

THE DESTROYING ANGEL

By
LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

SYNOPSIS.

Young Hugh Whitaker's doctors tell him he has but a few months to live, and he has to take that and leave him. His friend, Peter Stark, finds him disconsolate and proposes a voyage. Whitaker runs away to a strange town and finds young Mary Ladislav, described by the man with whom she eloped, about to commit suicide.

One about to die surely must feel more at ease about his future if he is conscious of having really done some good in the world. And in the scheme of things beyond our understanding perhaps a single big unselfish act—one that saves another from a grievous doom—will balance our million mean little transgressions and leave us with credit on the Big Book. In the installment given here there's a mighty fine story involving just this point.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

"I didn't have any money to speak of, but I had some jewelry—my mother's—and he was to take that and pawn it for money to get married with."

"I see." The girl in her turn went to one of the windows, standing with her back to the room. Whitaker drew a chair for her and took a seat a little distance away, with a keen glance appraising the change in her condition. She seemed measurably more composed and mistress of her emotions, though he had to judge mostly by her voice and manner, so dark was the room.

"Don't!" she cried sharply. "Please don't look at me so."

"I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to."

"It's only—only that you make me think of what you must be thinking about me."

"You've had a narrow but a wonderfully lucky escape."

"Oh! . . . But I'm not glad . . . I was desperate—"

"I see," he interrupted coolly, "from Mr. Morton. The silver hair, you're not married to a black guard."

"Oh, yes, yes!" she agreed passionately. "And you have youth, health, years of life before you!"

He sighed inaudibly. . . . "You wouldn't say that, if you understood."

"Have you thought of going home? Have you written to your father—explained?"

"I sent him a special delivery three days ago, and—yesterday a telegram. I knew it wouldn't do any good, but I . . . I told him everything. He didn't answer. He won't, ever."

She bent forward, elbows on knees, head and shoulders cringing.

"It hurts so!" she wailed. . . . "what people will think . . . the shame, the bitter, bitter shame!"

"Yes, I earned my punishment."

"Oh, I say—"

"But I have, because—because I didn't love him. I didn't love him at all, and I knew it, even though I meant to marry him."

"But, why—In Heaven's name?"

"Because I was so lonely and . . . misunderstood, and unhappy at home. No mother, never during to see my sister (she ran away too), no friendships at school discouraged nothing in life but my father to bully me and make cruel fun of me because I'm not pretty. . . . That's why I ran away with a man I didn't love, because I wanted freedom and a little happiness."

"Good Lord!" he murmured beneath his breath, awed by the pitiful, childish simplicity of her confession and the deep damnation that had waited upon her.

"So it's over!" she cried—"over, and I've learned my lesson, and I'm desisting forever, and friends and all—stop right there!" he checked her roughly. "You're not friendless yet, and that nullifies all the rest. Be glad you've found your romance and learned your lesson."

"Please don't think I'm not grateful for your kindness," she interrupted. "But the disgrace—that can't be blotted out!"

"Oh, yes, it can," he insisted bluntly. "There's a way I know—"

A glimmering of that way had only that instant let a little light in upon the darkness of his soliloquy distress for her. He rose and began to walk and think, hunched behind him, trying to make what he had in mind seem right and reasonable.

"You mean beg my father to take me back. I'll die first!"

"There mustn't be any more talk, or even any thought, of anything like that. I understand too well to ask the impossible of you. But there is one way out—a perfectly right way—if you're willing and brave enough to take a chance—a long chance."

Somewhat she seemed to gain hope of his tone. She sat up, following him

with eyes that sought incredulously to believe.

"Have I any choice?" she asked. "I'm desperate enough."

"God knows," he said, "you'll have to be!"

"Try me."

He paused, standing over her. "Desperate enough to marry a man who's bound to die within six months and leave you free? I'm that man; the doctors give me six months more of life. Will you take my name to free yourself? Heaven my witness, you're welcome to it."

"Oh," she breathed, agitated, "what are you saying?"

"I'm proposing marriage," he said, with his quaint, one-sided smile. "Please listen: I came to this place to make a quick end to my troubles—but I've changed my mind about that, now. What's happened in this room has made me see that nobody has any right to hasten things. But I mean to leave the country—immediately—and let death find me where it will. I shall leave behind me a name and a little money, neither of any conceivable use to me. Will you take them, employ them to make your life what it was meant to be? It's a little thing, but it will make me feel a lot more at ease about this world to know I've left at least one decent act to mark my memory. There's only this far-fetched chance—I may live. It's a million-to-one shot, but you've got to bear it in mind. But really you can't lose."

"Oh, stop, stop!" she implored him, half hysterical. "To think of marrying to benefit by the death of a man like you—"

"You're no right to look at it that way." He had a very secret smile for his specious sophistry. "You're being asked to suffer, not to accept, a favor. It's just an act of kindness to a hopeless man. I'd go mad if I didn't know you were safe from a recurrence of the folly of this afternoon."

"Don't!" she cried—"don't tempt me. You're no right. . . . You don't know how frantic I am."

"I do," he countered frankly. "I'm depending on just that to swing you to my point of view. You've got to come to it. I mean you shall marry me."

She stared up at him, speechless, incessantly yielding to the domination of his will. It was inevitable. He was scarcely less desperate than she—and

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The rain had ceased, leaving a ragged sky of clouds and stars in patches. The air was warm and heavy with wetness. Sidewalks glistened like black watered silk; street lights mirrored themselves in fugitive puddles in the roadways; limbs of trees overhanging the sidewalks shivered now and again in a halfhearted breeze, pelting the wayfarers with miniature showers of lukewarm, scented drops.

Whitaker, taking his heart and his fate in his hands, accosted a venerable gentleman whom they encountered as he was on the point of turning off the sidewalk to private grounds.

"I beg your pardon," he began.

The man paused and turned upon them a kindly countenance framed in hair like snow.

"There is something I can do for you?" he inquired with punctilious courtesy.

"If you will be kind enough to direct me to a minister . . ."

"I am one."

"I thought so," said Whitaker. "We wish to get married."

The gentleman looked from his face to the girl's, then moved aside from the gate. "This is my home," he explained. "Will you be good enough to come in?"

Conducting them to his private study, he subjected them to a kindly catechism. The girl said little, Whitaker taking upon himself the brunt of the examination. Absolutely straightforward and intensely sincere, he came through the ordeal well, without being obliged to disclose what he preferred to keep secret. The minister, satisfied, at length called in the town clerk by telephone; who issued the license, pocketed his fee, and in company with the minister's wife, acted as witness.

Whitaker found himself on his feet beside Mary Ladislav. They were being married. He seemed to hear the drooping of the loom of the Fates.

And they were man and wife. The door had closed, the gate-clicked behind them. They were walking in the open air, side through the scent of night, they whom God had joined together. Neither found anything to say. At the station, Whitaker bought his wife a ticket to New York and secured for her solitary use a drawing-room in the sleeper. Whitaker possessed himself of his wife's hand-bag long enough to furnish it with a sum of money and an old envelope bearing the names and address of his law partner. He explained that the envelope would issue her an adequate monthly allowance and advise her when she should have become her own mistress once more; in a word, a widow.

She thanked him cordially, gratefully, with a constraint he understood too well to resent.

Both, perhaps, were sensible of some of the when at length the truth tumbled in from the East-breathing smoke and flame. Whitaker helped his wife aboard and interviewed the porter in her behalf. Then they had a moment or two alone in the drawing-room, in what was meant to be their first and last parting.

She caught him suddenly by the shoulders with both her hands. Her eyes sought his with a wistful courage he could not but admire.

"You know I'm grateful . . ."

"Don't think of it that way—though I'm glad you are."

"You're a good man," she said brokenly.

He knew himself too well to be able to reply.

"You mustn't worry about me, now. You've made things easy for me. I can take care of myself, and I won't forget whose name I bear!"

He muttered something to the effect that he was sure of that.

She released his shoulders and stood back, searching his face with tormented eyes. Abruptly she offered him her hand.

"Good-by," she said, her lips quivering. "Good-by, good friend!"

He caught the hand, crung it clumsily and painfully and, wondering whether or not hallucinations were a phase of his malady. A sick man often dreams strange dreams. . . .

A voice behind him, cool with a trace of irony, observed:

"I'd give a good deal to know just what particular brand of foolishness you've been indulging in, this time."

He whirled around to face Peter Stark—Peter quietly amused, very much the master of the situation.

"You needn't think," said he, "that you have any chance on earth of escaping my fond attentions, Hugh. I've had it up with Nelly to wait until I bring you home, a well man, home, to be get married; and if you refuse to be my best man—well, there won't be any party. You can make up your mind to that."

CHAPTER IV.

Willful Mischief.

It was one o'clock in the morning before Whitaker allowed himself to be persuaded; fatigue re-enforced every stubborn argument of Peter Stark's to overcome his resistance. "Oh, have your own way," he said at length, unconsciously iterating the words that had won him a bride.

Whitaker has consented to go seafaring. But his mind is on the girl he has just married. What do you think he will do now?

(TO BE CONTINUED)

THE HOME BEAUTIFIER

Flowers and Shrubbery
Their Care and Cultivation



An Attractive Arrangement of Plants in the House.

THE INDOOR GARDEN

By ELIZABETH VAN BENTHOVEN.

I imagine that most of my readers are now having their joys and sorrows with the indoor garden—that some substitute for the out-of-door plants of the good months. But as half a lot is better than no bread, so the pleasure of having a few flowers in the house during the cold months is worth all the time and trouble that it requires, and the added consolation is present that one need not be entirely without color and fragrance even when the winds are blowing a flower outside.

There is hardly a real lover of flowers in the world who has not at least tried to make an indoor winter garden. Some use a cellophane or wax tent, others a glass case, and some others a simple box or a large tub.

The intimate association that one has with the few plants which may be nurtured throughout the winter makes them all the dearer. One becomes better acquainted with them. They become actual members of the family, and they take on the character of children as they are given more and more the sort of solicitude that a mother might be expected to bestow upon an invalid child.

Light, moisture, warmth, fresh air and protection from insects are the prime essentials of the winter garden. Most flowering plants ought to have the full sun for at least a part of the day. A number of the foliage plants will do very well without the direct rays, if there be plenty of light.

The heat in the room where plants are to be kept must be under control so that a temperature of from 40 to 60 degrees may be maintained overnight. Even where it is only possible to maintain 40 degrees of heat most of the ordinary house plants can be kept, if they can be protected during especially cold weather from frost striking through the windows.

One often finds it possible to cut off a bay window, or other like window space, so that it may be sheltered by screens or curtains running well up to the ceiling. Thus the particular part of the room may be kept warmer at night and in an atmospheric state better suited to the plants.

Generally speaking, the question of proper moisture is the most neglected feature of the winter garden problem. It is a happy sequel that the problem is easily regulated. The greatest trouble is to know just what the plants require. Moisture in the air is just as essential as moisture on the soil.

Steam heat and the improved methods for supplying water comfort to people, takes the vitalizing element out of the air. It can be remedied by placing vessels of water on radiators, or near stoves where plants are kept in the room. The evaporation of the water attends to this necessary detail quite well.

In providing moisture for the soil it

is likely that the amateur will overdo the trick more often than it will be underdone. Many of the plants will take a winter snooze through the cold months and will require little soil moisture. Plants to be kept in active growth, of course, require more. In many cases thorough drainage must be provided because a water-saturated soil will prove fatal and you must remember that it is quite possible to drown a plant.

Escaping Humulating gas or coal gas will poison your plants. They are very sensitive and must have air to breathe that is not polluted. A flower will discover gas poison before the average person will do so. Keep your plants clean. Insects thrive on dirty plants. They also propagate more rapidly indoors than out. Light spraying is almost a necessity.

Diversified farming may be the watchword of the time, but it is not the principle to follow in the house garden. To have a little of everything generally means that you will not have much of anything. The varieties must be limited. A number of plants of the same habit and color are much better than a collection.

Begonias will give a touch of color to the winter garden. A temperature of 55 degrees is required for them, and they can be propagated by tubers, leaves or cuttings. The gloxinia requires heat in the early stages. The easiest method of propagation is from tubers direct. The ananias, or hippeastrum, makes a handsome pot plant. Its flowers are large and they vary in that. They require very little water to make a winter success.

The banana requires a fairly warm spot for the best results, but it makes a fine plant for winter blooming. The spirea, with its creamy masses and delicate odor is always a valuable factor. Good drainage and plenty of moisture are required.

ROSES FOR NORTHERN LATITUDES

For hardness, sturdy growth, freedom of bloom, color and beauty of flower and foliage free from disease, Radiance is a glorious extra hardy hybrid tea.

If you can have but one white rose, select Frau Karl Druschki. With its large, full, pure-white flower, it is a thing of beauty.

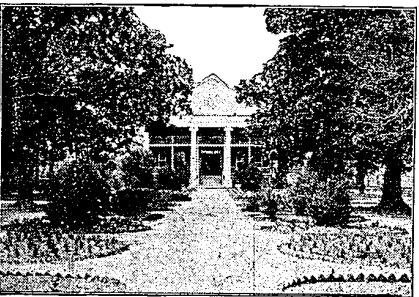
Another hybrid perpetual which is a good one to select is Mrs. John Laing. It is a beautiful soft pink rose, well formed and a persistent bloomer.

For a good red rose Captain Haywood, a hybrid perpetual is a good choice.

Then there are many old favorites, such as General Jacquemont, Mme. Plantier, Harrison, George IV, black rose and the York and Lancaster roses.

Most rose plants stand the cold weather fairly well. It is the melting snows and cold rains with freezing weather overnight in the spring that is most trying to the life of the rose.

To withstand these quick climatic changes your rose plants require good winter protection.



An Unusual and Artistic Planting Scheme.

Billy Sunday Says:

"SOME get-rich-quick

scams have tried to interest me in their plans. But 5% first mortgage bonds and a night's rest should be better than 15% and insomnia." It is a fact that some investments do pay six, eight, ten per cent., and even more. But only to those who are closely in touch with investment centers and have a generous supply of good luck thrown in. Such investments are not open indiscriminately to the person of limited means. The average person better stick to the good, safe 5% investment, such as offered by our First Mortgage Bond Certificates, secured by First Mortgage taken on basis of 50% of actual cost value; every \$1 of investment secured by more than \$2 of actual income-producing property, and further guaranteed by a conservative, responsible company, with \$200,000.00 paid-up capital. Bonds issued in denominations of \$50, \$100, \$500 and upwards. Send for booklet.

Urban Realty Mortgage Company

46-48 W. Congress St. Detroit

Uncle Sam's Chemists.

Despite the monumental work of such government experts as Doctor Rittman, the discoverer of a new gasoline process; Dr. Harvey Wiley of pure-food fame, and the whole corps engaged in fertilizer experiments, public opinion will not give credit for any good thing to Uncle Sam's chemists. After making a low-cost record for producing smokeless powder at Pictet's arsenal and producing "dum-dum" bullets, the famous secret "high explosive" "D"—the workers in explosives have succeeded in producing a flashless powder. The great heat developed in smokeless powder detonations causes flying particles to become incandescent, producing a flash, but this new explosive produces only a pear-shaped iridescent flow at the muzzle, invisible at two miles. At night, a flash as high as a mounted man (technically known as "mounted defile") will conceal the flash, the "defile" required at night for our present explosive is not exactly known, but artillery officers have been known to declare, pessimistically, that a mile would be none too high.

His Weather Eye.

Two ladies were hurrying down the street in Worcester in the rain, carrying their umbrellas low for protection. In turning a corner sharply the point of one umbrella struck a passerby in the forehead.

"Goodness!" gasped the woman. "I'll keep an eye out in the future."

"Goodness!" exclaimed the man, "you near had one out in the present!"

The Only Way to Phone.

"Why, this is a funny telephone you have on your desk; it isn't finished, is it?"

"Yes, that is a complete telephone."

"But there is nothing to it but the receiver. Where is the mouthpiece?"

"Doesn't need one. That is the instrument over which I converse with my wife."

The Gentle Sex.

Almae—I hear that Hazel is trying to get into business.

Mary—So? What kind of business? Almae—Everybody's.

POSTUM
HELPS
WHERE
COFFEE
HURTS
There's
a
Reason.