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We Can Try to be Consistent, Anyhow.

Consistency is indeed a jewel. We have no doubt many of our readers read the article in this paper yesterday about government printing envelopes and the inconsistency of business men declaiming against the public for buying from mail order houses when they themselves are using mail order printing.

But we are not disposed to be severe in our criticisms in this connection. We know what a job it is to be consistent. Just as there never has been a human being perfect so there has never been a human being consistent.

But there is such a thing as making too object a surrender to one's inclination to be inconsistent. It is better to be consistent now and then than it is never to be consistent. So if there is one of our readers who has contracted the mail order printing habit, we suggest that he break away from it at least on occasion and give his order to one of the home printeries. Why not all pull together in building up the town?

Of course the government should go out of the printing business, and we believe it will eventually, as a result of the constantly strengthening public sentiment against the unfairness of such competition, but in the meantime it is well enough for users of stationery who are against the mail order business to be as consistent as a very natural human proclivity will allow them to be.

Mr. Ryan's System.

M. D. Hart, a Richmond man, writing in the Journal of that city, defends Thomas F. Ryan against some of the criticisms which were directed at the New York financier at the National Democratic Convention.

"The system through which he has made his money," says Mr. Hart, "from all I can learn, is not peculiar to the United States, but is operated the world over. For the benefit of the unenlightened, it is a pity that Mr. Hart didn't explain what he meant by Mr. Ryan's system of making money. Mr. Ryan at Baltimore characterized Mr. Ryan as of the privilege-seeking class and it is a standing criticism in New York city where the former Virginian has made his fortune that the corruption of the city government has been a part of Mr. Ryan's money making program. Mr. Ryan's system may be operated all the world over and may also be all wrong. Mr. Hart missed a good opportunity to explain Mr. Ryan's system. If he had told what the system was, one could have come nearer reaching a conclusion as to whether it was defensible.

We have an idea that Mr. Hart purposely omitted to define the Ryan system, realizing that to do so would impair the force of his argument.

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The readers of this paper will be pleased to learn that there is at least one dreadful disease that science has been able to cure in all its stages, and that is Catarrh, Hall's Catarrh Cure is the only positive cure now known to the medical fraternity. Catarrh being a constitutional disease, requires a constitutional treatment. Hall's Catarrh Cure is taken internally, acting directly upon the blood and mucous surfaces of the system, thereby destroying the foundation of the disease, and giving the patient strength by building up the constitution and enabling nature to do its work. The proprietors have so much faith in its curative powers that they offer One Hundred Dollars for any case that it fails to cure. Send for list of testimonials.

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No Man's Land A ROMANCE By Louis Joseph Vance Illustrations by Ray Walters

CHAPTER XVIII

Evening was advancing in utter calm when Coast regarded the beach before the deserted village. The wind had died away to mere vagrant breaths, barely strong enough to darken that dully polished, unquiet floor of water, widening in loneliness from those desolate, fog-bound shores. Pausing beside the beached catboat Coast stared hungrily at the little vessel off shore, gently swinging at its mooring. How to reach her, how make use of her if needs must? He shook his head in doubt, strongly assured now that he would set foot upon her decks only through exercise of force.

His hopes reverted now to Appleyard as the last resort. Without the little man and the Echo—or some other boat—he was powerless, a figure for the mirth of his enemies. At his feet the blind dog crouched motionless as stone, seeming to search the infinite with the unwinking stare of its dead, colorless eyes. Abruptly a sound of pelting feet transformed the scene. The blind dog lifted up with a jump and faced round, growling in its throat. Coast turned, startled and apprehensive. Down the way to the beach Chang was running at a curious, outlandish jog-trot, head low between his broad, gaunt shoulders. Apparently he was heading directly for Coast.

With a little thrill of fear the American glanced round for some means of defending himself. He had no doubt that the Chinaman had been commissioned to dispose of him even as poor Power had been done away with. In a sudden flash of anger he laid hold of the first thing that caught his eye—which happened to be the half rotted tiller of the catboat, a heavy and formidable club if it did not break with the initial blow—and moved a pace or two forward, holding himself in a position of defence. But within a hundred yards the Chinaman swerved widely, then held on steadily toward the northern sand spit. A moment or two later he arrived at the water's edge, and while Coast stared half stupefied, stopped and stripped to his linen drawers, then took to the water, wading out until he loathed footing, then swimming with long, powerful, overhand strokes, straight off for the catboat.

Watching the round, shaven poll with its collared pigtails out swiftly through the glimmering silvery sheen of water, Coast lost himself in anxious speculation until recalled by a quick movement of the dog at his side, accompanied by a deep-throated growl. He wheeled then to discover Blackstock close upon them, his burly body swaying heavily as he came on at a moderate pace. A second growl, that more resembled an angry roar, brought the man to a standstill, with a hand moving nervously toward the side pocket of his coat, in which a firearm sagged visibly. "If you're on speaking terms with that brute," said the man brusquely, "call him off before I take a pot-shot at him."

"Keep your hand clear of that pocket," said Coast sharply, advancing. "or I'll take a chance at you myself." "You!" Blackstock's thick lips curved, contemptuous. "Take your chance, by all means, with that silly, womanish tiller, if you've got the nerve; but call off that dog, or I'll shoot him dead. I want a little talk with you." Coast, without ceasing to watch the man, for fear of treachery, had stepped to the dog's side and caught his fingers in an aged and weather-worn strap round his throat, before he appreciated the full significance of Blackstock's words. Then his jaw dropped and his eyes widened. "What!" he cried, astounded. His gaze was keen upon the plump, dark, brutish face that leered at him; he saw its small eyes no longer dull and fixed, but twinkling with an evil, impish glitter. The dim suspicion that more than once he had rejected from his thoughts as extravagant and idle, was suddenly resolved into conviction. "So," he said slowly, "you do see, after all?" "The discovery," said Blackstock with a ponderous affection of mordant wit, "does credit to your perceptivity. I congratulate you on making it—when I chose to let you."

Blackstock laughed again, by all tokens enjoying himself immensely. "But why?" he asked lightly. "Why damn me for taking a simple man's word for granted?—obeying Nature's first law, and all that sort of thing? I want you to stick here until tomorrow morning, at the earliest; that gives me a chance to make a clean get-away. Why should I leave you the means to gum up my plans? Thanks, I'm many kinds of a fool, I know, but not that bad!"

"You'll never leave this island free," Coast muttered. "Oh, what's that? Oh, you think not—? Believe me, my gay gallant, I'm wise to all you're banking on. It's true you had me guessing for a time—I wasn't sure about you at first; that immature beard you've been growing recently is quite some disguise, and besides you'd changed your way of talking; his lordship's languid drawl was missing; and you look like any other ordinary mutt, out of your pretty clothes—but I got your number in due course of time. That break you made about the gun when I was pulling my bluff about knowing people by the feel of their faces—you forgot yourself then, and I hadn't any more doubts. I did some talk figuring before I got completely hep, but a little work with wireless rounded the story out. You see, you had the yare of the Corsair's trouble down too pat and gib for it to be without a grain of truth; you gave me that well, we knew one man certainly; and probably two, had been on the island in the fog yesterday morning and butted in on the funeral obsequies of my ill-favored young assistant, Power, and it didn't seem in reason they'd be content to let the matter rest at that—specially after going to the trouble of breaking Chang's head in return for being shot at. . . . So I got busy, as I say, and the fog helping I fixed things up very prettily.

"I warned Voorhis—he's sloping for safety now; sent the tug after the Corsair, unhappily too late—its evident your friend, the Secret Service sleuth—"

"How did you guess that?" Coast demanded huskily. "Considering what I've been up to, what was the likeliest guess? I wasn't sure until you gave it away just now—merely satisfied such was the case. . . . Well, as I was saying, I worked the wireless pretty steadily—was happy enough to pick up a message to the Scylla—a revenue cutter, I take it—ordering her here to bust up a nest of smugglers; and spiked that gun with another message, a couple of hours later, revoking the order as being based on false information. And, finally, I got my friends on the mainland to make up a little party to fetch me off. So, all things being pleasant as afternoon tea, I came down to greet over you a little. Hope you don't mind."

"Why," said Coast—"since you'd made up your mind about me—why did you hold off this long? To laugh at me?" "Partly, Mr. Coast, partly. There were other reasons. One was I don't bear you any ill-will; which you'll allow is pretty decent of me, considering the rotten way I've treated you. I don't kill in cold blood without a pretty good reason. Van Tuy's mouth had to be shut, you know—or rather, you don't know why, and likely never will; and Power was threatening to spill on the game here, so he had to be taken care of. But you . . . I'll be candid; to begin with your life wasn't worth a tallow-dip; I made up my mind to eliminate you with neatness and dispatch—when your back was turned, for choice. But then I began to think the game was about up, so far as No Man's Land was concerned. So, what was the use of making a bad matter messier? You were harmless, and I didn't hate you hard enough to want you murdered—unless you made it necessary. So I voted for the laugh instead of the funeral."

"Do you think for an instant I intend to let you go?" "You! What've you got to say about it? Don't be silly; I'm going—and not to the electric chair, either. I shall just quietly drop out of your ken for good and all—and some day you'll be grateful. Look what a cute little island I'm making you a present of—God knows I've no further use for it; you're welcome. Same way with my wife; I was rather fond of her, once, but now you can have her. Of course there'll be some delay about the blessed respectability end of it—the divorce—grounds—desertion—and all that—but, still, if you're half as keen as a lover as you are a fool—"

"You contemptible hound!" "Steady, there!" Blackstock's voice dropped to a dangerous key. "Remember—"

He found no time to finish. As he spoke Coast, bolder himself, released the dog and whirled the tiller above his head. With a grunt Blackstock stepped back, tugging at the weapon in his pocket; but before he could drop it the dog, free and frantic with hatred, launched itself like a bolt for his throat, and blind though it was, springing by instinct toward the sound of his voice, found its mark. Coast's bludgeon, sweeping for his head with deadly accuracy, none the less missed its mark, so quickly the dog staggered and carried Blackstock off his feet.

By the time they had passed through the Cold Lairs, Katherine's strength began to fail. The rapid pace at which they had made the ascent from the beach had told upon her more than Coast would have realized but for insupportable evidence of distress she betrayed; her laggard footsteps and her labored breathing. Passing an arm round her waist, he held her up and gave her what support and help he could, but when they had gained the summit of the first ridge inland, between the farm-house and deserted village, he had to pause and rest.



"Take Me Away Quickly!"

flew out of his hand and to one side, falling in shallow water, while Chang grabbed his right hand with his left and doubled like a jackknife over it, screaming with agony. In mute amazement, seeking the source of this timely assistance, discovered Katherine standing with her revolver still uplifted, half-way between the Cold Lairs and the beached catboat. He marvelled at her. In this moment of trial and terror, she retained her wits and courage in a manner calculated to command the homage of a veteran of many wars. The instant after Coast caught sight of her, she fired again, placing a bullet shrewdly at the very feet of the Chinaman.

"Get back!" she called clearly. "Back—or I'll shoot to kill!" Chang not only heard, but in all his pain and blank amazement understood. Without a word's delay he turned his back and nursing his injured hand, trotted sullenly off, to eastward down the beach. Coast took the echoes with a shout. "Well done, Katherine! Look to him now—while I—"

He turned back to Blackstock and the dog, just then a confused and struggling mass in the shadow of the boat. So quickly had Chang been disposed of that Blackstock, for all his tremendous strength and activity, for all that he was pitted against nothing more powerful than a blind and aged if infuriated dog, was only just succeeding in fighting to his knees. Already Coast was closing in to his assistance, forgetful of his hatred and thinking only of aiding him in that unnatural contest; though at ways with the thought that they had by the rarest turn of Chance won the whip-hand—when Blackstock rose with a lurch, wrenched the coil from his breast and with a sudden, swift and merciless movement swung the dog above his head and brought it down with tremendous force across the coaming of the boat. There was a single, terrible yelp, and the dog lay inert with a broken back.

Panting and shaken, both hands to his lacerated and bleeding throat, the man staggered a pace or two away, and fell suddenly against the bows of the boat, grasping its stem for support. Stunned with the surprise of it Coast turned away, aware that Katherine was calling him. "Garrett! Garrett!" he heard her cry. "Come—quickly! . . . Don't you see—?" She swung an arm seaward and to the west. Following this sign, he saw, perhaps a quarter of a mile off shore and sweeping swiftly in under the urge of a dozen oars, a mackerel-fisher's seine-boat, crowded to the thwarts with men.

There was no sign of any vessel in the offing. Whether this long-boat could have dropped from deified his most far-fetched guess. He stared agape and thunderstruck until the woman, gaining his side, caught his arm with an imperative hand. "Garrett!" Her voice was quivering now with consternation and the reaction from the excitement that had buoyed her up through the last few minutes. "Take me away, take me quickly! There's not a minute—"

"The catboat." "Gone," he answered stupidly; "sunk by Chang—Blackstock's orders. We've no chance now—only Appleyard." "Then, hurry! Don't you see that boat—?" "Yes, but—"

CHAPTER XIX

By the time they had passed through the Cold Lairs, Katherine's strength began to fail. The rapid pace at which they had made the ascent from the beach had told upon her more than Coast would have realized but for insupportable evidence of distress she betrayed; her laggard footsteps and her labored breathing. Passing an arm round her waist, he held her up and gave her what support and help he could, but when they had gained the summit of the first ridge inland, between the farm-house and deserted village, he had to pause and rest.

From that point of vantage, with the broad crescent of the beach spread out beneath their gaze, they watched the landing of the seine-boat. Like some huge water insect of many legs, black body silhouetted against the silvered sea, it sped inland, four long oars to a side dipping and lifting with the rhythmical beat of a perfect piece of machinery. Then of a sudden with precise accord the oars were lifted and laid in; at slowly decreasing speed the long-boat slipped through the shoaling waters and nosed the sands. Four figures leaped overboard and grasping the thwarts hauled the bows high up on the beach. Others followed, some lingering to help drag the long-boat out of the tide's limits, some trotting to Blackstock's aid.

With difficulty, because of the momentarily fading light, Coast counted the company of the newcomers; they numbered, as nearly as he could estimate, ten. With Blackstock and Chang, that meant twelve to two—fourteen to two, if he were to include the two coolies in the farm-house. He withheld a groan of dismay, and lightened his arm round the woman's waist, unconsciously consecrating his life to her defense. Blackstock should recapture her only when he, Coast, had fallen fighting.

Dimly through the gloaming he saw Blackstock lifted to his feet before the throng closed round him, a vague dark blur about the boat. From the east the tall, gaunt figure of Chang was moving with long and steady strides back to join them. As yet there was no indication of pursuit. None the less, Coast stirred uneasily and glanced in solitude down at the pale oval of the face resting wearily against his shoulder. "Feeling better?" he inquired gently. "Do you think you can walk, dear?"

She drew in a deep breath and nodded assent. "I'm all right, now," she said, though still her respiration sounded harsh and uneven; "at least, I will be presently. . . . Are they coming?" she added with a start. "No," he answered. "They're not worrying about us. We can't get far—not off the island. When we're wanted, they'll find us easily enough, I'm afraid. For the present, Blackstock's entertaining them with the story of his misadventure." He laughed shortly. "Come," he said; and they turned again inland, moving at a brisk walk toward the bungalow—with what purpose neither could have said.

"But that seine-boat!" he asked suddenly, a moment later. "Where under Heaven did she drop from? You spoke of the schooner. . . ." "It's ashore," she told him. "I saw it all from the bungalow. . . . I had been inside, looking for my trunk keys. I couldn't seem to find them at first. He was in the wireless-room when I went in, but by the time I found the keys he had disappeared. I went to the door and stood looking out, wondering what had become of him and whether I dared risk a return to the beach—and you—while it was still so light; and suddenly the schooner shot out of the mist a little south of the point, over there in the west. I could just hear the engine knocking—and I don't think they suspected how close they were to the island. At all events, the next instant she struck—stopped short as if she had run against a wall, quite a distance out; and in two minutes her stern was under water. I saw the crew putting out the long-boat and jumping into it; and then I ran down to the beach.

"She's the one," he said abstractedly—the schooner Appleyard was after, beyond round. You heard them hail Blackstock by name—by the name they know him under." "The woman said 'Yes,' indifferently, leaning more heavily upon him. "Out of the dusk, in which objects were just perceptible, the bungalow loomed up before them. By common consent they paused, Coast looking back toward the beach, Katherine peering up into his face. "Are they coming, Garrett?" "Not yet," he said, perplexity in his tone. "It's as I thought; they know they can lay hands on us at any time. So we can go hang until they're ready to take up our case."

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