

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 enough 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."

Hugh 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 the end." 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 somberly at the drooping ash of his cigar. "There were several reasons. In the first place I didn't have to: I had asked no retainer from Drummond, and I rendered no bill; what I had found out 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 abhorrence by her family. She was already successful in a small way, had little need of the money she would get as claimant of your estate. She enlisted my sympathy, and—I held my tongue."

"That was decent of you."

The man bowed 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 point-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 wasn't hard to perceive, everything considered, that your motive was pure chivalry—quixotism. 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 . . . hopelessly . . . 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 me. . . . But that's why I never lost interest."

"You mean," Whitaker took him up diffidently—"you continued to—ah—?"

"Court her—as we say? No." Ember's shoulders, lifting, emphasized the disclaimer. "I'm no 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 unsuspecting."

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

"Did it strike you to 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 tiptoe for the sensation that presently came to them: the report of Drummond's death."

"What the devil—!"

"Patience! This is the third time it has happened—the same thing, practically: 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?"

"Nickname? No!"

"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 they blame her?"

"It isn't blame—it's superstition. Listen . . ."

Ember bent forward, holding Whitaker's gaze with intent, grave 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; same men with everything in the world to live for do such things, you know—according to the newspapers."

"I understand you. Please go on."

"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 way—a 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 dead, with a bullet in his brain. It was a rifle bullet, but though the square was crowded, no one had heard the report of the shot, and no one was seen carrying a rifle. The conclusion was that he had been shot by somebody using a gun with a Maxim silencer, from a window on the south side of the square. There were no clues."

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

A slightly sardonic expression modified the lines of Ember's mouth. "So far as Mrs. Whitaker is concerned," he said with the somewhat pedantic mode of speech which Whitaker was to learn 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. It is not as yet an established fact that he is dead."

"You mean there's hope—?"

"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—then. 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 still 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. . . . How long has Drummond known that you are alive?"

"Since noon today."

"May I ask, what was the extent of your property in his trust?"

"A couple of hundred thousands."

"And he believed you dead and was unable to find your widow . . .?"

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

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

"Well?"

"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."

"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 to, 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-fiend. 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 upon; always he's been able to fall back upon that asset, sure that her popularity would stave off bankruptcy. And he's superstitious; he believes she is his mascot. I don't accuse him—I suspect him, knowing him to be capable of many weird extravagances. . . . Furthermore, it's a fact that Max was a fellow-passenger with Billy

Hamilton when the latter disappeared in midocean."

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?"

"By all means."

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

"No."

"Or anybody else?"

"No."

"Then keep the truth to yourself—at



"They Call Her 'The Destroying Angel.'"

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."

What is your opinion of this Drummond suicide report? Do you believe the man is dead—if he isn't, why the effort to create the suicide impression? Is Drummond a thief or a madman?

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

EXIST IN PRIMITIVE EASE

Pueblo Indians Live in Exactly the Same Manner as Have Generations of Ancestors.

Perhaps the most unique settlement in the United States is the Pueblo Indian village, located in Arizona, observes the Christian Herald. This village comprises 1,500 peaceable Indians, whose sole and almost only aim in life is to secure a livelihood as easily as possible. This settlement is located in the hottest section of the state, but the excessive heat is not uncomfortable to these people, whose ancestors have lived in that desert section for unnumbered generations. Wastes of burning sand stretch for miles and miles on every side of this village.

A peculiar thing about this people is that they have two distinct villages. The summer village is located upon the floor of the valley, where the Pueblos occupy themselves in agriculture. The produce they raise, over what they need to eat during these hot months, is stored away for winter use. There are only a few places in that section of the desert where water is obtainable, and in these places the Pueblos pursue their primitive agriculture. Seasons come and seasons go, but as each goes by it sees these people living as they did during the preceding one. Since the white man first knew of this colony, which was back in the sixteenth century, the habits of this tribe have not changed. They eat the same kind of food, do the same sort of fancy work and live just as did their ancestors. So far as is known to historians, this is the oldest colony of any kind in this country.

Crude Musical Sense.

"That boy of yours is constantly whistling."

"Yes. He carries a tune much better than his sister, who is learning to play the piano, and doesn't cost me a cent for lessons."

HAD LONG LIST OF TROUBLES

And Woman Reported Them All to Unfortunate Listener in the Telephone Department.

The family had not had their telephone very long, says the Southwestern Telephone News, and everyone took a deep and abiding interest in it. On the outside of the directory they had noted the words, "Trouble, call No. 4217."

It had been a hard morning and everything had gone wrong. Finally the lady of the house in desperation turned to her trusty telephone and called 4217.

"This is the trouble department," answered the operator sweetly.

"Is this where you report your troubles?" asked the lady.

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, I only want to report that our cat got drowned in the cistern this morning, the baby is cutting a new tooth, the cook left without warning; we are out of sugar and starch; the stovepipe fell down; the milkman left only a pint instead of a quart today; the bread won't raise; my oldest child is coming down with the measles; the plumbing in the cellar leaks; we have only enough coal to last through tomorrow; the paint gave out when I got only half over the dining room floor; the mainspring of the clock is broken; my three sisters-in-law are coming to visit tomorrow; the man has not called for the garbage for two weeks; our dog has the mange; the looking glass fell off the wall a while ago and broke to pieces; and I think that my husband is taking considerable notice of a widow lately that lives next door. That's all today, but if anything happens later I'll call you up and tell you about it."

Clothing Cleanser.

Glycerin, one ounce; sulphuric acid, one ounce; methyl alcohol, one ounce; aqua ammonia, four ounces; castile soap, one ounce. When dissolved add sufficient water to make two quarts.

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 for 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, Billiousness, 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 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.

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 n 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.

Water—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