

The DESTROYING ANGEL

By Louis Joseph Vance

CAN YOU SOLVE LOVE'S PUZZLE?

What is love, anyhow? Is it, in the case of husband and wife, respect and admiration of certain spiritual qualities? Or, in your experience, is it pure physical attraction between a certain man and a certain woman—with respect and admiration as side lights?

Do you believe that an intelligent woman would love her husband to live with him, the man who years previously had married her just to save her good name as a girl and then had disappeared? That is the problem confronting Sara Law, the great actress, in "The Destroying Angel."

High Whitaker, you remember, was given just six months to live, by eminent surgeons. He discovered a decent young woman in trouble—her honor at stake. "One good deed before I go," he said; "I'll marry this frightened child, and give her my respectable name. Then I'll go off somewhere and wait for her." This he did—and five years later turned up in New York from Australia, prosperous and healthy, and started a hunt for the girl-wife of other days.

He discovers her in Sara Law, and mutual recognition across the footlights stops a play. Martin Ember, former detective, comes to Whitaker and tells amazing facts. A big mystery looms in this installment.

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

"And you found her and told Drummond?"

Whitaker leaned over the table, studying the man's face with intense interest.

"No—and yes. I found Mrs. Whitaker. I didn't report to Drummond."

"But why—in heaven's name?"

Ember smiled soberly at the drooping ash of his cigar. "There were several reasons. In the first place I didn't have to. I had another claimer from Drummond, and I rendered no bill; what I had found was mine, to keep or to sell, as I chose. I chose not to sell because—well, because Mrs. Whitaker begged me not to."

"Ah!" Whitaker breathed, sitting back. "Why?"

"This was all of a year, I think, after your marriage. Mrs. Whitaker had tasted the sweets of independence and—got the habit. She had adopted a profession looked upon with approval by her family. She was already successful in a small way, had little need of the money she would get as claimer of your estate. She enlisted my sympathy, and—I held my tongue."

"That was decent of you."

"This time I had a quiet acknowledgment. I thought you'd think so."

"There was a third reason."

He paused, until Whitaker encouraged him with a "Yes?"

"Mr. Whitaker—the query came plain-blank—"Do you love your wife?"

Whitaker caught his breath. "What right!" he began, and checked abruptly. The blood darkened his lean cheeks.

"Mrs. Whitaker gave me to understand that you didn't. It was a query to test my every nerve, for your motive was pure chivalry—quintessence. I should like to go to my grave with anything half as honorable and unselfish to my credit."

"I beg your pardon," Whitaker muttered thickly.

"You don't, then?"

"Love her? No."

"There was a slight pause. Then, "I do," said this extraordinary man, meeting Whitaker's gaze openly. "I do," he repeated, flushing in his turn, "but I hopelessly—no. However, that was the third reason," he pursued in a more level voice—"I thought you ought to know about it—that induced me to keep Sara Law's secret."

"I loved her from the day I found her. She has never looked twice at my affairs. But that's why I never lost interest."

"You mean," Whitaker took him up diffidently—"you confided to—"

"Court her—as we say? No," Ember's shoulders, lifting, emphasized the disclaimer. "I'm not fool. I have had the sense not to invite the thunderbolt. She doesn't know it, unless Max told her against my wish; but it was I who induced him to bring her before the public, four years ago, as Joan Thursday. Since then her destiny has been rather too big a thing for me to tamper with; but I've watched and wondered, sensing forces at work about her of which even she was unconscious."

"What in blazes do you mean?" Whitaker demanded, mystified.

"Did it strike you in wonder at the extraordinary mob her farewell performance attracted tonight?"

"Why—yes. It struck me as rather unusual. But then, Max had done nothing but tell me of her tremendous popularity."

"That alone, great as it is, wouldn't have brought so many people together to stare at the outside of a theater. The magnet was something stronger—the morbid curiosity of New York. Those people were waiting, thrilled with expectancy, on a tip for the sensation that presently came to them: the report of Drummond's death."

"What the devil?"

"Falseness! This is the third time it has happened—the same thing, precisely: Sara Law on the verge of leaving the stage to marry, a fatal accident intervening. Did Max by any chance mention the nickname New York has bestowed on Sara Law?"

"Whiskered?"

"They call her 'The Destroying Angel.'"

"What rot!"

"Yes; but what coincidence. Three men loved her—and one by one they died. And now the fourth. Do you wonder?"

"Oh, but—"The Destroying Angel!"—Whitaker cried indignantly. "How can you blame her?"

"I can't blame—it's superstition. Listen."

Ember bent forward, holding Whitaker's gaze with intent, gray eyes. "The first time," he said in a rapid undertone, "was a year or so after her triumph as Joan Thursday. There were then two men openly infatuated with her, a boy named Custer, and a man I believe you knew—William Hamilton."

"I knew them both."

"Custer was making the pace; the announcement of his engagement to Sara Law was confidently anticipated. He died suddenly; the coroner's jury decided that he had misjudged the intentions of a loaded revolver. People whispered a suicide, but it didn't look quite like that to me. However Hamilton stepped into his place. Presently we heard that Sara Law was to marry him and leave the stage. Hamilton had to go abroad on business; on the return trip—the wedding was set for the day after he landed here—he disappeared, no one knew how. Presumably he fell overboard by accident one night; some men with everything in the world to live for do such things, you know—according to the newspapers."

"I understand you. Please go on."

"You don't mean to say you think there was any method in that train of tragedies?"

"I'm not in the least superstitious, my dear man. I don't for an instant believe, as some people claim, that Sara Law is a destroying angel, hounded by a tragic fate; that her love is equivalent to the death warrant of the man who wins it."

"But what do you think, then?"

"I think," said Ember slowly, his gaze on the table, "that someone with a very strong interest in keeping the young woman single—and on the stage—"

"Max! Impossible!"

Ember shrugged. "In human nature no madness is impossible. There's not a shred of evidence against Jules Max. And yet—he's a gambler. All theatrical managers are, of course; but Max is a card-freak. The tale of his plunging runs like wildfire up and down Broadway, day by day. A dozen times he's been on the verge of ruin, yet always he has had Sara Law to rely on. He's always been able to fall back upon that asset, sure that her popularity would save off bankruptcy. And he's superstitious; he believes she is his mascot. I don't accuse him—I suspect him, knowing him as I am capable of many weird extravaganzas."

Furthermore, it's a fact that Max was a fellow-passenger with Billy Hamilton when the latter disappeared in mid-ocean."

Ember paused and sat up, preparatory to rising. "All of which," he concluded, "explains why I have trespassed upon your patience and your privacy. It seemed only right that you should get the straight, undistorted story from an unprejudiced onlooker. May I venture to add a word of advice?"

"All means."

"Have you told Max of your relations with Sara Law?"

"No."

"Or anybody else?"

"No."

"Then keep the truth to yourself—at least until this coil is straightened out."

Ember got up. "Good night," he said pleasantly.

Whitaker took his hand, starting. "Good night," he echoed blankly. "But I say—why keep it quiet?"

Ember, turning to go, paused, his glance quietly quizzical. "You don't mean to claim your wife?"

"On the contrary, I expect to offer no defense to her action for divorce."

"Grounds of desertion?"

"I presume so."

"Just the same, keep it as quiet as possible until the divorce is granted. If you live till then . . . you may possibly continue to live thereafter."

"Approximately eighteen months later a man named Thurston—Mitchell Thurston—was considered a dangerous aspirant for the hand of Sara Law. He was exceedingly well fixed in a money sort of dilettantish architect, with offices in the Metropolitan tower. One day at high noon he left his desk to go to lunch at Martin's; crossing Madison square, he suddenly fell from a window on the south side of the square. There were no clues."

"And now Drummond?" Whitaker explained in horror. "Poor fellow! Poor woman!"

A slightly sarcastic expression modified the lines of Ember's mouth. "So far as Mrs. Whitaker is concerned," he said with the somewhat pedantic tone of speech which Whitaker was learning to associate with his moments of most serious concentration—"I echo the sentiment. But let us suspend judgment on Drummond's case until we know more."

"You mean that he is not as yet established fact that you are aware of?"

"There's doubt," Ember corrected acidly—"doubt, at least, in my mind. You see, I saw Drummond in the flesh, alive and vigorous, a good half hour after he is reported to have leaped to his death."

"Where?"

"Coming up the stairs from the downtown subway station in front of the Park Avenue hotel. He wore a hat pulled down over his eyes and an old overcoat buttoned tight up to his chin. He was carrying a satchel bearing the initials C. S. D., but was otherwise pretty thoroughly disguised, and I fancied, anxious enough to escape recognition."

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A slightly sarcastic expression modified the lines of Ember's mouth. "So far as Mrs. Whitaker is concerned," he said with the somewhat pedantic tone of speech which Whitaker was learning to associate with his moments of most serious concentration—"I echo the sentiment. But let us suspend judgment on Drummond's case until we know more."

"You mean that he is not as yet established fact that you are aware of?"

"There's doubt," Ember corrected acidly—"doubt, at least, in my mind. You see, I saw Drummond in the flesh, alive and vigorous, a good half hour after he is reported to have leaped to his death."

"Where?"

"Coming up the stairs from the downtown subway station in front of the Park Avenue hotel. He wore a hat pulled down over his eyes and an old overcoat buttoned tight up to his chin. He was carrying a satchel bearing the initials C. S. D., but was otherwise pretty thoroughly disguised, and I fancied, anxious enough to escape recognition."

"You're positive about this?"

"The man was Carter S. Drummond. I don't think I can be mistaken."

"Which way did he go?"

"Toward the Pennsylvania station, I fancy; that is, he turned west through Thirty-third street. I didn't follow—I was getting into taxi when I caught sight of him."

"But what did you think to see him disguised? Didn't it strike you as curious?"

"Very," said Ember dryly. "At the same time, it was none of my affair. Nor did it present itself to me as a matter worth meddling with until, later, my suspicions were aroused by the scene in the theater—obviously the result of your appearance there—and all later, when I heard the suicide report."

"But—" Whitaker passed a hand across his dazed eyes. "What can it mean? Why should he do this thing?"

"There are several possible explanations. One is that you are alive."

"How long has Drummond been in your vision?"

"Oh, I don't think that!" Whitaker expostulated.

"Nor do I. We're merely considering possible explanations. There's a third."

"He may have received a strong hint that he was nominated for the fate that overtook young Custer, Hamilton and Thurston; and so planned to give his disappearance the color of a similar end."

SORGHUM VARIETIES FOR GREAT PLAINS



ORDINARY BLACKHULL KAFIR AND DWARF FETERITA.

(Prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture.)

After tests for several seasons, the United States department of agriculture is recommending four new varieties of sorghum for trial in the central and southern Great Plains area. The varieties have resulted from the plant introduction and breeding work of the department. They are described in Bulletin 383 recently issued by the department.

Dwarf hegari is primarily a grain sorghum, but like Blackhull kafir it is valuable also as a forage plant. In general appearance it is intermediate between Blackhull kafir and feterita. It is almost, if not quite, as early in maturity as feterita, and at the Chillicothe (Texas) field station, where it has been under test for five years, it has produced better seed crops than any other variety of sorghum, and has become quite popular with the farmers in that locality. Many farmers prefer it to Dwarf milo on account of its higher forage value and the greater ease of harvesting, due to the erect heads.

Improved feterita is a late maturing variety of sorghum, having been obtained from Africa in 1908, two years after the first successful importation of feterita. It has been selected for uniformity and leafiness, and shows a higher yielding power than the earlier importation.

Dwarf feterita originated from a plant which was only two and one-half feet high and two weeks earlier in maturity than the general crop of feterita. It has not fully retained either its dwarfness or its earliness, but has made consistently high yields of grain and appears to be of some value where an early maturing grain crop is desired.

White milo is a variety of sorghum which has been grown to small extent throughout Oklahoma and Texas for a number of years. A dwarf strain of

This variety has been obtained by the department, which very much resembles the ordinary Dwarf Yellow milo. White milo has given evidence of greater drought resistance than even the ordinary Dwarf milo and feterita, and where the animals were disposed of locally, have reached these conclusions:

In the centralized markets the farmers' share of the gross returns ranged from 54 per cent to 85 per cent, with the average at 65 per cent. In the local market the average was 2 per cent to 9 per cent to the packers and 8 per cent to 33 per cent to the retailers.

In the local sales from 62 per cent to 84 per cent of the gross returns was received by the farmers and from 15 per cent to 38 per cent by the retailer.

Central Sales Bring Most.

The detailed figures indicate, however, that even when account is taken of the fact that lower grade stock is sold locally, the returns from such sales are not as great relatively as those from sales through centralized markets.

The investigations covered the leading markets of the country. The specialists, under direction of A. D. Melvin, chief of the bureau of animal industry, and C. J. Brand, chief of the bureau of market and distribution, typical lots of beef cattle from producer to consumer.

The three general methods of marketing found to be in most common use, says the report, are shipping to the large centralized markets, selling to local butchers and packers, and the sale of farm-prepared meats to dealers or consumers. The bulk of the animals from central states is sold through the centralized markets, while some form of a local market predominates in the extreme eastern, western and southern sections.

The great central markets handle four-fifths of the sheep and lambs, two-thirds of the hogs and approximately one-half of the beef cattle. For slaughter, about one-third of the beef cattle, one-eighth of the sheep and lambs and one-twelfth of the hogs are sold. Nearly one-third of the hogs and about one-tenth of the beef cattle and one-twentieth of the sheep and lambs are slaughtered on farms and ranges.

Co-operative Association of cattlemen are becoming an important factor in market, the report shows. Seven hundred and fifty organizations which market cattle in a co-operative way now exist in 15 states.

The department specialists declare that these associations bring greater returns to the farmers because of reduction of marketing expenses and the realization of the prevailing prices at the centralized markets, and that they are also valuable because of their educational features.

The chief outlet for food producing animals in this country, the study discloses, is wholesale slaughter and meat-packing. More than 1,200 slaughtering and meat-packing establishments were operating in the United States in 1914 and turned out products worth \$1,851,725,424.

Packing establishments buy directly from the producer in California to a greater extent than in any other state or section. This practice, which, in the opinion of specialists, will continue to be important in those parts of the country remote from centralized markets, is most characteristic of the western group of states in general.

There is a decided difference of opinion among producers, market men and packers as to the effects of this practice in sections supplied with central markets. The general market prices of live stock and on the prosperity of cattle raisers.

Lumber Products of Country Above This Figure in 1914, in Spite of Temporary Slump in Industry.

The value of the annual output of lumber products of the United States is now well above the billion-dollar mark. This mark was passed in 1908, when the output was valued at \$1,080,736,000, and while a decline of 5.3 per cent was shown in 1914, according to census figures just given out by Uncle Sam, the annual output was still worth more than a billion dollars, the exact value being placed at \$1,022,382,000. The figures for 1916 are expected to generally exceed those of 1914.

In spite of a general slump in the industry in 1914, the amount paid out in salaries during the year showed an increase of 12.2 per cent over that of 1909, while the amount paid out in wages showed a decline of only 0.5 per cent.

FROM ALL OVER

Western Africa has a small species of hippopotamus not much larger than the ordinary African species. It has been proposed that this animal be brought to the swamps of Louisiana for cultivation as a satisfactory substitute for beef. The big species would break down fences.

At the present rate of copper consumption of about 1,000,000 tons a year, the present visible supply would last considerably longer than twenty years.

At a recent golden wedding reception of Mr. and Mrs. Nathaniel Willard of West Freeman, Me., Mrs. Willard wore a brown silk skirt which her mother wore at her own wedding 74 years before. Twenty-four years ago Mrs. Willard's parents, Stephen and Susan Rowe Peary, celebrated their golden wedding in the same house in which Mr. and Mrs. Willard's was held.

A railroad and wagon bridge in Arkansas has been so built that it can be utilized as the lift span should the channel of the river that it crosses shift.

Cartagena is a picturesque old seaport on the northern coast of South America, interesting nowadays for what it used to be rather than what it is. Fronting on a perfect harbor, with pleasant green hills sloping up behind its gray walls and red-roofed houses, it would be more popular with people of the North if it were somewhat healthier and a great deal cooler. The town has been down through a moist heat, and the unaccustomed are prone to sicken in Cartagena with great suddenness. There is no town in either of the Americas that is a more perfect example of what Spain could build in the days of her greatest power. The mistress of the Indies made this port her best western stronghold. The massive walls still stand with their old towers well preserved; the ancient castles are no longer capable of mounting a hostile fleet, but they loom up with a bold and warlike front. Here you may see the grim old building that was for centuries the headquarters of the Inquisition in the New World.

Dear Me, Yes

We often hear a groans tragically or a great sorrow more cruelly than we do the minor annoyances of life. Fears are more disconcerting than elephants.

Canada in 1915 mined \$18,039,971 worth of gold.

Day of Potato Digger.

This is the day of the potato-digger. The better the digger, the better the day. It is hard enough to do such work with the best possible tools.

Red Clover for Hogs.

Red clover in bloom is not good for hogs, but when young it makes a fine pasture.

Washing Milk Vessels.

All milk vessels should be washed in scalding water before and after each milking and should be left to the sunshine throughout the day.

Hogging Off Corn.

At the Missouri experiment station an acre of corn hogged off produced more pork than an acre of corn harvested and fed to hogs in the customary way.

Harvesting Corn Crop.

One acre of corn harvested by hogs will return a greater profit than an equal acre harvested in the usual way.

MEAT PRODUCERS GET LARGE SHARE

Farmers Receive 54 to 85 Per Cent of Prices Paid, U.