SERIAL STORY

No Man's Land

A ROMANCE

By Louis Joseph Vance

Illustrations by Ray Walters

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SYNOPSIS.

Panama Coast. A young man of New York City, name forgotten, is found floating in a life raft. Coast takes him to a port and nurses him back to health. He remembers nothing but believes he is now with Katherine Thayer. Coast fails to convince her that Blackstock is unworthy of her friendship. At the party Coast meets two named Gordon and Van Tuyl. There is a quarrel, and Blackstock shows Van Tuyl good. Coast struggles to wrest the weapon from him; then the police disperse them. Coast is arrested for murder. He is acquitted, but as he leaves the courtroom Gordon names Blackstock as the murderer and kills himself. Coast becomes free, but Blackstock has married Katherine Thayer and fled. Coast purchases a yacht and, while sailing near a man drowns from a distant boat. He rescues the fellow who is named Aggleyard. 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 Thayer, who explains that her husband, under the name of Black, has bought the island. He is killed, a wireless operator and one a native there. Coast informs her that her husband murdered Van Tuyl. Coast sees Blackstock and some Chinaman burying a man. They die at sun, but he is rescued by Aggleyard, who gets him to the Echo in safety, and there he reveals that he is a secret service man.

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

"The window was open—it was warm enough for that—and because of the fog I could stand quite near and see what was taking place inside without being seen. . . . It was a goodish sized room, one of three under a single roof, by all appearances, and stuffed full of apparata of various kinds. There was a big gas-motor alaging away at one end, running a dynamo. Right near the window was a heavy table with all the paraphernalia of a wireless station.

"There was a young man standing right by the table, evidently just out of his chair. He was taking off the telephone headpiece when I first saw him. He looked to be under thirty, and wore red hair and a good coat of sunburn; and he was mad clean through—mad at another man who was standing just inside a doorway leading to another room. That door was closed. The second man was evidently just out of bed; he had a smash bathrobe belted round him, with his pyjamas showing underneath, and beefy, naked ankles running into bedroom slippers. They were having it hot and heavy, rigging out at each other straight from the shoulder.

"I don't know—didn't hear—what started the row, and it ended just after I came within hearing. The younger chap was saying—he had a bit of a brogue: 'Don't let that trouble you, Mister Black. I'll have you know I wired for a relief last night, while you were at dinner, and the minute he sets foot on this damned island, I leave it; nor will I be resting till I've turned in my report at the home office. Put that in your pipe, now.'

"Black (as he called him) seemed to lose control of himself for an instant. He sort of lurched forward, his hands working as if he was going to throw himself at the younger man's throat; then he caught up, thinking better of it, as if he knew the other fellow had grabbed his chair by the back and stood ready to brain him with it; which he couldn't have known, for it turned out he was blind. 'If I had my sight,' he said, 'and could lay hands on you, Power, I'd break every bone in your body.'

"That staked Mr. Power to an ugly laugh—the kind of a laugh that's calculated to make the other chap's blood boil. 'Divvil a doubt of that,' says he; 'but well you know I'd stop at nothing to protect myself against a brute like you, Mr. Black. And what's more' (I thought he tried to hold his tongue, but couldn't; this last seemed fairly to burst out of him) 'I warn you if ever again I see you lay finger on that unhappy woman, your wife, I'll murder you with the first weapon that comes handy. Remember that.'

"Black was white with rage by this time; I don't think he could have held in much longer. As it happened, just then the door behind him opened, and a woman in a dressing-gown stepped into the room. She was ghastly pale, frightened to death, but otherwise just about the prettiest woman I ever laid eyes on. She said just one word in a pitiful voice—'Douglas'—and touched her husband's arm; but I saw her eyes were praying Power to go. He saw it too.

"'Very well, then,' he said with a little bow to the woman. 'I'll be going now.'

"'And you needn't come back,' said the man he called Black. 'I'll do without you until your successor comes.'

"'That suits me to a T,' says Power. 'Good morning, Mrs. Black; I'm sorry we woke you up.'

"Black listened to his footsteps, with that weird expression the deaf and blind have, for some seconds after I had lost the sound of them; then he shook himself and said to the woman in a pretty steady voice, considering how hot he had just been: 'Get back to bed, Kate. I'll step up the rest of the night. That matter's settled; you needn't worry any more.' I thought his voice sounded not unkind, but it was plain he longer ruled the man.

"The wife hesitated, but seemed afraid to cross him. She sort compelling I didn't catch, and went back, closing the door.

"I was of two minds, whether to follow Power (if I could) or wait and see what next, and while I was debating it, Black returned, putting on his coat. He'd managed to get into his clothing in a surprisingly short time. He went straight to the door, jerked it open, and slammed out, taking the same path as Power. I followed, judging my distance at discretion.

"The path led us directly to the farmhouse. Unfortunately I was a bit overconfident, and so permitted Black to get too far ahead. By the time I caught up, something had happened I didn't quite see through, at first. I heard the gate click behind Black, then his footsteps as he pounded across the stony, and an instant later voices followed, by a sound of struggling. Black was cursing Power for a sneaking, scuttling fool. But when I found him again he was alone—sitting alone in the kitchen, the only lighted room in the house. He had drawn a chair up to the table and sat square to it, his feet solidly on the floor, his hands spread out flat. I could see him quite plainly through the open door. He just sat there, staring at the black wall opposite (of course, he couldn't see anything, for that matter) and never moved a muscle through what seemed to me an eternity.

"I daresay this lasted over ten minutes: it seemed hours. Then suddenly it came—what we'd both been waiting for—like a thunderclap for unexpectedness, only more awful. I fancied I heard, first, a thin, far shout; at any rate, Black threw back his head, as if he had heard something. The next instant the air seemed to shudder with the most terrible, indescribably harrowing scream of mortal agony . . .

"Then silence again—nothing more. Beyond that preliminary start, Black hadn't moved. He sat on, just as he was, though he understood as well as I, and better, what had happened off there in the darkness: that Power, suspecting Black's intentions, had made a break to get away by boat, but had been overhauled by somebody instructed by Black—overhauled and murdered. . . . And he could sit there, unstirring, with that on his conscience . . .!

"After a while I heard something moving in the barnyard and dodged back into hiding—into the shadows. Then a man passed between me and the light, like a ghost, trotting along noiselessly. He jogged up to the house and into the kitchen: as he entered, Black swung round sharply. This new arrival was a Chinaman—a low-caste coolie, I judged. I couldn't hear what they said—they spoke in undertones—but I managed to catch a word or two, among them 'boat:' which fitted in with my suspicions. At once Black got up—heavily, as if very tired—and went through the house and out by the front door; I tagged along, of course. He went directly back to the wireless station, sat down at the operating table, and gave another marvelous exhibition of what a blind man can accomplish, with instinct reinforcing the sense of touch.

"He threw in the motor cut-off switch, to begin with, and the motor started on the spark, just as some automobile engines will. Then he monkeyed with the detecter for a while, listening. Nothing doing, apparently—though he may have been getting the range for New York. The next thing, he disconnected the receiving apparatus, threw the current in through the starting box and primary switch, and begin calling the New York office of the Standard Wireless, stopping now and then to listen for their response. Presently that came through, and he told 'em to stand ready to take an important message for Venetia, the second vice-president. They were to get him on the telephone at once—wake him up and holler on an instant answer. . . . I'm'a'mere guessed that I number in the list of my many and varied accomplishments the ability to read Morse by ear; once upon a time I was a regular telegraph operator.

"The message was: 'Power has left without warning, taking boat to new in Vineyard. Absence just discovered. Send trustworthy substitute immediately. When may I expect him? All quiet here; brand flag found.'

"The reply came through within twenty minutes—which was pretty quick work. Of course I couldn't hear it; I only knew it was being received.

"Just as Black gave the O. K. signal and shut off the motor and dynamo, the door opened again, and his wife spoke to him. She said, almost timidly: 'Douglas . . . is anything the matter?' He said in a rough, surly tone: 'Everything's the matter. That ass, Power, has stolen one of the boats and left the island. I've just asked Venetia to send some one in his place. He says there's a man on the way; it seems Power sent in his resignation yesterday evening.' Those were his words, in effect—as nearly as I can remember them. He added something offensive about that being the finish of that flirtation and that he'd thank her to leave the next operator alone. She said: 'Oh-h!'—as if he'd hit her with a whip. Then he got up and announced that he was going to the farmhouse to get some breakfast. It was then just getting a little light. He said she needn't hurry, that he would probably be at the beach by the time she came to breakfast—wanted to find out which boat Power had taken. Then he went away, and the woman shut the door again. . . .

"This time I let Black take his road alone; I'd other fish to fry. I could hear his wife moving about in the other part of the building and judged she was dressing; but she took an interminable time to it. . . . In the course of the next century or two, however, she came out, dressed, and took the path to the farmhouse. I let her go, timed myself as close as I could, and dodged into the wireless room. It was taking a chance; I knew that if Black returned my life wouldn't be worth a picayune; but I had to know Voorhis's message. . . .

"I started the motor and called New York. When they answered I gave Black's signal and demanded a repetition of the message. That was taking another chance: the operator at the other end might recognize the difference in our styles of sending and refuse me. But he may have been sleepy; at all events he obliged without comment. Voorhis had wirelessed: 'Power gave notice he was leaving yesterday evening. New man on way, should reach New Bedford this morning, island by evening, conditions favoring. Name, John Handyside. He is in my confidence.' . . . At least that was the substance of it. . . .

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Were Having It Hot and Heavy.

Beware First False Step.

He who is false to present duty breaks a thread in the loom and will find the flaw when he may have forgotten the cause.—Henry Ward Beecher.

The CIVIL WAR

FIFTY YEARS AGO THIS WEEK

May 10, 1862.

Martial law went into force in Charleston, S. C.

General Pleasonton with his command reached Franklin, W. Va., by forced marches, under the apprehension that an attack would be made on Generals Schenck and Milroy, already in that neighborhood. His was part of the force of 20,000 men held from joining General McClellan's Army of the Potomac on the peninsula by the elusive operations of Stonewall Jackson.

The Army of the Potomac moved 12 miles nearer Richmond during the day.

Major General Halleck, at Monterey, Miss., issued an order expelling newspaper correspondents from his lines.

General Butler, in New Orleans, issued an order suppressing the New Orleans Crescent, owned and edited by a Confederate.

Brigadier General Kelly's force of National troops was attacked by guerrillas in a pass at Reedy Creek, Virginia. His men made a gallant charge up the mountain, driving the enemy. There was loss of only gunpowder and breath on either side.

Suffolk, Va., was occupied by Nationals under Major Dodge.

A Federal reconnoitering party under General Smith had a skirmish with Confederates near Monterey, Tenn.

General Butler issued an order interfering with a day of fasting and prayer in the churches of New Orleans, proclaimed by President Davis.

The Union General Negley occupied Rogersville in northern Alabama.

May 14, 1862.

In a skirmish five miles from Trenton Bridge, North Carolina, Lieut. Rogers, a favorite Confederate officer, was killed and his men driven by a superior force of National troops under command of Col. Amory.

The Charlestown Mercury published the following circular, composed by citizens of New Orleans: "To cotton planters—New Orleans has fallen, not degraded or enslaved, but yielding to armed ships with guns leveled at the homes of our defenseless wives and children. The escutcheon of Louisiana is untainted, and her flag has been desecrated but by her enemies. None could be found among us so vile, low, or degraded as to lower her national insignia. We have yielded to brute force but for the moment.

"It becomes now the duty of all planters to display more than ever their patriotism and devotion to their country. They have sealed that devotion upon the battlefield. Now let us fight our enemies, as well by burning and destroying every bale of cotton upon the river or rivers liable to capture, as well as refusing ever to ship or sell a bale of cotton until peace is declared and our nationality fixed. Let their conquest be a barren one.

"The merchant ships of Europe and Yankeedom will soon be bringing their riches to trade among us, expecting an exchange of cotton. . . . If we are true to ourselves there will be no trade, and the countless millions of foreign products will be without purchasers. How long will they remain idle spectators of such a scene? The powers of Europe will see that there is no sentiment or regard for the old flag—that we despise the race; and when we withhold or destroy our property, they will find that Unionism is dead forever."

The U. S. S. S. Ceres and Lockwood captured the Confederate steamer Alice in Roanoke river, about two miles below Williamstown. She had on board bacon for the Confederate army, and the church bells of Plymouth, which were to have been cast into guns.

May 15, 1862.

A detachment of infantry sent to guard the wagons of a column of Gen. Geary's National forces, arriving at the destination of the march before the infantry, which was on a train, was attacked by Confederates and captured in a body.

The U. S. gunboats Monitor, Galena, Naugatuck, Aroostook and Port Royal were repulsed in an attack on Fort Darling in the James river. The one hundred pound gun on the Naugatuck exploded at the first discharge.

Great excitement existed in Richmond over reported progress of the Union army under General McClellan and the Union fleet. A joint committee was appointed by the legislature of Virginia to communicate with President Davis in relation to the defense of the city. The general assembly resolved that the capital of the state should be defended to the last extremity. Gov. Letcher issued a proclamation calling all officers out of the service, and, others who were willing to unite in defense of the capital, to meet at the city hall that evening. The meeting was held amid great excitement and enthusiasm. The action of the governor was warmly commended.

In the senate of Virginia Mr. Collier submitted a joint resolution declaring that slavery was the fundamental doctrine of the southern civilization.

A skirmish took place nine miles east of Batesville, Arkansas.

Gen. Butler issued "Order No. 15" at New Orleans: "As officers and soldiers of the United States have been subjected to repeated insults from the women (calling themselves ladies) of New Orleans, . . . it is ordered that hereafter when any female shall by word, or gesture, or movement, insult or show contempt for any officer, . . . she shall be held and regarded as a woman of the town plying her trade."

May 16, 1862.

President Lincoln issued the following order: "The skillful and gallant movement of Maj. Gen. John E. Wool and the forces under his command, which resulted in the surrender of Norfolk and the evacuation of the strong batteries erected by the rebels on Sewell's Point and Craney Island, and the destruction of the rebel ironclad steamship Merrimac, are regarded by the president as among the most important successes of the present war." The order continued, ordering thanks to Gen. Wool and the officers and soldiers of his command.

The U. S. S. S. Oriental was lost on Body's Island, thirty miles north of Cape Hatteras, Carolina.

Gen. Butler, commanding the National occupation of New Orleans, issued an order suppressing the New Orleans Sun for encouraging the southerners to burn their cotton, and prohibiting the circulation of Confederate notes. "On and after the twenty-seventh day of May instant," the order read, "all circulation in Confederate notes and bills will cease within this department; and all sales or transfers of property made on and after that day, in consideration of such bills or notes, directly or indirectly, will be void, and the property confiscated to the United States—one-fourth thereof to go to the informer."

Two Union gunboats opened fire on Darien, Georgia, but did no harm.

The day was observed as a fast day throughout the Confederate states.

The National Intelligencer carried a three-column article denouncing Gen. Hunter's proclamation freeing the slaves and asserting that the president would revoke it.

Commodore Goldsborough, moving up the James river with four gunboats to reduce Confederate batteries on the southern shore, found them abandoned.

May 17, 1862.

There was a general advance of the Union lines toward Corinth, Mississippi, with much skirmishing and several severe engagements. Gen. Sherman's division lost forty-four killed and a number wounded in a fight for the possession of Russell's house.

Capt. Henry Eagle, commanding the United States naval forces, sent a message to the commander of the Confederate defenders of Galveston, Texas, demanding the surrender of the place, and threatening a bombardment as soon as the National forces appeared, to which the Confederate general, Herbert, replied that an answer would be returned when the enemy arrived. The Confederate commander urged the people to keep cool, assuring them there was no danger and advising every man to hold himself in arms to fight for every inch of ground.

The gunboat Currituck, accompanied by the transport steamer Seth Low, moved up the Pamunkey toward Newcastle, to destroy several Confederate vessels on the river. The vessels were burned by the Confederates.

The gunboat Penobscot opened fire on the Confederate batteries at Newlet inlet, near Wilmington, North Carolina. Having developed the position and strength of the batteries, the gunboat withdrew.

May 18, 1862.

A skirmish took place near Searcy, on the Little Red river, Arkansas, between one hundred and fifty men of Osterhause's division and some six hundred Confederates under Colonels Coleman and Kicks, in which the latter were defeated, with a loss of one hundred and fifty left on the field and quite a number wounded.

A fight took place at Princeton, Virginia, between the Nationals under the command of Gen. Cox and a body of Confederates under Humphrey Marshall, in which the Nationals were defeated with a loss of thirty killed and seventy wounded.

S. Phillips Lee, United States navy, commanding the advance naval division on the Mississippi river, demanded the surrender of Vicksburg to the authority of the United States.

Suffolds, near Norfolk, Virginia, was occupied by Federal troops.

Gen. Grant invested Vicksburg, with communications opened via the Yazoo.

May 19, 1862.

Gen. Stoneman's brigade of McClellan's army advanced within fourteen miles of Richmond. They left their encampment near White house at daybreak and pushed on to six miles above Turnstabull's Station. They were opposed only by a small body of Confederate pickets, who were dispersed in a charge.

Gen. Hunter's proclamation, by which the slaves of Florida, Georgia and South Carolina were declared free, was officially repudiated and pronounced void by President Lincoln.

Governor Yates of Illinois issued a proclamation asking for recruits to fill up the state regiments at the front, some of which had gone forward with little more than the minimum complement, and all of which had suffered from death by bullet and disease.

In a reconnoissance to Clinton, nine miles south of Newbern, North Carolina, the advanced pickets of the Confederates were encountered and a bloody skirmish ensued.

The legislature of Virginia adjourned in accordance with a resolution previously adopted. In the house of delegates the speaker, Mr. Sheffey, of Augusta, delivered an affecting valedictory.

John T. Monroe, mayor of the city of New Orleans, and other municipal officers were arrested and sent to Fort Jackson by order of Gen. Butler of the National army.

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