

The White Sepulchre

The Tale of Pelee

BY WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

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CHAPTER VI.

Constable remembered turning into the driveway after his terrific exertion; he remembered that the girl and her mother were standing upon the veranda; that the former stretched out her hand to help him and the elder woman released a cutting remark. Then a servant brought a chair, and billows of nausea surged over him. Just as his consciousness waned, and he was launching, chair and all, into space, Lara's voice reached him again. * * *

Then he was in the hallway, through some miracle, and insisting most uncommonly that he was not to be taken into the library, but into the music room, because the windows there commanded the mountain.

He awoke to the interesting discovery that Miss Stansbury was fawning him. Presently she re-chilled a towel in the iced basin and folded it upon his forehead, now deliciously cool.

"It's mighty sweet of you to take care of me this way," he muttered gratefully. "How is Pelee? How long have I been here? The last I remember, I was lost in the hall, and you found me."
"You've been here about three hours. Mr. Constable. Pelee is quiet again, but the whole world is white outside—a perfect blizzard of ash has fallen! They say a terrible thing has happened at the extreme northern end of the city. The River Branch overflowed her banks, and ran with boiling mud from the volcano. Thirty people are reported killed and the Usine Guerin destroyed."

She thought he was considering the disaster in the silence which followed, but in reality he was battling with the old problem.

"Miss Stansbury," he said finally, "is there anything a man possessed of full faculties could do, say or bring about that would induce your mother to spend the night of shore?"

She shook her head.
"You know that the Madame could be brought in for the mails to-morrow morning."

"I have taken the liberty to suggest that to mother," Lara replied. "She says that to-morrow will be time enough."

"Miss Stansbury, won't you put yourself in the care of Captain Negley to-night? I hope I'm wrong, but the Guerin disaster may be only a preliminary demonstration—like the operator experimenting to find if it is dark enough to start the main fireworks. You know, I would stay ashore, and Negley is a good old man of the sea."

"Don't you understand, Mr. Constable?" she said, in real distress for denying him so repeatedly. "Don't you see that such a thing would bring down a miserable scene upon our heads? Besides, I am not thinking of my own safety as such a paramount thing. I don't want to be one of Job's lone survivors. Mother and Uncle Joey and you must go—when I do."

The pale, searching face regarded her. Again he was silent. His lips were shut, his eyelids half-closed. * * * A swift intuition was borne to the woman. He was about to renew the siege. She was not ready, and shrank from being moved to a decision which she had not formed in the privacy of her own mind. The last two days of suffering had rendered her strangely responsive to his mental actions. His quest had filled her brain with wonders, but they were not yet coalesced—impulses and inspirations without unity, unbound as yet by judgment. She wanted to yield with grace, if it came to that, but not to be overthrown. His hand reached for hers, but she drew away.

"Miss Stansbury—"

"Please don't say it now!" she whispered swiftly, her words startling herself quite as much as the man. "These are such dreadful hours! We must think of the crisis—only of that—putting behind all that passed last night!"

"Until?" said Constable, sitting up.
"Oh, who can tell? One knows—Mr. Constable, isn't it wicked of you to muddle me this way?"

A smile from him had given her the saving turn. The tension was eased. Now, as he held out his hand to her, she was not slow to accept it, or to miss the meaning of the compact.

"Pelee will be beyond the sky line for us all pretty soon," he said cheerfully. "We'll be very good pals in the meantime. Please go to the window and see how our ogre is faring—the giant who thinks he's going to eat us when we're prime—member the fairy story? By the way, Miss Stansbury, did you ever have a set of billiard balls cracking off caroms on your brain pan?"

"Yes, and ten-pins. Men don't know headache matters. * * * The north is clearer, sir. A little while ago it was all a seething mass of blacks and grays."

An exclamation broke from her lips, and Constable joined her at the window. A dozen birds had fallen to the lawn from the eaves. Most of them were dead from the tainted air. The sight brought the situation more forcibly than ever to her mind.

"I should think the birds would fly away!" she said pityingly.

"Perhaps the mother birds are waiting for mails to come in," suggested a voice behind them. Mrs. Stansbury was standing in the hall doorway.

A gracious rain cleared the air of early evening, and Constable settled himself for a further nap at the north window upstairs. He had not realized his ex-

haustion, and was astonished to find that it was midnight when he awoke. He was stronger, but a cyclonic headache still oppressed him. Glad though he was for the hours passed, still he was by no means unappreciative of the chances he had taken. A forlorn hope of saving the lady, even though a destroying eruption overtook them at the plantation house, had grown in his mind since the night before. To be caught asleep would render this chance a far one.

The Guerin disaster might be considered among the promises of a favorable issue, as well as a forerunner of chaos. The mountain's overflow into the River Blanc might have eased the pressure upon the craters. There was no authority nor precedent for such a hope. If Pelee's fuse were burning shorter and shorter toward a Krakatoan cataclysm, it was not for man to say what spark would shake the world. Still, Constable held the hope.

He turned on the lights in the room. A cablegram had been slipped under the door. It proved to be an answer to a message he had sent to Basse Terre in the morning, regarding the movements of the Panther.

"Str. Panther arrived and departed here on time," he read. There was strength in the word. The mail liner reasonably might be expected to call at Martinique with the dawn, according to schedule. The mails should be ready for distribution at nine.

"We'll have luncheon aboard the Madame to-morrow," Constable mused, "and while the blessed maiden is passing cake and pouring tea, the Madame will be running like a scared deer, to hitch herself to the solid old Horn, built of rock and sealed with icebergs!"

He shaded his eyes at the window, staring beyond the city into the ashen shroud—Pelee's flag of truce. "Grand old martyr," he murmured devoutly. "Hang on, hang on!"

There was a tap at the door, and Breen was admitted.

"I haven't seen much of you in the past three weeks, miscalled days," said Constable.

"It is true. I have felt my own inconsequence in the presence of the big drama here. It is your drama, Peter. Then, I have found a place of many marvels."

"Pere Rabeaut's?"
"None other. There is something like coolness in this thrice-burned isle. Also a maiden creature, half child, half woman, wholly wonderful."

"I have been glad to see you make the best of things. Of course one can never tell on a cruise where one is to encounter a series of business obligations—such as here."

"True again," Breen said gravely.

"I have been busy as that, but have accomplished nothing. Seriously, Breen, times are running close. Guerin's the first volley. To think I haven't been to the mountain; haven't taken a photograph or a note! My fellow researchers in things seismic will never forgive me for this. Breen, I thought I had a scientific mind—thought that even though I bulled in all else, I was a loyal geologist; but I have betrayed even that decent instinct. Another man would have had the women away to sea and be attending the mountain now; but here I am, a child with man's tools, gassing the night through, and she—across the hall—marked, for all I know, for Pelee's own! It's good to talk, though."

"There's only one way when words fail, Peter. If the mountain won't recede from the maiden, you must snatch up the maiden and make a get-away from the mountain."

"I'm not pirate enough, Breen," Constable replied wearily. "By the way, I'm sending some of the natives of the city—the women with babes—out to the Madame for cool air. There is no reason in the world why we shouldn't entertain our friends of the shop. Soronia is too rare a creature to be immolated by Pelee's bursting boilers. She and the Pere might just as well share the benefits. You see, the presence of others makes it possible. Attend to it, will you?"

"Good old Peter," Breen said softly; "but I don't think they would come. Who'd feed the little song birds?"

"Have her bring the birds along. They'll die there!"

"I had planned not to go to the little shop again, Peter."

Constable turned upon him abruptly. "Why?" said he.

"You see, Peter, she is such a rare little soul—asking so little and so ready to give her all for the promise of a man—think of it. I have found a good many playthings, pottering around this little sunspot planet—clear little films they are now, which stick in the brain and won't fade. Let me alone, Peter, and I'll wander back to reason presently. A very ugly album is a sinner's memory, and when it is quite full the sinner usually dies—sometimes off Brooklyn piers. The truth is, I found a shred of conscience developed under your culture and Pelee's heat; and so I refused another plaything, refused to crowd another film into that sullied album of mine. I lied, said I didn't understand that admiration meant anything to her—and went away. Not too late, I trust. She is a natural optimist, and slow to lose faith in mankind."

Constable believed that Soronia had

found her first lover in Breen, and he pitied the heart so suddenly impassioned and so swiftly dethroned of its dream. He remembered the face of Soronia in the court shadows, and his pity lingered.

They talked until the Panther lights shone afar in the offing, misty with dawn and volcano fog; then parted for an hour's rest. Constable was the first below, and there was little joy with the coming of the day. The rumblings of the mountain were renewed. The great tower of ash shot up yesterday was still falling; the trees and shrubbery in the gardens were bent with the weight of white; indeed, many branches were broken. The dismal bellowing of cattle and the stamping of ponies were heard from the barns. It was only by keeping the doors and windows of the house tightly shut that living was bearable. The native who brought the copy of Les Colonies wore a thick wet rag over his nostrils, and had the appearance of having freshly emerged from a bin of cement. Constable and Breen were first in the breakfast room.

"This pudgy editor," Constable declared savagely, as he read the morning paper. "Yesterday I called upon him and in sweet modesty and limping French explained the proper policy for him to take. To-day he devotes a half-column of insufferable humor to my force of character and extreme views."

Constable translated Mondet's account of the Guerin disaster, and his assurances of the safety of Saint Pierre, so far as the mountain was concerned. "Oh, the flakiness of that French mind!" he exclaimed. "With a volcano in the pangs of dissolution, towering over the city, is apparently in dread of an earthquake! * * * 'Where on the island,' thus he inquires editorially, 'could a more secure place than Saint Pierre be found in the event of an earthquake visitation?'"

Constable struck the paper in his hand. He glanced at his watch and then at the mountain, from a habit now grown deeply.

"The northern end of Saint Pierre is flooded out like an ant hill under a kettle boiling over," he capitulated thoughtfully.

"The mountain is gathering for another demonstration. Let us flee with all dispatch to the craters of the volcano, to escape this hypothetical earthquake! M. Mondet certainly enthralled me. I must call upon him again. * * * Breen, is there any way to stimulate the distribution of the Panther mails?"

CHAPTER VII.

Immediately after breakfast Constable drove down to the city to send out final orders to Captain Negley, and attend certain matters having to do with the Madame's facilities for entertainment. Uncle Joey was to go for the mails. If he could prevent, Constable was minded that there should be no hitch nor tangle at the last moment. In spite of darkish apprehensions, his heart would burst now and then into singing, since he asked but two hours more of old Pelee, upon whose summit was now written in lightning and black cloud the ominous letters of Disaster.

The ladies were left to such graceful ministrations of Breen as were found needful. Mrs. Stansbury, having gained her point, imposed no further delays. The eagerness of the daughter was controlled, but in no way concealed. The past three days had left a pallor upon her face, and shadows under her eyes, but the innate fineness of her features seemed intensified rather than diminished by physical suffering, and the more subtle perturbations of the inner woman.

"When a strain brings out the splendor of a woman's face, mark her well for a thoroughbred," Breen had found occasion to whisper to his friend. The sentence was soul's refreshment, as Breen intended it to be.

Constable, indeed, was contemplating the full significance of the words, and their possible bearing upon his present and future, as he rode down the Morne d'Orange into the Rue Victor Hugo. The little black carriage of Father Damien was approaching, and, gripped by a sudden idea, Constable halted it, saying to the elder spirit of the parish, whom he had met at the plantation house: "Father, take this two thousand francs and use it for the maintenance of the homeless refugees in Fort de France. I shall see that more funds get to you to-day."

A little way farther, another carriage approached, one of the public conveyances of the city this time. Behind the driver loomed the head and shoulders of a white man—hard head and broad shoulders—the sight of whom struck the music from the brain of Constable, as a knife that is slashed across the strings of a harp. Both vehicles stopped abruptly.

"Well, I've got you," the broad individual remarked cheerfully. "Where's the other fellow?"

Let it be known that the man whom Constable now faced was the same energetic person who occasioned discord on the Brooklyn pier, just as the Madame swung blithely forth into the harbor. Constable was thinking very rapidly. He felt prepared to commit murder rather than have his plans for the morning thrust aside.

"The other fellow?" he repeated gently.

"The man hidden in your cabin when you cleared. His name is Nicholas Stembridge, if you don't happen to know," the stranger said, with some impatience. "Where is he?"

"Where you saw him last," Constable said, with sudden cordiality; "and I want to state that I'm glad to see you—that is," he added doubtfully, "if you've come to take him away. If you've looked me up, you'll have found that I'm usually ready to pay in money, hide, or liberty, for the mistakes I make."

(To be continued.)

Buenos Aires has a population of 1,200,000, of which about 80 per cent is foreign, the Italians forming about 60 per cent of the foreign population.

HOUSEHOLD

Improved Pickle Fork.

A distinct improvement in pickle forks has been devised by a Louisiana man, who realized how difficult it is to attempt to remove the last few pickles remaining in the bottom of the bottle with the ordinary pickle fork. In using the latter, it is a very easy matter to pierce the pickle with the prongs of the fork, but when it is hauled to the top it invariably falls off

PICKLE FORK. or refuses to go through the neck of the bottle. With the new implement there is no necessity of sticking the pickle. Instead it is grasped in a pair of curved prongs, like a pair of pliers, and thus drawn out of the bottle.

Corameal Souffle Bread.

One pint milk, two-thirds cup corn meal, one level teaspoon salt, two level tablespoons butter, two level tablespoons sugar, yolks four eggs. Scald the milk in double boiler, and when hot stir in the meal, adding it gradually. Add the salt, cover and cook for thirty minutes. Remove from the fire, add the butter and sugar, and cool slightly. Then add the egg yolks, one at a time, unbeaten. Fold in the whites of the eggs, beaten stiff. Turn into a buttered baking dish, place in a pan of hot water and bake in a moderate oven for thirty minutes. Serve at once, either as a breakfast bread or with sauce as a pudding.

Celery Pickle.

Cut a dozen stalks of celery into inch pieces, place in saucepan with water to cover and boil slowly until tender. Remove from fire and drain. Put one quart cider, with alum size of a pea, in granite saucepan; bring to boiling point; then add one-half pound brown sugar, one tablespoon salt, saltspoonful pepper, one tablespoonful cinnamon, 10 drops onion juice; boil to a thick sirup, then add one gill vinegar and the cooked celery. Boil five minutes, stirring continually to prevent burning. Turn into jelly glasses and cover with paraffin.

Orange Jelly.

One-ounce packet of the best isinglass or gelatin, 4 ounces loaf sugar, 6 oranges, 1 lemon, 1 pint water. Soak the packet of isinglass or gelatin in half a pint of cold water; boil 4 ounces of loaf sugar in half a pint of water till it becomes a sirup, then add the juice of six oranges and one lemon and the peel of two oranges and half a lemon. Place on the fire for a minute, skim well and add a wine glass of cold water by degrees to make the serum rise; put in the isinglass, stir till dissolved and strain through muslin.

Ripe Currant Pie.

Crush one cupful currants, add one cupful of sugar. Beat the yolks of two eggs, and two tablespoonfuls of water and one tablespoonful of flour, mix with the fruit and sugar, and cook until smooth. Bake an under crust, fill with the cooked mixture, make a meringue of the two whites of the eggs and two tablespoonfuls of sugar, spread over the top and brown in the oven.

Way to Use Sage.

When preparing dressing for fowl sage is generally used, and the stems and leaves are found so disagreeable in the dressing. A good way of preventing this is to steep a tablespoonful of sage in half a cup of boiling water. Then this can be strained right into the dressing.

Raspberry Ice.

Raspberry water ice—Press raspberries through a fine hair sieve—enough of them to make three pints of juice. Add one pound of powdered sugar, the juice of one large lemon and one teaspoonful of raspberry extract. Then freeze.

String-Bean Salad.

To a cup of cold string beans cut into lengths add a teaspoon chopped onion, salt and pepper to taste, cut a small slice of bacon into dice and fry, add half cup vinegar, and pour over beans while hot. Serve very cold.

Orange Filling for Cake.

Beat the whites of two eggs very stiff, with one cupful powdered sugar, add half the grated peel and the juice of an orange. Whip to a soft cream and put between the layers of a cake when they are cool.

Layer Cake.

Cream one-half cup butter with one and one-half cups powdered sugar, add three-fourths cup milk and when well mixed three well-beaten eggs, enough flour for a good dough and two teaspoons baking powder.

Ginger Snaps.

One cup lard and butter mixed, one cup brown sugar, one cup molasses, one egg, one teaspoonful salt, one tablespoonful ginger, four tablespoons vinegar, one teaspoon soda, flour enough to roll.



"He swore he would be her page." "What did she do?" "Turned him down."—Birmingham Age-Herald.

"Seems to me you look younger than ever." "Why not? As I grow older, I become more and more expert in avoiding trouble."—Life.

Nell—Maude has lost a good friend in Jack. Belle—Why, have they quarreled? Nell—No, they are married.—Philadelphia Record.

The Questioner—I hear his wife is a brunette, but I thought he married a blonde. The Joker—He did, but she died.—Houston Post.

Gabbleby—After all, a woman's scream is her greatest weapon of defense. Gertrude—Undoubtedly; how did you find it out?—Puck.

Misses—Bridget, it always seems to me that the crankiest mistresses get the best cooks. Cook—Ah, go on wild yer blarney!—Town Topics.

The Boy (fervently)—You are the first and only girl I ever loved, Ethel. She—Ah, what lots of fun you have ahead of you, Freddy!—London Opinion.

He—A fellow told me yesterday he thought I was such a bright fellow. She—That's an awfully bad habit. He—What is? She—Talking to yourself.—Life.

Hix—I always have Dr. Emdee. When my mother-in-law was at death's door he pulled her through. Dix—Which way did he pull her?—St. Louis Republic.

"Who's your ideal of bravery?" queried the old bachelor. "Is it General Kuroki?" "No," answered the spinster, desperately. "It's a Mormon."—The Tatler.

"You never saw a man who understood women." "Well, I knew a man once who claimed that he did." "And did he?" "Well, he never married one."—Houston Post.

Nell—I don't suppose Mr. Sillicus has any vices. Belle—Vices? Why, he belongs to a glee club, an amateur theatrical society, and writes poetry.—Philadelphia Record.

Tonsorial Expert (cutting colored man's hair)—Tastus, your hair is just like wool. Rastus—Well, you didn't seem to cut silk for fifteen cents, did you?—Harper's Weekly.

Jim (regarding damage done to church by fire)—Good job it wasn't a factory, Bill. Bill—You're right, mate. Only one man put out of work, and he draws his money.—Punch.

The Boss—What's that? Office Boy—I says, you better send out and git a half dozen boys to do my work to-day; I'm goin to be sick about three o'clock!—New York Tribune.

"Yes; I am going abroad." "And how are you going to arrange your itinerary?" "Oh, pompadour. I think that will be most suitable for traveling."—Washington Herald.

Sambo—De doctor tells me dat ter eat six watermellons at one time would sho' kill me. Rambo—An' what you gwine do 'bout it? Sambo—I gwine ter die game!—New York Tribune.

"Suppose women should vote. What would be the result?" "Oh, I don't know," answered Mr. Sirius Barker, petulantly. "Perhaps we'd have hand-painted ballots."—Washington Star.

Simkins—You say that little man was formerly the lightweight champion? Thinkins—Yes, Simkins—How did he lose the title? Thinkins—Oh, he didn't lose it. He merely sold his grocery and retired.—Chicago Daily News.

Customer (pointing to the hieroglyphics on his check)—Is that my name in Chinese? Go Long (Chinese laundryman)—No; 'scrlption. Means 'IT' ole man; cross-eyed; no teeth." Customer—Er—thank you.—New York Globe.

"I suppose," said the facetious stranger, watching a workman spread a carpet from the church door to the curb, "that's the high road to heaven you're fixing there?" "No," replied the man, "this is merely a bridal path."—Philadelphia Press.

Professor Stone—To the geologist a thousand years or so are not counted as any time at all. Man in the Audience—Great Scott! And to think I made a temporary loan of ten dollars to a man who holds such views!—Philadelphia Inquirer.

Mrs. Exe—Good-by. I'm sorry my husband isn't in. I wish I knew some way of keeping him at home a little more. Mrs. Wye—Let him buy a motor car. Mrs. Exe—Why, he'd be out more than ever then. Mrs. Wye—Oh, dear, no! Mrs. Dasher tells me her husband bought a motor car a few days ago, and the doctor says he won't be out for six weeks.—Illustrated Bits.