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The Whited Sepulchre

The Tale of Pelee

BY WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

CHAPTER XVI.—(Continued.)

How many times the blue eyes of old Ernst rolled back under the lids, and his grip relaxed upon the oars, only to be recalled by the pleading voice and the face of the whiting tongue of Macready mumbled, forgetting its object, while his senses rebelled against the burning walls of his brain; how many times the splendid spirit of the woman recalled her own lawless faculties to action and the terrible meaning of the quest—only God and these knew. But the little boat held its course to the desolate shore.

They gained the Sugar Landing at last, and strange sounds came from the lips of Ernst, as he pointed to the bulk of the launch, burned to the water line. Gray-covered heaps were sprawled upon the shore, some half-covered by the incoming tide, some entirely awash. Pelee had brought down the city; and the freighter had rushed in at the kill. He was hissing and crunching still, under the ruins. The woman moaned and covered her face.

"There is nothing alive!" she said with dreadful stress.

"What else could you look for?" Macready demanded. "Wait till we get over the hill, and you'll bear the burials singing in the naygus laugh in the fields and wonder why the milkman don't come."

"I can live—yes, I can live—until I see our house crushed to the hill, all coated with paste, and those heaps lying about on the ground!"

"A woman can't be a friend like a man! You will stand and uncover your heads—when you see your friend lying upon the ground—and I—I will die!"

She was walking between them, up toward the market place, fighting back her tears, which added to the burdens of the men. The opened space was filled with the stones from the houses hurled there as from a dive box. Smoke and steam oozed forth from every ruin. The silence was awful as the sight of death. Rue Victor Hugo was effaced, the way up toward the morne unobscured. A breathing pile of debris barred every way. It was plain that they must make their way southward along the shore.

"If I end up get hold of that haricle as a shark's tooth. Pugh—if I end up get him here worse bare-fatted. Denny gasped—sure I'd be happy holdin' as him! He'd—don't step there!"

He pulled her away from a puddle of uncoagulated stuff as hot as running iron.

"Once he had stepped upon what seemed to be an ash-covered stone. It was soft, springy, and vented a wheezy sigh. Rain and rock-dust had swarmed all things alike in this gray, roasting chamber."

"Speak—won't you please speak?" the woman cried suddenly.

"It loks like rain, ma'am," Macready's quick tongue offered.

They were on the shore, hearing the rias of the Morne d'Orange. Saint Pierre had rushed to the sea—at the last. The mountain had fallen the women with children, as all manner of visitations find them—and the men a little apart. There was nothing to do by the way, no lips to moisten, no voice of pain to hush, no dying thing to ease. Pelee had not faltered at the last. There was not an insect murmur in the air, nor a crawling thing beneath, not a moving wing in the hot gray sky. They traversed a shore of death absolute—these three—and the woman was thinking ahead.

From the shoulder of the morne Lara turned back one look. Saint Pierre was like a mouth that had lost its pearls. The land ahead was a husk divested of its fruit. Pelee had cut the cane fields, sucked the juices, and left the blasted stalks in his path. The plantation house pushed forth no shadows of an outline. It might be felled, or lost in the smoky distance. The nearer landmarks were gone—houses that had brightened the morne in their day, whose windows had flashed the rays of the afternoon sun as it rode down over—levelled like the fields of cane. There was no balm, no saving grace. Pelee had swept far and left only his shroud, and the heaps upon the way, to show that the old sea-road, so white, so beautiful, had been the haunt of man. The dinges had lost their vesture; the palms were gnarled and naked fingers pointing to the pitiless sky.

She had known this highway in the mornings, when joy was not dead, when the children of the toilers and the laughter of the songs glorified the fields; in the white moonlight, when the sweet draughts from the sea met and mingled with the spice from terrid hills, and scent of jasmine and rose gardens.

The dark eyes under the huge helmet were staring ahead; her lips were parted and white. Though they had passed the radius of terrific heat, she seemed slowly to be suffocating. Macready remembered his voice.

"Things are queer by the sea, ma'am. Now, if I'd ha' tuk Pugh be th' 'troat I'd be intertainin' Mr. Constable presently in the bottom of a th' ship, togged out head an' fat in iron for th' occasion, an' he'd say, 'Denny, why didn't you stand be th' lady when I told you? Perhaps you can stand be th' bunkers better, me son. Go to thim, ye goat!'"

"Ernst, lad, you're intertainin', you're loquacious."

The woman was stepping forward swiftly between them. Words died upon Macready's tongue when he saw her face and thought of what she would find ahead. He believed that she would keep

her word—that she would break, brain and body—if the mountain had shown no mercy at their journey's end.

"And Macready did not hope. The man to whom he had tied his own life would be down like the others, and the great house about him! All that a soft heart could feel of terror and bereavement had waged in his breast for hours. To let the woman succumb among her dead was more than he could bear."

The ruins of the plantation house waved forth from the fog. The prayer had not availed; the day still lived. A swoon had not fallen pitifully upon the woman. He was allowing her to walk forward to her end, this beautiful creature whose courage was more than a man's!

"Ier fingers were upon his sleeve, pulling him forward. She had no need of words from him now. Life remained in her to reach the place ahead. She did not want more life, if the dead were there."

"Wait, ma'am!" he pleaded.

"No, no! I cannot wait!"

"For old Denny?"

"I thank you both. You have been very brave and kind; but, Denny, don't keep me back—not now!"

"Let me go first!" he implored, harboring the mad idea that he might put something out of her sight.

"No!" she screamed, breaking from him, and rushing forward through the fallen gate.

Her cry brought an answer—a muffled answer, the voice from a pit. Macready and Ernst picked at the charred boards in the circle of ruin.

"Peter, King Peter! Where are you, Great-heart?" she called, laughing, crying, picking at her hands.

"In the cistern—in the old cistern," came the answer. "Why—did—they—let—you—come—here?"

"Didn't I tell you I wud take more than a spilt as a mountain's singe hair at him, ma'am?" Macready yelled, dancing about the rim. "Are you hurted, sorr? Tell me, are you hurted?"

He was pushed away, and the woman knelt at the rim, bending far down.

CHAPTER XVII.

Constable rested and reflected in the cistern. It did not occur to him, save in the most flimsy and passing way, to doubt the efficacy of the distance in the case of Lara. She was safe, eight miles at sea, and watched over by Macready, whom he had leamed thoroughly to trust. Here was gladness immovable. Second, for the present and to all intents, his own life had been spared. This was not so important in consideration of the third point—that she loved him, and had said so. His first worry was that Lara might be thinking him dead.

The aspect of Constable's mind being touched upon, it may be well to outline the state of affairs as a third party would see it. In the first place, there was a woman in his arms, a woman whom the fire had touched and in whom consciousness was not, the mother of the world's matchless girl. Then he was sitting upon a slimy stone in a subterranean cell, the floor of which was covered with six inches of almost scalding water, and the vault filled with steam. The volcanic discharge, showering down through the mouth of the pit, had heated the water and released the vapor. An earthquake years before had loosened the stone walls of the cavern, and with every shudder of the earth, under the wrath of Pelee, the masonry lining the cistern tottered. Then, his hand had been torn during the descent of the chain, and the terrific heat in the well lived his burns to exquisite painfulness. But, as has been stated, these were mere cuticle disorders, and the heat of the man sang again and again its tuneful story.

Pelee was giving vent to the after-pangs. Torrents of rain were descending thick. The man in the cistern had lost track of time. Though replenished with rain, the water was still too hot to step in; therefore, he could not change his position and relieve the tension of his arms. Still, he felt that he owed an astonishing debt to the old cistern. No sudden impulse had brought him there. Since he had discovered the place in his night's vigil, and examined it more closely the following day, the idea had become fixed in his mind that it might be used at the last minute.

The women sighed now and stirred in his arms. The first quivering realization took his mind. He waited in embarrassment for her to speak. Would the fact that he had saved her life stand as extenuation for his rough treatment? Constable was by no means sure that he was not about to hear her estimate of him on the old footing, with the rage of a manhandled woman added—the whole a finished document delivered with Mrs. Stansbury's art and force. But she did not yet awake.

His brain worked rapidly now. She had lain upon his shoulder during the descent. Livid dust had fallen through the orifice. His burns were slight.

His eyes strained into her face, but the cistern was dark, dark. The fire had touched her hair—he knew that. Her bare arm brushed his cheek, and his whole being crawled with fear.

It seemed that hours elapsed. Where had Uncle Joey been at the last? Did Pelee tolerate any favorites? Breen, Soronia, Pere Rabaut, Mondet, the ships in the inner harbor, the thirty thousand of Saint

Pierre—were they all wrecked in the mills of the world? But the Madame was eight miles at sea! Pelee had waited for the woman. His heart of hearts held this joy.

The breath of life was returning to his burden. She sighed once more, and then, fall pitily, he felt her wince with the pain which consciousness brought.

"What is this dripping darkness?" he heard at last. The words were slowly uttered, and the tones vague.

"I came for you—came to tell you how much we needed you—how much we feared for your life, and to ask you once more—"

"What—an extraordinary—youth!" she murmured. "Was—there—ever—such—darkness—as—this?"

"We are in the old cistern—you and I, Peter Constable." His tones became glad as he added, "But your daughter is safe at sea!"

"Did you forget something, or did Lara send you for her parcel?"

"I came for you—came to tell you how much we needed you—how much we feared for your life, and to ask you once more—"

"What—an extraordinary—youth!" she murmured. "Was—there—ever—such—darkness—as—this?"

The cavern was dark, but not utterly black now. The circle of the orifice was sharply lit with gray.

"They will come from the ship to rescue us soon. Please—please turn your face to the light—so!"

"Yes, that will do!"

"Did you not know that I am blind, boy?"

"How big you seem! I should think you would put me down and rest your arms always."

Her face had been turned upward in the descent of the chain! He steeled himself to speak steadily. There was a cumulative harshness in that her face, above all others, so fragile, of purest line, should meet the coarse element, burning dirt. Furies leaped upon him that he had not saved her.

"The water is still hot in the bottom of the cistern," he said. "My arms are not in the least tired."

An interminable interval passed before he heard the voice again, slower, fainter: "And so you came back for me—and you knew Pelee—better!"

"No, the burns do not hurt terribly. My—face—feels—dead. You were not burned—were you?"

"This was the moment of dreadful memory. Her body, her face, arms, throat, had covered him, as the rusty chain slipped through his hand. The molten steel had not cracked his flesh because she had stood between."

"I tried to save you—you know that—but you kept the fire from me!"

His voice was broken with rebellion. Then out of a sigh came the words that lived with him always.

"I would—have—you—know—that—is—Montagne Pelee—is—artistic!"

(To be continued.)

SHARPENING A PENCIL.

In This Act You May Read a Man's Character.

No woman should marry a man till she has seen him sharpen a lead pencil. She can tell by the way he does it whether he is suited to her or not. Here are a few infallible rules for her guidance in the matter:

The man who holds the pencil to ward him and close up against his shirt front is slow and likes to have secrets. He is the kind of man who, when the dearest girl in the world finds out that there are "others" and asks him who they are and what he means by calling on them, will assume an air of excessive dignity.

The man who holds the pencil out at arm's length and whittles away at it, hit or miss, is impulsive, jolly, good-natured and generous.

He who leaves a blunt point dull and plodding, and will never amount to much. He is really good natured, but finds his chief pleasures in the commonplace things of life.

He who sharpens his pencil an inch or more from the point is high strung and imaginative and subject to exuberant flights of fancy. He will always be seeking to mount upward and accomplish things in the higher regions of business and art, and his wife's greatest trouble will be to hold him down to earth and prevent his flying off altogether on a tangent.

The man who sharpens his pencil all around smoothly and evenly, as though it was planned off in an automatic sharpener, is systematic and slow to anger, but he is so undeviating from a fixed principle that he would drive a woman with a sensitive temperament to distraction in less than six months. On the contrary, he who jumps in and leaves the sharpened wood as jagged as saw teeth around the top has a nasty temper and will spank the baby on the slightest provocation.

The man who doesn't stop to polish the point of lead once the wood is cut away has a streak of coarseness in his nature.

He who shaves off the lead till the point is like a needle is refined, delicate and sensitive. He will not be likely to accomplish so much as his more common brother, but he will never shock you, and is without doubt a good man to tie to.—New York Press

To Be Exact.

"Gee whiz! Here's the rain coming down again and somebody's stolen my umbrella."

"Somebody's stolen what?"

"Well, the umbrella I've been carry- ing for the last two weeks."—Philadelphia Press.

EVENTS OF THE DAY

Newsy Items Gathered from All Parts of the World.

PREPARED FOR THE BUSY READER

Less Important but Not Less Interesting Happenings from Points Outside the State.

France will not allow Castro to remain in the republic.

Samuel L. Clemens has just celebrated his 73d birthday.

Two Japanese steamers collided off Chefoo and 700 lives are reported lost.

Two Philadelphia men engaged in a pistol duel and two bystanders were wounded.

At a conference of Pennsylvania Baptist ministers Roosevelt was severely censured.

Harriman has made a speech in which he hinted that he would open fire on his enemies soon.

A California farmer who has had much trouble with white labor wants restrictions taken off Chinese immigration.

The Supreme court has ordered Virginia railroads to appeal to the State Supreme court before going to the Federal court in the rate cases.

Governor-elect Cosgrove, of Washington, shows no improvement and it is doubtful if he will be able to return home by the middle of January.

The Elkins-Abruzzi wedding has been declared off. The duke cannot satisfy the demands of the E. Kins family, who wanted equality with royalty.

A total of 54 counties in Ohio have voted out saloons.

European nations approve the American-Japanese treaty.

A high official of Germany says the Balkan situation is gloomy.

Great Britain is alarmed at the growth of the revolution in India.

The head of the St. Petersburg police is to be prosecuted for grafting.

Russia and Italy are said to have signed a secret treaty on the Balkan situation.

Haytian rebels have routed the government forces and are marching on the capital.

Los Angeles school girls are to receive regular instruction in getting off on street cars.

An explosion in a coal mine near Pittsburg caused the death of 275 men who were at work in the mine.

Holland refuses to negotiate with Venezuela, saying that government must first recall its hostile decree.

A Chinese official now in this country says that in 10 years there will be none of his countrymen in Canada or the United States.

Reports from various states show that at least 50 persons have been killed this season by being mistaken for deer, bear and the like.

Admiral Capps says the navy needs more collars.

Austria declares she will crush Serbia if need be.

Andrew Carnegie has just celebrated his 73d birthday.

Austria threatens war with Turkey unless she comes to terms.

Cholera has again broken out in Russia and is causing much alarm.

If Austria and Turkey should fight, Bulgaria would probably invade Macedonia.

A steamer struck a reef off the island of Luzon and 100 Filipinos were drowned.

Taft has offered Frank H. Hitchcock the position of postmaster general. He will accept.

Kaiser Wilhelm, who has been suffering from a nervous collapse, is recovering.

Italians in California fought a desperate battle with dynamite, knives and guns. Two men will die.

The national organization of locomotive engineers will build a \$1,000,000 labor temple at Chicago.

It is reported that Montenegro has mounted heavy batteries on the heights commanding Cattaro, one of Austria's commercial seaports.

Holland is much interested in Castro's visit to Europe.

Heny is so far recovered that he took an auto ride Thanksgiving day.

A 13-year-old Healdsburg, Cal., boy shot his step-father in defense of his mother.

Admiral Sperry has granted shore leave to some of the battleship crews at Manila.

AUSTRIA-TURKEY AFFAIR.

Austrian Ambassador Threatens to Go Home and Tension is Serious.

London, Dec. 1.—A dispatch to the Times from Constantinople says that the tension between Austria and Turkey is becoming more serious. The departure of the Austrian ambassador, Marquis Pallavicini, will mean the complete rupture of negotiations. It is difficult to see how this can be avoided by Turkey while Austria maintains her demand for suppression of the boycott by active interference of the porte. Under the new regime this is impossible, as even if the government issued orders to that effect they would not be obeyed.

The heads of the guilds concerned have told the grand vizier that the boycott will be persisted in so long as Austria perseveres in her present attitude.

A dispatch to the Times from Vienna says the emperor's determination to maintain peace is a hopeful sign. There are rumors that Marquis Pallavicini is not likely to leave Constantinople and there is much speculation concerning the long audience which the emperor granted today to Count Julius Andrássy, the Hungarian minister of the interior, in view of the fact that Count Andrássy was the only Hungarian minister with the courage to oppose the policy of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and predict its probable consequences.

CHINESE CUT WAY OUT.

Twenty-One Make Easy Escape From Detention Shed.

San Francisco, Dec. 1.—Twenty-one out of 116 Chinese held at the Pacific Mail dock, pending the decision of the immigration officials as to whether or not they were entitled to enter the United States, escaped from the detention shed at Second and Brannan streets about 12 o'clock last night. Four of them were recaptured in Chinatown today and returned to the shed. Immigrant officials, the local police and the officers of the Pacific Mail Steamship company are prosecuting a vigorous search for the others.

The Orientals cut the heavy wire netting over one of the windows, sawed through two iron bars and slid down a water pipe. A nightwatchman discovered the open windows a few minutes after the Chinese had "landed" without the approval of the immigration officers.

This is the second time that Chinese have escaped from the rickety old detention shed. Last September four of them awaiting deportation, sawed their way to liberty through the roof. Sensational charges made at the time by a petty officer of the liner Mongol that Chinese were being lured by the process of substitution, led to an investigation, which, however, did not disclose anything tending to support the charges.

TRY ALL CASES AT ONCE.

Move to Consolidate Hearing of 35 Springfield Riots.

Springfield, Ill., Dec. 1.—If plans now under consideration by public prosecutors of Sangamon county are realized, one of the biggest cases in the history of the country will be called for trial in the Circuit court here early next year. It is probable that the court will be asked if all the cases against alleged rioters in the August outbreak in Springfield may be tried at once.

If the court consents, indictments against the 35 defendants, charged in conspiracy, will be asked of the next grand jury and the cases will be tried in a consolidated hearing with 35 defendants, a score of lawyers for the defense and probably three or four prosecutors. The plan is offered in the interest of economy. Five cases already have been tried with a comparative hearing will cost the county \$10,000.

Marquis Renews Protest.

Constantinople, Dec. 1.—The Austro-Hungarian ambassador to Turkey, Marquis Pallavicini, in an interview with the grand vizier on Saturday renewed his protest against the Austrian boycott instituted by Turkey, and declared that his government could not wait many more days for a solution of the difficulty. The ambassador stated that, failing this, it would be necessary for him to proceed to Vienna, and he hinted that his absence might be prolonged unless the porte remedied the situation.

Mission is of Diplomacy.

Basse Terre, Island of Guadeloupe, Dec. 1.—President Castro, of Venezuela, arrived here today aboard the steamer Guadeloupe, on his way to Bordeaux. In reply to interviewers, President Castro declared that the object of his journey was to settle some diplomatic business with the French government.

BIGGY IS DROWNED

San Francisco Officer Disappears From Patrol Launch.

PROMINENT IN GRAFT TRIALS

After Having Served As Ruef's Jailer and Police Chief, Quarreled With Prosecution.

San Francisco, Dec. 1.—William J. Biggy, chief of police of this city, was drowned late last night while returning across the bay in the police patrol launch Patrol. Mr. Biggy had been at Belvedere, a suburb, to call on Police Commissioner Keil, who resides there. He boarded the launch to return to the city about 10 o'clock, and when the boat was out on the bay complained of feeling cold to Engineer Murphy, the only other occupant of the launch. Mr. Murphy advised him to go to the cabin at the stern of the boat.

Mr. Murphy then went below to attend his engine and did not see the chief again. He came on deck as the boat neared the city and noticed that the chief had disappeared. A search of the boat failing to locate him, Mr. Murphy made a run to the dock, where he reported the accident and went out into the bay again to search for the missing officer. Numerous boats were hurried to the scene and a careful search of the bay was begun.

William J. Biggy was appointed chief of police by Mayor Taylor after the latter had been placed in office upon the removal of Mayor E. E. Schmitz. Biggy succeeded Jeremiah F. Dinan, against whom the grand jury returned an indictment in connection with the bribery cases. When Abraham Ruef was arrested, the prosecution asked that Biggy be appointed jailer and be given the custody of the prisoner. For eight months, he held this position and at the expiration of that time was appointed chief of police in September, 1907, through the influence of the graft prosecution.

Ever since the suicide of Morris Haas, the man who attempted to kill Assistant District Attorney Henney and who later took his own life at the county jail, the relations between the chief and the graft prosecution have been strained to the breaking point.

REBELS APPROACH CAPITAL.

President Nord Alexis Says He Will Fight to the Last.

Port au Prince, Dec. 1.—Every hour brings the revolutionary army nearer to Port au Prince, and a feeling of impending disaster has taken possession of the people. The advance guard of General Antoine Simon's forces is now more than 25 or 30 miles from this city, and the insurgents have swept all before them.

The government loses at Anse a Veau and the rout of the loyal troops have caused consternation among the officials of the government, with possibly the exception of President Nord Alexis. Every effort to have him take himself out of the country has proved a failure, and the president, who has faced revolutions before, announces his determination to fight to the last.

TREATY IS SIGNED.

Root and Takahira Make Official the Japanese Agreement.

Washington, Dec. 1.—The Japanese-American agreement was signed at 5:30 o'clock yesterday afternoon by Secretary of State Root and Ambassador Takahira.

The agreement is in the form of notes, which were exchanged as soon as the signatures were officially affixed. The notes merely embody in concrete form the sentiments that have been held for a long time by both nations according to a statement made at the State department.

It was found desirable, it is surmised, to reduce them to writing because of the erroneous impressions existing.

Schmitz to Find New Sureties.

San Francisco, Cal., Dec. 1.—Frank Drew, attorney for ex-Mayor Schmitz, signified his intention today in Judge Dunne's court to spare William J. Dungee the embarrassment of being questioned as to his financial ability to remain on the bond of his client. Drew has decided to find a new bondsman and in order to submit a list to District Attorney Langdon the hearing was continued to Wednesday. It is possible that more than one bondsman will be required to qualify in the amount demanded by the court.

Magoon to Explain Cuban Loan.

Havana, Dec. 1.—Provisional Governor Charles E. Magoon left this city today for Washington to explain the nature of the proposed Cuban loan of \$25,000,000 before the Treasury department officials. Governor Magoon, before leaving, went over the matter with President-elect Gomez.