

The POOL 9 by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCES ILLUSTRATIONS_BY ELLSWORTH YOUNG COPYRICHT 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. Leaning on the balcomy he sees a beautiful girl who suddenly enters the gaming table O'Rourke notices two men watching him. One is the Hon. Bertie Giynn, 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.

CHAPTER III.

As he stepped out of the lift Colonel O'Rourke remarked a light in his room, visible through the transom over the door.

"The femme de chambre," he thought. "Sure and the poor thing's

still busy trying to clear up. , , ,"
To the contrary, he found the door "'Tis careless she was to leave fast. the light on," he observed, fitting his key in the lock.

If thoughtless in that one way, the woman had fulfilled the letter of her word in the other. It was with com-prehensive relief (since he anticipated a caller) that he found the room once

again presentable. But one thing surprised him; and But one thing surprised min, and more surprising still was the fact that his ordinarily indifferent eye should have detected it at the first glance. He had indeed hardly entered before he became aware of a square of white paper tucked in the corner of the bureau mirror.

"The divvle, now!" he greeted it. "That's curious. . . . Could one of me many admirers have bribed the femme de chambre to bring a note to He chuckled, holding to the light a much soiled envelope, grimy with the marks of many fingers, plastered with stamps and black with postage marks and substitute addresses, having evidently been forwarded over half the world before it reached the addressee: who was, in a bold hand, "Colonel Terence O'Rourke."

He whistled low over this, examin ing it intently, infinitely less concern ed with its contents than with the manner by which it had reached him. The first postmark seemed to be that of Rangoon, the original address, the Cercle Militaire, his club in Paris Thence, apparently, it had sought him in Galway, Ireland, Dublin, Paris again, and finally—after half a dozen other addresses—"C. of Mme. O'Rourke, Hotel Cariton, London." The London postmark was indecipherable.

He found himself trembling violently. By one hand alone could this have reached him, since the post had not brought it to Monte Carlo. He recalled that woman's voice which had so stirred him, the woman of the Casino whose bearing had seemed to

him so familiar. . . . Some one tapped on the door; he smothered a curse of annoyance, and

to answer, thrusting the letter into his pocket.

A page announced Monsieur le Comte des Trebes.

"Show the gentleman up," snapped O'Rourke. He was about to add, "in five minutes," when Des Trebes him-self appeared. "Anticipating that message, mon-

he said, moving into from one side of the door, "I took the liberty of accompanying this boy. I am late, I fear."

O'Rourke forced a nod and smile of welcome. "Not to my knowledge." said

The Frenchman consulted his watch. "Ten minutes late, monsieur; it is ten

midnight. Then," said O'Rourke, "the top o' the morning to ye. Enter, monsieur." He stood aside, closing the door behim his guest. "Tis no matter; if I thought ye punctual, 'tis so ye are

to all intents and purposes. A chair, monsieur." He established Des Trebes by a window. "And a cigarette? . . . A drop to drink?
. . As ye will, . . . And since
'tis to talk secret business that we're

here—would ye like the door locked?"
"That is hardly essential!" Des Trebes reviewed his surroundings swift, searching glance. "We are at least secure from interruption; one "We are at

could ask little more."
"True for ye," laughed O'Rourke. He moved toward the alcove. "Now first of all I'm to submit proofs of me identity, I believe," he added, Intending to dig out of his trunk a dispatch-box containing his passports and other pa-

pers of a private nature. Trebes had changed his mfnd. "That is unnecessary, mon sieur. Your very willingness is suffi cient proof. I have your word and am content."

comte. "Besides, I quarrel with no man's right to be reasonable. . . . And now I'm at your service, monsieur."

Des Trebes, lounging back, knees crossed, thin white fingers interlac-ing, black eyes narrowing, regarded the irishman thoughtfully for a moment. Abruptly he sat up and re-moved from an inner pocket a long thin white envelope, thrice sealed with red wax and innocent of any super-scription whatever.

"Are you prepared, monsieur," he demanded incisively, "to play blindman's buff?"

man's buff?"
"Am I what?" asked O'Rourke, startled. Then he smiled. "Pardon; perhaps I fail to follow ye."
"I mean," explained the vicomte patiently, "that I have to offer you a commission to act under sealed orders"—he tapped the envelope—"the orders contained herein". orders contained herein "

"And when would I be free to open that?"

that?"

"As soon as you are at sea—away from France, Monsieur."

O'Rourke considered the envelope doubtfully, "From you, monsieur—from the Government of France, which you represent," he said at length, "yes; I will accept such a commission. France," he averred simply, "knows me; it wouldn't be asking me to do anything a gentleman shouldn't." anything a gentleman shouldn't."

"You may feel assured of that," agreed Des Trebes gravely. "Indeed, I venture to assert you will find this— let us say—adventure much to your liking. . . Then you accept?"

iking. . . . Then you accept:
"One moment—a dozen questions,
When must I by your leave. . . . When must I start?'

"Tomorrow morning by the Cote d'Azur Rapide, at ten minutes to eight."

"And where will I be going?"

"First to Paris; thence to Havre; thence, by the first available steamer, to New York; finally, it may be to Venezuela, monsieur."

"Expenses?"
"I will myself furnish you with funds sufficient to finance you as far as New York. There our consul-general will provide you with what more you may require. It is essential that your connection with this affair shall be kept secret; should you draw on the government in this country, it would

expose you to grave suspicions, per-haps to danger."
"I understand that," assented the irishman. "But to obviate all danger of mistake, would it not be well to have one of your trusted agents meet me on the steamer and provide me with whatever ye figure I might require? 'Tis barely possible your con-sul general might not recognize me in New York. Why should he? I never

heard his name, even."

Des Trebes meditated this briefly. "It shall be as you desire, monsieur. It shall be arranged as you suggest." "Finally, then, what is to be my

"That must depend. I am authorized to assure you that in no case will you receive less than twenty-five thousand francs; in event of a successful termination of your mission, the re-ward will be doubled."

"'Tis enough," said O'Rourke with a sigh; "I accept."

The Frenchman rose, offering him the envelope. "You must pledge your-self, monsieur, not to break these seals until you are at sea?' "Absolutely-of course." O'Rourke

weighed it curiously in his hand and scrutinized the seals. He remarked that they were yet soft and fresh; the wax had been hot within the half hour.

"I will do myself the honor of meeting you at the train to see you off, mon-sieur," said Des Trebes. "At that time, also, will I provide you with the funds you require. "Thank ye."

Their hands met.

"Good night, Monsieur O'Rourke."

"Good night. . . ." Half way to the door, Des Trebes paused. "Oh, by the way," he ex-claimed carelessly, "I believe you are a friend or my old school-fellow, Cham-

a friend of my old scanor-tenew, Chambret—mon cher Adolph?"

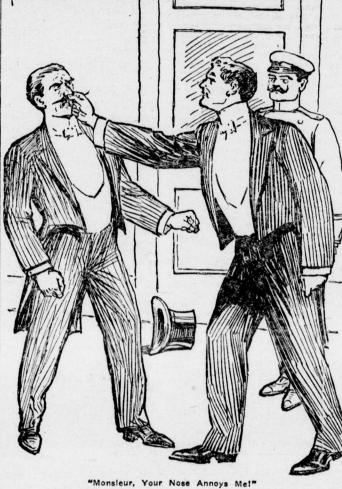
"Tis so," assented the Irishman warmly. "The best of men—Cham-

'Odd," commented the vicomte "only this afternoon I was thinking of him, wondering what had become of the man.

"The last I heard of him, he was in "The last I near with some French force in the desert."
"Thank you . . ." On the point

"Thank you . . ." On the point of leaving the vicomte snapped his teeth on a second "Good night," and swore beneath his breath,

O'Rourke, surprised, stared. Frenchman was standing stiffly at at-"That's the way of doing business tention, as if alarmed. His pallor was, that I like," assented O'Rourke heart if possible, increased, livid—his close-ity, warming a little to the man as he ly shaven beard showing blue-black on furned back 2 chair racing the vi his heavy jowis and prominent chin.



cove to O'Rourke.

"Monsieur?" he demanded harshly,

'what does this insult mean?"
"Mean?" iterated O'Rourke, "Insult? Faith, ye have me there."

Speechless with rage, Des Trebes ges tured violently toward the alcove; and O'Rourke became aware that the curtains were shaking—wavering as though a draught stirred them. But there was no draught. And beneath their edge be saw two feet—two small, bewitching feet in the daintiest and most absurd of evening slippers, with an inch or so of silken stockings show-

ing above each.

Des Trebes' eyes, filled with an expression unspeakably offensive, met the Irishman's blank, wondering gaze. "It is, no doubt," the Frenchman stammered, "sanctioned by your code to have me spied upon by the partner of your liaisons.'

"But, monsieur-" compliment the lady upon the smallness of her feet, as well as upon ankles so charming that I cannot bring myself to leave without a glimpse of their mistress' features."

Des Trebes moved toward the al-

Thunderstruck, O'Rourke rapcove. ped out a stupefied oath, then in a stride forestalled the man. With him it was as if suddenly a circuit had closed in his intelligence, establishing a definite connection between the three -now four-most mystifying incidents of the evening.

"Less haste, monsteur." he counseled in a voice of ice. His hand fell with almost paralyzing force upon the other's wrist as he sought to grasp the curtain, and swung him roughly back. "Yourself will never know who's there-whoever the lady may be. . .

Ah, but no, monsieur!"
Maddened beyond prudence, Des
Trebes had struck at bis face.
O'Rourke warded off the blow and in what seemed the same movement whirled the man round by his captive wrist and caught the other arm from the back. The briefest of struggles en sued. The Frenchman, taken at a complete disadvantage, was for all his re sistance hustled to the door thrown through it before he fairly comprehended what was happening

Free at length, if on all fours, he scrambled to his feet to find O'Rourke had shut the door behind him, calmly awaiting the next move.

'Haven't ye had enough?" demanded the irishman as the vicomte, blind-ed with passion, seemed about to re-new the attack. "Or are ye wishful to be going downstairs in the same fashion?

Des Trebes drew back, snarling. "You dog!" he cried Then abrupt iy, by an admirable effort, he calmed himself surprisingly, drawing himself

His eyes blazed, shifting from the al- | did there remain any trace of his malignant and unquenchable batred.

"I am unfortunately," he sneered, "incapable of participating in such brawls as you prefer, Colonel O'Rourke. But I am not content. I warn you . . . My rank prevents me from punishing you personally; I am obliged to fight gentlemen only."

O'Rourke laughed openly.

"But i advise you to leave Monte Carlo before morning. Should you remain, or should you come within my neighborhood another time—at what-ever time—I will kill you as I would a

rabid cur—or cause you to be shot."
"There's always the coward's alternative," returned the Irishman. "But ye mustn't forget ye've only the one leg to stand upon in society—your take steps to see that ye fight me be-fore sunset. Else shall all Europe know yo for a coward."

Behind the vicomte the lift shot up. paused, and discharged a single passenger. As swiftly the cage disappeared.

Out of the corner of his eye, O'Rourke recognized the newcomer as an old acquaintance, and his heart swelled with gratitude while a smile of rare pleasure shaped itself upon his lips. He had now the Frenchman

The man paused stiffly with the square-set and erect poise of an officer of the German army. "At your service, Colonel O'Rourke," he said in impec-

But the Irishman had returned undivided attention to Des Trebes. "Mon-sieur," he announced, "your nose an-noys me." And with that he shot out hand and seized the offensive member between a strong and capable thumb and forefinger. "It has annoythumb and forefinger. "It has annoy ed me," he explained in parenthesis "ever since I first clapped me two eyes upon ye, scum of the earth that ye

And he tweaked the nose of Monsieur le Viscomte des Trebes, tweak ed it with a will and great pleasure, tweaked it for glory and the Saints: carefully, methodically, even painstak-ingly, he kneaded and pulled and twist-ed it from side to side, ere releasing it.

Then stepping back and wiping his fingers upon a handkerchief, he cocked his head to one side and admired the result of his handiwork. "'Tis an amazingly happy effect," he served critically—"the crimson blotch it makes against the chalky complexion ye affect, Monsieur des Trebes . . . And now i fancy ye'll fight.
Your friends may call upon mine here

an immobile countenance. wait the seconds of Monsieur des Tre has in my rooms."

The Frenchman essayed to speak choked with passion, and turning ab ruptly, somewhat unsteadily descending the staircase.

O'Rourke laughed briefly, offering the German his hand. "'Twas wonder-fully opportune, your appearance, cap-tain dear," said he. "Thank, e from the bottom of me heart. . . . And now will ye forgive me excusing me-self until I hear from ye about the af-fair of the morning? I've a friend waiting in me room here. . . . Pardon the rudeness."

CHAPTER IV.

It would be difficult to designate pre-cisely just what O'Rourke thought to discover, when after a punctilious return of Captain von Einem's salute, he reopened his door and, closing it quickly as he entered, turned the key in the

His mood was exalted, his imagination excited; the swift succession of events which had made memorable the night, culminating with his open in-vitation to a challenge from the most desperate duelist in Europe, had in-spired a volatile vivacity such as not even the excitement of the Casino had been potent to create in him. Of all mad conjectures imaginable the maddest was too weird for him to credit in his humor of that hour. Eliminating all else that had happened, in the course of that short evening, his heart had been stirred, his emotions played upon by a recrudesence of a passion which he had striven with all his strength to put behind him for a time; he had first heard the voice of the one woman to whom his love and faith and honor were irretrievably pledge., he had then seen her (or another who re-markably resembled her) for the scantiest of instants; and finally he had mysteriously received a letter which could, he believed, have been convey-ed to him by no other hand but hers. And now he was persuaded beyond a doubt that the person of the alcove, the eavesdropper for whose fair repute he had chosen to risk his life, was no-ody in the world but that same one woman.

But more than all else, perhaps, he expected and feared to find the room deserted; for the balcony outside the windows afforded a means of escape too facile to be neglected by one who wished not to be discovered. . . .

His first definite impression was of consternation and despair; for the lights had been shut off in his absence. Then quickly he discerned, with eyes dazed by the change from the lighted hallway to the lightless chamber, the shadowy shape of a wom-

an, motionless between him and the windows, waiting.

An electric switch was at his elbow. With a single motion he could have drenched the place with light. For an instant tempted, some strange scruple of delicacy, abetted it may be by his native love of romantic mystery, stayed his hand.

"Madame," said he, "or mademoiselle, whichever ye may be-the windows are open, meself's not detaining ye. If ye choose, ye may go; but ye'd favor me by going quickly. I give ye," he continued, seeing that she neither moved nor replied, "this one chance. In thirty seconds I turn on the lights."

The woman did not stir; but he thought he could detect in the stillness her quickened breathing.

"What ye've taken," he amended, "I'd thank ye to leave as ye go—if ye came to steal. "Tis little I have to lose.

There was no answer.

He touched the switch with an impatient hand, stepped forward a single pace, caught himself up and stopped short, now pale and trembling who had a moment gone seen flushed with calm.

"Beatrix!" he cried thickly.

Dumbly his wife lifted her arms and offered herself to him, unutterably lovely, unspeakably radiant. . . .

It were worse than a waste of time to attempt a portrait of her as she seemed to him. Seen through her husband's eyes, her beauty was incomparabsolutely at his mercy.

"Captain von Einem," he said delicate a thing to be bodied forth in delicate a thing to be perfection quickly, "by your leave, a moment of words, dependent upon the perfection your time." fair as sunlight on the sea, not in her eyes of autumnal brown, not in the conderful fineness of her skin or in the daintiness of her features, not in the graciousness of her body, did he expression, but in the love she bore him, in the sweetness of her inviolate soul, in the steadfastness of her impregnable heart.

But it's doubtful if ever he had analyzed his passion for her so minute-Mostly, I think, at that moment of her abrupt disclosure to him, he longed unutterably for her lips and the proffered wreath round his neck of her slim, round, white arms.

Yet he would not. Trembling though he was, with every instinct and every fiber of his being straining toward her, with the hunger for her a keen pain in his heart, he held himself back; or his conception of honor held him back.
That which he had voluntarily forfeited and put away from him for his hon-or's sake, he would not take back though it were offered freely to him.

"So," he said, after a bit, shakily; then pulled himself together, and controlling his voice—"So 'twas yourseif, after all, Beatrix! Me heart told me no other woman could have sung that song as ye did-"

The woman dropped her arms. "Your heart. Terence?" site asked a little bit

What else? Do ve doubt k?" (TO BE CONTINUED.

It's har perfect hea. tired and sun back has a heavy



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RUDE FELLOW.



My gwacious. Such a

cious natuah Percy has! Clarence—Has he weally? Reggy—Fwightful. I had some words with him today, and he deliberately weached out his hand and disawange my hair.

Accounted For.

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