

THE DESTROYING ANGEL

By LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

QUEER LUCK

Did you ever have a piece of really good luck—for instance, help from an entirely unexpected source when you were in deep trouble?

Luck, good or bad, is certainly on the trail of Hugh Whitaker. You remember, a corps of eminent surgeons gave him just six months to live. So he found a girl in trouble, married her to save her good name and disappeared immediately. Five years later he reappeared in New York from Australia, happy, healthy and prosperous, and started out to find the little girl he married. He discovers her when he goes to the theater—she's Sara Law, great actress. Mutual recognition across the footlights stops the play and creates wild excitement among the audience. What next occurs is told in this installment. Go to it!

CHAPTER V—Continued.

"Where's Miss Law?" he asked. "I dunno—go ask Max." "Where is he?" "You can search me; last I saw of him he was tearing the star dressin' room up by the roots."

Whitaker hurried on just in time to see Max disappearing in the direction of the stage door, at which point he caught up with him, and from the manager's disjointed catechism of the doorkeeper garnered the information that the star had hurried out of the building while Max was making his announcement before the curtain.

Max swung angrily upon Whitaker. "Oh, it's you, is it? Perhaps you can explain what this means? She was looking straight at you when she dried up! I saw her—"

"Perhaps you'd better find Miss Law and ask her," Whitaker interrupted. "Have you any idea where she's gone?"

"Home, probably," Max snapped in return.

"Come on, then." Passing his arm through the manager's, Whitaker drew him out into the alley. "We'll get a taxi before this mob—"

"But, look here—what business've you got talking in?"

"Ask Miss Law," said Whitaker, shortly. It had been on the tip of his tongue to tell the man flatly: "I'm her husband." But he retained wit enough to deny himself the satisfaction of this shattering rejoinder. "I know her," he added; "that's enough for the present."

At the entrance to the alley Max paused to listen to the uproar within his well-beloved theater.

"I'd give five thousand gold dollars if I hadn't met you this afternoon!" he groaned. "I always knew that woman was a Jonah!"

"You were calling her your mascot two hours ago."

"She'll be the death of me, yet," the little man insisted gloomily. He stopped short, jerking his arm free. "Look here, I'm not going. I've got my work cut out for me back there"—with a jerk of his head toward the theater.

Whitaker hesitated, then without regret decided to lose him. It would be as well to get over the impending interview without a third factor.

"Very well," he said, beckoning a taxicab in to the curb. "What's the address?"

Max gave it sullenly.

"So long," he added morosely as Whitaker opened the cab door; "sorry I ever laid eyes on you."

Whitaker settled back in the cab and, oblivious to the lights of Broadway streaming past, tried to think. It suddenly presented itself to his reason, with shocking force, that his attitude must be humbly and wholly apologetic. It was a singular case: he had come home to find his wife on the point of marrying another man—and she was the one entitled to feel aggrieved! Strange twist of the eternal triangle!

Far too soon the machine swerved into Fifty-seventh street, slipped halfway down the block, described a wide arc to the northern curb and pulled up, trembling, before a modest modern residence between Sixth and Seventh avenues.

Reluctantly Whitaker got out and, on suspicion, told the chauffeur to wait. Then, with all the alacrity of a condemned man ascending the scaffold, he ran up the steps to the front door.

A man-servant answered his ring without undue delay.

Was Miss Law at home? He would see.

This indicated that she was at home. Whitaker tendered a card with his surname pencilled after that of Mr. Hugh Morten in engraved script.

He stared round him with pardonable wonder. If this were truly the home of Mary Ladislas Whitaker—her property—he had bulidied far better than he could possibly have foreseen with that investment of five hundred dollars six years since. Soft, shaded lights, rare furnishings, the rich yet delicate atmosphere of exquisite taste, the hush and orderly perfection of a home made and maintained with consummate art: these furnished him with dim, provoking intimations of an individuality to which he was a stranger—less than a stranger—nothing. . . .

Almost immediately he became aware of feminine footsteps on the staircase—there entered to him a lady well past middle age, with the dignity and poise consistent with her years, her manifest breeding and her iron-gray hair.

"Mr. Whitaker?"

He bowed.

"I am Mrs. Secretan, a friend of Miss Law's. She has asked me to say that she begs to be excused, at least for tonight. And I am further instructed to ask if you will be good enough to leave your address."

"Certainly; I'm stopping at the Ritz-Carlton; but"—he demurred—"I should like to leave a note, if I may—?"

Mrs. Secretan nodded an assent. "You will find materials in the desk there," she added, indicating an escritoire.

Thanking her, Whitaker sat down, and, after some hesitation, wrote a few lines:

Please don't think I mean to cause you the slightest inconvenience or distress. I shall be glad to further your wishes in any way you may care to designate. Please believe in my sincere regret. . . .

Signing and folding this, he rose and delivered it to Mrs. Secretan.

He found himself in the street, with his trouble for all reward for his pains. He wondered what to do, where to go, next. The driver of the taxicab was holding the door for him, head bent to catch the address of the next stop. But his fare lingered still in doubt.

Dimly he became aware of the violent bawlings of a brace of news vendors who were rambling through the street, one on either sidewalk. At the spur of a vague wonder if the papers were already noising abroad the news of the fiasco at the Theater Max, Whitaker purchased a paper.

"There's a, sir. 'Orrible molder . . . Thanky . . ."

The man galloped on, howling. But Whitaker stood with his gaze riveted in horror. The news item so pointedly offered to his attention was clearly legible in the light of the cab lamps:

LATEST EXTRA

TRAGIC SUICIDE IN HARLEM RIVER.

Stopping his automobile in the middle of Washington bridge at 7:30 p. m., Carter S. Drummond, the lawyer, and fiancée of Sara Law, the actress, threw himself to his death in the Harlem river. The body has not yet been recovered.

CHAPTER VII.

A History.

Whitaker consulted a telephone book without finding that Drummond had any private residence connection, and then tried at random one of the clubs of which they had been members in common in the days when Hugh Whitaker was a human entity in the knowledge of the town. Here he had better luck—luck, that is, in as far as it put an end to his wanderings for the night; he found a clerk who remembered his face without remembering his name, and who, consequently, was not unwilling to talk. Drummond, it seemed, had lived at the club; he had dined alone, that evening, in his room; had ordered his motor car from the adjacent garage for seven o'clock; and had left at about that hour with a small handbag and no companion.

Nothing further was known of his actions save the police report. The car had been found stationary on Washington bridge, and deserted, Drummond's motor coat and cap on the driver's seat. Bystanders averred that a man had been seen to leave the car and precipitate himself from the bridge to the stream below. The body was still unrecovered. The club had notified by telegraph a brother in San Francisco, the only member of Drummond's family of whom it had any record. Friends, fellow members of the club, were looking after things—doing all that could and properly ought to be done under the circumstances.

Whitaker walked back to his hotel. There was no other place to go; no place, that is, that wooed his humor in that hour. He was, indeed, profoundly shocked. He held himself measurably responsible for Drummond's act of desperation. Next to poor Peter Stark, whom his heart mourned without ceasing, he had cared most for Drummond of all the men he had known and liked in the old life. Now . . . he felt alone and very lonely, sick of heart and forlorn. There was, of course, Lynch, his partner in the Antipodes; Whitaker was fond of Lynch, but not

with the affection that a generous-spirited youth had accorded Peter Stark and Drummond—a blind and unreasoning affection that asked no questions and made nothing of faults. The capacity for such sentiment was dead in him, as dead as Peter Stark, as dead as Drummond. . . .

It was nearly midnight, but the hour found Whitaker in no humor for bed or the emptiness of his room. He strolled into the lounge, sat down at a detached table in a corner, and ordered something to drink. A page, bearing something on a salver, anbled through the lounge, now and again opening his mouth to bleat, dispassionately: "Mista Whitaker, Mista Whitaker!"

The owner of that name experienced a flush of exasperation. What right had the management to cause him to be advertised in every public room of the establishment? . . . But the next instant his resentment evaporated, when he remembered that he remained Mr. Hugh Morten in the managerial comprehension.

He lifted a finger; the boy swerved toward him, tendered a blue envelope, accepted a gratuity and departed.

It was a cable message; very probably an answer to his to Grace Pettit. Whitaker tore the envelope and unfolded the inclosure, glancing first at the signature to verify his surmise. As he did so, he heard his name a second time.

"Pardon me; this is Mr. Whitaker?"

A man stood beside the little table—one whom Whitaker had indifferently noticed on entering as an equally lonely loungee at another table.

Though he frowned involuntarily with annoyance, he couldn't well deny his identity.

"Yes," he said shortly, looking the man up and down with a captious eye.

Yet it was hard to find much fault with this invader of his preoccupation. He had the poise and the dress of a gentleman; dignity without aggressiveness, completeness without ostentation. He had a spare, not ungraceful body, a plain, dark face, a humorous mouth, steady eyes: a man easily forgotten or

overlooked unless he willed it otherwise.

"My name is Ember," he said quietly. "If you'll permit me—my card." He offered a slip of pasteboard engraved with the name of Martin Ember. "And I'll sit down, because I want to talk to you for a few minutes."

Accordingly he sat down. Whitaker glanced at the card, and questioningly back at Mr. Ember's face.

"I don't know you, but . . . What are we to talk about, please?"

The man smiled, not unpleasingly. "Mrs. Whitaker," he said.

"Mrs. Whitaker didn't send you to me? Then how— What the deuce—!"

"I happened to have a seat near your box at the theater tonight," Mr. Ember explained coolly. "From—what I saw there, I inferred that you must be—yourself. Afterwards I got hold of Max, confirmed my suspicion, and extracted your address from him."

"I see," said Whitaker, slowly. "Who the devil are you?" he demanded bluntly.

"I was," said the other slowly, "once, a private detective. Now—I'm a person of no particular employment, of independent means, with a penchant—you're at liberty to assume—for poking my nose into other people's business. Mrs. George Pettit once employed me to find her sister, Miss Mary Ladislas, who had run away with a chauffeur named Morton."

"Just a minute," said Whitaker suddenly—"by your leave—"

Ember bowed gravely. For a thought longer Whitaker's gaze bored into his eyes in vain effort to fathom what was going on behind them, the animus undiscovered by his words; then, remembering, he looked down at the cable message in his hand.

"Martin Ember (it ran) private agency 1435 Broadway, Grace Pettit." Whitaker folded the paper and put it away in a pocket.

"Go on, please," he said quietly. "In those days," Mr. Ember resumed, "I did such things indifferently well. I had little trouble in following the run-aways from Southampton to Greenport. There they parted. He was wanted for theft in a former position, was arrested, convicted and sent to Sing Sing; where he presently died, I'm glad to say. . . . Miss Ladislas had registered at the Commercial house as Mrs. Morton. She was there, alone, under that name, for nearly a week before you registered as Hugh Morten, and in the space of a few hours married her, under your true name, and shipped her off to New York."

"Right," Whitaker agreed steadily. "And then—?"

"I traced her to the Hotel Belmont, where she stopped overnight, then lost her completely; and so reported to Mrs. Pettit. I came into a little money about that time, and gave up my business; gave it up, that is, as far as placing myself at the service of the public was concerned. After some time Mr. Drummond sought me out and begged me to renew my search for Mrs. Whitaker; you were dead, he told me; she was due to come into your estate—a comfortable living for an independent woman."

"What do you think of this man Ember? Is he on the level, or is he a smart rascal who has evil designs on Whitaker?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

PERSONAL WASTE HEAVY TAX

Standard Oil Would Soon Go Bankrupt on "System" That Most Americans Follow.

How many mornings does your cook spoil the toast? You don't know.

Nor do you keep tabs on the 50 other apparently trifling things of every day.

From the moment you draw an unnecessary amount of water for your morning bath until you have touched the push button and stopped that tireless electric meter at night and retire to rest it is waste plus "don't know" all along the line, writes "Girard" in the Philadelphia Public Ledger.

If Standard Oil was as careless with its pennies as a man making \$10 a week is with his, it would be bankrupt before Christmas. But you know well enough that you've got to be wide awake to snatch even one cent from J. D. R.

And here is President Ren's railroad, which has run passenger trains 3,000,000 miles without killing a passenger. Why? Because he has made in three and one-half years 2,500,000 tests to see that his trainmen observe the rules of safety.

But, heigh-ho, you never test anything in your smaller affairs to see how many little spigots are pouring out pennies needlessly. Just the same they are taxing you a great deal more than your church pew.

Freighter Unloads Quickly.

About midsummer the Italian cargo boat Milazzo, undoubtedly the largest freighter on the seas, completed its maiden voyage from Naples to New York. The vessel is of special interest because of its remarkable unloading facilities, which enable its 14,000-ton cargo to be discharged within forty-eight hours. It is particularly designed for the transportation of grain and coal, but because of current conditions is now carrying a general cargo.

The ship is 512 feet in length, 65.9 feet across the beam and when loaded displaces 20,040 tons. Its single screw is turned by a 4,000-horse power quadruple expansion engine. The ship's unloading equipment is its most wonderful feature according to Popular Mechanics Magazine.

The Far-Sighted Woman.

You are, let us say, a capable stenographer or a teacher; if through any untoward circumstances, you should be bereft of one of your faculties necessary to your vocation, what would you do? Such things do happen, you know, and wise is the woman who cultivates a hobby or an avocation that employs other faculties than the ones she uses daily. If you know nothing else but teaching, and should lose your hearing, you would be stranded on the island of the helpless; if your daily work is of the manual sort, cultivate a hobby for something that requires mental effort. If your mental faculties are in use daily, give them a rest by doing some sort of manual work.—Exchange.

Occasionally Useful.

We all of us give the farmers a mighty lot of advice, but the most of them don't mind it; sometimes there's a bit of it they can use.

The Censor.

The censor is not the man who puts the news in the newspapers, and he doesn't have much luck keeping it out.

Half Bathrobes.

Two women were shopping in a Washington street department store. One stopped in front of a price card which read, "Half-Bathrobes."

"Well, what do you think of that?" she said to her companion. "Half bathrobes! Wonder if they cut them in two?"

"Well, if they do I don't want them. A whole one for me every time," replied the other woman.—Indianapolis News.

A WOMAN'S BURDENS IN THIS WAR

Every woman's burdens are lightened when she turns to the right medicine. If her existence is made gloomy by the chronic weakness, delicate derangements, and painful disorders that afflict her sex, she will find relief and emancipation from her trouble in Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription. If she's overworked, nervous, or "run-down," she finds new life and strength. It's a powerful, invigorating tonic and nerve which was discovered and used by an eminent physician for many years in all cases of "female complaints" and weakness. For young girls just entering womanhood; for women at the critical "change of life;" in bearing-down sensations, periodical pains, ulceration, inflammation, and every kindred ailment, the "Favorite Prescription" will benefit or cure.

The "Prescription" contains no alcohol, and is sold in tablet or liquid form. Send 10c to Dr. Pierce, Invalids' Hotel, Buffalo, N. Y., for large trial pkg.—Adv.

No Doubt About It.

"It's tough when a girl marries a worthless man."

"And modern life has introduced another angle."

"What is that?"

"It's tougher when she gives up a good job."—Kansas City Journal.

For Constipation, Biliousness, Liver and Kidney troubles, take Garfield Tea.—Adv.

The Human Beast.

"It is a pity that a man spouting on a vexed question can't do as the whales do in similar action."

"What do you mean?"

"The whales, you know, always pour oil upon the water."

LISTEN TO THIS! SAYS CORNS LIFT RIGHT OUT NOW

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 drugist 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.

Trained.

"Miss Strongmind says she doesn't intend to marry until after the war, and then she'll marry only a soldier."

"Why a soldier?"

"Because her husband will then know the value of implicit obedience."—Boston Transcript.

Friends.

"A dog is man's best friend."

"Well," replied the prudent citizen, "considering the price of ham and eggs, a pig and a hen must be very comforting, even if they're not so sociable."—Washington Star.

To Dyspeptics: Others have found a steady course of Garfield Tea a pleasant means of regaining health. Why not you?—Adv.

Last Resource.

"My dear, the doctor says I'm in need of a little change."

"Then ask him to give it to you. He's got the last of mine."—Exchange.

Career of Perfection.

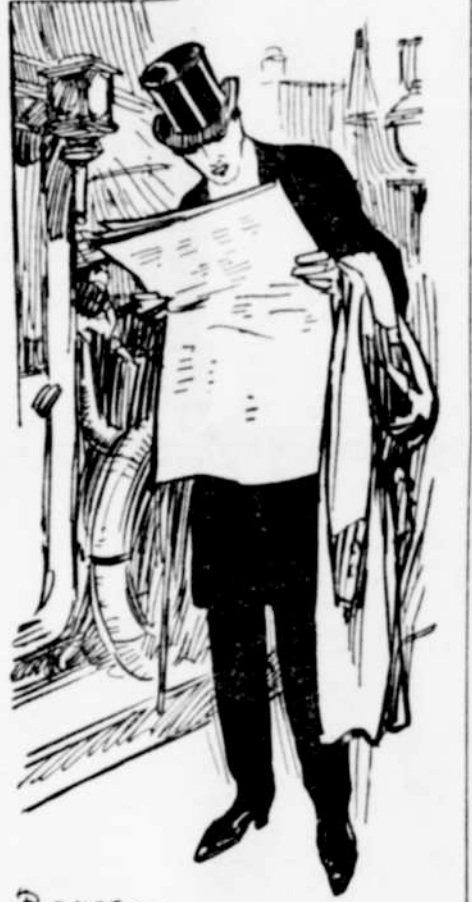
About the best praise that a man can get is to come to the end of his life and still be the man his wife is glad that she married.—Detroit Free Press.

The Modern Method.

Waiter—What will you have, sir? Diner—Oh, bring me an assortment of proteins, fats and carbohydrates—I leave it to you, Henry, say about 800 calories.—Brooklyn Citizen.

Cuticura Soap Ideal For Baby's Skin

COUGHING annoys others and hurts you. Relieve throat irritation and tickling, and get rid of coughs, colds and hoarseness by taking at once PISO'S



Whitaker Stood With His Gaze Riveted in Horror.