

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. Although he dislikes Blackstock, the reason being that both are in love with Katherine Thaxter, Coast falls 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 sets 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. Coast penetrates to the lair of Blackstock's disguise. Katherine enters the room and passes him a note which tells Coast that neither his life or her own are safe. Coast feels that Blackstock suspects him. Appleyard and the Echo disappear. Coast assures Katherine of his protection, and she informs him that they are to abandon the island immediately.

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

Coast waited to hear no more. Dumb with rage—to be so tricked and bamboozled! To have his teeth drawn in such a manner, by a blind man, almost without a struggle!—he stooped, picked up a heavy monkey-wrench, and threw himself at Blackstock. Before he had covered half the scant distance between them, however, he was caught up suddenly from behind, jerked back and held, struggling, kicking, helpless as a child in the arms of Chang. As if he were wholly unaware of what was taking place, Blackstock's voice rumbled on: "... adopted this means of making my wishes known. I trust you won't resent it when you wake up to the reasonableness of my attitude. You weren't hurt—of that I'm sure—beyond your feelings, perhaps. And," he added, suavely sardonic, "I beg to apologize for the indignity, Mr. Handyside."

CHAPTER XVII.

To his own advantage Coast was gifted with the ability to recognize the irremediable and concede it as such. With quiet resolution he calmed himself at that moment when he was cold with despair, thrilled with apprehension, hot with anger, trembling with humiliation, and powerless in the grasp of one to whom his most determined struggles were as impotent as the writhing of the butterfly whose wings you imprison between thumb and forefinger. The arms of the big Chinaman wound round him were as sinewy and long as those of a gorilla, as strong as bands of steel; he could as readily break their embrace as he could summon a jinn to his aid by twisting the ring upon his finger. He schooled himself to resignation. "Very well," he said in a passionless voice. "You've got your own way of making a civil request, and I don't pretend to like it; but I'll be grateful if you'll instruct this Chinese giant to let me go."

"What are you there, Chang?" Blackstock's simulation of surprise was admirable—if it were simulation. "You may release Mr. Handyside," he continued; "he has promised to be good." Without a word the Chinaman dropped his arms and stepped aside. His face, when Coast saw it, was as stolid as always; only the yellow eyes, glistening like a cat's through their heavy, half-closed lids, seemed to hold a hint of derision. Coast lifted his shoulders in a shrug not of bravado but of endurance, turned to the tool bench by the motor and replaced the wrench. His thoughts were all confusion; again an incident mocked him with hidden meaning. What was he to understand—that Blackstock recognized his voice and knew him for himself, Garrett Coast? That he suspected him of being another than Handyside—a spy of the Treasury Department, in short—and had determined to disarm him as a matter of common precaution, suspending sentence until he had determined precisely who he was? "You're wondering," said Blackstock, "why I didn't demand this gun before taking it by force. Aren't you?" "I am," Coast assented bluntly.

"For one reason, because I wouldn't've got it. Would I?" "Certainly not. What right—" "One moment: I'm coming to that." Blackstock smiled his secret smile, weighing the weapon reflectively before bestowing it securely in a hip-pocket. "It was a matter of discipline—morale is the better word. You had to be made to understand that on this island I am dictator, my word law, my wishes law's equivalent. Your personal independence doesn't amount to a row of tacks, so long's you're on No Man's Land; I'm boss, and you've got to come to me. I don't allow anybody but myself to tote a gun here, and since I knew you'd refuse a request, I took this spectacular means of making our relations clear as daylight. The main trouble with Power was his exaggerated conception of the importance of his blessed ego; when I gave him a practical demonstration of its relative insignificance in the cosmic scheme, he got peevish. Don't you make the same mistake." "I'm surprised," retorted Coast, deliberately offensive, "that Power didn't beg to be allowed to stay and lick your boots." "That," said Blackstock, with an open grin, "sounds suspiciously like mutiny, Mr. Handyside." "Call it any name you like. Possibly you may find somebody to knuckle under to such treatment for the privilege of earning a bare living on this God-forsaken island, but..." "Well, I've had enough of you and I'm finished. Get Voohis to send you another man as soon as you like; I leave, the first chance that turns up." "Then the sooner you get that motor running, the quicker you'll be suited," returned Blackstock. "You'd better get busy." "Go to the devil," said Coast coolly. "If you send out any messages from this station, some one else will have repaired your motor—I shan't. Good-night!" "Good-night, Mr. Handyside," rang

grave though it slowly starved—he heard a faint cry from seaward, turned in surprise, and saw Katherine stumbling hurriedly up from the beach. Though she had evidently been running for some distance and was flushed and breathless, there was something more than haste in her manner; there was its stimulus, a commingling of strong emotions so interdependent and confused that he found them unintelligible and recognized only intense excitement into which they merged. "Garrett," she gasped—"Garrett—I want you to tell me the truth, if you know it—the truth, Garrett, though I'm afraid to hear it..." She paused, shuddering, the crimson ebullience from her cheeks and lips while terror played like lightning in her eyes. Cautiously he looked round. . . . But the deserted buildings shut them off from the farm-house, and there was no one visible on the bluffs or downs. He took her tenderly in his arms. "There," he soothed her gently. "Tell me..." "I'm afraid," she breathed brokenly. "It's too awful, Garrett, too dreadful. It can't be true..." "Tell me," he begged, though now he knew. "It's—about Mr. Power, Garrett. I—I—he never left this island." "I know," he said. "She drew away, her eyes widening. "You knew, Garrett?" "You knew, Garrett?" "It happened yesterday morning, just before I came ashore—about daybreak." "You—you know this to be so?" "He told her briefly what and how he knew of the tragedy. "This dog," he concluded, "has been there—you must have noticed—by his grave ever since." She nodded. "I saw him," she said in a low, vibrant voice, "but—I didn't understand. I remember thinking it strange. He was here when we came—a legacy from the former tenant—



"Instruct This Chinese Giant to Let Me Go."

in his ears accompanied by a jeering laugh, as he swung on his heel and through the door to the open; but he paid no attention. Lacking any excuse to linger in the vicinity of the bungalow, he continued at leisure toward the farm-house, consistently at every step more troubled with doubts, anxieties, forebodings. It was all very well (he thought) to make the best of a bad business! but—Appleyard was not to return until nightfall. It was now half-past four of a sultry, overcast and misty afternoon. In the two and a half or three hours of daylight to follow, what might not happen? What if Blackstock purposed leaving No Man's Land in the little catboat within that interim? What could possibly be contrived to stop him by one man, unfriended and unarmed? Pausing at the farm-house only briefly to make sure Katherine was not there, without purpose, in weary despondency he wandered on, down through the Cold Lairs toward the beach. As he drew near the spot where the collier kept its vigil, the animal, apparently recognizing his footsteps, rose and whined a woe-begone welcome. He stopped out of sheer compassion, sensible of a vague feeling of fellowship with the dog, since he, too, was outcast, defenceless and impotent, the sport of malign circumstances. That thought rankled. . . . Presently it occurred to him that the dog must be hungry. On sudden impulse he left it, went back to the farm-house kitchen, and without word of explanation to the Chinese there, foraged for scraps until he had heaped a pan with food; with which he returned to the collier. It ate ravenously, as if breaking a long fast. And while he stood watching it, wondering at the dumb fidelity which had kept it steadfast beside the

and Power was kind to him. He never would have anything to do with any of the rest of us—except me; Mr. Power fed him and he followed him everywhere, but my—the dog hated, and the Chinese, too." The brief explanation had helped to quiet her; but now as she stood staring blankly seaward, tears trembled in her lashes, and her lips trembled as she breathed convulsively. "It's so terrible," she said in a dull and even monotone, dispirited and cheerless. "Was I born only to bring suffering and terror and death to all about me?" "Don't say such things," Coast pleaded wretchedly. "Just a little longer and—" "But nothing can ever make me forget, Garrett. . . . Mr. Power was kind—I don't believe especially high-principled or good—but he was thoughtful as to me and resented his treatment of me. It was because of that they were constantly at odds—and now, because of that. . . . Oh, Garrett, Garrett!" she sobbed. "Silent, who knew no words to comfort her, he let her grief spend itself in his embrace. When she was more composed, he ventured a question that had been troubling him ever since she had betrayed her fears: How had she learned of this? "It was the boat—the boat they said he stole," she explained listlessly. "I remember thinking at the time it wasn't like him—that he would have waited until the fog cleared, and then would have taken the sail-boat. He knew a great deal about the water, and knew that the tides run very strong between here and Squibnocket." She named the nearest point on Martha's Vineyard. "I thought it strange he should try to row across with nothing to guide him and the danger of being swept out to sea—" (TO BE CONTINUED.)

DOINGS AT THE STATE CAPITAL

Railroad Deaths Increased.

Seventeen more persons were killed on the steam railroads of Pennsylvania in the first three months of 1912 than in the same period of 1911, according to the figures of railroad accidents issued by the Pennsylvania State Railroad Commission. In addition it is shown that the number of injuries received was 719 greater than in the first quarter of last year, chiefly among employees and due to the increased traffic handled. The death list which reached 285 includes 135 employees, 116 trespassers, three passengers and thirty-one others, which comprise those killed at grade crossings. The injury list aggregated 2,577, of which number 2,174 were employees, 229 passengers, 107 trespassers and sixty-seven others. Grade crossing fatalities numbered twenty-nine and accidents fifty-seven. The list of employees killed shows thirty-eight more killed in the quarter than in the same period last year and an excess of 634 injured.

The street railway accident bulletin shows forty-one killed and 853 injured in the same period, a decrease of six in the killed and increase of fifteen in the injured as compared with the first quarter of 1911. The killed were two employees, seven passengers and five trespassers; the injured fifty-three employees, 413 passengers and ten trespassers. The combined reports show 326 killed, 330 injured in three months.

Laws Block Road Work.

Delegations from Berks, Potter, Tioga and other counties, who appeared before Highway Commissioner E. M. Bigelow to urge early reconstruction of roads in their counties, were informed by the commissioner that he would do what he could to start the work desired, but owing to the fact that the income from automobile licenses was not to be had for road building, an entire rearrangement of the program of his department would have to be made. It was the belief of the commissioner that the act of 1909 and other acts providing that receipts from automobile licenses should be used for highway improvements would make the cash available, but Auditor General A. E. Sisson takes the position that the act of 1909, known as the "specific appropriations" act, prohibits the payment of any money without an appropriation act setting forth the amount and that it supersedes the laws disposing of the income from the automobile licenses. It is estimated that the amount of money paid into the State treasury for automobile licenses the last few years aggregates \$1,250,000 or more, and if it could be used for road construction purposes under the State aid act, twice that sum could be spent on roads. The commissioner intimated that the road building program would have to be revised and that it would require some time to do it.

May Appeal to Courts.

Auditor General Sisson considers that he is entitled to a four-year term as Auditor General, and in case a nomination is made by the Republican State Convention this week he will ask the courts to pass upon the question. The Auditor General is not seeking nomination for another term, as reported from Pittsburgh and other places, as the Constitution does not permit the Auditor General to succeed himself.

Five Food Arrests Ordered Here.

State Dairy and Food agents received orders to prosecute five milk dealers in this section, two in Harrisburg and three in Camp Hill. Five arrests were also ordered in Philadelphia, three being for the sale of dried peaches containing chemicals, one for the sale of raisins similarly treated and another for selling grapefruit that was unfit for food.

Many to Bid on Supplies.

The State Board of Public Grounds and Buildings is already receiving many applications for blanks for making bids on the schedule for furnishing State supplies on which bids will be opened at the Capitol on June 4. The schedule contains more than seven thousand items.

Guard Favors Butt Memorial.

National Guard officials in this city gave approval to the proposed memorial to Major Archibald Butt, who was lost on the Titanic and will contribute if the move is started.

Find New Blight Center.

New centers of chestnut tree blight infection have been discovered in central counties by the inspectors of the State Commission and a close survey is being made in counties in the Susquehanna Valley.

Named State Depository.

The State Board of Revenue Commissioners has approved the application of the Farmers' National Bank of Ephrata to be a State depository.

No Titanic Insurance in State.

As far as the State Insurance Department can learn none of the Philadelphia or up-State companies handling marine insurance had any insurance on the Titanic, the bulk of it being held abroad and some in New York.

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

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