

NO MAN'S LAND

A ROMANCE

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RAY WATERS

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SYNOPSIS.

Clayton 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 a woman named Dundas and Van Tui. There is a quarrel and Blackstock shoots Van Tui dead.

CHAPTER II.—(Continued.)

The man looked up and nodded. "Well, it's too late now. That's done for good and all. We needn't quarrel about it."

He went back to his seat.

"Good Lord, how long they are!"

He began to talk to himself as to himself of what might have been and what had been, speaking of his aims, ambitions, achievements in an oddly detached way, as he might have reviewed another's life, only emotional when forced to realization of the fact that this was the end of it all. The phrase, "This ends it!" punctuated the semi-confessional soliloquy monotonously, repeated over and over with the same falling inflection. Coast detected not a word, not even a note of regret for his crime, save insofar as it affected Blackstock's fortunes—blasted them.

A shrill clamor of the telephone bell electrified them all. Dundas cried out. Blackstock jumped up and stumbled into the hall. Coast, rising, heard his voice.

"Yes. Tell them to come up."

He returned, almost reeling. "Here, Dundas," he said, slowly, "you let 'em in, will you, like a good fellow."

Note in his panic, Dundas went to the door.

Coast could hear the whine of the ascending elevator, the clanking of its safety chains.

Abruptly he was conscious that Blackstock's temper had undergone a change. From passive surrender to his fate the man had passed to a mood of active resistance. Somehow instinctively, Coast seemed to divine this in the surcharged, tense atmosphere of that moment. He shot a swift, suspicious look at the man, and caught in return a look of low cunning and desperation.

He saw Blackstock in a pose of attention listening, every sense alert, every muscle flexed—a man gathering himself together as a cat about to spring.

The elevator was very near the door.

"By God!" Blackstock whispered, setting his lips, and again his eyes were blazing, "I'll fool 'em yet!"

The man turned swiftly. Outside the elevator gate clanged. Coast heard a confusion of footsteps and voices, a knocking on the door. And suddenly he understood what Blackstock intended. Already he had regained the side table and snatched up the pistol. He turned with it lifted. "They shan't have me!" he cried, and reserved it to his temple.

"You fool!" Coast screamed unconsciously. With almost incredible swiftness of action he flung himself upon Blackstock and seized the pistol, deflected it toward the ceiling. It exploded.

For a moment longer he was struggling frantically with Blackstock to save the man from self-destruction. Then, without warning, he was seized and dragged away, holding the pistol. A strange hand snatched that away. Other hands piloted his arms to his sides. He fought for freedom for an instant, then ceased to resist, thunderstruck with amazement.

Blackstock towered over him, pointing him out. "That's your man—take him!" he cried. "He's done murder and was trying to murder. I managed to keep him quiet until he heard you coming, then he made a grab for the pistol. Thank God, you're in time!"

Something stuck in Coast's throat—his tongue trying to articulate in a mouth dry with fear and consternation. "You liar!" he managed to say. "You—"

"Shut up, you!" One of the policemen holding him clapped a hand over his mouth.

"Why?" he heard Blackstock say, "you saw him yourself, gentlemen. If there's any question in your minds, here's Mr. Dundas, who saw it all. Dundas, who shot Van Tui?" Mr. Coast here?

It was as though a haze Coast saw Dundas emerge from the press of men in the room, a ghost of a man, eyelids quivering, limbs shaking, features working in his small, pesty face. And in his English of anger, fear and resentment, Coast detected the look, unobserved by any other, of secret understanding that passed between the two men.

"Yes," Dundas said, his voice tremulous. "Why—why, of course. Mr. Coast did it."

Coast felt the chill of handcuffs on his wrist—a chill that ate into his soul.

CHAPTER III.

Warburton had forgotten nothing. Coast walked out of Sing Sing to enter his own car, his departure so contrived and planned that he was conscious neither of a strange face nor a curious stare. The occupant of the driver's seat proved to be the mechanic who had driven for him prior to his trial and conviction; his "Good-morning, Mr. Coast; it's a pleasure to see you looking so well, sir," conveyed precisely the right degree of respectful congratulation; in this, too, Coast recognized the hand of his lawyer. He was grateful, further, for the hamper containing an excellent cold lunch, as well as for the fact, which Warburton presently disclosed, that the affair of his release had been managed so swiftly and quietly that only the latest editions of that day's evening papers would contain the news.

"We tried to give you as much time

as we could," Warburton told him. "Whatever your plans are, you'll be glad not to be mobbed before you get a chance to put 'em across."

Coast's swift smile was reward enough for the little man. He snuggled comfortably into his corner of the tonneau, the broad eccentric curves of his plump face and figure radiating pride of conquest in addition to the honest delight he felt because of his client's deliverance.

To his client and friend the world rocked in a sea of emotions rediscovered. The sense of freedom, of space, of motion, the soft buffeting in his face of the clean, sweet, unspent air, the recognition of a new-born world a-riant with color—vernal green, ineffable empyrean blue, flooding gold of sunlight—played upon his heart a muted melody.

Again he thanked his God his father and mother had not lived to know the day of his arrest.

He experienced a curious freak of memory, very suddenly seeing between him and the glorious world a fragment of a scene, his trial, exceedingly vivid; Blackstock groping a slow way toward the witness stand, his dark face the darker for an eye-shade, his eyes masked sinisterly with smoked glasses.

Poor old Van Tui!

His nerves crawled with apprehensions inspired by the city toward



He Found Appalling the Thought of Re-entering It.

which the car was bearing him; the city of his birth and banishment; the city inescapable, insatiable, grudge-eyed, peopled with its staring millions, ravelling with curiosity, whose appetite should long since have been glutted with details of his disgrace. He found appalling the thought of re-entering it, of trying to take up his former life in its airy, ordered groove, of coming and going in the company of those in whose eyes his brow would be forever branded with the mark of Cain—yes, even though he were exonerated of the crime of which he had been accused, for which he had been placed on trial, convicted and sentenced. Would they ever learn to believe him guiltless, even though the truth were published broadcast, trumpeted from the housetops? Would he not remain to them always the questionable hero of a sensational murder trial, whose escape from the electric chair had been due simply and solely to the exertions of his influential friends?

Exonerated!

The word was sweeter to him than the name of Freedom had been to his forebears in 1776 and 1861. He dared not breathe it—yet; he dared not hope for it nor even question whether or not it had been made his.

What if his release had been solely due to the offices of his friends, to pressure brought to bear upon the state executive? He felt that to discover such to be the case would prove insufferable. Death itself were preferable to life without vindication of the charge that had been laid against him.

So terribly he feared to learn the truth.

His friends, those who stood by him, those who had been silent, those who had denied him; what would be their reception of him now? He couched the names of a dozen of the dearest; did they believe in him, even now, in their secret hearts? Had they ever had absolute faith in his innocence, despite their protestations? Would he himself ever cease to doubt them secretly?

Katherine Thaxter . . .

He had heard nothing of or from her since his conviction; before that, little enough; a note or two of halting sympathy, tinged by a constraint he had been afraid to analyze. Whether it had been due to belief in

his guilt, or to a thing more dreadful in his understanding, he had never found the courage to debate, not even in the longest watches of the hopeless nights when he had lain in the wailing torments in his cell, listening to some miserable condemned wretch moaning in his sleep a door or two down the row.

His thoughts had swung the full circle. He ceased to think coherently.

In time Warburton touched Coast's arm with a gentle hand. "Lunch?" he queried, almost plaintively.

To see Coast smile once more was a keen delight.

When they had finished, Coast, refreshed and strengthened, diverted and enlivened, boldly grasped the nettle.

"Well—?" he asked with a steady glance of courage.

Warburton pounced nimbly upon his chance. "It's exonerated," he began, and unconsciously lit upon the word so squarely that he caught himself up with a gasp at Coast's reception of it. "Why?" he cried, alarmed, "you're white as a sheet, man! I said exonerated—full and clear!"

Coast reassured him with a gesture. "It's just joy," he explained simply. He put his head back against the cushions, closed his eyes and drew a long breath. "How was I to guess how all this had been brought about? I was afraid to ask, afraid to surmise, even. Tell me, please."

"It came—like thunder out of a clear sky, Garrett, more amazed than I." Warburton reverted to the habit of clipped phrases that characterized his moments of excitement. "I suppose you know—you've seen the papers?"

"Only infrequently. I . . . I presume a bit cowardly about them."

"Then you hadn't heard about Blackstock?" Coast shook his head. "Well, his eyes went back on him—"

here is a sketch of how I cover my well on Richwood farm, says a writer in the Farm and Home. The 18-inch tile makes a most excellent curb. Then a lid cut out of boiler iron to just fit within the flange of the tile will keep out all leaves, dust and other undesirable things. A handle can be placed on the upper side of the lid, and a hook on the underside on which to hang the bucket and rope will make a most complete arrangement.

If your well is in the branch or creek bottom and the floods get over it they cannot damage it, for the water cannot get under the lid to raise it. I fixed one in the bed of a creek

were falling during the trial, if you'll remember, I heard he'd injured them somehow—with his wireless experiments, you know. He went nearly blind and took himself out of the country—to Germany, the papers said, to consult a Berlin specialist, perhaps to undergo an operation.

"One moment." Coast took a deep breath. "Did he go alone?"

"So far as I know. Why?"

"No matter. Call it idle curiosity." (TO BE CONTINUED.)

TAKES BACK THE EMPTY PODS

Thaddeus Obediently Returns to Grocer, but is Exceedingly Busy En Route.

Little Thaddeus is an East side boy who likes uncooked young green peas. These tid-bits he devours with relish direct from the pods, in whatever quantities are obtainable. His weakness for young green peas recently came near getting him into trouble, as it led him to petty larceny.

Passing a grocery store near his home, the youngster spied a basket of peas, and, seeing that no one was looking, he grabbed a fistful and toddled hurriedly off. Reaching home with his plunder he was about to sit down and leisurely enjoy himself, when his mother discovered him with the goods on, and demanded to know where he got the peas.

"I took 'em from Brown's 'tore," explained the youngster, nibbling a pea appreciatively.

"Thaddeus," said the mother sternly, "you take those peas right back to Mr. Brown, and when you give them back to him you tell him you are a thief."

Thaddeus obediently got up and started back toward the store, but he must have been exceedingly busy en route, for it was a handful of empty pea hulls that he handed to the grocer.

"Her, Misser Brown," he said, "take 'em. I'm a thief."

CEMENT FLOOR IS SUPERIOR

Not Only Practicable but Will Return Big Profits in Saving Manure—How to Build One.

In response to a query regarding a cement floor for saving manure, Mr. S. S. Stanley of Ohio, makes the following reply in the Breeder's Gazette.

Bulletin No. 183 of the Ohio Experiment Station says that the saving of manure from 58 head of cattle, 25 on hard earth floor and 24 on cement floor, was \$50 more on the cement floor than on the earth floor. It is stated also that half the cost of the cement floor was saved in six months' feeding. So one sees it is not only practicable but will pay big returns in saving manure, to say nothing of having the cattle wading knee-deep in the mud.

A concrete yard floor can be put down directly on the earth, after scraping off the top-soil until a hard level floor is obtained; but it is best

VALUABLE EXPERIMENTS WITH SHEEP AT MINNESOTA STATION

Pastures Grow So That, If Possible, Some Variety Would Always Be in Season—Remarkable Results Achieved by Keeping Land Working—Soil Was a Sandy Loam.



A Profitable Flock.

In experimental work in growing pasture for sheep at the Minnesota Experiment Station about 100 sheep and lambs were pastured on 10 acres of land from May 1 to November 1. Almost two-thirds of the entire number were sheep and one-third lambs. In addition to the pasture a fraction over 10 tons of fodder and over 10 tons of green food were taken from the same land. Nearly as much food was taken from the pasture the previous year, says the Agriculturist. On a single acre six sheep and 10 lambs were pastured five months. The land was a sandy loam, not half as good as the average soil in Minnesota. It was not high in fertility, having been fertilized only once with farmyard manure during the six previous years, although cropped every year. The secret of this wonderful return lay in keeping the land at work.

Two and one-half acres of land were kept in grass. On this the sheep were grazed when the weather was wet and when other pasture was not ready. The pastures were grown so that, if possible, some variety would always be in season. Movable hurdles were used to inclose the plot or plots that were being beaten down. The sheep were grazed on these in the forenoon and in the afternoon, and were given the freedom of the shed and of the adjoining yard in the middle of the day and also at night.

The foods grown that proved most useful were winter rye, oats and barley sown together, corn, sorghum, rape

and cabbage. Of these winter rye was first in season and was the only variety that furnished early pasture. Rape provided pasture for a longer period than any of the other plants and, taking it all in all, proved the most valuable plant. But the greatest amount of pasture per acre was obtained from cabbage.

Rye, as stated above, was first in season. As soon as it ceased to provide pasture abundantly, the land was plowed and sown with corn, sorghum or rape, and in some instances it was sown again in the early autumn with the winter rye after one or the other of these crops had been grazed down. As soon as the rye pasture was gone the oats and barley were ready, and when eaten down this crop was followed at once with corn or rape. In some instances oats and peas were sown and with satisfactory results. Sorghum was usually followed by winter rye. Corn was sown at any time occasion offered after the weather had become sufficiently warm. Rape was also sown any time from the opening of spring until the middle of July. It was the chief reliance for fall pasture and cabbage was the last food grazed down.

Producing Winter Eggs.

The chief essentials for the production of winter eggs, are pullets, that have had the best of care from the very beginning, and have been pushed from the time of hatching until they are fully developed.

manner seldom freezes over in winter, and the water is kept cooler in summer than in an open well or one over which only boards are laid.

Raising Calves.

The future usefulness of the cow depends a great deal upon how the calf is brought up during the first year. It should have plenty of water; and salt presented in clean vessels, sudden changes of diet avoided and regularity of feeding practiced. Warm, dry quarters are necessary if the weather is damp. Plenty of roughage should be fed and not too much grain, for then a large capacity for handling food, so desirable in dairy animals, will be developed. When six months old milk should be omitted from the calf's ration and a full roughage and grain diet substituted.

Roosters in Winter.

Our hens lay more during December, January, February and March, the months when the eggs are high; says a writer in an exchange. We sell eggs and fowls at fancy prices; others go to market. Our neighbors sometimes come for roosters in the spring, but go away disappointed, as our roosters are all killed in the fall. We tell them that if they want something to keep for nothing they must get them in the fall and not expect someone else to keep them all winter.

Managing Ducks.

In managing ducks for market it has been found highly desirable to emphasize cleanliness, pure drinking water, good ventilation and to provide ample feed consisting of three parts corn meal, one of bran and one of meat meal or beef scrap. In two to four weeks this ration and way of managing has always proved satisfactory in fattening the birds.

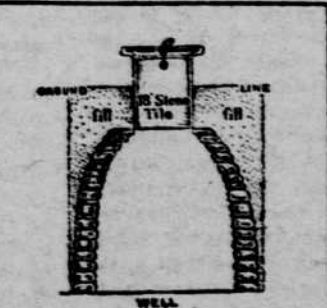
Value of Farm Prosperity.

In striking contrast with the slow growth in the number and acreage of farms and the area of improved land during the ten years is the enormous rise which has occurred in the value of farm property.

COVERING FOR A FARM WELL

Practical and Economical Method For Keeping Out Leaves, Dust and Undesirable Things.

Here is a sketch of how I cover my well on Richwood farm, says a writer in the Farm and Home. The 18-inch tile makes a most excellent curb. Then a lid cut out of boiler iron to just fit within the flange of the tile will keep out all leaves, dust and other undesirable things. A handle can be placed on the upper side of the lid, and a hook on the underside on which to hang the bucket and rope will make a most complete arrangement.



Well Curb and Cover.

10 years ago and the floods have been over it many times, yet when a dry spell comes and the owner is compelled to resort to well water, he cleans the sand from around the lid, prides it up and goes to drawing water. Every other device to keep a well in the bottom of the creek bed has failed.

Around the barn lot and for a stock well there are no boards or timbers to rot and let the stock fall into the well, nor to harbor rats and snakes. A well drawn in and covered in this

to excavate 10 or 12 inches and fill in with 6 or 8 inches of gravel or cinders, so that water will not stand under the concrete and cause it to heave by frost. A curb or wall of concrete 18 inches deep should be built all around to keep out rats, and also from being undermined by hog wallows. For cattle the floor had best be 6 inches thick and for the hog floor 4 inches. A mixture of 1 cement, 2 sand and 4 parts of crushed stone passing through an inch mesh, will make a good floor. If pit or creek gravel is used, which has about that proportion of sand and gravel, our custom here is to use one barrel (4 sacks) to one yard of gravel. All this work can be done by the farm help, if some one with some knowledge or experience can be had to superintend it.

German Eggs Small.

The eggs of the German hen are below the average in weight, running as low as 10 to the pound.

Separating Milk.

The best time to separate milk is immediately after it is drawn from the cow, before it gets cold.

FATE AND THE FLETCHERS

Intervention That Made It Certain Hour for Senator's Death Had No Effect.

Senator Duncan U. Fletcher of Florida sought his berth one night on a sleeping car on the way south from Washington. Pulling back the curtains of a lower nine, he saw that his bed was already occupied.

"Hi, there!" called the senator, shaking the stranger by the shoulder. The sleeper awoke and protested angrily.

"My name's Fletcher," explained the statesman, "and this is my berth."

"You've got nothing on me," answered the other. "My name's Fletcher, and this is my berth."

"My full name is Duncan U. Fletcher," the senator elaborated.

"So's mine," agreed the intruder.

"Ah, I see," said the senator politely. "There must have been a mistake in reserving the same berth for two men of the same name. I'll go into the next sleeping car."

The stranger, by this time, was fully awake, and proceeded to apologize, and to offer to give up the berth. This the senator would not do, but went into the car ahead and found a place to sleep.

An hour later the train was wrecked. The car in which the stranger occupied the lower nine fell through a trestle, and that Fletcher was killed. The senator's car was not damaged at all.—Popular Magazine.

VAIN EXPERIMENT.



Daughter—Pa, why do you let the furnace go out every evening Mr. Romance comes to see me?

Father—I am trying to freeze out the microbes of love, my deluded daughter.

Longevity Personified.

Senator Benjamin F. Tillman relates an amusing anecdote about a colored man named Jeff who has been with a neighboring South Carolina family since before the war.

"One day," said Mr. Tillman, "his mistress was rather surprised when old Jeff asked to have a few days off to go, as he put it, 'up to de old state of Boston,' to see his aunt."

"Why, Jeff," said the lady, "your aunt must be pretty old, isn't she?"

"Yes'm," he replied, "yes'm; mah aunt must be pretty ole now—she's bout ah hundred an' five years ole now."

"One hundred and five years!" exclaimed his mistress, "what on earth is she doing up in Boston?"

"Deed, I see dunno what's she's doin', ma'am," rejoined old Jeff, in all seriousness, "she's up dere livin' wid her gran'mother."

Explanations.

Miss Fullerton (of a poetical turn) Which are you of opinion one should say, professor: "Summer flies" or "Summer flees?"

Absent-Minded Professor (great on entomology)—The two species, my dear young lady, are entirely distinct. Now, the common house fly—Then he wondered why she suddenly opened a conversation with the young man on her right.—London Sphere.

Agriculture.

Mother—Yes, Johnny, the queen bee is boss.

Johnny—How about the presidential bee?

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The proceeds of one crop of wheat, oats and barley, as well as cattle raising, are enough to pay for the land. Government returns show that the number of settlers in Western Canada from the U. S. is up 60 per cent larger in 1910 than the previous year.

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