REPUBLICAN NEWS-ITEM

Published by C. S. DAUBERMAN, Lessee

LAPORTE ..... PA.

Life in Cuba is just one roughhouse after another.

Chicago's birth rate is decreasing, but its population liars are not.

Aviators who carry the mails will have no chance to read the postcards.

All genuine Mocha and Java coffee comes from Brazil, and the valorization mill.

A few drops of oil, properly administered, will soften your lawnmower's raucous voice.

New Jersey is discussing whether dead mosquitoes should be paid for by weight or by the pint.

Speaking of unsolved mysteries, what has become of the bearded lady and the dog-faced boy?

Some men live for years in industry and righteousness and then spoil it all by going into politics.

Today's short story deals with a man who poured gasoline into his motor car while smoking a pipe.

Every time we read of an aeroplane accident we are reminded of the fact that there is one born every minute.

"Massaging with warm cocoa butter," says a beauty expert, "develops the arms." So does massaging dishes.

"Bathing," says a German scientist, "multiplies bacteria," but few men have died from excessive cleanliness.

Chicago boasts of the year's first heat prostration. Evidently trying to live up to its reputation as a hot old town.

Once in a while the weather man causes us to forget the straw hat question and cast longing eyes at somebody's umbrella.

Chicago man was given a divorce because his wife persisted in going through his pockets. The judge, we take it, is a married man.

In France eagles are being trained to attack airships. The day may come when we shall have city ordinances requiring the muzzling of our eagles.

Now a scientist says that a big nose is a sign of nerve. True, and often its bigness is due to the fact that its owner insisted on putting it in other people's affairs.

Nearly 4,200 American books were listed by publishers this spring, and few of them, indeed, will provide money to those who wrote them for summer vacations.

Cincinnati women have voted to set an example in simplicity. But it is said sometimes that there is nothing else so expensive as simplicity, that is, fashionable simplicity.

Trinity Church, New York, has an income of $1,000,000 a year. How cheap a man who can't afford to put more than a nickel upon the contribution plate must feel there.

A Pennsylvania court rules that "a voter's home is where his wife lives." Which leaves the bachelors to find their own homes, a feat sometimes difficult for some of them late at night.

The New York Medical Journal makes the announcement that card playing is injurious to the mind. It does not explain how it found the material that was necessary for experimenting.

The new French aeroplane line over the English channel has adopted a 15-minute schedule.

An Indian woman wants a divorce because her husband tried to compel her to wear his old false teeth. When the case comes to trial her lawyer ought to be able to work in a few bits of biting sarcasm.

Ten bull fighters killed and 166 injured in 872 bull fights in Spain during 1911 is a statistical testimonial that Spain's bullfighting game is determined to keep ahead of our national pastime of football.

An English writer tells us that women would make successful explorers When it comes to exploring the fastnesses of friend husband's trousers in the dead of night they certainly are there, as the lowbrows say.

Baseball magnates threaten to shorten the playing season, but they generously refrain from taking any action which might prevent the fans from talking about or thinking of the game the whole year round.

A Chicago woman advertised for a maid and promised an auto ride once a week as an inducement. Her only applicant wanted to see a picture of the chauffeur. Certainly; there could be no joy in a joy ride if the element of joyousness were missing.

In San Francisco, the defendant in a divorce suit ignored his child, but asked that the custody of a pet spaniel be awarded to him. The dog with the child was awarded by the court to the more human-minded of the conjugal partners in the case.

The POOL of FLAME

by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLSWORTH YOUNG

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. 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.

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

"That the man will never consent to weapons worthy the name. He values his precious hide too highly, and he's not going to put himself in the way of being injured when he has the Pool of Flame to steal. Be easy on that score, darling—and have faith in me a little. I'll not let him harm me by so much as a scratch."

"Ah, but how can I tell? . . . Dearest, my dearest, why not give it up—not the duel alone, but all this life of roaming and adventure that keeps us apart? Am I not worth a little sacrifice? Is my love not recompense enough for the loss of your absolute independence? Listen, dear, I have thought of something; I will make you independent, I will settle upon you all that I possess. I—"

"Faith, and I know ye don't for an instant think I'd dream of accepting that!"

"But give it up. What is the world's esteem when you have me to love and honor you? . . . Come to me, Terence. I need you—I need you desperately. I need the protection of your arm as well as your name. I need my husband!"

"I will," he said gently; "sweetheart, I promise ye I will—in ninety days. Give me that respite, give me that time in which to make or break my fortunes. Give me a chanbe to take the Pool of Flame to Rangoon—nay, meet me there in ninety days. I will come to you as one who has the right to claim his wife; but if I have lost, still will I come to you, a broken man but your faithful lover—come to you to be healed and comforted. . . . Dear heart of me, give me this last chance!"

With an eldritch shriek and a mighty rushing wind the storm broke over the mainland and a roaring rain came down.

Impulsively the Irishman turned off the lights, and, lifting his wife in his arms bore her to an armchair by the window.

The storm waned in fury, passed, died in dull distant mutterings. Still she rested in his embrace, her flushed face, wet with tears, pillowed to his cheek, her mouth seeking his.

Vague murmurings sounded in the stillness, sighs. . . .

CHAPTER V.

At five in the morning a heavy motor car of the most advanced type stole in sinister silence out of the courtyard of the Hotel d'Orient, at the same sedate pace and with the same surreptitious air skulked through the town, and finally swung eastwards upon the Route de la Corniche, suddenly discarding all pretense of docility and swooping onward with a windy roar, its powerful motor purring like some gigantic tiger-cat.

It carried four; at the wheel a goggled and ennuied operator in shapeless and hideous garments; in the tonneau its owner, a middle-aged French manufacturer with pouched eyes, a liver, lank jaws clean-scraped, and an expression of high-minded devotion to duty; Captain von Einem in uniform; and Colonel O'Rourke.

At the end of an hour's run, disturbed by one or two absurdly grave conferences between the seconds, in appropriate monotones, the mechanician put on the brakes and slowed down the car, then deftly swung it into a narrow lane, a leafy tunnel through which it crawled for a minute or two ere debouching into a broad and sunlit meadow, walled in by woodland, conspicuously secluded.

To one side and at a little distance a second motor-car stood at rest; its operator had removed the hood and was tinkering with the motor in a most matter-of-fact manner. In the body of the machine Monsieur le Vicomte des Trebes, ostentatiously unaware of the advent of the second party, sat twisting rapier-points to his moustaches and concentrating his gaze on infinity. O'Rourke observed with malicious delight the nose of the duelist, much inflamed.

Advancing from his antagonist's position three preternaturally serious gentlemen of France in black frock coats and straight-brimmed silk hats waded ankle deep in dripping grass to meet O'Rourke's representatives.

The two parties met, saluted one another with immense reserve, and retired to a suitable distance to confer; something which they did wordily, with enthusiasm and many picturesque gestures. At first strangely amicable, the proceedings soon struck a snag. A serious difference of opinion arose. O'Rourke divined that the conference had gone into executive session upon the question of weapons. He treated himself to a secret grin, having anticipated this trouble.

The choice of weapons being his, as the challenged, he had modestly selected revolvers and had brought with him a brace of Webleys, burly pieces of pocket ordnance with short barrels and cylinders chambered to hold half a dozen .45 cartridges. They were not pretty, for they had seen service in their owner's hands for a number of years, but they were undeniably built for business. And at sight of them the friends of the vicomte recoiled in horror.

Eventually a compromise was arrived at. Monsieur Juilliard stepped back, saluted, and with Von Einem returned to his principal, his face a mask of disappointment. As for himself, he told O'Rourke, he was desolated, but the seconds of Monsieur des Trebes had positively refused to consent to turning a meeting of honor into a massacre. They proposed to substitute regulation French dueling pistols as sanctioned by the Code. Such as that which Monsieur le Colonel O'Rourke might observe in Monsieur Juilliard's hand.

O'Rourke blinked and sniffed at it. "Sure," he contended, "'tis a magnifying glass I need to make it visible to me undressed eye. What the divvle does it carry—a dried pea? What d'they think we're here for, if not to slay one another with due ceremony? Ask them that. Am I to salve the vicomte's wounded honor by smiting him with a spitball? I grant ye, 'tis magnificent, but 'tis not a pistol."

Grumbling, he allowed himself to be persuaded. As he had foreseen and prophesied, so had it come to pass. Yet he had to grumble, partly because he was the O'Rourke, partly for effect.

None the less, he consented, and in the highest spirits left the car and plowed through the lush wet grass to the spot selected for the encounter, in the shadow of the trees near the eastern border of the meadow. Here, the seconds having tossed for sides, he took a stand at one end of a sixty-foot stretch and, still indecorously amused, received a loaded pistol from Von Einem.

Des Trebes confronted him, white with rage, regretting already (O'Rourke made no doubt) that he had not accepted the Webleys. The Irishman's open contempt maddened the man.

The seconds retired to a perfectly safe distance, Von Einem holding the watch, one of Des Trèbes' seconds a handkerchief. The chauffeurs threw away their cigarettes and sat up, for the first time roused out of their professional air of blase indifference.

"One," cried the German clearly.

Des Trebes raised his arm and leveled his pistol at O'Rourke's head. A faint flush colored his face, but his eye was cold and hard behind the sight and the hand that held the weapon was as steady as if supported by an invisible rest.

"Two," said Von Einem.

O'Rourke measured the distance with his eye and raised his arm from the elbow only, holding the pistol with a loose grip.

"Three," said Von Einem.

The handkerchief fell.

The Irishman fired without moving. Des Trebes' weapon was discharged almost simultaneously, but with a ruined aim; its bullet went nowhere in particular. The Frenchman dropped the weapon and, wincing, examined solicitously a knuckle from which O'Rourke's shot had struck a tiny particle of skin. His seconds rushed to him with cries, preceded by the surgeon with bandages. O'Rourke gracefully surrendered his artillery to Juillard, laughed at the vicomte again, and strolled back to the motor-car.

Juillard and Von Einem presently joined him, the former insistently anxious to have O'Rourke descend and clasp the hand of fraternal friendship with the vicomte. But the Irishman refused.

"Faith, no!" he laughed. "Niver! I'm too timorous a man to dare it. Sure and hasn't he hugged both his seconds and the surgeon [illegible] For me own part I've no mind to be kissed. Let's hurry away before he celebrates further by imprinting a chaste salute upon the cheek of our chauffeur. . . . Besides, I've a train to catch."

CHAPTER VI.

Events marched to schedule; what O'Rourke planned came serenely to pass. He experienced a day as replete with emotions as the night that preceded it and more marked by activity. Nothing hindering, he left the battle-scarred Vicomte des Trebes upon the field of honor at half-past six; at seven forty-five he settled himself in a coach of the Cote d'Azur Rapide, en route for Marseilles—a happy man, for he was alone. . . . At a quarter to one in the afternoon of the same day he boarded the little steamer Tabarka of the Mediterranean ferry service; and half an hour later stood by the after-rail of its promenade deck, watching the distances widen between him and all that he held beloved.

"In ninety days, dear boy," she had said. . . . "Ah, Terence, Terence, if you should fail me . . . !"

"I shall not fail. . . . Rangoon in ninety days. Dear heart, I will be there. . . ."

As if to feed the hunger of his heart he strained his vision to see the last of the land that held her. At length it disappeared, and then for the first time he consciously moved—drew a hand across his eyes, sighed and turned away.

Picking his way through the cosmopolitan throng of passengers, he went below, found his stateroom, and subsided into the berth for a sorely-needed nap; instead of indulging in which, however, he lay staring wide-eyed at his problem. He had much to accomplish, much to guard against. Des Trebes bulked large in the background of perils he must anticipate; O'Rourke was by no means disposed to flatter himself that he had scotched the schemes of the vicomte.

He made his second public appearance on the Tabarka at the hour of sunset; and in the act of making it, turned a corner and ran plump into the arms of a young person in tweeds and a steamer cap—a stoutish young Englishman with a vivid complexion and a bulldog pipe, nervousness tempering his native home-brewed insolence, the blank vacuity of his eyes hopelessly betraying the caliber of his intellect.

A sudden gust of anger swept O'Rourke off his figurative feet. He stopped short, blocking the gangway and the young man's progress. So this was what had been set to spy upon him!

"Good evening to ye," he said coldly fixing the Honorable Mr. Glynn with an interrogative eye that served to deepen his embarrassment and consternation. "I trust I didn't hurt ye, Mr. Glynn."

"Oh, no—not at all," stammered the Englishman. "Not in the least. No." He looked right and left of O'Rourke for a way round him, found himself with no choice but to retreat, and lost his presence of mind completely. "I—I say," he continued desperately, "I say, have you a match?"

"Possibly," conceded O'Rourke. "But I've yet to meet him. Of this ye may feel sure, however: if I have, 'tis neither yourself nor Des Trebes. Now run along and figure it out for yourself—what I'm meaning. Goodnight."

He brushed past the man, leaving him astare in sudden pallor, and went his way, more than a little disgusted with himself for his lack of discretion. As matters turned out, however, he had little to reproach himself with; for his outbreak served to keep young Glynn at a respectful distance throughout the remainder of the voyage. They met but once more, and on that occasion the Englishman behaved himself admirably according to the tenets of his caste—met O'Rourke's challenging gaze without a flicker of recognition, looked him up and down calmly with the deadly ennuied air peculiar to the underdone British youth of family and social position, and wandered calmly away.

O'Rourke watched him out of sight, a smile of appreciation curving his lips and tempering the perturbed and dangerous light in his eyes. "There's stuff in the lad, after all," he conceded without a grudge, "if he can carry a situation off like that. I'm doubting not at all that something might be whipped out of him, if he weren't what he's made himself—a slave to whisky."

For all of which appreciation, however, he soon wearied of Mr. Glynn. During the first day ashore it was not so bad; there was something amusing in being so openly dogged by a well-set-up young Englishman who had quite ceased to disguise his interest. But after that his shadowy surveillance proved somewhat distracting to a man busy with important affairs. And toward evening of the second day O'Rourke lost patience.

All day long in the sun, without respite he had knocked about from pillar to post of Algiers, seeking news of Chambret; and not until the eleventh hour had he secured the information he needed. Then, hurrying back to his hotel, he made arrangements to have his luggage cared for during an absence of indeterminate duration, hastily crammed a few indispensables into a kit box, and having dispatched that to the railway terminal, sought the restaurant for an early meal.

In the act of consuming his soup he became aware that the Honorable Bertie, in a dinner coat and a state of fidgets, had wandered down the outer corridor, passed at the restaurant door and espied his quarry. The fact that O'Rourke was dining with one eye on the clock and in a dust-proof, dust-colored suit of drill, was enough to disturb seriously the poise of the Englishman.

Exasperation stirred in O'Rourke. He eyed the young man rather morosely throughout the balance of his meal,

So This Was What Had Been Set to Spy Upon Him.

a purpose forming in his mind and attaining the stature of a definite plan of action without opposition from the dictates of prudence. And at length swallowing his coffee and feeing his servitor, he rose, crossed the room with a firm tread, and came to a full stop at the Honorable Mr. Glynn's table.

Momentarily he held his tongue, staring down at the young man while drumming on the marble with the fingers of one hand. Then Glynn, glancing up in a state of somewhat panic-stricken inquiry which strove vainly to seem insouciant, met the level stare of the adventurer and noticed the tense lines of his lips.

"I—I say," he floundered, "what's the matter with you, anyway? Can't you leave me a—lone?"

"I've been thinking," said O'Rourke crisply, disregarding the other's remark entirely, "that it might be of interest to ye to save ye a bit of botheration to know that I'm going up to Biskra by tonight's train. It leaves in ten minutes, so I'll have to forego the pleasure of your society on the trip."

Glynn got a grip on himself and pulled together the elements of his manhood. He managed to infuse blank insolence into his stare, and said "Ow?" with that singularly maddening inflection of which the Englishman alone is master; as who should say: "Why the dooce d'you annoy me with your bally plans?"

"Don't believe I know you, do I?" he drawled.

"I don't believe ye do, me lad."

"Can't say I wish to very badly, either."

"I believe that," O'Rourke chuckled grimly.

The meaning in his tone sent the blood into the young man's face, a fiery flood of resentment.

"Oh, I'm not afraid of you, y'know," he said, bristling. "Of course you're not going to Biskra, or you wouldn't tell me so. But if you do, I shall make it my business to find out and follow by the next train—bringing Des Trebes with me."

"Oh, will ye so? Ye mean to warn me he's in Algeria, too?"

"His boat's due now; I'm expecting him at any moment, if you wish to know." O'Rourke's smiling contempt was angering the young man and rendering him reckless. "You'll be glad to know you've made a dem' ass of yourself—if you really are going to Biskra."

"Praise from Sir Hubert—"

"Oh, don't you think I mind giving you a twelve-hour start; you won't gain anything by it. Y'see I know where you're going, and I know it's not there. If you'll take a fool's advice, you'll turn back now. You'll come back empty-handed anyway. I don't mind telling you that we mean to have that ruby, Des Trebes and I, and we know where it is. You're only taking needless trouble by interfering."

Truth was speaking from the bottom of the absinthe tumbler. O'Rourke's brows went up and he whistled noiselessly, for he realized that at least Glynn believed what he was admitting. "So that's the way of it, eh? I admire your candor, me boy; but be careful and not go too far with it. 'Twill likely prove disastrous to ye, I'm fearing. . . . But tit-for-tat; ye've made me a handsome present according to your lights, of what ye most aptly term a fool's advice, and 'tis meself who'll not be outdone at that game. For yourself, then, take warning from the experience of one who's seen a bit more of this side of the earth than most men have, and—don't let Des Trebes know ye've talked so freely. He's a bad-tempered sort and . . . But I'm obliged to ye and I bid ye a good evening."

CHAPTER VII.

South of Biskra there is always trouble to be had for the seeking; south of Briska there is never peace. A guerilla warfare is waged perennially between the lords of the desert, the Touaregg on the one hand, and the advance agents of civilization, as personified by the reckless French Condemned Corps and the Foreign Legion on the other. Year after year military expeditions set out from the oasis of Biskra to penetrate the wilderness, either by caravan route to Timbuctoo or along the proposed route of the Trans-Saharan Railway to Lake Tchad; and their lines of march are traced in red upon the land.

Toward this debatable land O'Rourke set his face with a will, gladly; for he loved it. He had fought over it of old; in his memory its sands were sanctified with the blood of comrades, men by whose side he had been proud to fight, men of his own stamp whose friendship he had been proud to own.

Mentally serene, if physically the reverse of comfortable, O'Rourke dozed through the interminable twelve hours of the journey to El-Guerrah; arriving at which place after eight the following morning, he transferred himself and his hand-bags (for now he was traveling light) to the connecting train on the Biskra branch. The latter, scheduled to reach the oasis at four-thirty in the afternoon, loafed casually up the line, arriving at the terminus after dark.

The Irishman, thoroughly fagged but complacent in the knowledge that he had left both vicomte and honorable a day behind him, kept himself from bed by main will-power for half the night, while he made the rounds of cafes and dance halls, in search of a trustworthy and competent guide—no easy thing to find.

The French force by then was three days out from the oasis, and no doubt since it was technically a "flying column," calculated to move briskly from point to point in imitation of Touaregg tactics, hourly putting a greater distance between itself and its starting point. Moreover, the pursuit contemplated by the adventurer was one attended by no inconsiderable perils By dint of indomitable persistence unflagging good-nature and such influence as he could bring personally to bear upon the authorities, O'Rourke competent got what he desired—[illegible]als, or guide and two racing cam[illegible]hera, with a pack animal tha[illegible] serve their purpose.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)