



The POOL of FLAME

by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLSWORTH YOUNG

COPYRIGHT 1909 by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE



SYNOPSIS.

The story opens at Monte Carlo with Col. Terence O'Rourke, a military free lance and something of a gambler, in his hotel. Learning on the balcony he sees a beautiful girl who suddenly enters the elevator and passes from sight. At the gaining table O'Rourke notices two men watching him. One is the Hon. Bertie Glynn, while his companion is Viscount Des Trebes, a duelist. The viscount tells him the French government has directed him to O'Rourke as a man who would undertake a secret mission. At his apartment, O'Rourke, who had agreed to undertake the mission, finds a mysterious letter. The viscount arrives, hands a sealed package to O'Rourke, who is not to open it until on the ocean. A pair of dainty slippers are seen protruding from under a doorway curtain. The Irishman finds the owner of the mysterious feet to be his wife, Beatrice, from whom he had run away a year previous. They are reconciled, and opening the letter he finds that a Rangoon law firm offers him 100,000 pounds for a jewel known as the Pool of Flame and left to him by a dying friend, but now in keeping of one named Chambret in Algeria. O'Rourke worships the nobleman in a duel. The wife bids O'Rourke farewell and he promises to soon return with the reward. He discovers both Glynn and the viscount on board the ship. As he finds Chambret here in an attack by bandits and his friend tells O'Rourke that he has left the Pool of Flame with the governor general, who at sight of a signal ring given the colonel will deliver over the jewel. Arriving at Algeria the Irishman finds the governor general away. Des Trebes makes a mysterious appointment and tells O'Rourke that he has gained possession of the jewel by stealing it. In a duel O'Rourke masters the viscount, secures possession of the Pool of Flame and starts by ship for Rangoon. He discovers the captain to be a smuggler who tries to steal the jewel. It is finally secured by the captain and O'Rourke escapes to land. With the aid of one Danny and his sweetheart, O'Rourke recovers the Pool of Flame. On board ship once more, bound for Rangoon, a mysterious intruder appears. O'Rourke comes upon a lazar about to attack the lady, who is a Mrs. Pryne, and kills the man into the hold. Mrs. Pryne claims she is en route for Indiana on a mission for the king. O'Rourke is attacked by the lazar, who secures the Pool of Flame, the captain is shot and the lazar jumps into the sea. The ship arrives in port. Danny hands O'Rourke the Pool of Flame which he has stolen from Mrs. Pryne. It is the real jewel, the one lost at sea being a counterfeit. O'Rourke goes to Calcutta and discovers Des Trebes disguised. He now knows that Mrs. Pryne was an accomplice. Finally he gets to the lawyer who has offered the reward, delivers the jewel and gets the money. Going to the residence of the lazar on invitation, O'Rourke finds him murdered and Des Trebes is found dying.

CHAPTER XXXII.—(Continued.)

With each development the mystery was assuming more fantastic proportions, becoming still more impentriable and unsolvable. But he had no leisure in which to ponder it now, if Des Trebes were to be restored. And O'Rourke worked over the man as tenderly as though they had been lifelong friends, with skillful fingers estimating the nature and extent of his wounds, with sound knowledge of gough and ready surgery doing all that could be done to bring him back to consciousness.

At last Des Trebes sighed feebly; a spot of color, feeble, fleckle, evanescent, dyed his cheeks; his breath rattled harshly in his gullet; his eyelids twitched and opened wide. He glared blankly at the face above.

"Des Trebes!" cried O'Rourke. "Des Trebes!"

His voice quickened the intelligence of that moribund brain. A flash of recognition lighted the staring eyes. The lips moved without sound.

"Des Trebes!"

"Ah, yes . . . the Irishman."

The whisper was barely articulate. O'Rourke put to his lips a cup of brandy diluted with a little water. "Drink," he pleaded, "and try to tell me what's happened to ye. Who gave ye these wounds? Try to speak."

"But . . . no . . . I shall not tell."

"But—good God, man! ye've been murdered!"

The white lips moved again; the adventurer bent his ear low to them. "We . . . have both . . . lost . . . but you . . . your wife . . ."

"My wife!"

In a frenzy O'Rourke resumed his efforts to strengthen the dying man with spirits and water, but Des Trebes, with a final effort, obstinately shut his teeth, moving his head imperceptibly from side to side in token of his stubborn refusal.

So he died, implacable. In death the chiselled features remained set in a smile sardonic and triumphant. Dying, he gave no comfort to his foe.

For a little time longer O'Rourke knelt at Des Trebes' side, watching and wondering. Eventually he sighed heavily, shook his head, shrugged his shoulders and rose. And, rising, he perceived for the first time that he was no longer alone with the dead in that place.

Kneeling in silence by the vicomte's side he had till then been hidden from the inner doorway to the room by the drapery of the center table. And evidently it was this circumstance which had emboldened a man to slip in from the main hall and approach Sypher's desk at the back of the room.

As O'Rourke appeared he was conscious first of something moving in the room—a movement caught vaguely from the corner of his eyes. Then he heard a stifled cry of fright. He had already his revolver in his hand, so instant had been the obedience of his brain and body to the admonition of instinct.

He swung about with the weapon poised, crying: "Stop!" The other man was apparently trying to escape by the door to the hall, but was much too far from it to escape the threatened bullet. A jet of fire spurted from his hand. O'Rourke heard a crash and clatter of broken window-glass behind him. Without delay or conscious aim he fired and saw, still indistinctly through pungent wreaths of smoke, the figure reel and collapse upon itself.

The man had hardly fallen ere O'Rourke stood over him, with a foot firm upon one arm, while he bent and wrenched a revolver from relaxing fingers. Then, stepping back, he took stock of the murderous-minded intruder, and saw at his feet, writhing, coughing and spitting, a Chinese coolie—a type of the lowest class, his face a set yellow mask, stolid, unemotional, brutalized. Even then it betrayed little feeling; only the slant-set black eyes burned with unquenchable hatred as they glared up at the conqueror.

O'Rourke's bullet had penetrated the man's chest; and as he squirmed and groaned through his sharpened teeth of a rat, a crimson stain spread on the bosom of his coarse white blouse.

Wholly confounded, O'Rourke shook an amazed head. A third element had been added to the mystery with no effect other than to render it more opaque and dense than before.

The telephone, its raucous voice now long since stilled, came into his mind, and he was minded to leave the room and find it, to summon aid.

Before he could move, however, a footfall on the veranda started him, and his ears were ringing with a command couched in terse, curt English: "Hands up!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A man stood in one of the windows, his figure conspicuous against the night in cool white linen of a semi-military cut, his extended right hand training a revolver on the Irishman's head.

"Faith!" cried O'Rourke with genuine relief, "you're more welcome than a snowfall in Hades. Good evening to ye, and many of them."

"Hands up!"

"With all the pleasure in the world," O'Rourke elevated his hands. "I've two revolvers on me person," he volunteered amiably; "before ye go any further ye'll be wanting to take 'em away from me, I'm not doubting."

"From what I see, I quite believe I shall," agreed the Englishman, without relaxing his unprejudiced attitude. "At all events, keep your hands where they are, for the time being. . . . What the deuce does this mean?"

"Tell me yourself and I'll make ye a handsome present," returned the O'Rourke composedly. "I've been adding me wits over it for the last thirty minutes, but neither rhyme nor reason can I read into it. But, see now; would ye mind relieving me of the arsenal I've been telling ye about, that I may rest me arms without fear of being punctured?"

The other laughed shortly and entered the room—a clean-limbed, sturdy, well-set-up boy of four or five-and-twenty, or thereabouts. He possessed, aside from an emphatic and capable manner, good looks enhanced by a wide good-humored mouth.

"You might help me out a bit, you know," said the boy briskly. "You've been so free with your information that I don't doubt you will place me still further under obligation to you by turning your back and depositing your weapons on that table. Of course, I needn't bore you by remarks upon the folly of false moves."

"'Twould be quite superfluous," replied O'Rourke, obeying with a fair and easy grace. "There now. What else may be your pleasure?"

"Move back three paces and stand still."

"Right-O, me lord."

O'Rourke executed the prescribed evolution and, at rest, heard footsteps behind him; a thought later he felt the Englishman's hands rapidly going through his pockets. Then, with a "very good," the latter stepped between the table and O'Rourke and faced him.

"You've apparently told the truth thus far," he said. "Now what'dyou know about this?" He waved a hand round the room. "Be careful what you say. I may as well inform you

I'm Couch, lieutenant sub-chief of police for this district."

"Saint Patrick would be no more welcome," declared O'Rourke. "I was on the point of trying to get ye by telephone when ye saved me the trouble. How the devil did ye happen to drop in so opportunely?"

"I was coming up-stream in the police launch, on the night tour of inspection, and stopped at the landing just below this—the grounds here run down to the river, you know—to telephone back to headquarters on business. The exchange operator suggested I look in here and see if everything was all right—said he'd been unable to get any response since nightfall. . . . Now?"

Carefully and concisely O'Rourke wove the events of the day into a straight narrative, starting with the delivery to Sypher of the Pool of Flame, touching briefly upon Des Trebes' part—so far as he understood it—and concluding with the death of the coolie. The sub-chief of police eyed him throughout with gravely concentrated interest, nodding his understanding.

"I see," he said slowly. "You make it clear enough. Moreover, you've convinced me. I didn't really believe from the first you'd had any hand in this ghastly mess, but I couldn't take chances, of course. You're at liberty to take up these pistols as soon as you please; in fact, I advise you to do so immediately. From what's taken place already, you may have need of 'em within the next ten seconds. . . . Now for this coolie. If he's able to speak, I'll get some information out of him."

"'Tis too far gone he is, I'm fearing."

"We'll soon find out," the Englishman bent over the man, who was now very quiet, but, by the constant flicker of his cunning eyes, still conscious. A hasty examination told the investigator all he needed to know about the nature of the wound. "He'll not last long," said Lieutenant Couch, and began to converse with the local vernacular of Pidgin-English, about one word in ten of which was intelligible

"Stubborn brute," growled Couch. "Most of these animals here belong to some devilish tong or other, and they'd rather die than say anything touching on the business of the society or affecting the interests of a brother-member. But I think I know a way to bring him to reason. Hand me that knife, please."

Wondering, O'Rourke tendered him the weapon that had brought death to Sypher. The lieutenant wiped it carefully on the corner of the coolie's blouse and held the keen shining blade before his eyes, accompanying the action with a few emphatic phrases. A curious expression, compounded of sullen fury and abject panic fright, showed in the Chinaman's eyes, and his lips were as if by magic unsealed. However reluctant, he began to chatter and spoke at length, delivering himself of a long statement which Couch punctured now and again with pertinent, leading questions.

At length, throwing aside the knife, he jumped up, strong excitement burning in his eyes. "I've got enough from him," he said rapidly. "I'll explain later. You'll help—of course; your wife's involved as well as Miss Pynsent. But I don't think you need fear; we'll be in time. Are you ready? . . . Half a minute; I've got to use that telephone."

He ran out into the hall, rang up and shouted a number into the receiver, and for a few moments spoke rapidly in a Burmese dialect. O'Rourke gathered that he was speaking with a native subordinate at the police headquarters in Rangoon.

Couch swung back into the study. "Got those revolvers, sir? Then come along; we'll have to run for it. Fortunately our launch is handy; otherwise . . ."

He sprang across the veranda and down to the lawn, O'Rourke pelting after him.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A night of velvet blackness, softly opaque, lay upon land and water. The police launch, shuddering with the vi-



A Man Stood in One of the Windows.

brations of a motor running at high tension, sped down the silent reaches of Rangoon River like a hunted ghost. She ran without lights, these having been extinguished by Couch's directions, regardless of harbor regulations or danger. Happily the hour was late enough to relieve them of much fear of trouble with other craft; the upper reaches of the river were practically deserted.

In the bow Couch was handling the wheel with the nonchalance of one from whom the river had no secrets by night or day. To O'Rourke it seemed no light task to pilot so slight a craft at such high speed through that Stygian darkness; yet the sub-chief

was accomplishing the feat without a discernible trace of fear or tremor of uncertainty.

O'Rourke sat beside him. In the stern a police orderly acted as mechanic, attending to the motor. These three, no more, made up the rescue party.

"Though devoured by impatience and anxiety, O'Rourke forbore to question Couch, hesitating to divert his attention from his task and knowing that as soon as he could the young lieutenant would speak. From the time when the coolie had yielded, there had been not a second's rest for either; neither had had time to confer save on questions of the most immediate moment; and control of these Couch had voluntarily and naturally assumed, deciding, acting and directing in the same thought, apparently.

"Your wife, with Miss Pynsent," said Couch abruptly, without looking round—"at least I presume it's Mrs. O'Rourke, from what you say—have been kidnapped by a gang of highbinders and are now aboard a junk in the lower river, which will sail for God-knows-where at the turn of the tide. That's the only thing that saves 'em. We'll be on 'em before they're able to force a way down the river."

O'Rourke groaned, holding his head with both hands. "My wife . . .!" he said brokenly.

"I know," Couch interrupted grimly; "I know how you feel. Miss Pynsent is there, too, you see."

"Oh," said O'Rourke, "I didn't understand that. . . . I'm sorry." He dropped a hand on the younger man's shoulder and let it rest there briefly. "Please God," he said reverently, "there'll be many another polluted yellow soul yammering at the gates of hell this night!"

"Amen!" said Couch. . . . We shan't be long now."

Silently O'Rourke removed his coat and waist-coat, his collar and lawn tie, and turned back his cuffs. "Evening clothes are hardly the thing to fight in," he said; "but I'm thinking 'twon't make a deal of difference to me. Got any cartridges for a Webley mark IV?"

"Wheeler has. Give Colonel O'Rourke a few, Wheeler," said Couch, addressing the orderly.

The latter rummaged in a locker and pressed into O'Rourke's hand half a dozen cartridges, with which the adventurer proceeded to replenish the empty chamber in his revolver.

"I'd only discharged one," he observed, "but 'tis likely we'll need that, even, with only the three of us against a junk-load."

"Oh, I telephoned for reinforcements, of course," returned Couch. "They ought to be there ahead of us."

"What did the coolie tell ye, if ye've time to talk?"

Couch laughed. "I daresay you're wondering how I made him speak at all."

"That's the true word for ye."

"I threatened to cut off his silly pig-tail and send him naked and dishonored to the ghostly halls of his ancestors. It's wonderful how much those callous brutes dote on that decoration. I told him further, that if he lied, when I found it out I'd return and shave him bald as an egg, even if he were dead by that time. So I persuaded the truth from him, the whole story—from his side of it."

"I'm listening. . . ."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Mr. J. B. Duke's Ploughing.

In spite of the distractions of the Tobacco company's reorganization, Mr. James B. Duke bestows much attention upon the work of developing and beautifying his three thousand acre estate, Duke's Park, near Somerville, N. J. Not infrequently on his tours of inspection he personally directs the laborers. One day he took the plough from the hands of a slow, awkward foreigner, saying:

"Here, let me show you how to plough a furrow. I've not forgotten how I did that when I was a boy in South Carolina."

Another day he took the place of the boss of a gang of workmen and before he got through he dismissed five for inefficiency.

Ladies Object to Profanity.

The woman golfers of New York have made objections to swearing on the links and have discussed the matter in their clubs. The men who play over the links are all supposed to be gentlemen, but sometimes they are not careful of their language, and ladies have been made very indignant by some speeches. It has been suggested that notices be placed in the clubhouses, but the fact that the ladies have discussed the subject will, no doubt, be all that is necessary.

Time!

One of the Principal Advantages of a

Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen

is that you have a pen that will always respond immediately wherever you want to write. The Spoon Feed regulates an even and steady flow and prevents overflow. Gold Pens to suit every hand.

Sold Everywhere 173 N. Y. "The Pen That Big Men Use"



PARKER'S HAIR BALM. Cleanses and beautifies the hair. Promotes a luxuriant growth. Keeps Fall to Restore Gray Hair to its Youthful Color. Prevents hair falling. 50c and \$1.00 at Druggists.

ELECTRIC LIGHT IN DENMARK

Every Town in That Country of Over 5,000 Population Has Public Service.

According to recent information about the progress of electric light and power industries in Denmark, it appears that all the towns of 5,000 inhabitants and over are now provided with public electric service, says the Scientific American. As to towns having between 5,000 and 3,000 inhabitants, there are only three in which electric mains are not installed, so that it will be seen that Denmark is one of the most progressive countries in this respect. The largest sized electric stations are to be found at Copenhagen and at present there are three large plants in operation giving a total of 27,000 horse power. Current is supplied for the city mains, as well as for the tramway lines. As regards the Danish stations in small towns, in general each town has its own plant, and there is but one example of an intercommunal system. This is at Skovhoved, near Copenhagen, and the central station extends its power lines over all the suburban regions, also supplying the tramways of Hellerup and Klampenborg. In most of the town electric stations the Diesel heavy oil engine is used.

The Love in Fiction and Life.

A periodical devoted to the drama pleads for plays based on some emotion other than love. The difficulty in producing such plays is that every play must have a hero, and in making a hero, the playwright, as well as his audience, almost inevitably adopts the view expressed 2,000 years ago by a scribbler of the dead walls of Pompeii: "He who has never loved a woman is not a gentleman."

Subtle Admonition.

"Why do you always ask that regular customer if the razor hurts him?" asked one barber.

"Just as a gentle reminder," replied the other, "that if he forgot the tip it's liable to hurt him next time."

The Likeness.

"This free pulling of teeth has some features in common with big social functions."

"What are they?"

"Charity bowls."

Some people boast in order to keep others from doing so.

A FOOD CONVERT

Good Food The True Road to Health.

The pernicious habit some persons still have of relying on nauseous drugs to relieve stomach trouble keeps up the patent medicine business and helps keep up the army of dyspeptics.

Indigestion—dyspepsia—is caused by what is put into the stomach in the way of improper food, the kind that so taxes the strength of the digestive organs they are actually crippled.

When this state is reached, to resort to tonics is like whipping a tired horse with a big load. Every additional effort he makes under the lash diminishes his power to move the load.

Try helping the stomach by leaving off heavy, greasy, indigestible food and take on Grape-Nuts—light, easily digested, full of strength for nerves and brain, in every grain of it. There's no waste of time nor energy when Grape-Nuts is the food.

"I am an enthusiastic user of Grape-Nuts and consider it an ideal food," writes a Maine man:

"I had nervous dyspepsia and was all run down and my food seemed to do me but little good. From reading an advertisement I tried Grape-Nuts food, and, after a few weeks' steady use of it, felt greatly improved."

"Am much stronger, not nervous now, and can do more work without feeling so tired, and am better every way."

"I relish Grape-Nuts best with cream and use four heaping teaspoonfuls as the cereal part of a meal. I am sure there are thousands of persons with stomach trouble who would be benefited by using Grape-Nuts." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above Tetter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.