

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 that Dundas 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 pursues 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 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 an 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 she has abandoned the island. He wishes to flee. They discover a yacht, but before they can reach it the cooie disables the craft. Black appears and tauntingly states that he is no longer blind. He is overpowered.

CHAPTER XVIII.—(Continued.)

Almost beside himself, Coast retained sufficient presence of mind to recognize his golden chance. Dropping his club, he went to his knees at Blackstock's side and with swift, sure hands rifled his pockets, possessing himself of the pistol which had been taken from him, or its counterpart. Dully, while thus employed, he was aware of a shout and a scream, oddly blended. The fear of Chang uppermost in his consciousness, he jumped to his feet, armed and alert, and whirled about.

But everything had taken place so swiftly and with so little warning, that the Chinaman, quick though he was to take the alarm and start at top speed for the scene of the struggle, was still many yards distant when Coast arose, without a scruple leaving Blackstock at the mercy of the dog.

He saw Chang coming and saw him stop and level a revolver. Simultaneously he heard a shot—but from another quarter and another weapon than the Chinaman's. The latter, gleaming in the half light, suddenly flew out of his hand and to one side, falling in shallow water, while Coast grabbed his right hand with his left and doubled like a jackknife over it, screaming with agony. In mute amazement, Coast, seeking the source of this timely assistance, discovered Katherine standing with her revolver still uplifted, half-way between the Cold Lairs and the beached catboat.

He marvelled at her. In this moment of trial and terror, she retained her wits and courage in a manner calculated to command the homage of a veteran of many wars. The instant after Coast caught sight of her, she fired again, placing a bullet shrewdly at the very feet of the Chinaman.

"Get back!" she called clearly. "Back—or I'll shoot to kill!"

Chang not only heard, but in all his pain and blank amazement understood. Without a breath's delay he turned his back and, nursing his injured hand, trotted sullenly off, to eastward down the beach.

Coast woke the echoes with a shout. "Well done, Katherine! Look to him now—while I—"

He turned back to Blackstock and the dog, just then a confused and struggling mass in the shadow of the boat. So quickly had Chang been disposed of that Blackstock, for all his tremendous strength and activity, for all that he was pitted against nothing more powerful than a blind and aged if infuriated dog, was only just succeeding in fighting to his knees. Already Coast was closing in to his assistance, forgetful of his hatred and thinking only of aiding him in that unnatural contest; though always with the thought that they had by the rarest turn of Chance won the whip-hand—when Blackstock rose with a lurch, wrenched the coil from his breast and with a sudden, swift and merciless movement swung the dog above his head, and brought it down with tremendous force across the coming of the boat. There was a single, terrible yelp, and the dog

lay inert with a broken back. Panting and shaken, both hands to his lacerated and bleeding throat, the man staggered a pace or two away, and fell suddenly against the bows of the boat, grasping its stem for support.

Stunned with the surprise of it, Coast turned away, aware that Katherine was calling him.

"Garrett! Garrett!" he heard her cry. "Come—quickly! . . . Don't you see—?"

She flung an arm seaward and to the west. Following this sign, he saw, perhaps a quarter of a mile off shore and sweeping swiftly in under the urge of a dozen oars, a mackerel-fisher's seine-boat, crowded to the thwart with men.

There was no sign of a vessel in the offing. Whither this long-boat could have dropped from defied his most far-fetched guess. He stared agape and thunderstruck until the woman, gaining his side, caught his arm with an imperative hand.

"Garrett!" Her voice was quavering now with consternation and the reaction from the excitement that had buoyed her up through the last few minutes. "Take me away, take me quickly! There's not a minute . . . The catboat . . ."

"Gone," he answered stupidly; "sunk by Chang—Blackstock's orders. We've no chance now—only Appleyard."

"Then, hurry! Don't you see that boat—?"

"Yes, but—"

"They're his men—the crew of that schooner—at least, I think so, I'm sure of it. Against them, what chance have we? Let's get away, hide some place until your boat—"

"Right!" He whipped in his wool-gathering faculties. "But—we'll take him with us." He made as if to move—

cord the oars were lifted and laid in: at slowly decreasing speed the long-boat slipped through the shoaling waters and nosed the sands. Four figures leaped overboard and grasping the thwarts hauled the bows high upon the beach. Others followed, some lingering to help drag the long-boat out of the tide's limits, some trotting to Blackstock's aid.

With difficulty, because of the momentarily fading light, Coast counted the company of the newcomers;—they numbered, as nearly as he could estimate, ten. With Blackstock and Chang, that meant twelve to two—fourteen to two, if he were to include the two coolies in the farm-house.

He withheld a groan of dismay, and tightened his arm round the woman's waist, unconsciously consecrating his life to her defense. Blackstock should recapture her only when he, Coast, had fallen fighting.

Dimly through the gloaming he saw Blackstock lifted to his feet before the throng closed round him, a vague dark blur about the boat. From the east the tall, gaunt figure of Chang was moving with long and steady strides back to join them.

As yet there was no indication of pursuit.

None the less, Coast stirred uneasily and glanced in solitude down at the pale oval of the face resting wearily against his shoulder.

"Feeling better?" he inquired gently. "Do you think you can walk, dear?"

She drew in a deep breath and nodded assent. "I'm all right, now," she said, though still her respiration sounded harsh and uneven; "at least, I will be presently. . . . Ah, they're coming!" she added with a start.

"No," he answered. "They're not worrying about us. We can't get far—not off the island. When we're



"Take Me Away Quickly!"

for Blackstock, holding that gentleman under cover of his pistol.

But she held him back. "No; he'd only delay us. We must find a place of safety—"

"Right again!" he assented, turning with her and hastening toward the Cold Lairs. "But where—?"

She dragged heavily upon his arm for a moment, gasping and shaken with short, dry sobs. Then bravely she pulled herself up and released him.

"I don't know—some place—we must find some place—"

From behind them came a long-drawn, piercing yell:

"Black, O Black! Aho-o-y!"

Blackstock lifted his head with an effort.

"Aho-o-y!" he cried in a shaking voice, and: "Help!" in a feebler.

And Coast, looking curiously over his shoulder as they totted up the incline, saw him paw feebly at the side of the boat, then collapse upon the sands beside it, as if fainting.

CHAPTER XIX.

By the time they had passed through the Cold Lairs, Katherine's strength began to fail. The rapid pace at which they had made the ascent from the beach had told upon her more than Coast would have realized, but for insuppressible evidences of distress she betrayed, her laggard footsteps and her labored breathing. Passing an arm round her waist, he held her up and gave her what support and help he could, but when they had gained the summit of the first ridge inland, between the farm-house and deserted village, he had to pause and rest.

From that point of vantage, with the broad crescent of the beach spread out beneath their gaze, they watched the landing of the seine-boat.

Like some huge water insect of many legs, black body silhouetted against the silvery sea, it sped inshore, four long oars to a side dipping and lifting with the rhythmic beat of a perfect piece of machinery. Then of a sudden with precise ac-

wanted, they'll find us easily enough. I'm afraid. For the present, Blackstock's entertaining them with the story of his misadventure." He laughed shortly. "Come," he said; and they turned again inland, moving at a brisk walk toward the bungalow—with what purpose neither could have said.

"But that seine-boat?" he asked suddenly, a moment later. "Where under Heaven did she drop from? You spoke of the schooner . . ."

"It's ashore," she told him. "I saw it all from the bungalow. . . . I had been inside, looking for my trunk keys. I couldn't seem to find them at first. He was in the wireless-room when I went in, but by the time I found the keys he had disappeared. I went to the door and stood looking out, wondering what had become of him and whether I dared risk a return to the beach—and you—while it was still so light; and suddenly the schooner shot out of the mist a little south of the point, over there in the west. She was running under power—"

"I could just hear the engine troubling—and I don't think they suspected how close they were to the island. At all events, the next instant she struck—stopped short as if she had run against a wall, quite a distance out; and in two minutes her stern was under water. I saw the crew putting out the long-boat and jumping into it; and then I ran down to the beach."

"She's the one," he said abstractedly—the schooner Appleyard was after, beyond doubt. You heard them hail Blackstock by name—by the name they know him under."

The woman said "Yes." Indifferently, leaning more heavily upon him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Same Thing. Savings Bank Depositor—Will you please cancel my old book and issue me a new one?

Cashier—What's the matter, lost your book?

Depositor—Not exactly, but it amounts to the same thing; my wife won't let me have it.—Judge.

FROM THE STATE CAPITAL

Information and Gossip From Harrisburg.

Cutalar's Fate Still in Balance.

Although the State Board of Pardons has had the case of Alphonso Cutalar under consideration since February, no decision in the case was announced at the conclusion of the May meeting, and unless something is done in June, the case will go over until fall, as the board takes a recess in the summer. No reason has been assigned for the long continued consideration of the application. Four applications for commutation of death sentences were refused by the board, being the largest number of such cases to be decided adversely at any meeting this year. These commutations were refused: Sebastino Demasi and Michael Comporto, Philadelphia; Antonio Romeo, Lancaster; and William Peter Blieshe, Lackawanna.

To Have Hearings On Bill.

It is probable that a series of hearings on the drafts of the proposed employers' liability law will be announced within a short time by the Industrial Accidents Commission. The members of the commission have been outlining their bills and it is the intention to hold hearings in Philadelphia, Wilkes-Barre, Harrisburg, Williamsport, Erie, Pittsburgh and other places.

Candidates Spent Little.

Five of the men nominated at recent State conventions for Congressmen-at-large filed their expense accounts at the Capitol, each showing expenditures of less than fifty dollars. The men filing were A. H. Walters, A. R. Rupley, John M. Morin and E. E. Lewis, Republican nominees, and George R. McLean, Democrat. John H. Nugent, a Republican aspirant, filed a similar paper.

Approves Germantown Memorial.

Approval has been given by the Governor to the designs for the memorial to the German settlers of Pennsylvania to be erected at Germantown by the appropriation of Congress and the contributions of the German residents of the State. The memorial will cost \$50,000, of which one-half was given by Congress and the remainder collected by a committee headed by Dr. C. J. Hexamer.

Bigelow Makes Changes.

State Highway Commissioner E. M. Bigelow has recalled Engineer D. G. Anderson, of Philadelphia, from work in the eastern part of the State, to the Capitol as officer engineer. John T. Gephart, who has had charge in the Lancaster district, has been transferred to the district comprised of Indiana, Clearfield, Center and Clinton counties.

Condemns High School Site.

Dr. Henry Snyder, superintendent of the schools of Jersey City, has made a report to the Board of Trade that the proposed site for the new high school in the west end of the city is unfavorable and recommends a site near Capitol Park as more central and best adapted.

Announcement Notification Day.

Announcement was made at Democratic State headquarters that the notification of the Democratic candidates would be held in Scranton on July 9. The candidates for Auditor-General and State Treasurer and Congressman-at-Large will be present, together with many Democratic leaders.

To Have More Orchard Work.

State Zoologist H. A. Surface said that he would announce the third week of orchard demonstrations for the spring within a few days. The demonstrations have been so successful that a fourth week will be arranged if the conditions are favorable.

Dobbins Pays State \$209,946.

Murrell Dobbins, City Treasurer of Philadelphia, made the largest payment of the month, a check for \$209,946.19 being sent on account of the liquor license.

Heacock's Firm Adds To Capital.

The Joseph Heacock Company, of Jenkintown, which is headed by Senator Joseph Heacock, gave notice of an increase of its stock from \$24,000 to \$50,000.

Last County Files Returns.

The last county to file its official returns of the primary election came in Wednesday. It was Luzerne and one legislative district. The Third is still tied up by a dispute.

Commission To Meet Trainmen.

The State Railroad Commission adjourned after meeting a committee of members of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen relative to the enforcement of the "full crew" act.

Mauch Chunk.—

The Palmer Water Company, of Palmerton, brought a suit in equity against the Lehigh Water Company perpetually to restrain it from using the waters of Big Creek, from which the plaintiff company gets its water supply.

TERMS.—

The terms of subscription to the Reporter are one dollar per year in advance.

ADVERTISING RATES.—

Display advertisement of ten or more lines for three or more insertions, eight cents per inch for each line. Display advertisement occupying less space than ten lines and for less than three insertions, from ten to twenty cents per inch for each line, according to composition.

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