

The Destroying Angel

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

AUTHOR OF "THE PAUL OF FLAME," "THE BOOKER BELL," "THE BLACK BAG," "THE BRASS BOW," "THE PAUL OF FLAME," "THE BOOKER BELL," "THE BLACK BAG," "THE BRASS BOW."

EMINENT surgeons tell Hugh Whitaker that six months is his life limit. Peter Stark, intimate friend, finds him stunned by the news and arranges to take Whitaker on a long South sea yacht trip. The sick man sneaks off to a country hotel, intending to kill himself, but surprises a young girl in the act of drinking poison. She is Mary Ladislav, love-starved daughter of a New York plutocrat, deserted by the man with whom she planned clandestine marriage. To save her good name, Whitaker marries the girl (knowing that six months is his limit), gives her money and puts her on a train for home. He runs plump into Stark, hunting him. Months later, the yacht burns at sea. All hands die but Whitaker, who is reported lost. A delicate operation restores his health, and after five prosperous years in Australia, he returns to New York—one back from the dead! We find him—in this installment—talking with his old law partner, Drummond, about the prospects of finding that little girl wife. A beautiful actress enters the story.

CHAPTER IV—Continued.

"Would you know her if you saw her?"

"I don't know," Whitaker frowned with annoyance. "She's six years older—"

"Well, but what was she like?" Drummond pursued curiously.

Whitaker shook his head. "It's not easy to remember. Matter of fact, I don't believe I ever got one good square look at her. It was twilight in the hotel, when I found her; we sat talking in absolute darkness, toward the end; even in the minister's study there was only a green-shaded lamp on the table; and on the train—well, we were both too much worked up, I fancy, to pay much attention to details."

"Blonde or brune?"

"I swear I don't know. She wore one of those funny knitted caps, tight down over her hair, all the time."

Drummond laughed quietly.

"I don't feel in a joking humor," Whitaker said roughly. "It's a serious matter and wants serious treatment . . . What else have we got to mull over?"

Drummond shrugged suavely. "There's enough to keep us busy for several hours," he said. "For instance, there's my stewardship."

"Your which?"

"My care of your property. You left a good deal of money and securities lying round loose, you know; naturally I felt obliged to look after 'em. There was no telling when Widow Whitaker might walk in and demand an accounting. I presume we might as well run over the account—though it is getting late."

"Half-past four," Whitaker informed him, consulting his watch. "Take too long for to-day. Some other time."

Drummond's reply was postponed by the office boy, who popped in on the heels of a light knock.

"Mr. Max's outside," he announced. "O the deuce!" The exclamation seemed to escape Drummond's lips involuntarily. He tightened them angrily, as though regretting the lapse of self-control, and glanced hurriedly askance to see if Whitaker had noticed. "I'm busy," he added, a trace sullenly. "Tell him I've gone out."

"But he's got 'nappointment," the boy retorted. "And besides, I told him you was in."

"You needn't fob him off on my account," Whitaker interposed. "We can finish our confab later—Monday—any time. It's time for me to be getting up-town, anyway."

"It isn't that," Drummond explained doggedly. "Only—the man's a bore, and—"

"It isn't Jules Max?" Whitaker excitedly. "Not little Jules Max, who used to stage manage our amateur shows?"

"That's the man," Drummond admitted with plain reluctance.

"Then have him in, by all means. I want to say howdy to him, if nothing more. And then I'll clear out and leave you to his troubles."

Drummond laughed a trifle sourly. "Max has developed into a heavy-weight entrepreneur, you know."

"Meaning theatrical manager? Then why not say so? But I might've guessed he'd drift into something of the sort."

A moment later Whitaker was vigorously pumping the unresisting—indeed the apparently boneless—hand of Jules Max. The hat that had made Hammerstein famous Max had appropriated—straight crown, flat brim and immaculate gloss—bodily. Beneath it his face was small of feature, and fat,

was sold out a month ago. Even the speculators are cleaned out."

"Tut!" the manager reproved him loftily. "Hugh is going to see Sara Law act for the last time from my personal box—aren't you, Hugh?"

"You bet I am!" Whitaker asserted with conviction.

"Then come along," Max caught him by the arm and started for the door. "So long, Drummond . . ."

CHAPTER V.

Curtain.

Nothing would satisfy Max but that Whitaker should dine with him. He consented to drop him at the Ritz-Carlton, in order that he might dress, only on the condition that Whitaker would meet him at seven, in the white room at the Kafekebocker.

"Just mention my name to the head waiter," he said with magnificence; "or if I'm there first, you can't help seeing me. Everybody knows my table—the little one in the southeast corner. . . . Shoot, James!"

The latter phrase was Max's way of ordering the driver to move on. The car snorted resentfully, then pulled smoothly and swiftly away. Max waved a jaunty farewell with a lemon-colored hand, over the back of the tonneau.

Whitaker went up to his room in a reflective mood in which the theatrical man had little place. Since his arrival in New York he had fallen into the habit of seeking the view from his window when in meditative humor. A view of ten thousand roofs, inexpressibly enchanting. . . . Somewhere—perhaps—in that welter of steel and stone, as eternal and as restless as the sea, was the woman Whitaker had married, working out her lonely destiny. A haphazard biscuit tossed from his window might fall upon the very roof that sheltered her; he might search for a hundred years and never cross her path.

He wondered. . . .

The possibility that she might have married a second time did not disturb his pulse by the least fraction of a beat. He even contemplated the chance that she might be dead with normal equanimity. Fortunately, that he didn't love her. More fortunate still, that he loved no one else.

Incontinently he wrote and dispatched a long, extravagant cablegram to Mrs. Pettit in care of the American embassy, little doubting that she would immediately answer.

When eventually he strode into the white room, Max was already established at the famous little table in the southeast corner. Whitaker was conscious of turning heads and guarded comment as he took his place opposite the little fat man.

"Make you famous in a night," Max assured him importantly. "Don't happen to need any notoriety, do you?"

"No, thanks."

"Dine with me here three nights hand-running and they'll let you into the Syndicate by the back door without even asking your name. P. T. A's one grand little motto, my boy."

"P. T. A.?"

"Pays to advertise. Paste that in your hat. Look me over," he requested abruptly, leaning back. "I guess I'm some giddy young buck, what?"

Whitaker reviewed the striking effect Max had created by encasing his brief neck and double chin in an old-fashioned high collar and black silk stock, beneath which his important chest was protected by an elaborately frilled shirt decorated with black pearl studs. His waist was strapped in by a pique waistcoat edged with black, and there was a distinctly perceptible "invisible" stripe in the material of his evening coat and trousers.

"Dressed like a fool," Max summed up the ensemble before his guest could speak. "Would you believe that despair could gnaw at the vitals of anyone as wonderfully arrayed?"

"I would not," Whitaker asserted. "Yet, I'm down in the mouth, because this is Sara's last appearance." Max motioned the waiter to remove the debris of a course. "I've got it in my knob that she's my mascot. If she leaves me, my luck goes with her. I made her, all right, but she made me, too; and it sprains my sense of good business to break up a paying combination like that."

"Nonsense," Whitaker contended warily. "If I'm not mistaken, you were telling me this afternoon that

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you stand next to Belasco as a producing manager. The loss of one star isn't going to rob you of that prestige, is it?"

"You never can tell," the little man contended darkly; "I wouldn't bet thirty cents my next production would turn out a hit. I've had several close calls with Sara—she's threatened to chuck the stage often before this; but every time something happened to make her change her mind. I've got a hunch maybe something will happen this time, too. If it does, I won't want any partners."

How much information do you wager that Max is in a position to give Whitaker if he were of a mind to do so?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

AS PHILOSOPHER SAW LIFE

Walter Pater's Idea of Success Was Hardly That Held by the Modern Business Man.

The service of philosophy, of speculative culture, toward the human spirit is to rouse, to startle it to a life of constant and eager observation. Every moment some form grows perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive to us—for that moment only. Not the fruit of experience but experience itself, is the end. A counted number of pulses only is given to us of a variegated, dramatic life. How may we see in them all that is to be seen in them by the finest senses? How shall we pass most swiftly from point to point and be present always at the focus where the greatest number of vital forces unite in their purest energy?

To burn always with this hard gem-like flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. . . . Great passions may give us this quickened sense of life ecstasy and sorrow of love, the various forms of enthusiastic activity, disinterested or otherwise, which come naturally to many of us. Only be sure it is passion—that it does yield you this fruit of a quickened, multiplied consciousness.—Walter Pater.

Had No Gift for It.

"Did yez say yer health is bad, Mr. Donovan?"

"Yis, ol' ye bin walkin' in me slape."

"Och, begorra, if Oi cud' only have done that same, Oi woudnt be off the force now."

New Servant Girl Story.

The wife of a successful young literary man had hired a buxom Dutch girl to do the housework. Several weeks passed and from seeing her master constantly about the house, the girl received an erroneous impression.

"Ogscuse me, Mrs. Blank," she said to her mistress one day, "but I like to say somedings."

"Well, Rena?"

The girl blushed, fumbled with her apron, and then replied, "Vell, you pay me four tollars a week—"

"Yes, and I really can't pay you any more."

"It's not dot," responded the girl; "but I be villing to take tree tollars till—till your husband getta work."—Boston Transcript.

To Keep Clean and Healthy take Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets.

They regulate liver, bowels and stomach.

A Real Curiosity.

The showman was exhibiting a very small skull, which he said was the headpiece of the great Oliver Cromwell.

"This skull is much too small to be the skull of a man," said one patron, indignantly. "It can only be the skull of a little boy. You're a fraud!"

The showman did not lose his nerve at this, but replied with dignity: "You are right—it is not the skull of a man, but that of Cromwell when he was a small lad."—New York Globe.

WOMEN ON BATTLEFIELD

We hear much these days of what the women are doing on the battle-line. How few American women are strong enough to go to the front and endure the hardships of the men!

Help is offered, and is freely given to every nervous, delicate woman, by Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription. Remember ingredients on label. In tablet or liquid form. No alcohol.

In "female complaint," irregularity, or weakness, and in every exhausted condition of the female system, the "Prescription" seldom fails to benefit or cure. Bearing-down pains, internal inflammation and ulceration, weak back, and kindred ailments are cured by it, ask your neighbor. It's a marvelous remedy for nervous and general debility, insomnia, or inability to sleep.

Write Dr. Pierce, President of the Invalids' Hotel, Buffalo, N. Y., for confidential advice and you will receive the medical attention of a specialist, wholly without fee—no charge whatever.

Send 10c for trial pkg. "Favorite Prescription Tablets."

Only One Can Dress Well.

"Her husband must have a big salary."

"What makes you think so?"

"The way she dresses."

"Well, go now and take a look at the way her husband dresses, and you'll change your mind."—Brooklyn Citizen.

Cuticura is So Soothing

To itching, burning skins. It not only soothes but heals. Bathe with Cuticura Soap and hot water, dry gently and apply Cuticura Ointment. For free samples address, Cuticura, Dept. X, Boston. At druggists and by mail. Soap 25, Ointment 25 and 50.—Adv.

Quite So.

"We may live to see the airplane in common, every-day use like the automobile."

"Sure! But our chances of living to see that will be better if we leave the experimenting to other people."—Exchange.

Inspired Respect.

"How did Mrs. Grabcohn succeed in getting Mr. Grabcohn to attend church regularly?"

"She persuaded the new rector to play Mr. Grabcohn a game of golf. The rector beat Mr. Grabcohn so badly he proves their wonderful properties. For old gentlemen said any man who could play golf like that ought to be able to preach a smashing sermon, so he went to church."—Brooklyn Citizen.

GRANDMA USED SAGE TEA TO DARKEN HAIR

She mixed Sulphur with it to Restore Color, Gloss, Youthfulness.

Common garden sage brewed into a heavy tea with sulphur added, will turn gray, streaked and faded hair beautifully dark and luxuriant. Just a few applications will prove a revelation if your hair is fading, streaked or gray. Mixing the Sage Tea and Sulphur recipe at home, though, is troublesome. An easier way is to get a 50-cent bottle of Wyeth's Sage and Sulphur Compound at any drug store all ready for use. This is the old time recipe improved by the addition of other ingredients.

While wispy, gray, faded hair is not sinful, we all desire to retain our youthful appearance and attractiveness. By darkening your hair with Wyeth's Sage and Sulphur Compound, no one can tell, because it does it so naturally, so evenly. You just dampen a sponge or soft brush with it and draw this through your hair, taking one small strand at a time; by morning all gray hairs have disappeared, and, after another application or two, your hair becomes beautifully dark, glossy, soft and luxuriant.

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