The Whited 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; 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 fanning 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 off-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 tonight? 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 exhaustion, 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 Blanch 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 scons, 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 sunshot 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 crushed the paper in his hand. He glanced at his watch and then at the mountain, from a habit now graven 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 enthralls 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 further, 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.)

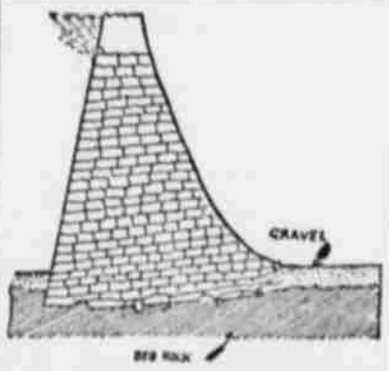
Buenos Aires has a population of 1,200,000, of which about 80 per cent is foreign, the Italians forming about 60 per cent of the foreign population.

Building a Dam.

I expect to build a dam on a creek for a saw mill. Dam will be about 100 feet long at top to raise the water ten feet. 1. What would be the cheapest way of building the dam? 2. Will you give a plan of such a dam? 3. What size of turbine would be necessary to run a 48-inch circular saw?

Ans.—The accompanying sketch shows a cross-section of the style of dam that would be required for this purpose. Dams are sometimes constructed by a curbing of wood, masonry, or cement, the interior being filled with dry stones. Such a dam is called a rock-fill dam. If stone is plentiful, the dam may be built entirely of masonry. The top should be laid either with plank or cement.

As the illustration shows, the dam is laid on bed-rock, the bed rock being blasted out sufficiently to secure a key and a solid footing generally. With a ten-foot dam the base should be ten feet wide. On the upstream side, the batter or slope of the dam is about 1 in 4, and on the downstream side the upper part of the batter is about 1 in 3 and the lower part 1 in 1. The dam throughout its length should curve upstream, so as to present a concave surface to the pressure of the water. The masonry work should be constructed of rubble with cement mortar, and all the work should be very thoroughly done.



DAM FOR SAW MILL POWER.

A necessary provision in connection with a dam is sufficient wasteway for water not utilized for power. The common form of wasteway is a tunnel through the dam sufficiently large to provide for the maximum amount of water that would be required to pass through it. In addition sluice gates should be provided, by which the flow of water would be controlled. The water to be utilized for power may be carried to the wheel by means of a flume. A fifteen-inch turbine wheel would provide from 8 to 10 horse power, which would be sufficient to run a saw of the size mentioned.—Montreal Star.

For Feeding Stock.

A bucket of peculiar construction, designed especially to be used by farmers and dairymen in feeding slop to stock and in the handling of fluid substances is the invention of a Michigan man. It serves in a sense as a dipper.

NEW BUCKET.

The arrangement is such that it can be filled by forcing it bottom downward into a receptacle of fluid substance, the hinged portion of the bottom being opened to permit the bucket to be filled and closed to hold the contents until carried to the place of feeding. The contents can thus be discharged into a trough without wasting it and without the liability of spilling it upon the clothes of the operator. The hinged portion of the bottom of the can is operated by a rod extending above the top, which terminates into a handle. As the bucket is carried by the latter, pressure is always maintained upon the bottom to keep it closed. When it is desired to discharge the contents the handle is pushed downward.

Salt for Live Stock.

Why salt should be regularly supplied to stock is thus put by a famous English authority: Because in the blood of animals there is six or seven times more sodium than potassium, and that the composition of the blood is constant. To keep animals in good health a definite amount of common salt must be assimilated. The excess of potassium salts in vegetable foods causes by chemical exchange an abnormal loss of common salt. This is proved by the fact that the craving of an animal for common salt is most noticeable when the food contains a large proportion of potassium salts, such as wheat, barley, oats, potatoes, beans and peas. The addition of salt to animal food increases the appetite, promotes the repair of tissue by its searching diffusion through the body, and stimulates the rapid using up of its waste products. Boussingault's experiments showed that salt increases muscular vigor and activity, and improves their general appearance and condition.

The Right Way to Pack Fruit.

If the fruitgrower simply tumbles his apples into the barrel without sorting and without arrangement, in order to get the greatest number into the barrel, heads it up and ships to market, he will discover when he gets his check that his fruit has been sold for the lowest price. The only way to get the top prices for fruit is to sort it according to grades, arranging in barrels or boxes in layers, placing each apple in by hand, and selecting for the top layer fruit of the same color. The top layer should be made up of apples all of the same size if possible, and the fruit should come just to the top of the staves. Then the heading should be carefully placed on top and gently pressed down until it slips into the chine. This can be done better by the use of a block placed under a lever.

Nitrate of Soda.

The value of nitrate of soda applied to barnyard millet at the New Jersey experiment station was stated by the experimenters as follows: Amount applied, 100 pounds per acre; yield untreated acre, 7.03 tons; treated acre, 13.38 tons; gain by use of nitrate, 5.75 tons; per cent of gain, 75.4; value of gain, at $3 per ton, $17.25; cost of nitrate per acre, $3.60, net gain per acre by use of nitrate over cost, $13.65. The crop was seeded on June 16 on well-fertilized land at the rate of three-fourths bushels of seed per acre, after a crop of oat and pea forage had been harvested, which averaged six tons per acre. The nitrate was applied soon after the plants were well rooted and capable of absorbing food rapidly.

Pig Money in Waste Land.

The woven wire fence is revolutionizing the hog industry in the whole country, and when farmers learn to utilize every bit of waste land for pasture for their hogs the herds will be healthy and the cost of production will be decreased many dollars. It won't do to allow the pigs to lie in the shade of the corn cribs or to allow them only a run of pasture. Feed a little corn all of the time that the pigs are running in the pasture. The grass-grown pig does not appear so attractive with his working clothes on, but when he is well developed and ready to be fitted he makes the pampered pets look like 30 cents. He makes a fine appearance and is a credit to his owner and feeder.

Cow Stall.

The stall as shown here is four feet over all, but can be made less. Cow when eating will stand with her hind feet just behind the 2 by 4, leaving the droppings behind it.

When she lies down she will be compelled to lie in front of the 2 by 4 with her head under the feed rack. It is not necessary to have a gutter in a stall of this kind. There should be short partitions, however, to keep the cows from turning around.

COW STALL.

For building, use 2 by 4 for bottom feed rack; bottom of rack 3 feet above floor. Strips of 1 by 4, 6 inches apart form the rack, and should slope back 60 degrees. From 7 to 8 feet from front of stall place 2 by 4 on edge; if set in dirt use stakes.

Farming Notes.

Remember the importance of the kitchen garden.

Some genius has figured out that a bee will on a busy day draw sugar from 120,000 different clover heads.

When mustard is a serious pest the fields are sprayed with a solution that kills the weed, but does not harm the crop.

The government spent $10,000 this last spring planning ways to destroy the green bug in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

Preaching economy doesn't amount to much. You must practice it, but there is such a thing as being too economical.

The Clairmont ranch, near Englewood, in Clark County, Kan., consisting of 21,000 acres of fine land, will be cut up into small farms.

One hundred and thirty-nine cows, comprising the best of thirty-six Illinois herds, produced an average of 503 pounds of butter fat last year.

MYSTERIES OF SONG SLANG.

Onions Are Akin to Sentiment in the Music Hall World.

How many people would guess the meaning of a "Spanish onion song?"

This strange phrase—one of the many to be found in the professionals' dictionary of slang—is used to denote the music hall ballad, and owes its origin to the fact that no self-respecting member of its race would be without a pathetic reference to "dear old mother" or "somebody's sweetheart far away." Now, pathos draw tears, and so do onions. The rest is obvious, says the Cleveland Plain Dealer.

These ballads are also known by the name of "Give me your kind applause songs," a title which is also applied to ditties whose duty it is to draw attention to some misdeed on the part of the imperial government.

Artists, too, always allude to the last song they sing as their third song, though in many cases it may be their second or their fourth.

"Breathers" are so called because the unfortunate artist who sings them has no chance to breathe unless, perhaps, he surreptitiously drops a stray note here and there and thus draws a few molecules of air into his lungs. These songs—of which "The Irish Christening" is an example—always have at least five long verses, which are run one into the other and sung without a break of any kind.

A type of song which is designed with the express purpose of deceiving the audience is the "cod ballad." With great ingenuity the composer begins his verse in a highly sentimental tone, when, just as the audience is commencing to search for its pocket handkerchief, a sudden turn is given to the words and every one realizes that he has been tricked. The whole thing is, in fact, veriest parody. "Mingle your eyebrows with mine, love," is a case in point.

At the present moment the music hall world is searching high and low for concerted numbers, which form 9 per cent of the seaside. These are merely solos, rewritten to form trios, quartets or quintets for Pierrots and outdoor theatrical troupes, while "extra business" is added to suit requirements.

Motto songs, which are increasing in popularity every day, will also, it is expected, help to pass the hours for the loungers on "those yellow sands." These ditties always point an excellent moral.

The "production number" is a term which needs some explanation. It means that the song is elaborated or "featured" with chorus girls and is "produced" on a more elaborate scale than the ordinary number. It also requires special scenery, with effects.

Soubrette songs give the idea of songs always sung by soubrettes. They must, however, fulfill certain other requirements. The chorus, as in other songs, do not remain the same, the couplet in every case being differently worded.

Cherry History.

It is still asserted in school books that cherries were introduced to England by the "fruiterer" or green grocer of Henry VIII.; also, that they were not common for a hundred years after that time. This is an error. Mr. Thomas Wright found the name in every one of the Anglo-Saxon vocabularies which he edited. So common were they and so highly esteemed that the time for gathering them became a recognized festival—"cherry fair" or "feast." And this grew into a proverbial expression for fleeting joys. Gower says the friars taught that "life is but a cheryefayre," and Hope "endureth but a throwe, right as it were a cheryefeste." There is more than one record of the purchase of trees for the king's garden at Westminster centuries before Henry VIII. was born. But Pliny contradicted the fable, as if in prophetic mood. After telling that Lucullus first brought cherries to Rome (from Pontus, in 680 A. U. C.), he adds that in the course of 120 years they have spread widely, "even passing over sea to Britain."—Cornhill Magazine.

Dollar Bills by Weight.

"Dollar bills are worth almost their weight in gold," a bank president said the other day to a depositor.

"Yes, I suppose they come in handy for change and are easy to carry," the depositor replied absently.

"No; I was speaking literally," the bank president said. "We got into an argument in the bank here the other day as to how much a dollar bill weighed. A twenty-dollar gold piece weighs 540 grains. We found that twenty-seven crisp, new one-dollar bills weigh the same as a twenty-dollar gold piece. We tested some bills that had been in use and found that it took but twenty-six of them to balance the gold piece. I suppose that twenty-six used bills gather an accumulation of dirt in passing from hand to hand that weighs about what one new bill does."—Kansas City Star.

Not to Be Expected.

"Have you any idea how many pounds the shipments of tea received in this country in a year would total?"

"Of course not. I'm not a tee-totaler."—Kansas City Times.