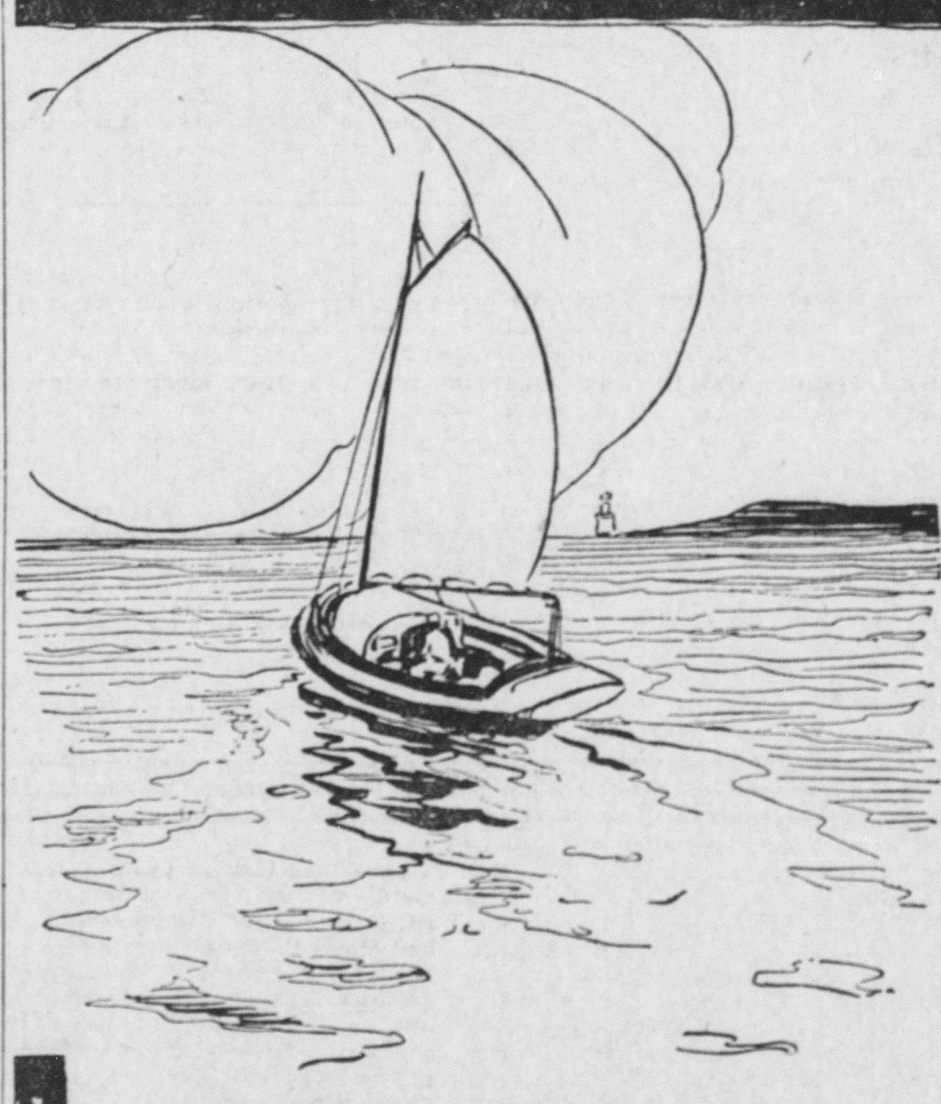
Steadily the guiding longshore lights swung round them, marking their progress: to starboard Cuttyhunk shining steadfast as a low-hung star, to port Gay Head lifting up its lofty beacon, astern, low down, a glimmer, frequently lost—Nobska. No nearer lights were there to bewilder; wise coastwise mariners hugged snug harbors on such a night as that; the Echo took her chance alone.

Touching Coast's arm, Appleyard drew his attention to a tiny glint of light in the south, where No Man's Land beckoned them from afar, across a weary waste of broken waters.

Coast nodded, with a set, grave face, knowing that his hour drew nigh.

CHAPTER XIII.

About midway between the eastern and western extremes of the north shore of No Man's Land, a little sandy spit juts out, forming, according to Appleyard, "what you might call a sort of cove, if you don't care what you say." To the west of it lies the



The Echo Took Her Chance Alone. . . .

only good anchorage near the island—one that can be termed such solely when the winds blow from the south.

Into the poor shelter of this courteous harbor, under the pilotage of Appleyard (who asserted that he found his way half by guess work and half by sense of smell) the Echo fought her way and as her anchor bit into the bottom and her cable tautened brought up staggering, like a spent runner at the close of a long race.

Only seamanship of a sort not inaptly to be called superb (but not less so than the courage exhibited by both men) eked out by Appleyard's intimate acquaintance with the waters thereabouts, could have brought the Echo through in safety.

Coast took ashore with him a new sense of respect and admiration for his companion. What emotions, if any, Appleyard entertained, remained inscrutable.

Driving the boat through a quartering run of surf, they made an uncomfortable though not dangerous landing on the west side of the sand spit, drew the dory far up and set off, side by side, wet and weary, for the Cold Lairs—as they had christened, by common consent, the abandoned fishing village.

They stumbled up to and through its empty street, a little wondering, a little apprehensive, more than a little alert and inclined to seek the touch of each other's shoulders. They were, in the good old phrase, taking their lives in their hands in this phase of their adventure; and the sense of this clutched at their hearts with fingers of ice. That they would be recognized (save Coast by Katherine) as the men who had been on the island in the fog seemed little likely; so far as they knew neither had been seen but by the Chinaman whom Appleyard had stung; and it was improbable that he had caught clear sight of either. There remained, however, a hundred masked dangers growing out of Blackstock's certain distrust and misgivings, with a far-fetched possibility that the men stranded on the shoals of Pasque would find some means of escape and communicate with Blackstock by wireless from the mainland. It was not more than an improbable possibility, but none the less it held its meed of danger, and they might

not forget it, though Appleyard naively argued and contrived plausibly against mischance.

If the crew of the grounded vessel (he explained) chose to land on Pasque, they would better their condition not at all—merely exchange a comfortable cabin for the questionable freedom of a little two-by-four island cut off from Naushon and its habitations by the deep, swift currents that scour Robinson's Hole. In another direction, it would profit them as little to seek the cheerless shelter of the life-saving station on Nashawena; it would require more than man-power to free the cruiser from the sticky clutches of the shoal, and their chances of obtaining a tow before the storm abated were positively nil.

"You can tie to this," Appleyard had summed up: "they'll stay put till morning. And then a while. That'll give me time to tend to their cases properly. Even should I fall down there, we've got at the worst reckoning a clear eighteen hours. And if that's not long enough for us to frame up a suitable last act for this thrilling draymah of crime and human hearts, we ain't fit even to dope out a scenario for a moving-picture film; and I for one will make up my mind to shake the leg, and try to make a dent in the two-a-day."

From which pronouncement Coast drew what comfort he could.

The bunaglow occupied what was apparently the brow of the island's highest ridge, something like a quarter of a mile to the south of the farm-house and near the southern shore. As they drew nearer Appleyard slowed down to a cautious walk. At a fair distance from the lighted window both paused, as if seeking some final word; then, without speech (it would have been necessary to

shriek to make oneself heard in that exposed spot) Coast caught the little man's hand and gave it a long, friendly pressure. He turned and moved a few paces toward the house. When he looked back Appleyard had melted into the darkness.

He passed a window so misted with moisture that he could have seen little within had he wished or stopped to look. He turned a corner, moved past another window, and came to a door before which he stopped a long minute, not hesitant, but pulling himself together, realizing but on the whole not sorry that he now stood alone, had only himself to look to whatever the emergency the next few hours might give rise to. On the other side of those panels were the only two beings in the world who could strike upon his heart-strings every chord in the gamut of the emotions; and he must be prepared to experience them all and show himself unmoved, at least outwardly.

Lifting his hand, he knocked loudly, and without waiting turned the knob and entered. A tearing blast of wind accompanied him, for the door faced the east. He had a brief struggle with it before he got it closed and faced the light—his heart in his mouth, if the truth is to be told.

To Coast's unspeakable relief he found Blackstock alone. Apparently the man had been sitting by the table, his feet on a near-by stool; but when Coast discovered him he was standing in that dogged, forceful pose of strength and preparedness which seemed somehow peculiarly his: with his feet well apart, his heavy body inclining forward from his hips, his broad shoulders a trifle lifted, his round and heavy head thrusting forward on its thick, strong neck.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

A Great Economic Problem. Uncle Eben—"I tell ye, the present poor quality of immigration is driving out the native born Americans." Nephew Eben—"Right ye are, uncle! Look at this town, for instance. What with drummers in the spring, city boarders in the summer, surveyors in the fall, and actors in the winter, a reeler who's born and raised here don't stand any chance with the home gals at all."—Judge.

DOINGS AT THE STATE CAPITAL

Forest Perils.

Pennsylvania's foresters concluded their fifth annual convention at the Capitol with a general discussion of the dangers that menace the preserves and details of forest management, including the business side, of which the general public knows very little. The foresters were treated in the papers as an investment made by the State as well as public properties of the utmost value for conservation. After the convention the foresters inspected the exhibition in the Senate caucus room and showed delegations of boy scouts how to tell the different woods. Former Congressman N. W. Wheeler and T. D. Collins, of Forest county, who are interested in forestry from the commercial side; Forestry Commissioner S. B. Elliott, of Jefferson county; former Mayor E. A. Weimer, of Lebanon, and others addressed the foresters, as did Prof. I. T. Worthington and Joseph Illick, of the Mount Alto Academy. Mr. Elliott devoted much time to discussing the proper trees to plant in reforestation, and then Geo. A. Retan, of Greenwood, aroused considerable discussion by his suggestion of the possibilities of deer becoming, under protective laws, as great a nuisance to the forester, through destruction of trees, as squirrels and rabbits.

Pure Food Law Decision.

State officials who have read the opinion handed down at Williamsport during the Superior Court session by Judge John J. Henderson, declare that it upholds the constitutionality of the pure food act of 1909 on every contented point and that it will enable the Dairy and Food Commissioner to proceed with numerous prosecutions which have been held up pending the decision. The case which Judge Henderson decided was known as the Pfium case, as it was the appeal of a firm of that name from the decision of Judge Willis Martin in the Philadelphia Common Pleas Courts. The case was made the occasion for a general attack on the pure food law's constitutionality.

Banks and Unclaimed Accounts.

An opinion has been given by Deputy Attorney General W. M. Hargest to Dr. N. C. Schaeffer, president of the State Board of Education, to the effect that there is no provision in the school code or any other act of Assembly which compels banks or trust companies to account to the Board "for any deposits remaining unclaimed for any period of time." The question arose from an inquiry from Dr. Schaeffer as to what right the Board had to require financial institutions to account for deposits unclaimed for seven years. Mr. Hargest holds that it has none and the only authority to secure escheated money comes under Section 2701 of the school code, which provides that all escheated estates in the Commonwealth shall go into the State school fund of Pennsylvania, the estates to be first escheated according to law.

Ask State Aid in Celebration.

The co-operation of the Commonwealth in the observance of the semi-centennial of the conference held at Altoona by the Governors of fourteen loyal States in 1862 was asked of the Governor and various State officials by a delegation of citizens of Altoona. The celebration is to take place in September.

To Issue Camp Details Soon.

General orders announcing the details of the combined camp of the regulars and the representatives of the National Guard of Pennsylvania will be issued from the National Guard headquarters within a few days, Adjutant General Thomas J. Stewart having been in Washington consulting with War Department officials.

Railway To Extend.

Papers have been filed at the State Department authorizing extension of the Philadelphia & Gettysburg Railway from its present terminus in Philadelphia to Media. The extension runs through three Delaware county townships and will be six and a half miles long.

Ask Clemency For Slayers.

Applications for commutation of the death sentences of two murderers were filed with the State Board of Pardons here. Leonard W. Gilbert, of Harrisburg, and William Reed, Chambersburg, are the two men for whom clemency is asked. The cases will be heard on March 20.

To Seek Blight in Northern Tier.

A vigorous campaign of inspection of forests for the chestnut tree blight is to be undertaken along the northern tier as soon as the weather permits of more extensive field work.

Register Martin Pays State.

Register of Wills David Martin, of Philadelphia, has paid \$49,185.63 to the State Treasury as the State's share of the income of his office for February.

Rewarded Conductor Dies.

Edwin L. Casner, a Pennsylvania Railroad conductor, died here at the age of fifty-eight years. He had been an employee of the company since 1876, and received a reward for meritorious service in the disturbances of 1877.

TERMS.—The terms of subscription to the paper are one dollar per year in advance.
ADVERTISING RATES.—Display advertisements of ten or more lines for three or more insertions, eight cents per line for each issue. Display advertising occupying less space than ten lines is charged for less than three insertions, from ten to twenty cents per line for each issue, according to composition.
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