

The DESTROYING ANGEL

By Louis Joseph Vance

HOW THE STORY GOES

Hugh Whitaker is told, after a diagnosis by eminent surgeons, that he cannot live longer than six months. His sweetheart jilts him. The double blow stuns him. Peter Stark, his friend, proposes a South sea voyage on Stark's yacht. Whitaker consents, but runs away to a country hotel with the intention of committing suicide. He surprises Mary Ladislas, daughter of a rich and hard New Yorker, in the act of drinking poison and stops her. She has been deserted by the man with whom she had planned a clandestine marriage. Whitaker marries the girl to save her good name, gives her money and immediately puts her on a train for home. He turns—and walks into Peter Stark's arms. "No more foolishness," says Stark. "You've got to go sailing with me." The sick man shrugged wearily: "All right," he replies. "Have your own way." What happens next is told in this installment. You'll find it mighty interesting.

CHAPTER IV—Continued.

Beyond drawing heavily on his bank and sending Drummond a brief note, Whitaker failed to renew communication with his home. He sank into a state of semi-apathetic content. The Adventuress was five months out of port before he began to be conscious that he was truly accursed. There came a gradual thickening of the shadows that threatened to eclipse his existence. And then, one day as they dined with the lonely trader of an isolated station in the D'Entrecasteaux Islands, he fell from his chair as if poleaxed. He regained consciousness only to shiver with the chill of the wind that's fanned by the wings of death. It was impossible to move him. The agonies of the damned were his when, with exquisite gentleness, they lifted him to a bed.

Stark sailed in the Adventuress before sundown of the same day, purposing to fetch a surgeon from Port Moresby. Whitaker said a last farewell to his friend, knowing in his soul that they would never meet again. Then he composed himself to die quietly. But the following morning brought a hapchance trading schooner to the island, and with it, in the estate of supercargo, a crapulous Scotch gentleman who had been a famous specialist of London before drink laid him by the heels. He performed a heroic operation upon Whitaker within an hour, announced by nightfall that the patient would recover, and the next day sailed with his ship to end his days in some abandoned Australian boozing-ken—as Whitaker learned in Sydney several months later.

In the same place, and at the same time, he received his first authentic news of the fate of the Adventuress. The yacht had struck on an uncharted reef, in heavy weather, and had foundered almost immediately. Of her entire company, a solitary sailor managed to cling to a life-raft until picked up, a week after the wreck, by a tramp steamship on whose decks he gasped out his news and his life in the same breaths.

Whitaker hunted up an account of the disaster in the files of a local newspaper. He read that the owner, Peter Stark, Esq., and his guest, H. M. Whitaker, Esq., both of New York, had gone down with the vessel. There was also a cable dispatch from New York detailing Peter Stark's social and financial prominence—evidence that the news had been cabled home. To all who knew him Whitaker was as dead as Peter Stark.

"There is a world outside the one you know
To which for curiousness 'E'll can't compare;
It is the place where wilful missings go,
As we can testify, for we are there."

Kipling's lines buzzed through his head more than once in the course of the next few years; for he was "there." They were years of such vagabondage as only the South Seas countenance; neither unhappy nor very strenuous, nor yet scarred by the tooth of poverty. Whitaker had between four and five thousand dollars in traveller's checks which he converted into cash while in Sydney. Memory of the wreck of the Adventuress was already fading from the Australian mind; no one dreamed of challenging the signature of a man seven months dead. And as certainly and as quietly as the memory, Whitaker faded away; Hugh Morten took his place, and Sydney knew him no more, nor did any other parts wherein he had answered to his rightful name.

The money stayed by him handsomely. Thanks to a strong constitution in a tough body (now that its malignant demon was exorcised) he found it easy to pick up a living by one means or another. Indeed, he played many parts in as many fields before joining hands with a young Englishman he had grown to like and entering upon what seemed a forlorn bid for fortune. Thereafter he prospered amazingly.

When at length he did make up his mind to go home, he was in Melbourne with Lynch, his partner. Whitaker passed old friends in the street. They were George Presbury and his wife—Anne Forsythe that was—self-evident tourists, looking the town over between

steamers. Presbury, with no thought in his bumptious head of meeting Hugh Whitaker before the day of judgment, looked at and through him without a hint of recognition; but his wife was another person altogether. Whitaker could not be blind to the surprise and perplexity that shone in her eyes, even though he pretended to be blind to her uncertain nod; long after his back alone was visible to her he could feel her inquiring stare boring into it.

The incident made him think; and he remembered that he was now a man of independent fortune and of idle hands as well. After prolonged consideration he suddenly decided, told Lynch to look out for his interests and expect him back when he should see him, and booked for London by a Royal Mail boat—all in half a day. From London Mr. Hugh Morten crossed immediately to New York on the Olympic, landing in the month of April—nearly six years to a day from the time he had left his native land.

He put up at the Ritz-Carlton, precisely as any foreigner might be expected to do, and remained Hugh Morten while he prowled around the city and found himself. Now and again in the course of his wanderings he encountered well-remembered faces, but always without eliciting the slightest gleam of recognition; circumstances that only went to prove how thoroughly dead and buried he was in the estimation of his day and generation.

Nothing, indeed, seemed as he remembered it. But his ultimate utterance awakened to the truth that his home had outgrown him fell upon the fourth afternoon following his return, when a total but most affable gentleman presented himself to Whitaker's consideration with a bogus name and a genuine offer to purchase him a drink, and promptly attempted to enmesh him in a confidence game that had degenerated into a vaudeville joke in the days when both of them had worn knickerbockers. Whitaker privately admitted that he was outclassed, that it was time for him to seek the protection of his friends.

He began with Drummond. The latter, of course, had moved his offices. Whitaker found him independently established in an imposing suite in the Woolworth Building—found him an ashen-faced man of thirty-five, who clutched the side of his roll-top desk as if to save himself from falling.

"Whitaker!" he gasped. "My God!" "Flattered," said Whitaker. "I'm sure."

He derived considerable mischievous amusement from Drummond's patent stupefaction. It was all so right and proper—as it should have been. He considered his a highly satisfactory resurrection. Seldom does a scene pass off as one plans it; but Drummond played up his part in a most public-spirited fashion—gratifying, to say the least.

It took him some minutes to recover, Whitaker standing by and beaming. He remarked changes, changes as striking as the improvement in Drummond's fortunes. Physically his experimenter had gone off a bit; the sedentary life led by the average successful man of business in New York had marked his person unmistakably. Only his face seemed as it had always been—sharply handsome and strong. Whitaker remembered that he had always somewhat meanly envied Drummond his good looks; he himself had been fashioned after the new order of architecture—with a steel frame.

He discovered that they were both talking at once—furiously—and, not without surprise, that he had a great deal more enlightenment to impart to Drummond than he had foreseen.

"You've got an economical streak in you when it comes to correspondence," Drummond commented, offering Whitaker a sheet of paper he had just taken from a tin document-box. That's Exhibit A."

Whitaker read aloud:

Dear D.: I'm not feeling well, so off for a vacation. Burke has just been in and paid \$1,500 in settlement of our claim. I'm enclosing herewith my check for your share. Yours,
H. M. W.

"Far be it from me to cast up," said Drummond; "but I'd like to know why the deuce you couldn't let a fellow know how ill you were."

"That's so. And you never heard—?" "Merely a rumor ran round. More than that nothing—until we heard that the Adventuress had been lost, half a year later."

"I'm sorry," said Whitaker contritely. "It was thoughtless . . ."

"But that isn't all," Drummond objected, flourishing another paper. "See here—Exhibit B—came in a day or so later."

"Yes," Whitaker recognized the document. "I remember insisting on writing to you before we turned in that night."

He ran through the following communication:

Dear Drummond: I married here, tonight, Mary Ladislas. Please look out for her while I'm away. Make her an allowance out of my money—five hundred a month ought to be enough. I shall die intestate, and she'll get everything then, of course. She has your address and will communicate with you as soon as she gets settled down in town. Faithfully,
Hugh Morten Whitaker.

"If it hadn't been so much in character," commented Drummond, "I'd've thought the thing a forgery—or a poor joke. Knowing you as well as I did, however . . . I just sat back to wait for word from Mrs. Whitaker."

"And you never heard, except that once?" said Whitaker thoughtfully.

"Here's the sole and only evidence I ever got to prove that you had told the truth."

Drummond handed Whitaker a single, folded sheet of note-paper stamped with the name of the Waldorf-Astoria.

Dear Sir: I inclose herewith a bank-note for \$500, which you will be kind enough to credit to the estate of your late partner and my late husband, Mr. Hugh Morten Whitaker.

Very truly yours,
Mary Ladislas Whitaker.

"Dated, you see, the day after the report of your death was published here."

"But why?" demanded Whitaker, dumfounded. "Why?"

"Mrs. Whitaker may have desired to marry again immediately. If I'm any judge of human nature, she argued that repayment of the loan wiped out every obligation. Feminine logic, perhaps, but—"

Whitaker nodded in somber abstraction.

"You may not," continued Drummond with light malice, "have been so generous, so considerate and chivalric, after all."

"Oh, cut that!" growled Whitaker, unhappily. "I never meant to come back."

SEEK GOLD IN CEMETERY

Murderer Believed to Have Hidden Large Sum in Burial Ground at Pomona, Cal.

One morning recently there was found a hole in the ground under a gigantic sycamore tree in the east end of the Pomona (Cal.) cemetery. The incident opens a mystery which puzzled the people of this community ten years ago and was never solved. The mystery seems deeper than ever.

One morning about ten years ago the cemetery caretaker discovered that somebody had dug a hole five feet long and two feet deep under a huge limb of the sycamore. When the incident was investigated it was learned that a man who had just finished serving 30 years in the penitentiary had been seen strolling through the cemetery a few days earlier. His history was traced and it was learned that the ex-convict had served time for killing an old miner, from whom, it is alleged, he had stolen \$50,000 in gold.

The incident caused great excitement. During the next few weeks the cemetery was honeycombed with holes which were dug by treasure seekers.

The Penalty.

Little John is a confirmed sleepy-head. One morning when he was more than usually averse to getting up, his mother reasoned with him by calling his attention to the flowers.

"Why, the little flowers have been awake for hours," she told him, "and here you are at eight o'clock still in bed."

"Oh, well," was the reply, "look what awful dirty beds they have, and how nice and clean mine is!"

"Then why did you?"

"Oh . . . I don't know. Chiefly because I caught Anne Presbury's sharp eyes on me in Melbourne—as I said a while ago. At the 'worst—if what you suggest has really happened—it's an open-and-shut case; no one's going to blame the woman; and it ought to be easy enough to secure a separation or divorce—"

"You'd consent to that?" inquired Drummond intently.

"It's the only decent thing I can do."

Drummond laughed quietly. "If that's how you feel," he said, "I can only give you one piece of professional advice."

"What's that?"

"Find your wife."

After a moment of puzzled thought, Whitaker admitted ruefully: "You're right. There's the rub."

"I'm afraid you won't find it an easy job. I did my best without uncovering a trace of her."

"Did you try old Thurlow?"

"Her father died within eight weeks from the time you ran away. He left everything to charity, by the way. Unforgiving blighter."

"Well, there's her sister, Mrs. Pettit."

"Address," observed Drummond, dryly: "the American Embassy, Berkeley."



"Whitaker!" He gasped. "My God!"

lin. . . Pettit's got some sort of a minor diplomatic berth over there."

"O the devil! . . . But, anyway, I can write."

He moved to a window and stared rudely at the Post Office Building for a time. "I'm going to find her just the same—if she still lives," he announced, turning back.

And when Whitaker does find her, what do you suppose happens?—considering that she may have remarried.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Shingle Roof a Menace.

The ordinary shingle roof is a tremendous fire hazard which is not fully appreciated by most persons. After a shingle has been exposed to the weather for a time it becomes so inflammable that it will burn as quickly as paper, and they are so light that an ordinary wind will carry these burning brands from one building to another some distance away. This was clearly demonstrated at the conflagration which took place a short time ago at Paris, Ky. Of the total number of 1,440 buildings destroyed, over 1,000 had shingle roofs. Perhaps no more convincing example of the danger in the use of untreated wooden shingles in a closely built up community could be found than that furnished by this latest conflagration. Practically the only residence in the path of the flames which was but little damaged was roofed with incombustible material. In the reconstruction of the city the use of wooden shingles without fire-retardant treatment should be absolutely prohibited.

Nelson Not to Blame.

Once an old lady was being shown over Nelson's ship Victory. As the party approached the spot where Nelson met his death, the attendant pointed to the brass plate fixed in the deck and said:

"That is where Nelson fell."

"The old lady was impressed, but not in the right way.

"No wonder!" she said. "I nearly tripped over that thing myself."

Business Is Business.

Guest—"I must take the next train. It means money to me! How soon does it go?" Clerk (country inn)—"I'd lose my job if I told you! It means money to us to keep you here!"

SAGE TEA BEAUTIFIES AND DARKENS HAIR

Don't Stay Gray! It Darkens So Naturally that Nobody can Tell.

You can turn gray, faded hair beautifully dark and lustrous almost overnight if you'll get a 50-cent bottle of "Weyth's Sage and Sulphur Compound" at any drug store. Millions of bottles of this old famous Sage Tea Recipe, improved by the addition of other ingredients, are sold annually, says a well-known druggist here, because it darkens the hair so naturally and evenly that no one can tell it has been applied.

Those whose hair is turning gray or becoming faded have a surprise awaiting them, because after one or two applications the gray hair vanishes and your locks become luxuriantly dark and beautiful.

This is the age of youth. Gray-haired, unattractive folks aren't wanted around, so get busy with Weyth's Sage and Sulphur Compound tonight and you'll be delighted with your dark, handsome hair and your youthful appearance within a few days.

This preparation is a toilet requisite and is not intended for the cure, mitigation or prevention of disease.—Adv.

Tough Luck.
Old Man (to crying boy)—What's the matter, my little man?
Boy—I'm lost. Boo-hoo!
Old Man—Lost? Nonsense! We mustn't give up hope so soon. Where do you live?
Boy—Don't know, sir. We've just moved, and I can't remember the address.
Old Man—Well, what's your name?
Boy—D don't know, sir. My mother got married again this morning.—Exchange.

ALL MEN AT HOME SHOULD PREPARE FOR WAR.

The first test a man is put thru for either war or life insurance is an examination of his water. This is most essential because the kidneys play a most important part in causing premature old age and death. The more injurious the poisons passing thru the kidneys the sooner comes decay—so says Dr. Pierce of Surgical Institute, Buffalo, N. Y., who further advises all people who are past thirty to preserve the vitality of the kidneys and free the blood from poisonous elements, such as uric acid—drink plenty of water—sweat some daily and take Anuric, double strength, before meals.

This An-uric is a late discovery of Dr. Pierce and is put up in tablet form, and can be obtained at almost any drug store. For that backache, lumbago, rheumatism, "rusty" joints, swollen feet or hands, due to uric acid in the blood, Anuric quickly dissolves the uric acid as hot water does sugar. Take a little Anuric before meals and live to be a hundred. Send 10 cents to Dr. Pierce for trial package of Anuric.—Adv.

The Only Way.
"I have a friend who kept a cook for nearly a year."
"What jail is he in charge of."—Boston Transcript.

Take care of your health and wealth will take care of you. Garfield Tea promotes health.—Adv.

An Unexpected Answer.
"Polly, want a cracker?"
"No; I am conserving food," replied the intelligent bird.—Louisville Courier-Journal.

ALLEN'S FOOT-EASE FOR THE TROOPS.
Shaken into the shoes and sprinkled in the foot-bath it gives rest and comfort, takes the friction from the shoe and prevents blisters and sore spots. Makes walking easy. Accept no substitute! Sold everywhere, 25c.

A Marital Handicap.
"The girl is neither pretty, talented nor rich. What is her attraction for you?"
"A great and lasting one. She's tongue-tied."—Exchange.

For a disordered liver, take Garfield Tea, the Herb laxative. All druggists.—Adv.

Unsubstantial Returns.
"Did you raise anything on your promise to pay?"
"Oh, yes; I raised a smile."—Baltimore American.

Coated tongue, vertigo and constipation are relieved by Garfield Tea.—Adv.

YES! MAGICALLY! CORNS LIFT OUT WITH FINGERS

You corn-pestered men and women need suffer no longer. Wear the shoes that nearly killed you before, says this Cincinnati authority, because a few drops of freezone applied directly on a tender, aching corn or callous stops soreness at once and soon the corn or hardened callous loosens so it can be lifted out, root and all, without pain.

A small bottle of freezone costs very little at any drug store, but will positively take off every hard or soft corn or callous. This should be tried as it is inexpensive and is said not to irritate the surrounding skin.

If your druggist hasn't any freezone tell him to get a small bottle for you from his wholesale drug house. It is fine stuff and acts like a charm every time.—Adv.