

The White Sepulchre

The Tale of Pelee

BY WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

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CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

That instant, under the spell of soft music, Peter Constable knelt as in a dream to drink at the fountains of inspiration. The dinner call aroused him. The music ceased, and he was again the faltering human lover. The path had been illumined only long enough to show him that there was a shorter way.

It seemed during dinner that Lara had something to say which the presence of the others forbade. Mrs. Stansbury went upstairs. Breen and the planter engaged in a smoky discussion of the literary peregrinations of one Herman Melville. The other two set out for the gardens.

"I have wanted to tell you since morning how sorry I am," she said quietly. "I want you to know that, in spite of mother's decision, I thank you for your kindness, and believe in your deeper knowledge of our danger."

"It's good of you to say that," he answered. "I never tried to persuade anybody to do anything before. I may take Pelee too seriously, but I can't help it, with you folks here."

She laughed. "And I thought that nothing short of an actual eruption could disturb your equanimity."

"Did you ever read 'The Story of the Gadsbys'?" he asked.

"Yes."

"There is a big fragment of truth back of that. Do you think I would have played upon your imagination and nerves, and made a mess of things, if I hadn't been afraid?"

"Afraid of the mountain? That's not like you. Are we about to see you down below in the city, warning the people, like Cassandra in the streets of Troy?"

"I have a dearer service—before going down into the city," he answered. "It was as if Breen and the day's contemplation had made this moment inevitable. 'That done, I could take up the work there with sleeves rolled up and bursting with anthems.'"

"What service?" she asked bravely, though the trend of his words was as black on white. She was startled, unready.

"To put you out of the range of Pelee's guns!" he said, with sudden vehemence.

She had scarcely divined that there lived a lover in this man. She felt futile beside him, and yet fused by his penetrating vitality. To her, it was the signal moment in which the woman discovers a giant besieger at her gates.

"They will hear you!" she found herself saying, in a self-stifled tone.

"Let them hear me. I want you to be safe. Pelee is no study to me now, but a grim warning—because you are here! I can't keep my eyes from the volcano, nor my thoughts from you. Don't you know—don't you know that you crept into the very heart of me—a bit of a girl, telling me how to live my life? Yesterday, when I found the mountain awake, all that I had ever done and thought and felt turned to nothing compared to your life. No matter what you think or say to me—I am afraid for you!"

The head bending toward her face seemed huge in the dark, and his lowered voice charged with power.

"But we will go to sea when the Panther comes," she said huskily.

"Lara!" The voice was from Mrs. Stansbury, in the upper window of the house—that calm, fateful voice.

"I must go!"

"Listen. I cannot bear to wait until the Panther comes!" he went on impetuously. "I want to put you safely ashore in Dominica this night—or Fort de France, or even on shipboard—and I will come back here. Do this for me, Lady!"

"Lara!" was called again.

"Yes, mother. . . . No, I could not go alone! There would never be a home here again. I must go to mother—oh, I cannot speak now!"

He stood alone in the dark. A lizard that had hearkened attentively, began to croak his comment to the mango trees.

CHAPTER V.

Sleeplessness ranged through Constable's brain again, and he gave the night to the old work of watching the mountain, and keeping the woman at hand. From time to time, before midnight, he heard the voice of Mrs. Stansbury. The girl was with her, but seemed to make no answer. The house was all his own. Through the lower hall to the music room; out to the veranda, the garden paths and drives; from the window that faced the north, in his own room, to the summit of the Morne d'Orange and the shadowy lawns; through ash-fog and windless moonlight—he trod the night away. The hours fell asleep in passing; the moon drowsed for ages in the cloud gardens; the stars dimmed, disappeared, and trembled forth again, as they had been. It seemed left entirely to him that time passed; he had to grapple with the minutes one by one, and fight each back into the past.

At the side of the great house to the north there was a trellis heavily burdened with lianas. Within, he found the office of an old cistern, partially covered by unfixed planking. He lifted the boards, and the moonlight shined through the foliage reflected in the water far below. A heavy wooden bar crossed the rim and was set stoutly in the masonry. Constable lit a match. His mind keenly grasped each detail. A rusty

the thick crosspiece. Slabs of stone from the side walls were scattered over the bottom of the cistern. He dropped several ignited matches into the chamber, and determined to examine the place more thoroughly by daylight. From the native cabins came the sound of a dog barking. A shutter clicked in one of the upper windows of the plantation house.

"There's be no doubt about it now," he thought grimly. "They'll proceed at once to shut me up for being mentally irrecusable."

That was a parched but brilliant dawn. The blinding charge from the east changed the dew to steam before it touched the ground. The more delicate blossoms were withered in the hectic burning when the sun was but an hour high. Lara's face was ashen and darkly lined under the eyes. The night had been an evil one to her, evil with a struggle as yet unfinished.

"Peter, you're pulling yourself down," said Uncle Joey after breakfast. "Don't take Pelee quite so seriously. Go to bed for a day, or, better still, steam the Madame out for a day's run and get some rest under the breezy awnings."

"What sort of a graven image do you think your sister's boy is, uncle?" Constable inquired. "I'll get you folks out of the war zone, or stay here until Pelee is cool—or a billion tons lighter."

"But don't you overestimate the chance of an eruption, Peter?"

"I haven't finished my mathematical calculations, my dear relative. Holy nuptials and capitals of hell—I've been all over this before. Take my word for it, and get set for a start when the mails come in to-morrow morning. You are all foolish virgins. I'm going down below to see how your city flourishes in this furnace of a day. Who is the smug authority on Les Colonies, who undertakes to tell Saint Pierre editorially that there is no danger?"

"M. Mondet is the editor."

"I should relish considerably the pleasure of talking up the throat of M. Mondet with several sheets of his political conspiracies. I believe I shall call upon him."

"We look up to Les Colonies here, Peter. Remember this is not Montana."

"The tropics have enervated you, uncle. You need to be born again."

The hottest morning Saint Pierre had known for years! The portresses were gone from the highways. Rue Victor Hugo, the principal thoroughfare, was deserted at ten in the morning. Shop doors were closed, the street vendors silent. Volcanic ash lay in all the crevices, and mingled with the turf. Behind the shut doors children wailed. The tough little mules, some in their panniers and with no one to lead them, hugged the east walls for shade. From the byways came faintly the smell of death. In the offices of Les Colonies Constable found a breath of coolness, for the outer air was admitted as little as possible. M. Mondet welcomed the caller. Constable explained his purpose, proffered a card, and apologized for his French.

M. Mondet was a tubby little man. His hands were white, soft, tapering, ringed. If you saw them alone, you would promptly uncover, as is customary in the proximity of a woman. M. Mondet did not forget his hands.

"Pelee has a bad look, monsieur," Constable began. "I believe you could clear the city of ten thousand people if you printed a vigorous warning against the mountain; if you ordered the natives to take no chances, but to flee, regardless of their coats, chickens, coals, or their next city fathers. To be instrumental in saving the lives of ten thousand people is not a service given to all men, monsieur."

Constable spoke slowly, and was angered by the reply of the editor:

"But, my dear M. Constable, there is no danger—no danger, I assure you!"

"Sir, this is tragedy—black, rumbling, naked tragedy! I say there is need for a giant here, who would paint the possibilities of that monster in living fire. A man might die in the foulest gutter, cursed by the demons of drink and disease, but with a chant on his lips and 'vine leaves in his hair,' if the memory of such a service as may be yours were with him at the last!"

The French editor found himself looking into a lean, tanned face that flushed and paled in turn. Moreover, he was uneasy on account of a pair of lean, tanned hands which lay lightly and restlessly upon the knees of the man before him. These hands seemed to be the potent embodiments of hate and swiftness. The manner of their low leaping created the impression that their leashes were insecure, and the immaculate cravat of M. Mondet felt tight upon his throbbing throat.

"Perhaps it is well that you called," he said with haste, leading out his caller with the delicacy bred of the fear of dynamite.

Constable left, unsatisfied. The clock in the Hospital Militaire struck the hour of eleven. Constable slowly made his way to the water front and back to the Sugar Landing. His launch was still waiting there at the stone pier. He had sent out word to Captain Negley for steam to be kept up night and day. A small crowd was gathering on the shore, slightly to the north of the Sugar Landing. Constable hurried thither. A black woman had fallen, from the sun. Her

burdens lay together on the burning sand—a tray of cakes from her head, a naked babe from her arms. Constable had the stricken creature placed in the launch and taken out to his ship for care, sending a native doctor after her. The negroes regarded him with curious adulation. The water front would know him when he came again.

"Oh, I say, friends of mine," he announced in French. "If any of you have sick wives or little ones, send them out to the ship yonder, and they will be cared for. No, it is not a hospital, where fees are charged—just a temporary refuge from the heat for the women and little ones. Tell your neighbors. Here is money to hire boats. I can crowd two hundred babes and mothers on board."

The thought of a breath of coolness turned his steps to Pere Rabaut's little stone shop in the Rue de Rivoli. Light-headed from the heat, and the roof of each hair prickling its individual warning, he ascended the terraces and sank down in the darkness at last, in his old seat under the round window. The shop was quite deserted. Moments passed, as he fanned himself with his limp straw hat. A large piece of cardboard lay upon the table. He turned it over idly. A pencil sketch adorned the side which had lain against the wood. The realization was instantaneous that no common hand had wrought this work.

The figure was that of a grown girl—Sonia—and the attitude of expectancy brought out queerly the graceful and ardent lines of her figure. A wreath of blossoms was entwined in her hair, and an old French urn hung from her hand. The sketch seemed to be a series of happy after-thoughts, with not a line too much. As he studied it, with interest and curiosity, Constable became conscious of low voices in the court behind. He arose, with no idea of stealth, and stepped to the rear door.

Sonia and Hayden Breen were standing close together in the denser shade at the far end of the court. The song birds were stilled in the torrid noon. The girl's profile, a bewitching thing wrought of animated gold, was upturned to the eyes of Breen, and she was listening with soulful intent. Shy Sonia, mistress of the shadows, was called from her hiding place at last to hearken unto the whisperings of an American. Her heart seemed to wait upon his words.

A smile crept over the face of the watcher. His feelings were strange indeed. There was a nobility in the figure of Breen, standing there among the huge banana leaves! The watcher withdrew. The sketch upon the table reminded him that Sonia had revived the art, long-buried. Perhaps the vivid maiden had revived as well the lost youth of the world-jaded one. Constable departed.

The sky had become overcast. Pelee's cone was not visible from the streets. A sharp detonation cleaved the darkening air, and from the shut houses the answer issued, an answer partly stifled, but vibrant with fright—the quivering cries of age and childhood, sharp, low screams from the mothers, the sullen undertone of men. A subdued drumming came from the north now, completing the tossing currents of sound in the streets. All this was rubbed out instantaneously by a series of thunder crashes. A deluge of ash complicated the shroud of noonday, and the curse of sulphur pressed down. The highways filled magically with a crying, crouching, gray-lipped throng.

The American was running through the burned, poisoned air. A woman stretched out her hands to him as he passed. A mulatto youth fell in at his heels. Others followed. The white man was the sublimation of flight. Down the terraces to the Rue Victor Hugo the runners made their way, augmented as an avalanche gains weight and impetus. At the main thoroughfare, the seemingly maddened leader turned toward the Morne d'Orange, and staggered up the slope toward the plantation house.

(To be continued.)

An Apt Comparison.

When Ab del Hakk was poor he was one day traveling across a weary plain, says the author of "Life in Morocco," and was very hungry. So he came to the house of the Widow Zaidah, who was also poor; but when he made known his want she set before him two hard-boiled eggs, all the food there was in her house.

Later, when Ab del Hakk lived in Marakesh and was very rich, Meludi, the lawyer, disliking him, persuaded the Widow Zaidah to sue him for the eggs; but not for the eggs alone, for they would have become two chickens, which in time would have so multiplied that the whole fortune of Ab del Hakk would not now pay for them. When the case came to trial the rich man was not in court.

"Why is the defendant not here?" demanded the judge.

"My lord," said his attorney, "he is gone to sow boiled beans."

"Boiled beans?"

"Boiled beans, my lord."

"Is he mad?"

"He is very wise, my lord."

"Thou mockest!"

"Surely, my lord, if hard-boiled eggs can be hatched, boiled beans will grow."

The suit was promptly dismissed, with costs to the plaintiff.

A Casual Blunder.

Doctor—Yes, madam, your two sons are getting on very nicely. The elder stood the operation for the removal of the appendix exceedingly well.

Mother—Oh, good gracious, doctor! That's the wrong one. He's the measly one. It's the other one that has appendicitis.—Baltimore American.

ASSASSINATIONS OF HISTORY.

King Edmund of England.	March 26, 940
King Edward the Martyr of England.	March 18, 979
King Edward II. of England.	Sept. 27, 1327
King Edward II. of England.	Sept. 27, 1327
King James I. of Scotland.	Feb. 21, 1437
King Edward V. of England.	July, 1483
King James II. of Scotland.	.....
.....	June 11, 1488
Prince William of Orange.	July 10, 1584
King Henry II. of France.	Aug. 2, 1589
Feodor I., last of the House of Rurik, which had governed Russia for 700 years.	.....1598
King Henry IV. of France.	May 14, 1610
George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham.	.....Aug. 23, 1628
Peter III. of Russia, dethroned and murdered; succeeded by Catharine, his wife.	.....1762
Ivan IV. of Russia, murdered in prison.	.....1764
King Gustavus III. of Sweden.	.....
.....	March 16, 1792
Marat, by Charlotte Corday.	July 13, 1793
Czar Paul of Russia.	March 24, 1801
Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States.	.....April 14, 1865
Abdul Aziz, Sultan of Turkey.	.....
.....	June 4, 1876
Alexander II. of Russia.	March 13, 1881
James A. Garfield, President of the United States.	.....July 2, 1881
Sadi Carnot, President of France.	.....
.....	June 24, 1894
Stambouloff, Premier of Bulgaria.	.....
.....	June 15, 1895
Elizabeth, Empress of Austria.	.....
.....	Sept. 10, 1898
King Humbert of Italy.	July 29, 1900
William McKinley, President of the United States.	.....Sept. 8, 1901
King Alexander and Queen Draga of Serbia.	.....June 10, 1903
Grand Duke Sergius of Russia.	.....1905
King and Crown Prince of Portugal.	.....
.....	Feb. 1, 1908

EARL LOSES RICH WIFE.

Countess of Yarmouth Wins Decree Nullifying Her Marriage.

Sir Birrell Barnes, president of the Divorce Court, in London granted the Countess of Yarmouth, who was Miss Alice Thaw of Pittsburg, a decree nullifying her marriage to the Earl of Yarmouth.

It has been known for two years that the domestic affairs of the Yarmouths were unhappy. The earl's companions



THE EARL OF YARMOUTH.

and his manner of living, it was said, were such that he could not give his wife the place in society which she had a right to expect. She paid large sums to defray her husband's extravagances, and her friends say she conducted herself with dignity throughout the troubles resulting from this unhappy union and the difficulties of her mother, Harry Kendall Thaw.

When a woman really loves a man, she will shoot him if occasion arises.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Of the world's supply of India rubber 63 per cent is estimated to be furnished by South America.

Successful experiments have been made at Poitiers, France, with a wheeled stretcher, drawn by a dog, for ambulance work.

The number of books exported from Germany by German publishers last year exceeded 42,000,000, weighed 42,100,000 pounds and were valued at \$15,000,000.

Japan has thirty-two timepiece factories, which turn out annually goods valued at nearly \$800,000; the latest figures being 209,792 standing clocks, 441,755 hanging clocks and 25,360 watches.

Belgium has a Sunday postage stamp issued for those who do not wish to have their mail delivered on Sunday. All mail bearing the Sunday stamp is held over by the carriers for delivery Monday.

The tantalum lamp is very desirable from the fact that it is of high efficiency, but it is not adapted for many of the fixtures at present in use, for the reason that it must hang vertically, whereas more often than not, the lamps in the existing fixtures hang at an angle. An adapter has been recently invented by which this discrepancy is overcome.

Kipling is a town which has just blossomed out in Canada, where there is only one town of Shakespeare. There is a Shakespeare in Kosciusko County, Indiana. However, the great English dramatist was never popular among the new-town namers in North America, although there are in the United States thirty Miltons, three Goldsmiths, four Dickenses, thirty-odd Scotts, twenty Byrons, two Tennysons and one Thackeray. But there is no Browning on the American map.

Every precocious boy does not become a brilliant man, but some brilliant men have been precocious in childhood. John Ruskin, the great English essayist and critic on art, was such a child. At the age of 7 he wrote verses in rhyme and kept a journal or diary. This journal was really a record of trips through England that he took with his father. His interest in the old cathedrals and in the bits of scenery that he saw during these journeys betrayed the tastes that in later years decided his career.

"We Two" send the following to the London Express: "We are a young couple and at the present rate of salaries for bank clerks it will be eight, or even ten years before we can marry. As this is too far ahead to think of, and we have £200 (\$1,000) between us, we are determined to strike out for ourselves, and at the thousands of breakfast tables all over England where the Express is daily read we would, with your kind permission, appeal for ideas as to 'the best way of making a good start.'"

With the recent return of the yacht Galilee, at San Francisco, the ocean magnetic survey work is closed for the present, until the construction of a vessel specially adapted for the work has been completed. Plans for the new vessel are now being prepared by Henry J. Glow, naval architect and engineer. The Galilee was chartered by the Carnegie Institution, of Washington, and under the command of W. J. Peters, she was away nearly three years. The total length of the cruises traversed in the Pacific ocean during this period is about 65,000 miles.

In the northern part of India sheep are put to a use unthought of in European or American countries. They are made to serve as beasts of burden, because they are more sure-footed than larger beasts, and the mountain paths among the foothills of the Himalayas are steep and difficult. The load for each sheep is from sixteen to twenty pounds. The sheep are driven from village to village, with the wool still growing, and in each town the farmer shears as much wool as he can sell there and loads the sheep with the grain which he receives in exchange. After his flock has been sheared he turns it homeward, each sheep having on its back a small bag containing the purchased grain.

Several anchors have recently been made at the navy-yard at Charlestown, Mass., which are the largest ever made for any purpose. Four anchors are used on battleships generally, and the new anchors are being shipped in sets to the Pacific coast. One pair of this set of four weigh 17,000 pounds each. The largest anchors ever forged prior to those now being used weighed 16,500 pounds each and cost \$2,000 each. They were also made at the Charlestown yard. Each of the big anchors required the work of five men for a month, hammering, smelting and welding it. These mammoth anchors are sufficient, barring unusual conditions of weather and sea, to hold the largest battleship afloat. The size is fifteen feet long from crown to shackle, and about nine and one-half feet from one arm point to the other. The heavy crossbar is also about fifteen feet long, while the palms, of broad, flat pieces, welded to the arm ends, are about thirty-two inches wide.