

# The White Sepulchre

## The Tale of Pelee

BY WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

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### CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

Breen was dazed by the altered mood of the woman. Until the present instant of their walk, he had been contemplating a serene end to a day of most brutal beatings. They were on the eminence of the Morne d'Orange. Pelee was a baleful changing jewel in the black north. Breen heard the woman's breathing. He had no pity for her. He had spoken with exceeding gentleness, but it was forced. In the same voice he continued, since she did not speak:

"You could not walk to Fort de France, and there is neither boat nor carriage to-night. I thought you were going to let him be happy again."

"Did he send you to me?"

"He does not know that I am here, Miss Stansbury," Breen replied. "As we rode in from the mountain, I begged him to come to you to-night, but he said that if there were any hope of his saving your life, you would have shown him some sign this morning, instead—"

She felt herself called to her own defense. "Could he not see that the newspapers brought a shock to me?" she questioned pitifully.

"The shock was just as great, and the matter contained in the newspapers just as new, to him," he said. "Do you suppose he would have introduced me to you if he had understood all about me? I am all to blame, not our good Peter. Because I brought all this trouble upon him, I came to-night to undo the tragedy of your being away from him, and yet so close to the volcano."

"And you went with him to the crater to-day?"

"Do you think I would let him kill himself?"

"Oh, no!—but you said—you spoke about riding back with him from the crater," she returned hastily. The man's unyielding position wrought upon her strangely, sometimes startled, sometimes steadied, her.

"I heard that he had gone up the mountain, and followed. I found him at the summit in a faint, lying at the very rim of disaster."

"You—saved him from death?"

"A very essential proceeding, since I sent him there."

"Oh, what do you mean?"

"It was my presence that prevented you both from being out at sea to-night."

"It was a very little thing to bring him back from the crater, Miss Stansbury, but a big accomplishment to make him glad that I brought him back."

"Did he intend to kill himself by going there? Do you mean that I—?"

Breen felt that she deserved vividly to apprehend her failures of performance. "No, Miss Stansbury, but he was dazed with punishment. That a doubt could exist in your mind, regarding his integrity, pulled him out of his orbit, so to speak."

"But it was all so intricate and mysterious," she pleaded. "I didn't mean to do wrong, but you must see that a woman who can only wait, and never be told things—may not know what is best!"

His heart kindled to her now, but he was not building for the moment. "Let me tell you about Peter Constable," he said gently. "I was hunted to a corner in New York. I am all that the papers say, and much beside which they have overlooked. Only, I have never robbed the poor, nor widows and orphans, and I never have betrayed a friend until to-day, when my history arose in its wrath and man-handled poor Peter. All my operations were over when he found me—all my farces and strategies. I had lost my wool-cap, and the lambs would no longer play with me. They drove me to the water front. I was at the edge of the end when Peter Constable called."

"Come, Miss Stansbury, let us walk on toward the launch."

Breen had judged well the instant to make this suggestion. Though afraid that she would turn back, he spoke briskly, lightly, as if she had merely paused to survey the night. She obeyed, and, as he talked on, their steps grew faster and faster down the morne toward the edge of the silent, stricken city. Breen related how his friend had put aside for her the century-rare opportunity of studying Pelee in the throes. Of the volcano itself, he spoke familiarly, trenchantly, as only one could do who had peered into the roaring sink of chaos that day. He pictured at last the man with whom he had ridden, their last ride together, the gameness which men love, and—in tints almost ethereal—the brooding romance.

She was thrilled by this stranger who had played with men and lived to pray for one. By his own word, world-weary and a skeptic of human character, he had discovered his Utopia in a friend. Because she burned to believe all Breen said, his words rang true. Higher in her heart than he had reached in any of the day's fluctuations, Constable was upraised now and held. She did not call it love—she did not call it anything; but it was a valiant presence to cling to, as she entered with this stranger, hunted of men, the smothered lane which Rue Victor Hugo had become.

"You are a prince of defenders," she whispered.

"A man less white would not need a friend to champion his cause," he replied.

"Where is Peter Constable now?"

"I will put you in the care of Ernst in the launch, and then bring him to you," he said.

"Where is Mr. Constable?" she demanded imperiously.

"In a little shop up in the Rue de Rivoli."

She did not fall in this last pitiless assault, though the dreadful final sentences of her mother came back. This night was set apart in her life for the learning of the truth.

"I shall not wait at the launch. I shall go to him—there—up in the terrace. Why not?"

"It is the far better way," Breen answered steadily. "I only thought to save you from the climb."

The horrid insinuations could find no hold in her brain. They hovered afar off, like navies crippled in the roadstead. Breen's ready answer was a sterling defense.

"Let us hurry," she panted.

They turned and faced the empty cliff. To the left was an open door, and the form of a woman was carved in the light. The woman in the doorway spoke words warmed and vitalized from her very heart, and Breen answered and took her in his arms. Lara brushed past the two and into the shop.

The huge figure hunched forward upon the table had not moved. Lara stepped forward and touched his shoulder. He stirred uneasily, muttered as if in pain, but did not lift his head. She pressed her hand more heavily upon his soiled coat.

"Yes, yes—what is it?" he said in a quick, frightened way.

The haggard face turned up to her. The jaw dropped a little. His eyes, though fixed upon her own, seemed to have lost their direction. He gained his feet slowly, clutching the table with his hands.

"I have come to go with you—to your ship!" she declared brokenly.

"Breen, come here to me," he called, brushing his face roughly with his hand.

"It's not a dream, Peter," Breen answered cheerfully. "I found her waiting for you at the plantation house."

"No. It is I—Lara!"

He put his hand forth to touch her. She caught it in her own. Pere Rabaut entered the rear door.

"And now," Breen was saying, "you two must not forget that Pelee is still alive, and that my part is still undone while you are here—even though together." He spoke in English, which neither Soronia nor her father understood.

"But are you not going?" Lara asked.

"Oh, no, Miss Stansbury. Peter understands. I have told him that Nicholas Stenbridge ceases to compromise him after this night. It really is the better, the only way."

He turned to Pere Rabaut and added lightly in French: "Our guests are going. Let us all start a last sunrise of Epernay."

"But you know that I do not feel as the others do, but—as your friend does. Really, I am not afraid of you," she said unsteadily. There were tears in her eyes.

"It is a beautiful ending," Breen answered.

"I want you to know that I shall always remember your coming—your words when I would have failed!" she finished.

There was a moment in which Breen and Constable stood close together. Lara and Soronia were whispering, and strange it was, but out of their whispers was evolved a kiss.

"Look, Peter—the lily and the tiger lily bend together," said Breen.

The door was shut behind them. They faced the harbor and started down the sloping way.

"But you—?" she whispered.

### CHAPTER XIII.

Constable's mind was slow to inform this great concept. The day had left behind in his brain a crowd of unassimilated acts, and into this dull, formless company swept the climacteric joys. Figuratively speaking, he had to grope about until lantern and matches were brought together, before he could adjust and measure and proportion. He halted at last in the empty street, seized the girl by her shoulders, saying, as one would evoke the heart out of a miracle:

"Lara Stansbury! Lara Stansbury!"

"Yes, Sir Peter!"

"Don't laugh at me; don't grow impatient for I must ask questions."

"Begin. I shall be very good."

"Are you the little girl who handed me a newspaper this morning?"

"I am that little girl grown up, sir."

She revelled in the joy she was giving him, and thrilled under the tightening pressure of his hands upon her shoulders.

"And when you grew up—you came to me?"

"Please, sir, you said you would take me sailing."

"Lara, as I looked down the fiery throat of that dragon to-day, everything grew black and still like a vacuum. I thought it was death then. Tell me, did I come back, or are we two hurrying shapes in twilight land—in no man's land?"

"I'm sure you must have come back, sir, because I didn't die to-day, and we can't be talking together on different planes—with your fingers impaling my shoulders!"

"Lara Stansbury—are you mine?"

The huge fellow was lost in his labyrinth of happiness. The doubts that had smothered her answer were lifted now, and he heard his victory without a breath

of its expression hampered. The shop had vindicated her daring. With all the eagerness of brimming womanhood, which bursts the bonds of repression for the first time, she gave him her heart of hearts. She was like a queen who summons a man of her people into her inner sanctuary and bids him rule herself and her kingdom. Resistless, trembling, whispering, she was drawn into his arms.

"To think I didn't know you when you first came!" she was saying faintly. "But when I was a little girl I knew you—used to be frightened because you were so big!"

"Always then I knew you would come some time to take me away for your lady, and I thought I would cry when you came, because I would be so happy. That part didn't come true, did it, Strongheart?"

"They were all dreams, baby dreams, as if left over from some other betrothal with you! And when I grew into a big girl, Sir Peter, I was ashamed, and put them away, with other baby thoughts and things!"

"Ah, listen to old Pelee!"

The volcano had lost his monstrous rhythm and was ripping forth irregular crashes. Rue Victor Hugo was alive with voices, aroused by the hideous rattling in the throat of the mountain. The old dread fell again upon Constable. He drew the girl forward, almost running.

"I beg of you—don't look back!" he muttered. "The launch is just ahead."

"Hello, Ernst! I have kept you waiting long," he called as they neared the end of the pier. "Top speed to the Madame!"

The bells of Saint Pierre rang the hour of two. The launch was speeding across the smoky harbor, riding down little isles of foam, dead birds from the sky, and nameless mysteries from the roiled bed of the harbor. The wind was hot in their faces, like a stoke-hold blast. Often he heard a hissing in the water, like the sound of a wet finger touching hot iron. A burning cinder fell upon his hand, a messenger from Pelee, and cleared the source of the sounds. He jerked off his coat and tossed it about her shoulders, the filmy shawl and the delicate fabric of her waist scarcely protected.

"But you—?" she protested.

"I could not feel fire to-night!"

Her face in the lantern-ray enchanted him. In mingled shyness and ecstasy he took it between his hands. He could not speak for the marvel of the thing—that this, so vibrant, so beautiful, was for him to kiss and worship and keep bright. Her cheeks were as soft as a flower, her eyes glowing with the ardor which the tropics alone can inspire in flower and woman. In the strange light, he gazed with the raptness of one who seeks to penetrate the mystery of being—as if it were any clearer in a woman's eyes than in a Nile night, a Venetian song, or in the flow of gasoline to the spark, which filled the contemplation of Ernst.

"Beloved," he whispered at last, "I will tell you how much I love you at our golden wedding."

He heard the swift intaking of her breath with the peculiar tremble which follows tears. The launch was swinging around to the Madame's ladder. Wherever the ship lights fell, the sheeting of ash could be seen—upon mast and railing and plates.

"Are you frightened, dearest?" he whispered.

"You will not go back to Saint Pierre!"

"We need not think of that now. We are going together first—out into deep water and ocean air!" He was helping her up the ladder. When they reached the main deck, he called to Captain Negley on the bridge: "Pull us out of this blizzard, captain—a dozen miles if necessary, and quick as you can."

They had scarcely reached the bridge before the anchor chain began to grind. Three minutes later the Madame's screws were kicking the ugly harbor tide. They watched, until only the dull red of Pelee pierced the thick veil behind; until a star, and another, pricked the blue vault ahead, and the air blew in fragrant as wine from the rolling Caribbean.

"How sweet life is to me!" Constable said softly. "Grand old Pelee—he has been true blue! He made me his heir, and waited for me to carry his fairest daughter out into these reviving winds. Blow, old Vulcan, now! Splash at a ten-league canvas with brushes of comets' hair!" And you, gorgeous girl, have you any charity for a man who grows incoherent from sheer joy?"

"Yes, even though he forgets the city," she answered.

Captain Negley approached them. "We're about a dozen miles out now, sir," he said.

"Cruise around until daylight, captain; then draw in until you can find bottom to hitch to, but not any closer than seven or eight miles."

"Very well, sir."

Lara and Constable leaned over the aft railing of the bridge. The main deck below swarmed with women of Saint Pierre. They could not stay below, now that the defiled harbor was behind. Many were humming the old French lullabies to their little ones. Good food and cool air had brought back the songs of peace and summer to those lovely hearts.

"Lara, do you think if I went back to your mother now, or, rather, after daylight, I could persuade her to join us?"

"I knew it would come to that," she said, with a shudder. "I have been trying to put it off. Can't you guess that I had a bitter price to pay before following your friend to-night? She will not join us."

"I am going back to try, Lara. I think I can guess something that you passed through before leaving the house."

"Oh, no, you cannot! I could not suffer you to hear the words she uttered. It was like the wrath of Pelee—only causeless and without warning."

(To be continued.)

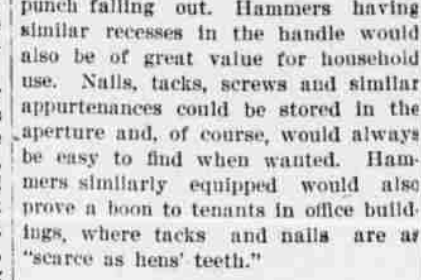
London's net municipal debt amounts to \$223,101,330.



### The Household

#### Loaded With Ammunition.

Carpenters have a bad habit of losing their nail punch. Being small, it is very readily mislaid and, naturally, can never be found when wanted. A Rochester invention suggests a simple means of overcoming this instinct of the nail punch to get lost. He has a recess placed in the end of the handle into which the nail punch fits. The latter has a plate at the end which clamps over the top of the opening and prevents the nail punch falling out. Hammers having similar recesses in the handle would also be of great value for household use. Nails, tacks, screws and similar appurtenances could be stored in the aperture and, of course, would always be easy to find when wanted. Hammers similarly equipped would also prove a boon to tenants in office buildings, where tacks and nails are as "scarce as hens' teeth."



#### Corned Beef.

Select pieces suitable and then for each 50 pounds of beef use four quarts of fine salt, 4 pounds of brown sugar and 4 ounces of saltpeter pounded fine. Mix together and, packing the meat closely in the barrel or jar, put the mixture between the layers, being careful to place the larger amount near the top, as salt works downward. When all is ready place a cover on the meat and on that a stone or other weight to keep it pressed down. Add no water. The juices of the meat make sufficient brine to cover it.

#### Blueberry Pudding.

Two cupsful of sifted flour, one egg, one-half cupful of sugar, one cupful of milk, one-half teaspoonful of salt, one heaping teaspoonful of baking powder, one teaspoonful of cornstarch and three cupfuls of blueberries. Beat the egg to a froth, moisten the cornstarch with the milk and stir into it, add the sugar and salt, then the flour in which the baking powder has been sifted, and lastly the blueberries dredged with flour. Turn into a buttered tin and bake in a quick oven. Serve with cream and sugar.

#### Watermelon Preserves.

Select a melon with thick rind and cut away all red portion. Peel and cut into squares, diamonds or any fancy shape. Lay in strong salt water overnight, then in fresh water twenty-four hours, changing often. Then put them in weak alum water to harden them. Drain very dry and add one pound of sugar to each pound of fruit; make a syrup, add a few pieces of ginger root and lemon peel. Drop in the pieces of melon and let boil until clear. Lift out carefully into jars, pour over syrup and seal.

#### Vegetable Salad.

Boil some blood beets until tender, throw them into cold water and rub off the skins. Cut some string beans into half-inch lengths and boil in salted water until tender. Chop the beets and mix in equal proportions with the boiled beans, adding a very small minced onion. Moisten with mayonnaise and serve on a platter of lettuce leaves. Cover the top of the salad with the mayonnaise and garnish with small stars cut from the boiled beets with a vegetable cutter.

#### Apple Pickles.

Three large tart apples, twelve large green tomatoes, one large head celery (or celery seed to taste), four large onions, four large red sweet peppers, one cup light brown sugar, one pint good cider vinegar, 5 cents' worth of mustard seed (white). Chop tomatoes, then salt. Let stand overnight, drain through colander, put all together in granite kettle, chopped. Allow it to come to the boiling point. Stir and heat thoroughly but do not boil. Bottle and seal.

#### To Soften an Egg.

When an egg has been boiled too long it can be softened instantly again by lifting pan off fire, quickly placing under tap, and allowing a good stream of cold water to pour into it. The sudden shock from hot to cold has the curious effect of softening the egg. A splendid method of securing correct consistency for invalids' eggs.

#### Sandpaper Cakes.

To remove the burned edges of layer or loaf cakes use fine sandpaper as soon as the cake is "set," but before it gets cold. A piece of paraffin paper, cut the shape of cake, will prevent the cake sticking to the plate on which it is to be set away.



### Jolly Joker

"What part of the chicken will you have, Mr. Hallroom?" "Some of the meat, please."—Life.

Patience—That Miss Bellow is going to sing. Patrice—Oh, is she? What shall we talk about?—The Tatler.

Mrs. Henpeck—You were talking in your sleep last night, Henry. Mr. Henpeck—I beg your pardon, my dear, for having interrupted you.—Stray Stories.

Sillicus—What do you consider is the proper time for a man to marry? Cynicus—Oh, I suppose when he hasn't anything else to worry him.—Philadelphia Record.

Departing Guest—We've had a simply delightful time! Hostess—I'm so glad. At the same time I regret that the storm kept all our best people away.—Brooklyn Life.

Mrs. Bacon—This paper says that a man's hair turns gray about five years earlier than a woman's. Mr. Bacon—That is because a man wears his hair all the time.—Yonkers Statesman.

Elderly Uncle—Spent your entire patrimony, have you, Archibald? Gone through everything? Scapegrace Nephew—Yes, uncle, everything but the bankruptcy court.—Chicago Tribune.

Faddist Visitor—Are you allowed in this prison any exercise beneficial for your health? Convict—Oh, yes, ma'am. By advice of my counsel I have been skipping the rope.—Baltimore American.

"Do you play any instrument, Mr. Jimp?" "Yes, I'm a cornetist." "And your sister?" "She's a pianist." "Does your mother play?" "She's a zitherist." "And your father?" "He's a pessimist."

"If I were you," said the old bachelor to the benedict, "I'd either rule or know why." "Well," was the reply, "as I already know why, I suppose that's half the battle!"—Atlanta Constitution.

Dawson—The facial features plainly indicate character and disposition. In selecting your wife were you governed by her chin? Spenlow—No; but I have been ever since we were married.—Boston Globe.

"Have you," asked the Judge of a recently convicted man, "anything to offer the court before sentence is passed?" "No, your honor," replied the prisoner, "my lawyer took my last cent."—The Reporter.

Niece—Uncle, they say that there are more marriages of blondes than of brunettes. Why is it, I wonder? Uncle Singleton (a confirmed bachelor)—H'm! Naturally, the lightheaded ones go first.—The Mirror.

Country Editor (out West)—This has been a lucky day for me. Faithful Wife—Has some one been in to pay a subscription? Editor—Well, no, wasn't as lucky as that; but I was shot at and missed.—New York Weekly.

"And do you like newspaper men?" he asked the little maid in a most condescending tone of voice. "I don't know," she replied, artlessly; "the only one I know is the one who brings our paper every morning."—Lippincott's Magazine.

Farmer Barker—I want to get a present to take home to my wife on the farm. Elegant Clerk—How would she like a pie knife? Farmer Barker—Good land, young man! Ain't you never been told you musn't eat pie with no knife?—New York Times.

The little girl was very fond of pleasant days, and at the close of a heavy rainstorm petitioned in her prayer for fine weather; when the next morning the sun shone bright and clear she became jubilant, and told her prayer to her grandmother, who said: "Well, dear, why can't you pray to-night that it may be warmer to-morrow so that grandma's rheumatism will be better?" "All right, I will," was the quick response; and that night as she knelt she said: "O Lord, please make it hot for grandma."

Grubb—I hear your last novel has already appeared in its sixth edition. How did you manage to become so phenomenally popular? Scrubb—Very simple. I put a "r-r-r-r-r-r" in the papers saying that I was looking for a wife who is something like the heroine of my novel. Within two days the first edition was sold out.—Tit-Bits.

"Why, that's a regular little printing press, isn't it?" remarked the visitor. "Yes," replied Mrs. Popley, "Willie's uncle gave it to him on his birthday." "What a complete little thing! It's self-inking, isn't it?" "I don't know; but Willie is." "Now, Pat, would you sooner lose your money or your life?" "Why, me loffe, yer reverence; I wan't me money for me old age."