

UTILITY OF EXPERIENCE.

Because a man disapproves of new ways of doing things, is no reason why he should be accounted a "back number." In many ways the methods to which he has been accustomed all his life, and which were instilled into him from boyhood, are the foundation stones upon which the newer methods are built. Their basic principle is the same, but whereas in former days they were intended to meet only specific conditions, in these later days it is found necessary to develop them sufficiently to cover possibilities which were undreamed of a generation or so ago. Experience undoubtedly is the best teacher, and fortunate indeed is he who can turn the lessons of the past to good account in the solution of present-day problems. To do this, however, he must possess, besides the advantage his experience brings, sufficient insight and sufficient foresight to absorb something of the newer and more "up-to-date" ideas. Otherwise he will find himself crowded out and denounced as a "back number." Common sense should teach him that conditions are constantly arising which were never taken into consideration before, for the reason that they never existed, and common sense should also teach him that the methods formerly in use cannot always be depended upon to reach these conditions. It is absolutely necessary for a man to keep up his interest in the world of affairs and to take part in the activities of life if he wishes to continue to be a factor in their development.

It isn't a very nice task to punish pussy if you're fond of her, but there are times when she must be chastised. This is how to do it, according to Louis Wain, the great authority on the fascinating feline. In the first place, don't actually strike the cat, says the London Answers. A blow merely numbs it. And when the spine, which is the most sensitive part, is struck—particularly if the cat is old—it is likely to spring at the striker. When pussy does anything wrong, frighten the wrongdoer by striking a stick on the ground. A cat is most sensitive to sounds, and will connect this new noise with what it has done. It feels more intensely than most animals; hence its supposed savagery in cases. Cats are highly electrical, and it is very good to have one perch on one's shoulder or knees.

According to the slang published as used in a noted woman's college, it is not strange that its further use has been prohibited by the college authorities. Some of the ordinary slang of the day is picturesque and probably would be missed, but the habit of writing and speaking accurate English, supposed to be one encouraged in college training, is not helped by the silly jargon which is held by silly college boys and girls to be characteristic and distinctive. For the good of the language, it is to be hoped the authorities will be successful in their stand.

With regard to those widely advertised rats, of which the meat-eating one traveled 5,000 miles further than the vegetarian one, it may cause a reaction toward vegetarianism. For the bipeds may recall the traditional wisdom of the South American monkeys who can talk but are too wise to do it lest the white men set them at work.

Somebody has found that 25,344,000 bubbles can be produced from one pound of soap. This fact having been established, Niagara rapids having been navigated in a barrel, the English channel having been crossed by a swimmer and both the poles having been reached, nothing of importance seems to be left to be done.

The average man can run a ship better than any navigator that sails the seas and can manage a ball team better than the best in the business. Criticism is the lot of those in authority and generally it is as unwarranted as it is illogical and absurd.

Astronomers tell us that the Martian year lasts 730 days. When we reflect on the size of the average Martian coal bill we are thankful to be living on this little old earth.

A postman walks about fourteen miles a day, and then lots of people who were expecting letters do not get any.

It is said that women are to supplant men as wireless telegraph operators on the north Pacific steamers. That ought to be more interesting to them than even a party telephone line.

The New York police have arrested Themistocles Pheodosuphaloph for loitering. They ought to let him go. Any man who can carry around a name like that can not be blamed for being weary.



# The POOL of FLAME

by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLSWORTH YOUNG

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### 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 balcony he sees a beautiful girl who suddenly enters the elevator and passes from sight. At the gaming 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, Beatrix, from whom he had run away a year previous.

### CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

She shook her head sadly, wistfully. "How do I know? How can I tell? Surely, dear, no two people were ever happier than we—yet within a year from our wedding you . . . you left me, ran away from me. . . . Why?"

"Well ye know why, dearest, and well ye know 'twas love of ye alone that drove me from ye. Could I let it be said ye had a husband who was incapable of supporting ye? Could I let it be said that your husband lived like a leech upon your fortunes? Faith, didn't I have to go for your sake?"

"No," she dissented with a second weary shake of her pretty head; "I think it was love of yourself, a little, Terence—that and your pride. . . . Why should any of our world have guessed you were not the rich man you fancied yourself when we were married? Who would have told them that your landed heritage in Ireland had turned out profitless? Not I, my dear."

"I know that," he contended stubbornly, "but I know, too, sooner or later it would have come out, and they would have said: 'There she goes with her fortune-hunter, the adventurer who married her for her money—'"

"And if so? What earthly difference could it make to us, sweetheart? What can gossip matter to us—if you love me?"

"If!" he cried, almost angrily. "If . . . Ah, but no, darling! 'tis yourself knows there is no 'if' about it, that I'm sick with love of ye this very minute—sick and mad for ye . . ."

"Then," she pleaded, with a desperate little break in her incomparable voice; and again held out her arms to him—"then have pity on me, oh, my dearest one—have pity on me if only for a little while."

And suddenly he had caught her to him, and she lay in his arms, her young strong body molded to his, her lips to his, her eyes half-closed, the sweet fragrance of her—too well remembered—intoxicating him; lay supine in his embrace, yet held him strongly to her, and trembled in sympathy with the deep, hurried pounding of his heart.

In the south the horizon flamed livid to the zenith, revealing a great, black wall of cloud that had stolen up out of Africa; beneath it the sea shone momentarily with a sickly silken luster. Then the dense blackness of the night reigned again, as profound as though impenetrable, eternal.

Later a dull growl of thunder rolled in across the waste. With it came the first fitful warnings of the impending wind storm.

"'Twas ye who sang to me, dearest?"

"Who else, you great silly boy? . . . And when you followed me to the door, making as much noise as a young elephant, Terence—I was minded to punish you a little, a very little, my dear. So I merely opened mine and closed it sharply."

"There was a woman in the hall—" "I saw her, dear, and laughed, thinking how puzzled you would be. . . . Was I cruel, my heart? But I did not mean to be. I'd planned this surprise, you know, from the minute I found our rooms adjoined."

"And this letter"—O'Rourke fumbled in his pocket and got it out—"ye brought it to me?" "It came to me in London, dear, two weeks ago; we were together—Clara Plinlimmon and I—at the Carlton, waiting for her yacht to be put into commission. Meanwhile she was making up the party for this Mediterranean trip. . . . I had no idea where to send you the letter. Have you read it?" "Have I had time, sweetheart of mine?"

There was an interlude. In the distance the thunder rolled and rumbled.

Resolutely the young woman disengaged herself and withdrew to a little distance.

"Read, monsieur," she insisted, peremptorily. "I've better things to do, me dear," he retorted with composure.

"You'll find it interesting." "I find me wife more interesting than— How d'ye know I will?"

"Perhaps I have read it." O'Rourke turned the letter over in his hand and noted what had theretofore escaped his attention—the fact that the envelope, badly frayed on the edges through much handling, was open at the top.

"So ye may," he admitted. "It was that way when I received it. And I have read it. How could I help it?"

"Then ye've saved me the bother." He prepared to rise and capture her. She retreated briskly. "Read!" she commanded. "Read about the Pool of Flame!"

He stopped short, thunderstruck. "The Pool of Flame?" he reiterated slowly. "What d'ye know about that?"

"What the letter tells me—no more. What has become of it?"

But he had already withdrawn the enclosure and tossed the envelope aside, and was reading—absorbed, excited, oblivious to all save that conveyed to his intelligence by the writing beneath his eyes.

It was a singularly curt, dry and business-like document for one that was destined to mold the romance of his life—strangely terse and tritely phrased for one that was to exert so far-reaching an influence over the lives of so many men and women. Upon a single sheet of paper bearing their letterhead, Messrs. Secretan and Sypher, solicitors, of Rangoon, Burmah, had caused to be typed a communication to Colonel Terence O'Rourke, informing him that on behalf of a client who preferred to preserve his incognito they were prepared to offer a reward of one hundred thousand pounds sterling for the return, intact and unmarred, of the ruby known as the Pool of Flame. The said ruby was, when last heard of, in the possession of the said Colonel O'Rourke, who would receive the reward upon the delivery of the said stone to the undersigned at their offices in Rangoon

"One hundred thousand pounds," he said. . . . "Trebble its worth, double what the O'Mahoney expected. . . ."

"Who is the O'Mahoney, dear?" He roused. "An old friend, Beatrix—an old comrade. He died some years back, on the banks of the Tugela, fighting with a Boer commando. He was a lonely man, without kith or kin or many friends beside himself. That, I presume, is how he came to leave the Pool of Flame with me." He wound an arm round her and held her close. "Hearken, dear, and I'll be telling ye the story of it."

Behind them the infernal glare lit up the portentous skies. Thunder echoed between clouds and sea like heavy cannoning. The wife shrank close to her beloved. "I am not at all afraid," she declared, when her voice could be heard—"with you. . . . Tell me about the Pool of Flame."

"The O'Mahoney left it with me when he went to South Africa," explained O'Rourke. "'Twas a paste-board box the size of me fist, wrapped in brown paper and tied with a bit of string, that he brought me one evening, saying he was about to leave, and would I care for it in his absence. I knew no more of it than that 'twas something he valued highly, but I put it away in a safe-deposit vault—which he might've done if he hadn't been a scatterbrain—an Irishman. . . ."

"Then he wrote me a letter—I got it weeks after his death—saying he felt he was about to go out, and that the Pool of Flame was mine. He went on to explain that the box contained a monstrous big ruby and gave me its history, as far as he knew it."

"It seems that there's a certain highly respectable temple in one of the Shan States of Burmah ('tis myself forgets the name of it) and in that temple there's an idol, a Buddha of pure gold, 'tis said. It would be a perfectly good Buddha, only that it lacks an eye; there's an empty socket in its forehead, and 'tis there the Pool of Flame belongs—or come from. In the old days the natives called this stone the Luck of the State, and maybe they were right; for when it

and the Pool of Flame had vanished. . . . For several years it stayed quiet, so far as is known. Then the curse of the thing began to work, and it came to the surface in a drunken brawl in the slums of Port Said. The police, breaking into some dive to stop a row, found nobody in the place but a dead Greek; they say 'twas a shambles. One of the police found the big ruby in the dead man's fist and before his companions guessed what was up slipped away with the stone. . . . He was murdered some months later in a Genoese baglio, by a French girl, who got away with it somehow. . . . The O'Mahoney came across the thing in Algeria, when he was serving with the Foreign Legion. He was in Sidi Bel Abbas one night, off duty, and wandering about, when he heard a man cry out for help in one of the narrow black alleys of the place. He thought he recognized a comrade's voice, and surely enough, when he ran down to aid him, he found a Dutchman, a man of his own regiment, fighting with half a dozen natives. He was about done for, the Dutchman, when the O'Mahoney came up, and so were three of the Arabs. The O'Mahoney took care of the rest of them, and left seven dead men behind him when he went away—the six natives and the Dutchman, who had died in his arms and given him the Pool of Flame with his last whisper. . . .

"That's how it came to me," said O'Rourke.

"And where is it now?" "Back in Algeria, if I'm not mistaken. . . . Ye remember Chambret—he was with us in the desert and wanted ye to marry him afterwards? He has it—the dear man; I love him like a brother. . . . He sickened of Europe when he found his case with you was hopeless, and went to Algiers, joining the Foreign Legion."

"But how?" "Well, we were fond of each other, Chambret and I. I helped him out of some tight corners and he helped me along when my money ran short—as it always did, and will, I'm thinking. After a while I got to wondering how much I owed the man and figured it up; the sum total frightened the life out of me, and I made him take the ruby by way of security—and never was able to redeem it, for 'twas only a little after that that I came into me enormous patrimony and squandered it riotously getting married to the most beautiful woman living."

"He warned me to hold the stone, the O'Mahoney did, saying that the time would come when some native prince would offer to redeem the Luck of the State as an act of piety and patriotism. He prophesied a reward of at least fifty thousand pounds. And now it's come—twice over!"

"And now what can you do?" "Do?" cried O'Rourke. "Faith, what would I be doing? D'ye realize what this means to me, dear heart? It means you—Independence, a little fortune, the right to claim my wife!" He drew her to him. "Do? Sure, and by the first train and boat I'll go to Algeria, find Chambret, get him to give me the stone, take it to Rangoon, claim the reward, repay Chambret and—"

"And what, my paladin?" "Dare ye ask me that, madame? . . . Say, will ye wait for me?" She laughed softly. "Have I not waited, Ulysses?"

"Tell me," he demanded, "have ye talked with anyone about this letter?" "Only to Clara Plinlimmon!"

"Good Lord!" groaned the Irishman. "Only to her! Could ye not have printed broadsides, the better to make the matter public?"

"Did I do wrong?" "Twas indiscreet—and that's putting it mildly, me dear. D'ye know the woman's a walking newspaper? How much did ye tell her? Did ye show her the letter?"

"No." She answered his last question first. "And I told her very little—only about this reward for a ruby I didn't know you owned. We were wondering where to find you."

"And she told no one—or who do you think?" The woman looked a little frightened. "She told—she must have told that man—Monsieur des Trebes."

"That blackguard!" "He was with us on the yacht, one of Clara's guests."

"She has a pretty taste for company—my word! How d'ye know she told him? He asked you about it?"

"The letter? Yes. He wanted to know the name of the solicitors and their address. I wouldn't tell him. I—disliked him."

"Had ye told Lady Plinlimmon?" "No. . . ."

"Praises be for that!" "Why?"

"Because . . ." O'Rourke paused, vague suspicions taking shape in his mind. "Why did he ask about Chambret?" he demanded. "How could he have learned that the jewel was with him?"

He jumped up and began to pace the floor.

His wife rose, grave with consternation. "What," she faltered—"what makes you think, suspect—?"

"Because the fellow lied to me about you this very night. Ye were with Lady Plinlimmon in the Casino, were ye not? Faith, and didn't I see ye? I was in chase of ye when the man stopped me with his rigmarole about representing the French government and having a secret commission for me. Ye heard him just now. . . . And when I asked him was he of your party, he denied knowing Lady Plinlimmon. . . . He made a later appointment with me here, to talk things over. I'm thinking he only wanted time to think up a scheme for getting me out of the way. Also, he wanted to find out where Chambret was. D'ye not see through his little game? To get me away from Monte Carlo by the first morning train, that we might not meet; to get me on the first Atlantic liner, that I might not interfere with his plot against Chambret. For what other reason would he give me sealed orders? Sealed orders!" O'Rourke laughed curly, taking the long envelope from his pocket and tearing it open. "Behold his sealed orders, if ye please!"

He shuffled rapidly through his fingers six sheets of folded letter paper, guiltless of a single pen-scratch, crumpled them into a wad and threw it from him.

"What more do I need to prove that he's conspiring to steal the Pool of Flame and claim for himself the reward? . . . A bankrupt, discredited, with nothing but his title and his fame as a duelist to give him standing; is it wonderful that he's grasping at any chance to recoup his fortunes?" He took a swift stride toward the door, halted, turned. "And young Glynn?" he demanded. "Was he with you, and was he thick with this precious-rogue of a vicomte?"

"They were much together." "Faith, then it's clear as window-glass that the two of them, both broke, have figured out this thing between them. . . . Well and good! I want no more than a hint of warning. . . ."

He was interrupted by a knocking. With a start and a muttered exclamation he remembered Van Elnem, and stepped to the door and out into a corridor, shutting the woman in.

She remained where he had left her, her pretty brows knitted with thought, for a time abstractedly conscious of a murmur of voices in the hallway. These presently ceased as the speakers moved away. She turned to one of the windows, leaning against its frame and staring at the ominous flicker and flare of sheet-lightning which lent the night a ghastly luminosity.

A cool breeze sprang up, belying the curtains. The woman expanded to it, reviving in its fresh breath from the enervating influence of the evening's still heat. Her intuitive faculties began to work more vivaciously; she began to divine that which had been mysterious to her ere now.

The lightning grew more intense and incessant, the thunder beating the long roll of the charge. A heavy gust of air chill as death made her shiver. She shrank away from the windows, a little awed, wishing for O'Rourke's return, wondering what had made him leave her so abruptly.

Then suddenly she knew. . . . She could have screamed with horror.

Almost simultaneously the door slammed; her husband had returned. With a little cry she flung herself upon him, clinging to him, panting, sobbing.

"Tell me," she demanded, "what you intend to do? Do you mean to fight him—Des Trebes?"

"In the morning," he answered lightly, holding her tight and comforting her. "'Tis unavoidable; I provoked his challenge. He was obliged to fight. But don't let that worry ye—"

"Oh, my dear, my dear!" She sobbed convulsively upon his breast. "'Twill be nothing—hardly that; an annoyance—no more. Believe me, dear."

"What can you mean—?" (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Getting Back at Her. She—I wouldn't marry you if you were the only man on earth.

He—Well, considering that in such a case I would have a large number of stunners to select from, I don't think you would.



She Flung Herself Upon Him, Sobbing.

within six months from date. Said delivery might be made either in person or by proxy. With which Messrs. Secretan and Sypher begged to remain respectfully his.

The Irishman read it once and again, memorizing its import; then deliberately shredded it into minute particles.

"So it's come," he said heavily. "Just as the O'Mahoney foretold it would!" He sank back in his chair, and his wife went to him and perched herself upon the arm of it, imprisoning his head with her arms and laying her cheek against his.

"What has come, my heart?"

disappeared the state became a British possession.

"In the war of 'eighty-five, says the O'Mahoney, a small detachment of British troops out of touch with their command, happened upon this temple we're speaking of and took it, dispossessing priests and populace without so much as a day's notice. The officer in command happened to see this eye in the Buddha's forehead, pried it out and put it in his pocket. In less than an hour the natives surrounded the temple and attacked in force. The British stood them off for three days and then were relieved; but in the meantime the officer had been killed

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