

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. Learning 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 1000 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 insists the jewel be in a duel. The viscount agrees, and O'Rourke farewells and promises to soon return with the reward. He discovers both Glynn and the viscount on board the ship, as he finds Chambret there is an attack by bandits and his friend dies telling O'Rourke that he has left the Pool of Flame with the governor general, who at six o'clock escapes. 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 finds the captain to be a smuggler who tries to steal the jewel. It is finally secured by the captain and O'Rourke escapes. With the aid of one Danny and his sweetheart, O'Rourke recovers the Pool of Flame. On board ship once more, O'Rourke and his sweetheart, a mysterious lady appears. O'Rourke comes upon a lascar about to attack the lady, who is a Mrs. Pryne, and kicks 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 lascar, who secures the Pool of Flame, the captain is shot and the lascar jumps into the sea. The ship arrives in port.

CHAPTER XXVI.—(Continued.)

"Get on with your story. What about Mrs. Pryne?" demanded O'Rourke, eyeing his servant curiously and trying to fathom his but half-disguised and wholly awkward air of self-esteem. Plainly the boy thought highly of himself because of something he had accomplished, some exploit of prowess or stroke of diplomacy as yet undisclosed.

"Yissor. . . I was tellin' ye it seemed to me the height of maneness she was displayin', ma'nin' this same Mrs. Pryne, whin 'twas meself knew, none better, how much ye've laid out on her account and herself not waitin' to settle up wid ye—"

"What business was that of yours?" "Twas none, sor. But yerself had keeled over and was did to ivything, and what am I for if not to look out for ye at such times? . . . So I'm afther shoppin' thim two just as they would be havin' their staterooms, and sz'l, 'Missus Pryne,' sz'l, 'me masher's compliments and he'd like a word wid ye before ye're gone entirely.' And 'What's this?' sz'she wid a fine show of surprise—the dayceytful buzzy!—though I'm watchin' her and thinkin' she was frigtenated about somethin', from the white turn av the face av her. Sz'she: 'Tis in the divvie's own hurry I am the minute,' or words to the same effect. Sz'she: 'And phwat will he be wantin' av me?' 'A momint's conversation wid ye,' sz'l. And sz'she: 'I've no time. Let me pass.' 'I'll be doing,' sz'l, 'nawthin' like that,' for be now I'm thinkin' there's somethin' deeper behind her fluster and flurry thin a mere desire to bilk ye—p'rhaps 'twas this thing in-too-ishum I've heard ye mention. And the next minit I'm sure av ut, for she goes white as snow in the face and the eyes of her begins to burn like cold grane fire and she screams to Cecile for help and is afther whipping out a gun to blow me out av her way wid; but 'tis meself that's be way av bein' too quick for her and takin' the pistol away; and be the mercy av the Saints Misher Dravos her shindy and hops down just in time to snatch another gun out of the hand av that same Cecile, and he grabs the gurl and turns her into a stateroom and shuts the dure on her and—"

"And," interrupted O'Rourke in a black rage, rising and turning back his sleeves—"And now I'm going to give ye the father and mother of all thrashings, ye insolent puppy! How dare ye lay hands on a lady—"

"Ow, murder!" chattered the boy, leaping away. "Be aisy, yer honor, and hear me out, for 'tis thin ye'll not be blamin' me, but if ye do I'll take the batin' widout a word, sor."

"Very well," assented O'Rourke omnifusly. "But be quick about it, for I'm mistrustful of ye altogether. Get on, ye whelp!"

Danny placed the table between them with considerable expedition. "Aw, listen now," he pleaded. "While Misher Dravos was 'tendin' to Cecile, this Missus Pryne was scarpin' like a wildcat, scratching and bitin', and 'tis all I can do to kape her av wrappin' me aroond tight about her and hold-

in' her so, and I'm makin' a grab at her waist whin be accident like what do I catch hold av but something undernath as big as a hin's egg—a stone she's carryin' round her neck, the same as yer honor did wid the Pool as Flame; and be the feel av ut ut's the same entirely; and thin I'm sure 'tis the same and that some sculduggery's be way av havin' been put upon ye."

"What the divvie!" "Wan momint more. . . Now in fightin' wid me the collar av her waist has come unfastened and meself can see the string av ribbon that's holding the thing there. So I sez to meself, sz'l, 'Tis strange enough to bear investigatin', sz'l, 'an' I'll be takin' a chanst at this if the masher do be afther flayin' me alive. So I calls Misher Dravos and gets him to hold her fast while I takes out me knife and cuts that ribbon and pulls the thing out widout any immodesty whatever; and there on that ribbon is a chamolis-case, all sewed up, and I'm rippin' it open an' findin'—this!"

"God in Heaven!" cried O'Rourke, stupefied and agape; for Danny, having worked up to his climax, had dramatically whipped from his pocket and cast upon the table between them the Pool of Flame.

He looked up, blind to the glee and triumph in Danny's face.

"How did ye come be this?" he demanded, speaking slowly and steadily, as one who, having drunk more than enough, listens to his own enunciation to detect in it the slur that liquor brings. "I mean—I mean—how could ye have taken this from the woman when it lay all the time at the bottom of the sea—six hundred miles and more behind us?"

"Ask Misher Dravos if ye do not belave me, sor. How would I be havin' it at all, widout I got it like I've told ye? . . . 'Tis the real Pool of Flame ye're handlin'; that's sure. T'other one—the stone the serang flung into the say, sor, was a counterfeit."

"How do ye know that?" "Aisy enough, yer honor; be puttin' the maid Cecile on the witness stand. 'Twas this way: I tuk the stone from

ye he'd taken measurements av the stone and made a wax mould av ut, so that whin he failed to kill yerself and had got his strength back, he went to Paris and had an imfashun av ut made there—somehow be fusing chape stones together and all that, I belave. 'Twas ixpensive an' him tight up for money, so he takes Missus Pryne into partnership and she puts up the cash. Thin—they've been watchin' yerself all the time, sor—they sets Cap'n Hole onto ye to get the stone away, and he does it like ye know. Afther ye escaped from the Pelican, he goes ashore and mates the lady at her hotel and daylivers the stone to her, getting his pay and the imfashun into the bargain, he insistin' on that because he knows ye'll be comin' back for the Pool av Flame, and he's afraid av ye—afraid ye'll kill him if he can't turn over a ruby to ye like the wan he stole. So 'twas the faked stone we tuk from him that same night and the same we brought aboard the Rancee and the same the serang sthole from ye."

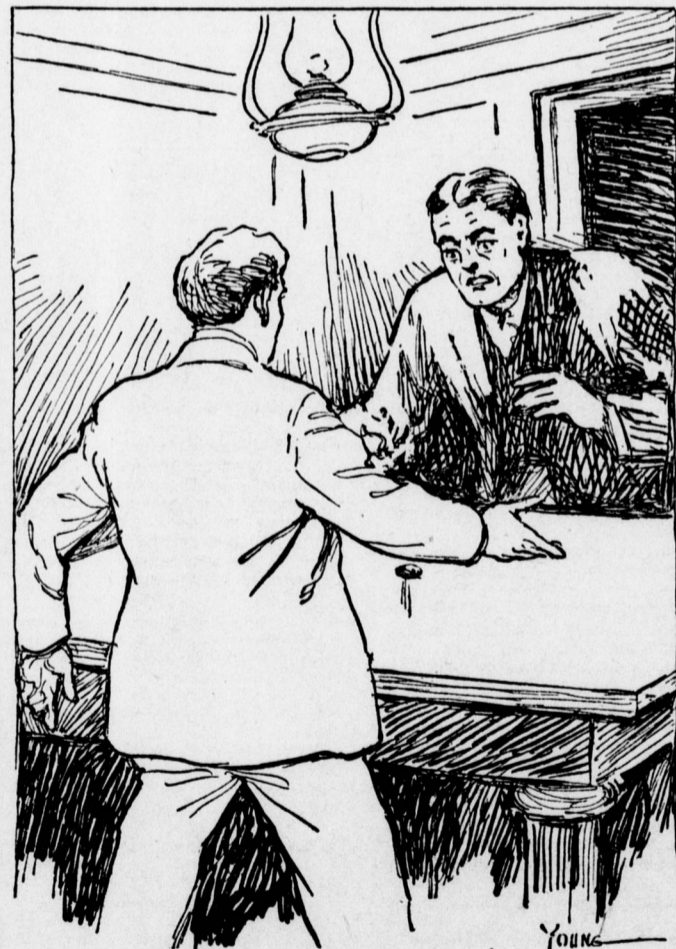
"I begin to see. But how about the serang? What did Cecile have to say in explanation of him?"

"She couldn't account for him at all, sor, save that mebbe the natives in Rangoon had somehow got wind av the fact that the stone was comin' back and a gang av thim set out to stale ut. She sez Missus Pryne niver cud account for the way they discovered she had ut, but they seemed to know pretty certain sure, sor, for ye'll recall they niver bothered ye at all at first, and 'twas only be chanst, lik, that the serang got the imfashun from ye."

"But what about Des Trebes? Did the maid say?"

"No more than he'd been lift in Paris, sor."

"And what 'ev ye done with the two of them, Mrs. Pryne and the maid? Are they still locked up safely?" "Divvie a bit, yer honor. 'Twas impossible to kape them so, Dravos said, wid Missus Pryne threatening to yell bloody murder out av the poort and kick up such a row that the authorities wud be down on us—if we didn't let her go. Besides, we'd got what we



"God in Heaven!" Cried O'Rourke.

Missus Pryne and Misher Dravos and meself locked her in her cabin. Thin afther talkin' things over we let Cecile out and be dint av threats and persuashuns, got her to tell what she knew."

"Go on."

"She sez that Frichman ye kilt back there in Algiers, sor, is at the bottom av it all, only he's not did because ye didn't make a clane job av ut, but lift him wid the laste suspicion av the breath av life in the body av him."

"I was afraid of that," nodded O'Rourke. "The next time we meet, Des Trebes and I, there'll be no mistake about it."

"She sez that before ne fought wid

wanted out av her, and pwhat was the use av holdin' her anny longer?"

"So ye let them go?"

"Yissor."

"I could kill ye for it," said O'Rourke, "and Dravos, too; for there's a deal of matters I'd like to be inquire into with the lady this blessed minute. But, Danny boy, there's nothing in the world I can't forgive ye now, for what ye've done for me, and 'twill be a strange thing if I don't serve ye handsomely when I come into a fortune."

Now don't be standin' there like a nunny, but be off with ye and pack me things before I lift me hand to ye. 'Tis in haste we are—with Des Trebes alive and Mrs. Pryne on the loose; and

there'll be no such thing as rest for either of us until we reach Rangoon."

CHAPTER XXVII.

"Danny . . ." said O'Rourke without looking up from the occupation which had engrossed his attention for the last three hours; and for the first time in that period he spoke audibly, making an end to the mumbled confabulation he had been holding with himself, a Murray's Guide, a Bradshaw, an Indian railway guide, several steamship folders and a large colored map of the Indian empire.

"What day's this day, Danny?" Danny thought laboriously. "'Twas this morn' we lift th' Rancee, sor?"

"This yestiddy was Wednesday."

"And today Thursday, be logical progress of reasoning, eh?"

"Aw, yiss, sor."

"And what's the time?"

Danny consulted O'Rourke's watch on the bureau. "A quarter av twelve."

"Then bestir yourself, ye lazy good-for-nothing, and pack up me things."

"Aw!" cried Danny, expostulating. "Our train leaves at two. Ye have an hour and a half."

"Aw, but yer honor, is ut no rist at all we'll iver be havin'?"

"Ye can rest on the train," said O'Rourke. "I've just ten days left in this to reach Rangoon, where I've an appointment to keep with a lady, Danny, to wit, Madame O'Rourke. D'ye mind her, and do ye blame me, Danny?"

Danny became suddenly extraordinarily busy. "Why did ye not say as much to begin with, yer honor?" he complained. "As if I wouldn't work me hands to the stumps av thim."

"Tis now Thursday noon," continued O'Rourke thoughtfully. "The two o'clock train's scheduled to land us in Calcutta at ten Saturday night. At eight Sunday morning a steamer leaves Diamond Harbor for Rangoon, scheduled for a fair-weather passage of three days. That'll leave us a little leeway, barring accidents. But we've no time to waste."

"But how'll we be catching that steamer at D'mind Harbor, sor? How far's that from Calcutta, now, an' will there be thrains at that hour av the night?"

"That's to be dealt with as it turns up, Danny. There's only forty miles between the two places, and if there's no train, we'll charter a motor-car or a boat down the Hughli."

The latter expedient O'Rourke finally adopted, although he could have afforded a comfortable night in a hotel at Calcutta, had he deemed it wise. But in the fifty-six hours of unmitigated sweltering that he and Danny endured in their flight across India he had leisure to think matters over very carefully, with the result that, all things considered, he felt justified in assuming the world to be in league against him and in shaping his course accordingly. Therefore it were unwise to permit himself to be seen and recognized in Calcutta, or even to linger on the soil of India an instant longer than absolutely necessary.

Within an hour, then, of his arrival at Howrah, he had, by dint of persistence and rupees, succeeded in hiring a launch to take him from the terminus by water to the steamer at Diamond harbor—

CHAPTER XXVIII.

At a small hour of the morning they made Diamond Harbor in pitch darkness and without misadventure were successful in causing themselves to be transhipped, bag and baggage, to the twin-screw steamship Poonah, which vessel rode at anchor in midstream.

Toward eight o'clock of the white-hot forenoon that followed, O'Rourke, in the shadow of a long-boat on the Poonah's promenade deck, stood finishing a matutinal cigar and watching narrowly a tender ferry out a final boatload of passengers from the eastern river bank.

Slowly the tender forged toward the steamer's side; and as it drew near, O'Rourke forgot to smoke and bent over the rail to inspect with unremitting interest those upon its decks.

The forward deck of the tender held his regard but briefly; those who waited there, eyeing impassively the towering flanks of the liner, were one and all of the east, of races, creeds and types too numerous to catalogue. These the adventurer might not read, save individually upon personal contact. If trouble was to come from them, collectively or individually, he would not know until the blow had fallen. On the other hand, he might be able to hazard shrewd surmises as to the potential animus inherent in any one of the Europeans who were to be his fellow passengers.

The latter were a mere handful; half a dozen commercial travelers from London, Paris, Berlin, their avocations evident beyond dispute; a tall English missionary with his withered wife, sombre figures in the stark sunlight, a red-faced deputy-something-or-other of the Indian government, helmet in white drill and new pith helmet with a gay puggaree; a lone English girl, and a Frenchman.

The two latter held the Irishman's attention; the girl because, even at a distance, her slim white-clad figure and well-poised head seemed singularly fresh and attractive; the man because—well, because O'Rourke was susceptible to premonitions.

He was a tall man and broad, the Frenchman—well-made, well-groomed, carrying himself with an indefinable air of distinction. His face was rather pale (and therefore notable in that concourse of dark skins), its features strongly modeled, the mouth and chin

masked by a neatly trimmed and pointed beard and mustache.

O'Rourke could not have said that he had ever seen the man before; yet there was this and that about him which struck a spark of reminiscence from his memory. A suspicion flashed through his mind which he put aside with disdain, as absurd and far-fetched. On the other hand. . . He knit his brows in puzzlement.

The very fixity of his regard drew the eyes of its object upwards. They encountered O'Rourke's, lingered briefly in an unvelled, inquiring stare in which there was not to be detected the least hint of recognition, and passed onward casually, indifferently, ignoring the impertinence.

The tender's passengers began to stumble up the gang-plank to a lower deck of the liner; and O'Rourke, with a sober face, went below, taking some care to avoid contact with the incoming crowd.

He found Danny was in his stateroom, engaged with some details of repair to the adventurer's wardrobe.

O'Rourke remained for a brief space standing in the middle of the cabin, visibly abstracted. Then abruptly some whimsical consideration seemed to resolve his dubiety—as lightning will clear sultry, brooding air; a smile deepened the corners of his mouth, the flicker in his eye merged magically into a twinkle, the shrug of his broad shoulders conveyed an impression of casting care to the winds.

"Danny, lad," he remarked reflectively, throwing himself ungracefully upon the cushioned transom opposite to his berth. "Danny, ye wouldn't lie to me, would ye now?"

"Aw-w!" reproved Danny. "Shure, yer honor knows ut isn't in me at all. And to himself; 'Phat the divvie now?"

"Then tell me, Danny, truthfully; did ye ever see a ghost?"

"Aw-w!"—seeing cause to take the query as a joke.

"A ghost that had grown a beard since it had become a ghost, Danny?"

"Aw-w-w!"—still willing to be amused, if "himself" chose to be facetious.

"Because," continued O'Rourke with a slight frown, "I have, and that not five minutes since."

"Aw?"

"Wance I left a man for dead, Danny, with a clean sword-thrust through the body of him—a misbegotten black-guard he was; but I killed him in fair fight, sword to sword, and no favor. . . And this bright and beautiful morning, lo and behold ye! who should come tripping up the gang-plank but his ghost, as lively as ye please, and with a neat new beard!"

"Aw-w?"—incredulously. O'Rourke frowned impatiently. "Des Trebes," he explained.

"Aw—"

"Stop it, ye parrot! Stop it, I say! Have ye no word in the dark lexicon of your ignorance other than 'Aw-w'?" Get up, ye omadhaun, and take me respects to the purser and ask him please will he show ye the passenger-list."

The valet left with circumspect alacrity.

Alone, O'Rourke rose and turned thoughtfully to a revolver that made a conspicuous black spot on the white counterpane of the berth, with nervous, strong fingers unlimbering the weapon and taking account of the brass dials of the cartridges that nestled snug in its six-chambered cylinder. The machine was in perfect condition; O'Rourke snapped the breech shut and thrust it in his pocket. Then he sat down to think, subconsciously aware from noises without that the tender had swung off and the anchor was being tripped.

Could the resemblance be accidental? It seemed hardly possible. The Des Trebes he had known had been a type distinct, so clear and aloof from the general Frenchman that not even the addition of a beard to his physiognomy could have proven a thorough disguise. And it seemed reasonable enough to assume that, Mrs. Pryne having failed in her undertaking, Des Trebes would resume his office as active head of their conspiracy. If it were indeed he whom O'Rourke had just seen, there was every chance imaginable that the final chapter in the history of the Irishman's connection with the Pool of Flame would prove an eventful one.

"Maybe not," admitted O'Rourke, "maybe I deceive meself. But I'm persuaded I'll do well to keep both me eyes open until the day I'm rid of the damned thing!"

At this juncture Danny's knock took him to the door. "Mongere Raoul de Hyeres," announced the valet breathlessly; "tis that the purser says his name is, yer honour."

"Yes," assented O'Rourke dubiously. "But perhaps the purser's mistaken—(mis)informed."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Bucking Horses.

A touch of the spur or a flick of the quirt signals the start, says the American Magazine, in an article on our western horses. His knowledge of what to do must be a heritage from his ancestors, for all horses do it, and all American wild horses are sprung from horses that once carried men. He pops down his head and levitates straight heavenward. While he and you are high in the air he arches his back and stiffens his body to iron rigidity. Thus he comes back to earth. The sensation to the rider is as if his spinal column had been struck by a plectrifier. The impression is not analyzed at the time, for the horse goes into the air again immediately. He swings to right or left, or he "changes ends" completely while in the air, and you come down facing southward, whereas you were facing northward when you ascended.

WHAT WILL CURE MY BACK?

Common sense will do more to cure backache than anything else. 'Twill tell you whether the kidneys are sore, swollen and aching. It will tell you in that case that there is no use trying to cure it with a plaster. If the passages are scant or too frequent, proof that there is kidney trouble is complete. Then common sense will tell you to use Doan's Kidney Pills, the best recommended special kidney remedy.

A West Virginia Case

R. W. Clark, 212 Beasley St., Bluefield, W. Va., says: "I was completely laid up for four months. I had terrible pains in my back, head-aches, both feet and ankles were so swollen I could not wear my shoes. Doan's Kidney Pills cured me completely after doctors failed."

Get Doan's at any Drug Store, 50c a Box

Doan's Kidney Pills

Constipation Vanishes Forever

Prompt Relief—Permanent Cure

CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS

never fail. Purely vegetable—act surely but gently on the liver. Stop after dinner—cure indigestion, improve the complexion, brighten the eyes. SMALL PILL, SMALL DOSE, SMALL PRICE.

Genuine must bear Signature

Write M. B. Stevens & Co., Atty., 633 F St., Washington, Estab. 1874

UNKIND.

"Tom is a very effeminate fellow."

"Yes, he never comes into the room without my looking to see if he has feathers on his hat."

German Farmer Good Business Man.

Under a seemingly generous offer of hospitality, a North German farmer has managed to include a good stroke of business for himself. In a Hanover paper recently appeared an advertisement that from fifteen to twenty women and girls (not under twelve years of age) who needed recuperation could have free board and lodging on a country estate. But in exchange they would be required to pick pease from eight to ten hours. Industrious pickers might also be paid cash for their labor.

Filial.

"I thought your father looked very handsome with his gray hairs."

"Yes, dear old chap. I gave him those."—London Opinion.

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 refresh 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 letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.