

The POOL of FLAME

by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ELLSWORTH YOUNG

COPYRIGHT 1909 by LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE



tered 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, examining it intently, infinitely less concerned 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 Carlton, 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 went 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



The Frenchman Rose, Offering Him the Envelope.

five minutes," when Des Trebes himself appeared.

"Anticipating that message, monsieur," he said, moving into view 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 he.

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

"Then," said O'Rourke, "the top of the morning to ye. Enter, monsieur." He stood aside, closing the door behind 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 with swift, searching glance. "We are at least secure from interruption; one 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 papers of a private nature.

But Des Trebes had changed his mind. "That is unnecessary, monsieur. Your very willingness is sufficient proof. I have your word and am content."

"That's the way of doing business that I like," assented O'Rourke heartily, warming a little to the man as he turned back a chair facing the vicomte. "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 interlacing, black eyes narrowing, regarded the Irishman thoughtfully for a moment. Abruptly he sat up and removed from an inner pocket a long thin white envelope, thrice sealed with red wax and innocent of any superscription whatever.

"Are you prepared, monsieur," he demanded incisively, "to play blind-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."

"And when would I be free to sign

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."

"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?"

"One moment—a dozen questions by your leave. . . . When must 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, perhaps 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 consul-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 recompense?"

"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 reward will be doubled."

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

The Frenchman rose, offering him the envelope. "You must pledge yourself, monsieur, not to break these seals until you are at sea?"

"Absolutely—of course." O'Rourke took the packet, 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, monsieur," 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 exclaimed carelessly, "I believe you are a friend of my old school-fellow, Chambret—mon cher Adolph?"

"'Tis so," assented the Irishman warmly. "The best of men—Chambret!"

"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 Algeria, monsieur—with some French force in the desert."

"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. The Frenchman was standing stiffly at attention, as if alarmed. His pallor was, if possible, increased, livid—his closely shaven beard showing blue-black on his heavy jowls and prominent chin. His eyes blazed, shifting from the alcove 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 gestured violently toward the alcove; and O'Rourke became aware that the curtains were shaking—waving as though a draught stirred them. But there was no draught. And beneath their edge he saw two feet—two small, bewitching feet in the daintiest and most absurd of evening slippers, with an inch or so of silken stockings showing 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—"

"I 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-

corn. Thunderstruck, O'Rourke rapped 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, monsieur," 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 his 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 ensued. The Frenchman, taken at a complete disadvantage, was for all his resistance hustled to the door and 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, blinded with passion, seemed about to renew the attack. "Or are ye wishful to be going downstairs in the same fashion?"

Des Trebes drew back, snarling

"You dog!" he cried. Then abruptly, by an admirable effort, he calmed himself surprisingly, drawing himself up with considerable dignity and throttling his temper as he quietly adjusted the disorder of his clothing. Only in his eyes, black as sloes and small, did there remain any trace of his malignancy and unquenchable hatred.

"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 whatever 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 notoriety as a duelist. And I shall take steps to see that ye fight me before sunset. Else shall all Europe know ye 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 absolutely at his mercy.

"Captain von Einem," he said quickly, "by your leave, a moment of your time."

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 impeccable French.

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

And he tweaked the nose of Monsieur le Viscomte des Trebes, tweaked it with a will and great pleasure, tweaked it for glory and the Saints; carefully, methodically, even painstakingly, he kneaded and pulled and twisted 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 observed 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—Captain von Einem, with your permission."

"Most happy, Colonel O'Rourke," assented the German, blue eyes sparkling in an immobile countenance. "I shall await the seconds of Monsieur des Trebes in my rooms."

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

O'Rourke laughed briefly, offering the German his hand. "'Twas wonderfully opportune, your appearance, captain dear," said he. "Thank ye from the bottom of me heart. . . . And now will ye forgive me excusing myself until I hear from ye about the affair of the morning? I've a friend waiting in me room here. . . . Par don the rudeness."

CHAPTER IV.

It would be difficult to designate precisely 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 lock.

His mood was exalted, his imagination excited; the swift succession of events which had made memorable the



"Monsieur, Your Nose Annoys Me!"

night, culminating with his open invitation to a challenge from the most desperate duelist in Europe, had inspired 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 recrudescence of a passion which he had striven with all his strength to put behind him for a time;

(Continued on Next Page)

Drs. J. S. & F. P. BYRD,
Dental Surgeons
Edgefield and Trenton
Edgefield Office over Postoffice
Office 'Phone 3 Residence 17-R

Treasurer's Notice.

The County Treasurer's office will be open for the purpose of receiving taxes from the 15th day of Oct., 1911, to the 15th day of March, 1912, inclusive.

A penalty of one per cent will be added to all unpaid taxes after the 1st day of January to the 31st of January 1912, of two per cent, from the 1st day of February to the last day of February 1912 and penalty of five per cent from the first day of March to the 15th day of March, 1912.

The tax levies for the year 1911 are as follows:

For State purposes	5 1/2 mills
Ordinary County	4 1/2 "
Cons. School tax	3 "
Special County tax	1 1/2 "
Bacon S. D. Special	2 "
Edgefield S. D.	2 "
Long Cane S. D.	3 "
Liberty Hill S. D.	3 "
Johnston S. D.	4 "
Collier S. D.	4 "
Flat Rock S. D.	3 "
Prescott S. D.	3 "
Plum Branch S. D. No 1	3 "
White Town S. D.	2 "
Trenton S. D.	2 "
Ward S. D.	2 "
Moss S. D.	3 "
Parksville S. D.	3 "
Washington S. D.	2 "
R. R. Bonds Wise T's' p	1 1/2 "
R. R. Bonds Pickens	3 "
R. R. Bonds Johnston	3 "
R. R. Bonds Pine Grove	14 "
R. R. Bonds Rocker	14 "
Bonds Town Edgefield	1 "
School Bonds	1 "
Town of Edgefield	7 "
Corporation Purposes	7 "

All male citizens between the ages of 21 years and 60 years except those exempt by law are liable to a poll tax of one dollar each. A capitation tax of 50 cents each is to be paid on all dogs.

The law prescribes that all male citizens between the ages of 18 and 55 years must pay a \$2 commutation tax or work six days on the public roads. As this is optional with the individual, no commutation tax is included in the property tax. So ask for road tax receipt when you desire to pay road tax.

Positively no taxes received after 15th of March.

JAS. T. MIMS,
Co. Treas. E. C.

New Photograph Gallery

I am now prepared to take photographs of all kinds, and respectfully solicit the patronage of the people. Special attention given to groups and outdoor work. My prices are very reasonable. Gallery open Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday from 11 till 5 o'clock.

D. O'HARA,
NORRIS BUILDING

Round Trip Excursion Rates

Via Augusta, Ga.—Via Southern Railway—Premier Carrier of the South.

Account Aviation Exhibitions, Augusta, Ga., January 10, 26, February 14, 23, March 13 and 29, 1912, by the Aviation Schools, the Southern Railway announces low round trip tickets to Augusta on the above dates, good returning the third day from, and including date of sale. For further information, call on ticket agents, or, John L. Meek, AGPA, Atlanta, Ga. Frank L. Jenkins, TPA., Augusta, Ga.

A. H. CORLEY, Surgeon
A. Dentist. Appointments at Trenton on Wednesdays. Crown and Bridge work a specialty.

Combahee Fertilizers are Real Fertilizers

Full of available Plant Food
Lots of Organic Matter to form Humus
They smell bad, but they're Good
Positively no filler used
Fish and Blood used largely in our goods

CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA
NORMAN H. BLITCH, President
R. WILLIAM MOLLOY, General Manager

ROYSTER FERTILIZER

HITS THE SPOT EVERY TIME

F.S.R.

The explanation is simple; they are made with the greatest care and every ingredient has to pass the test of our own laboratories; there's no hit or miss about Royster Fertilizers.

Sold By Reliable Dealers Everywhere
F.S. ROYSTER GUANO CO.

Sales Offices
Norfolk Va. Tarboro N.C. Columbia S.C.
Baltimore Md. Montgomery Ala. Spartanburg S.C.
Macon Ga. Columbus Ga.