

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 falls 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 sees Blackstock and some Chinamen jerrying 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 shilling 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. The blind man and his coolie servant overpower Coast, who afterward escapes and is met by Katherine, wishing to flee. They discover a yawl, but before they can reach it the coolie disables the craft. Black appears and tauntingly states that he is no longer blind. He is overpowered, and Coast and Katherine fly from the spot, and go to a remote part of the island and signal a boat which they see in the distance. Appleyard and the Echo appear. Blackstock comes rushing to the boat, claiming he is dying, and is taken on board.

CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued.)

Stooping low to escape the banging of the boom, Coast stepped over the Chinaman's body and went to Blackstock. He had some trouble overcoming his physical repugnance to the task, but resolutely forced himself to touch the man, seizing a shoulder with one hand, while with the other he lifted his head and exposed his face to the light. It shone a ghastly white, but the jaws were set and in their sockets the prominent eyes moved and lifted to Coast's face, with a dim, pale glimmer of recognition. But it was evident at a glance that only his tremendous vitality and force of will sustained the man; the blood soaked bosom of his flannel shirt told too plainly the tale of a terrible drain upon his strength.

"Appleyard—"

"No; this one's first—he's done for completely," interrupted the little man with prompt decision; "we've got to get him out of the way before we can move. 'Other can wait."

"But he'll die—"

"I'm satisfied. Here, lend me a lift at this, won't you?"

Together with considerable difficulty, they managed to raise the body of Chang to a side seat and then over the rail. A sullen splash and a shower of spray, molten silver in the moonlight, were all his funeral rite.

"And now for the quick," said Appleyard; "and quick's the word."

But as they approached Blackstock the man, drawing upon some unsuspected reserve of nervous force, deliberately if with torturing effort, pulled himself together, lifted a leg over the wheel and slipped off the box to the seat to leeward. A grim ghost of a smile showed upon his face, and for a fugitive instant there shone from his eyes a gleam of their one-time mocking luster, a little proud and disdainful, altogether unrepentant. Then with a long sigh, his chin dropped down on his breast again.

"Thanks," said Appleyard, callously; "you've saved us a deal of trouble and exertion, I'm sure. Coast, take the wheel, will you, while I get Mr. Blackstock a drink and see what can be done to save his worthless hide for a more evil end."

Obediently Coast placed himself on the box. "Any idea where we are?" he asked.

Blackstock roused at the query and raised his head, staring round the horizon. "Vineyard sound," he croaked hoarsely, with a nod to leeward; where, against the pale blue splendor of the sky the twin red masted beacons of the light vessel watched them, several miles ahead.

Coast consulted Appleyard's face. "New Bedford?" he asked, tersely.

The little man nodded. "Best for all concerned," he added; "especially if this festive hydrophobic is to get proper attendance."

With a snort of disgust he moved to Coast's side, and trimmed the sheet,

as the latter swung the Echo off upon her course; then turned and went forward to the companion door, descending to the cabin.

Thereafter for a little Coast heard indistinctly the murmur of Appleyard's voice, civil and pleasant but firm, contending with Katherine's. He understood that she was arguing against her own wishes and natural instincts, insisting she must go to her husband's aid, while the little man was insistently refusing to permit anything of the sort. And confirmation of this deduction was furnished when the detective's small, blonde-thatched head appeared against the light.

"Don't worry, madam," he was saying in conclusion. "Leave him to me; I'm an old hand at first aid to the injured, and I can do for him infinitely more than you'd dare attempt. If there's the slightest need of you, I'll be the first to let you know."

He wagged his head obstinately and came on deck, grumbling privately some refreshingly personal opinion as to the general and perverse intractability of the feminine sex.

Balancing himself before Blackstock, who in the interim had sunk into a semblance of lethargy, he measured out a good half glass of brandy to an equal amount of water, tucked the bottle, securely corked, beneath his arm, and roused the wounded man with a touch as gentle and considerate as his attitude and words were rough. "Here," he said; "get this down, and we'll make an examination, Blackstock."

Appleyard holding the glass to his lips, Blackstock drank greedily. "Thanks," he muttered huskily as the little man took away the glass drained to the final drop.

"Don't thank me—'t isn't my brandy. If it was, I doubt I'd give you any." He moved off and placed the bottle

perceptible strain. "I'm only in the way. With me out of it, everything'll run more smoothly for all of you."

By a mysteriously reinforced effort he lifted himself suddenly to his feet and stood swaying while Appleyard from his low seat and Coast from his post of duty watched him in amazement.

"Repentance?" said the man slowly, as if iterating some recently spoken word. He laughed briefly and without mirth. "No; nothing like that. I'm not that sort . . . which you can't understand. . . . No; I'm just a bad loser, that's all. I've played the game I liked—which you can't understand either, for you played on the other side—and I've lost out. . . . It's over . . . and paid for . . . as much as I intend ever to pay. . . . He smiled again his curious, secret smile. . . . "That's all. . . . Obituary: Here lies a bad loser. R. I. P. . . . Gentlemen. . . . He leaned heavily on the coaming. "Kindly convey respects to wife—and regrets. . . ."

With an exclamation of awakening comprehension Appleyard tried suddenly to lift himself out of the engine pit. Blackstock smiled strangely and pityingly down at him.

"Too late," he said. . . . "That's all. G'd-night . . ."

Before Coast had grasped an inkling of his purpose the man, placing a foot upon the seat, put forth his final ounce of strength and plunged over the side.

Coast put the wheel down hard and swung the Echo up into the wind. A glance at their wake showed him a spot of yeast, churning water, silver upon the black.

As the boat came up he would have leaped from his place, but Appleyard was too quick for him.

The hand of the little man struck



"Too Late," He Said. . . . That's All. "G'd-Night. . . ."

and the glass in a corner, where they were in no danger of overturning, now that a trained and steady hand was at the helm and the Echo moving smoothly and easily to a leading wind. "Now, harf a mo'," he continued. "I'm going to get this motor going"—and with this he dropped into the open engine pit—"and then I'll have a look at your wounds." He bent over and began to rock the flywheel.

Slowly the warming spirit worked a change in Blackstock, lending him a fictitious and evanescent sense of strength. He straightened up against the back of the seat, a faint touch of color dyeing his cheeks, and with a peculiar half-smile watched the little man at work.

"What's the use?" he asked abruptly in a voice more clear than heretofore.

"What's the use of what?" asked Appleyard sharply, looking up.

"Of troubling with me—trying to save my life?"

"Oh . . ." With a sudden cough the motor began to hum; Appleyard sat down on the edge of the hatch coaming, folded his hands before him and continued to eye the wounded man. "I don't know," he said with an air of open confession. "I don't know, I'm sure. Business, so far as I'm concerned; commonplace humanity with Coast, I presume; all that sort of nonsense. Why? Don't you want to be helped—saved?"

Soberly Blackstock shook his heavy head. "No," he said evenly. "What's the use? I'm at the end of my tether, as far as getting any of the savor out of life's concerned. . . . Can't see the profit of clinging to what's going to be only a burden to me from now on. . . . Prefer to be let alone."

He swung his head as though it were lead, to bring his gaze to rest on Coast; for a full minute he eyed him steadily, wonderingly; then with a little nod he moistened his lips with his tongue. "Reside," he said, with more

flat against his chest and thrust him back upon the box. Simultaneously Appleyard seized the wheel and sent the spokes spinning round to leeward. With a jerk the boom shot off and the mainsheet tautened.

"No!" cried Appleyard, his small, wizened face singularly white and solemn in the moonlight. "No, let him go—let him go the way he wants to go, I tell you—to whatever God he owns, with this, at least one decent act to plead for mercy on his soul!"

[THE END.]

INFLUENCE OF SALT WATER

It Induces Some to Drink, Others to Be Profane, and Others to Tell Falsehoods.

When riding on the harbor steamboats use your ears. Then you will not need your eyes nor your brains. By paying heed to the intentionally audible remarks of your neighbor it will be possible to pick up more inaccurate information than in any other place in the city. The deck of a ferry or the rail of a steamer acts curiously on the human mind. If it does not know, it will risk a guess, and the wilder the guess the more willingly risked.

It is well known that salt water acts in freakish ways on the conscience. To some it brings an overwhelming impulse to get drunk; to others it brings a disposition to the freest use of profanity; and still others, who would never think of fibbing from the windows of a railroad train (dear old gentlemen, and innocent young girls), the instant they put off from the wharf begin to tell the most shocking whoppers.—Boston Transcript.

More Pressing.

"Did you ever consider that old problem of where all the pins go?"

"No, I am going to take up the solution of that problem as soon as I have learned where all the dollars go."—Houston Post.

STATE CAPITAL NEWS

Late Happenings of Interest at Harrisburg.

Prison Case To Court.

The State Board of Public Charities, whose recommendations for the better management of the Dauphin county jail and the abolition of "kitchen orders" were ignored by the prison inspectors, have determined to bring the conduct of the inspectors to the notice of the Dauphin county court and district attorney. When the board met word was received that the conditions in the jail as to sale of special orders were the same as when the board's committee inspected the prison and that there had been no change to speak of. For a time a plan was considered to leave the matter up to the people, but this course was abandoned in favor of a formal resolution calling attention of the court to the state of affairs. This will be done next week by Secretary Bromley Wharton, who will also have charge of the inquiry into the management of the almshouse, which will be probed, if necessary, by a committee of eastern members of the board.

Bigelow Names Superintendents.

State Highway Commissioner Bigelow announced the proposed reconstruction of roads on Route No. 131, three and one-half miles west of Media, and on Route No. 74, six miles on the road between Mercer and Sharon. Appointments of superintendents announced were L. Hulsey, Sherswood, Meadville, and George F. Endsley, Somerset. They will assume their duties at once. Commissioner Bigelow and Chief Engineer Foster were at Lancaster to meet people interested in road improvement in that section.

Ask Rehearing For Murderer.

Application was made to the State Board of Pardons for a rehearing of the case of William Josiah McMeen, who is serving a life sentence in the Western Penitentiary for murder. McMeen was convicted in 1886, but sentenced was commuted the following year. In October, 1909, he was refused a pardon.

Drops Coatesville Complaint.

The State Railroad Commission has dismissed the complaint of Coatesville residents against the West Chester Street Railway Company, the commission failing to find that there is "sufficient demand for local service," and that the company could not give additional service without securing more rights from the borough.

To Discuss Medical Laws.

The operation of State laws relative to eclectic practitioners and suggested changes was the chief theme at the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania State Eclectic Medical Society in this city. The sessions were held at the Capitol and about one hundred physicians attended.

To Test Treasurer's Election.

A test of the school code section providing for the election of school board treasurers is threatened by City Treasurer O. M. Copellin, who has demanded the books of the School Board of Harrisburg as the rightful treasurer. The board some days ago elected George W. McIlhenny collector.

State Seeks Outstanding Bonds.

Only \$15,800 of State bonds called on February 1 are outstanding and the State sinking fund authorities are making every effort to get in some of them so that a favorable report can be made when the board meets next week for its monthly session.

Breaks Wrist in Capitol.

George G. Kennedy, superintendent of the Harrisburg Water Department, fell while escorting a party of Baltimore officials through the Capitol and broke his wrist. Notwithstanding his injuries he accompanied his guests to the office of the Governor.

Students Guiltless Of Cheating.

All of the Seniors of the Central High School were graduated, the charges of cheating in the examinations having been found baseless by the faculty. President T. A. Noble, of Dickinson, delivered the address.

State Gets 600 Acres Of Land.

The State Forestry Commission has purchased six hundred acres of forest land in Shirley township, Huntingdon county, for addition to the reserve. The land is well wooded and adjacent to one of the largest reserves.

Sugar Company Takes On Debt.

The Pennsylvania Sugar Manufacturing Company, of Philadelphia, filed notice of an increase of debt from nothing to \$1,040,000.

Heidelberg.—Daniel D. Fisher, William A. Schall and Daniel K. Flannery were appointed viewers to ascertain if the County Commissioners should build a bridge across Spring Creek, as advocated by one hundred taxpayers, who have petitioned court.

Sunbury.—Thomas Arbogast, who held the record for being the longest in service of any hotel clerk in central Pennsylvania, died here at the age of sixty-seven years. He was continuously in the employ of a local hostelry for twenty-two years.

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

ADVERTISING RATES.—Display advertising of one or more lines for three or more insertions, eight cents per inch for each issue. Display advertising occupying less space than ten lines and for less than three insertions, from ten to twenty cents per inch for each inch, according to composition.

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