



The POOL of FLAME

by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLSWORTH YOUNG

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Lamb's Tenure of Life Not Long.
A party of privileged sightseers were admitted to a private view of a menagerie between performances, and among other things were shown what was called a "Happy Family," that is to say, in one and the same cage there was a toothless lion, a tiger, somewhat the worse for wear, and a half-famished wolf. Beside these wild animals, curled up in one corner, was a diminutive lamb which shivered as it shivered.

"How long have the animals lived together?" asked one of the party.

"About twelve months," replied the showman.

"Why," exclaimed a lady, "I am sure that little lamb is not as old as that."

"Oh," said the showman, quite unmoved, "the lamb has to be renewed occasionally."

"WHY SHOULD I USE CUTICURA SOAP?"

"There is nothing the matter with my skin, and I thought Cuticura Soap was only for skin troubles." True, it is for skin troubles, but its great mission is to prevent skin troubles. For more than a generation its delicate emollient and prophylactic properties have rendered it the standard for this purpose, while its extreme purity and refreshing fragrance give to it all the advantages of the best of toilet soaps. It is also invaluable in keeping the hands soft and white, the hair lustrous and glossy, and the scalp free from dandruff and irritation.

While its first cost is a few cents more than that of ordinary toilet soaps, it is prepared with such care and of such materials, that it wears to a wafer, often outlasting several cakes of other soap, and making its use, in practice, most economical. Cuticura Soap is sold by druggists and dealers everywhere, but the truth of these claims may be demonstrated without cost by sending to "Cuticura," Dept. L, Boston, for a liberal sample cake, together with thirty-two-page book on the skin and hair.

Those who seem to escape from discipline are not to be envied; they have farther to go.—A. C. Benson.

Which wins? Garfield Tea always wins in its merits as the best of herbaceous.

A double wedding is one kind of a four-in-hand tie.

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Husband Declared Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Would Restore Her Health, And It Did.

Ashland, Ky. — "Four years ago I seemed to have everything the matter with me. I had female and kidney trouble and was so bad off I could hardly rest day or night. I doctored with all the best doctors in town and took many kinds of medicine but nothing did any good until I tried your wonderful remedy, Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound. My husband said it would restore my health and it has."



Mrs. MAY WYATT, Ashland, Ky.

There are probably hundreds of thousands of women in the United States who have been benefited by this famous old remedy, which was produced from roots and herbs over thirty years ago by a woman to relieve woman's suffering.

Read What Another Woman says:

Camden, N. J. — "I had female trouble and a serious displacement and was tired and discouraged and unable to do my work. My doctors told me I never could be cured without an operation, but thanks to Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I am cured of that affliction and have recommended it to more than one of my friends with the best results."

—Mrs. ELLA JOHNSTON, 324 Vine St.

If you want special advice write to Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Co. (confidential) Lynn, Mass. Your letter will be opened, read and answered by a woman and held in strict confidence.

Make the Liver Do its Duty

Nine times in ten when the liver is right the stomach and bowels are right. **CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS** gently but firmly compel a lazy liver to do its duty. Cures Constipation, Indigestion, Sick Headache, and Distress After Eating. SMALL PILL, SMALL DOSE, SMALL PRICE. Genuine must bear Signature.



THOMPSON'S EYE WATER Quickly relieves sore, inflamed eyes. Washes away dirt, restores vision. Sold everywhere. Price, 25c. **JOHN L. THOMPSON, BOSTON & CO., TROY, N. Y.**

CHAPTER I.

A still and sultry dusk had fallen, closing an oppressive, wearying day; one of those days whose sole function seems to reside in rendering us irritatingly conscious of our too-close casings of too-solid flesh; whose humid and inert atmosphere, sodden with tepid moisture, clings palpably to the body, causing men to feel as if they crawled, half-suffocated, at the bottom of a sea of rarefied water.

The hour may have been eight; it may have been not quite that, but it was almost dark. The windows were oblong, black as night in the yellow walls of O'Rourke's bedchamber in the Hotel d'Orient, Monte Carlo.

I have the honor to make known to you the O'Rourke of Castle O'Rourke in the county of Galway, Ireland; otherwise and more widely known as Colonel Terence O'Rourke; a cavalier of the Legion of Honor of France; sometime an officer in the Foreign Legion in Algiers; a wanderer, spendthrift, free-lance, cosmopolitan—a gentleman-adventurer, he's been termed.

He was dressing for dinner. The glare of half a dozen electric bulbs discovered him all but ready for public appearance—not, however, quite ready. In his shirt sleeves he faced a cheval-glass, pluckily (if with the baggard eye of exasperation) endeavoring to outmaneuver a demon of inanimate perversity which had entered into his dress tie, inciting it to refuse to assume, for all his coaxing and his stratagems, that effect of nonchalant perfection so much sought after, so seldom achieved.

Patently was the thing possessed by a devil; O'Rourke made no manner of doubt of that. Though for minutes at a time he fumbled, fidgeted, fumed, it was without avail.

His room itself was in a state of considerable disorder—something due mainly to O'Rourke's characteristic efforts to find just what he might happen to desire at any given time without troubling to think where it ought properly to be.

Something of this confusion, mirrored in the glass, was likewise reflected in O'Rourke's eyes, what time he paused for breath and profanity. "Faith, 'tis worse than a daw's nest, the place," he admitted, scandalized. "How ever did I—one lone man—do all that, will ye be telling me?" He flung out two helpless baffled hands, and let them fall. After a meditative pause he added: "Damn that Alsatian!"—with reference to his latest and least competent valet, who had but recently been discharged with a flea in his ear and a month's unearned wage in his pocket. "For knowing me ways," sighed O'Rourke, "there was never anyone the like of Danny."

For as many as three livelong days this man had been reduced to the necessity of dressing himself with his own fair hands—and that at least thrice daily, who did nothing by halves. And, somehow, mysteriously, his discarded garments had for the most part remained where he had thrown them, despite the earnest efforts of the femme de chambre to restore something resembling order from this man-made chaos. For servants all liked well the O'Rourke, improvident soul that he was, freehanded to a fault.

You are invited to picture to yourself O'Rourke as invariably he was in one of his not infrequent but ever transient phases of affluence; that is, a very magnificent figure indeed. Standing a bit over six feet, deep of chest and lean of flank, with his long, straight legs he looked what he had been meant to be, a man of arms and action. His head was shapely, its dark hair curling the least in the world; and, incredibly stained, a transparent brown, his features were lean, eager, and rendered very attractive by quick boyish eyes in whose warm blue-gray depths humor twinkled more often than not, though those same eyes were not seldom thoughtful, a trace wistful, perhaps, with the look of one who recalls dear memories, old friends and sweethearts loved and lost. . . . For he had begun to live early in life and had much to look back upon, though for all that it's doubtful if he were more than thirty at the time he became involved in the fortunes of the Pool of Flame.

For the rest of him, barring the refractory tie, the man was strikingly well groomed, while his surroundings spoke for comfortable circumstances. On the authority of the absent and regretted Danny, who had long served the O'Rourke in the intimate capacities of body-servant, confidant and chancellor of the exchequer (this last, of course, whenever there happened to be any exchequer to require a chancellor, there was never anyone at all

who could spend money or wear clothes like himself, meaning the master. And at this time O'Rourke was ostensibly in funds and consequently (as the saying runs) cutting a wide swath. Heaven and himself only knew the limits of his resources; but his manner a Monte Cristo might have aped to advantage. His play was a wonder of the Casino; for the matter of that, his high-handed and extravagant ways had made the entire Principality of Monaco conscious of his presence in the land. And you fall in the least to understand the nature of the man if you think for a moment that it irked him to be admired, pointed out, courted, pursued. He was, indeed, never so splendid as when aware that he occupied the public eye. In short, he was just an Irishman.

So, then, it's nothing wonderful that he should seem a thought final about the set of his tie.

Now as he stood scowling at his image, and wishing from the bottom of his heart he had never been fool enough to let Danny leave him, and calling fervent blessings down upon the head of the fiend who first designed modern evening-dress for men—he found himself suddenly with a mind divested of any care whatever and attentive alone to a sound which came to him faintly, borne upon the heavy wings of the sluggish evening air. It was nothing more nor less than a woman singing softly to herself (humming, probably be the more accurate) and it was merely the tune that caught his fancy; a bit of an old song, he himself had once been wont to sing, upon a time when he had been a happier man. It seemed strange to hear it there, stranger still that the woman's voice, indistinct as it was, should have such a familiar ring in his memory. He frowned in wonder and shook his head. "The age of miracles is past," he muttered; "I would never be herself. I've had my chance—and forfeited it. 'Twill not come to me a second time."

The singing ceased. Of a sudden O'Rourke swore with needless heat, and, plucking away the offending tie, cast it angrily from him. "The divil's in me with ye!" he said. "Is it bent on making me mad ye are? I'd give n. . . . Me fortune—faith!" He laughed the word to bitter scorn. "Tis meself that never had the least of anything like that without 'twas feminine—with a 'mis' tacked onto the front of it!" And he strode away to the window to cool off.

It was like him to forget his exasperation in the twinkling of an eye; another mood entirely swayed him by the time he found himself gazing out into the vague, velvety dusk that momentarily was closing down upon the fairy-like panorama of terraced gardens and sullen, silken sea. His thoughts had winged back to that dear woman of whom that fragment of melody had put him in mind; and he was sighing and heavy of heart with longing for the sight of her and the touch of her hand.

Even as he watched, stark night fell, black as a pocket beneath a portentous pall of cloud. . . . Far out upon the swelling bosom of the Mediterranean a cluster of dim lights betrayed a stealthy coasting steamer, making westward. Nearer, in the harbor, a fleet of pleasure craft, riding at anchor on the still, dark tide, was revealed in many faint, wrath-like shapes of gray, all studded with yellow stars. Ashore, endless festoons of colored lamps draped the gloom of the terraces; the facade of the Casino stood out lurid against the darkness; the hotels shone with reflected brilliance, the palace of the Prince de Monaco loomed high upon the peninsula, its elevations picked out with lines of soft fire.

The O'Rourke shook his head, condemning it all. "Tis beautiful," he said; "faith, yes! 'tis all of that. But I'm thinking 'tis too beautiful to be good for one—like some women I've known in me time. 'Tis not good for Terence—that's sure; 'tis the O'Rourke that's going stale and soft with all this easy living. . . . Me that has more than many another to live for and hope for and strive for! . . . And I'm lingering here in the very lap of luxury stuffing meself with rare food, befuddling meself with rarer wines—me that has fought a day and a night and a half a day atop of that on nothing and a glass of muddy water!—risking me money as if there was no end to it, throwing it away in scandalous tips like any drunken sailor! And all for the scant satisfaction of behaving like a fool of an Irishman. . . . 'Tis sickening—disgusting; naught less. . . . I'm thinking this night ends it, though; come the morning I'll be pulling up stakes and striking out for a healthier, simpler place, where there's something afoot a man can take an inter-

est in without losing his self-respect. . . . I'll do just that, I will!"

This he meant, firmly, and was glad of it, with a heart immeasurably lightened by the strength of his good resolution. He began to hum the old tune that the unknown woman's voice had set buzzing in his brain, and broke off to snap his fingers defiantly at the Casino. "That for ye!" he flouted it—"sitting there with your painted smile and your cold eyes, like the brazen huzzy ye are—Goddess of Chance, indeed!—thinking ye have but to bide your time for all men to come and render up their souls to ye! Here's once ye lose, madam; after this night I'm done with ye; not a sou of mine will ever again cross your tables. I'll have ye to understand the O'Rourke's a reformed character from the morning on!"

He laughed softly, in high feather with his conceit; and, thinking cheerfully of the days of movement and change that were to follow, the song in his heart shaped itself in words upon his lips.

"I'm Paddy Whack
From Ballyhaek,
Not long ago turned soldier—O
At grand attack,
Or storm or sack,
None than I will prove bolder—O!"

His voice was by way of being a tenor of tolerable quality and volume, but untrained—nothing wonderful. It was just the way he trotted out the rollicking stanza that rendered it infectious, irresistible. For as he paused the voice of the woman that had reminded him of the song capped the verse neatly.

"An' whin we get the route
Wid a shout,
How they pour!
Wid a ready right-about
Goes the bould soldier-boy!"

O'Rourke caught his breath, startled, stunned. "It can't be—" he whispered. For if at first her voice, subdued in distance, had stirred his

memory with a touch as vague and thrilling as the caress of a woman's hand in darkness, now that he heard the full strength of that soprano, bell-clear and spirited, he was sure he knew the singer. He told himself that there could be no two women in the world with voices just like that; not another than her he knew could have rendered the words with so true a spirit, so rare a brogue—tinged as that had been with the faintest, quaintest exotic inflection imaginable.

But she had stopped with the verse half sung. His pulses quickening, O'Rourke leaned forth from the window and carried it on:

"O 'tis thin the ladies fair
In despair
Tear their hair!
But—'Tis divil a bit I care!"
Cries the bould soldier-boy!"

There fell a pause. He listened with his heart in his mouth, but heard

nothing. And it seemed impossible to surmise whence, from which one of all the rooms with windows opening upon that side of the hotel, had come the voice of the woman. She might as well have been above as below him, or on either side; he could not guess. But he was determined.

Now there was beneath his window a balcony with a floor of wood and a rail of iron-filigree—a long balcony, extending from one corner of the hotel to the other. At intervals it was splashed with light from the windows of chambers still occupied by guests belated or busy, like himself, with the task of dressing for the evening. The window to his left was alight; that on his right, dark. With half his body on the balcony, his legs dangling within the room, O'Rourke watched the opening on his left with jealous, breathless expectancy. Not a sound came therefrom. He hesitated.

"If that weren't her room, I'd hear somebody moving about," he reasoned. "'Tis frightened she is—not suspectin' 'tis herself? . . . But how do I know 'tis herself? . . . Faith! could me ears deceive me?"

With that he took heart of hope and broke manfully into the chorus, singing directly to the lighted window, fervor, with confidence and with hope, singing persuasively, pleadingly, anxiously, insistently.

"For the world is all befo-ore us—" he sang and then paused. He heard no echo. And again he essayed, with that in his tone to melt a heart of ice:

"For the world is all befo-ore us—" And now he triumphed and was lifted out of himself with sheer delight; for from the adjoining room came the next line:

"And landladies ado-ore us—" Unable to contain himself, he



O'Rourke Caught his Breath, Stunned.

chimed in, and in duet they sang it out to the rousing finale:

"They ne'er rayfuse to sco-ore us,
But chalk us up wid joy
We taste her tap, we tear her cap—
'O, that's the chap
For me,' cries she—
'Whitroo!
Isn't he the darlint, the bould soldier-boy!"

As the last note rang out and died, the next window was darkened; the woman had switched off the lights. He heard a faint rustle of silken ruffles. "Tis herself," he declared in an agony of anticipation—"herself and none other! And I'm thinking she'll be coming to the window now—"

He was right. Abruptly he discovered her by the reflected glow from the illumination behind him. He was conscious of the pallid oval of her face, of a sleek white sheen of arms and shoulders, of a dark mass of hair, but more than all else of the glamour of eyes that shone into his softly,

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like limpid pools of darkness touched by dim starlight.

Inflamed, he leaned toward her. "Whist, darling!" he stammered. "Whist! 'Tis myself—'tis Terence—" But she was gone. A low, stifled laugh was all his answer—that and the silken whisper of her skirts as she scurried from the window. He flushed crimson, waited an instant, then flung discretion to the winds, and found himself scrambling out upon the balcony. Heaven only knows to what lengths the man would have gone had not the slam of a door brought him up standing; she had left her room!

So she thought to escape him so easily! He swore between his teeth with excitement and tumbled back whence he had come. Regardless of the fact that he was still in his shirt-sleeves he rushed madly for the door. On the way a shooting-jacket on the door, perhaps in revenge for neglect and ill-treatment, maliciously wound itself around his feet and all but threw him headlong; only a frantic clutch at the footrail of the bed saved him. Kicking the thing savagely off he flung himself upon the door and threw it open. His jaw dropped.

The lift shaft was directly opposite. Before it, in more or less patient waiting, stood a very young and beautiful woman in a gown whose extreme candor was surpassed only by the perfection of its design and appointment—both blatant of the Rue de la Paix; a type as common to the cognoscenti of Monte Carlo as the Swiss hotel porters. But O'Rourke did not know her from Eve.

"The divvie!" said he beneath his breath.

He was mistaken; but the young woman, at first startled by his unceremonious appearance, on instantaneous second thought decided to permit him to discover that twin imps, at least, resided in her eyes. And when his disappointment prevented him from recognizing them, her dawning smile was swiftly erased and her ascending eyebrows spoke eloquently enough of her haughty displeasure. Synchronously the lift hesitated at that landing and the gate clanged wide; the young woman wound her skirt about her and showed him a back which at any other time would have evoked his unstinted admiration. Then the gate shot to with a rattle and bang, and the lift dropped out of sight, leaving the man with mouth agape and eyes as wide.

A beaming but elderly femme de chambre on duty in the corridor, remarking O'Rourke's pause of stupefied chagrin, hoped and believed he needed her services. She bore down upon him accordingly.

"M'sieu' is desirous of—?" He came out of his trance. "Nothing," he told her with acid brevity. "But, 'es," he reconsidered with haste. "That lady who but this moment took the lift—her name?"

"Her name, m'sieu'? Ma'm'selle Voltaire."

"Impossible!" he told himself aloud, utterly unable to forge any connecting link between the lady in the lift and her whose voice had bewitched him. "But assuredly, m'sieu'. Do I not know—I who have waited upon her hand and foot these three days and to whom she has not given as much as—that." The woman ticked a fingernail against her strong white teeth. "Ma'm'selle Victorine Voltaire," she asserted stubbornly.

O'Rourke fumbled in his pocket and found a golden ten-franc piece, surrendering it to the woman as heedlessly as though it had been as many centimes. "I'll be leaving me room in five minutes, now. And do ye, for the love of Heaven, me dear, try to set me things the least trifling to rights. Will ye now, like the best little girl in the world?"

The best little girl in the world, who was forty-five if a day, promised miracles—with a bob of a courtesy. But so disgruntled was O'Rourke that he shut his door in her face.

"Tis meself that's the fool," he said savagely enough, "to think for a moment that ever again I'll set me eyes on her pretty face—God bless it, wherever she may be! . . . For why should I deserve to—I, the penniless adventurer?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Carte and Pierce.

He—What do you women do at your club?

She—Talk about the faults of you men. What do you do at yours?

He—Try to forget the faults of you women.—Boston Transcript.

Kind Insinuation.

He—I see where the hunters are shooting people, mistaking them for game.

She—Then you had better be very careful about going out, or they may shoot you for a goose.