

# The Whited Sepulchre The White Tale of Pelee By WILL LEVINGTON COMFORT

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CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)  
"I guess that's right, too. So you had to lock up Stembridge?"

"Yes, I found it advisable one day after he had tried to steal the ship—while I was ashore in San Juan," Constable explained ingeniously. "I glad to say he was a good fellow, taking him back. That is, unless you should think that I'll have to go back, too. I did play pretty rough with you, but your man had me going strong about that time. You've got to acknowledge that he's an artist. Let's get out of this. What do you plan to do?"

"Go out and get Stembridge, and settle with you."

"The word 'settle' usually refers to dollars up in the States," Constable said dryly.

"I doesn't pay to buck the detective bureau, Constable, and I'm—authorized to take cash for your part—this time."

"How much?"

"Five thousand dollars and expenses."

"It costs money to keep you off one's ship."

"I'm Crusoe of the detective bureau, and I usually go where I please," was the dulcet answer.

"I'll have to go out to the ship to get so much money," Constable declared resolutely.

"I'll have to go to the ship to get Stembridge," said Crusoe. "We'll go together."

"Where are your men?"

"I'm working alone this trip."

"You can play the part of your own armada to help you, if you think you'll need help," Constable suggested. "This was the galvanic instant."

Crusoe glanced at him keenly. He had been able to pick no flaw in the moment's talk. He was a shrewd man in his line and schooled, but Constable had rung true. There is no inclination on the part of the public at large to concede brilliance of acumen to the heirs of millions, unless the sparkling quality has been exposed in a strong light. The suggestion emanated; the gendarmes, and a last glancing at the man, the young man vanquished Crusoe's final doubt.

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The ladies had agreed to be ready at nine, in case Uncle Joey had returned with the mail by that time. His several errands must wait. The present matter would take the entire time, and must be done decently and in order. The driver was commanded to make good speed to the launch, which was in readiness. Crusoe would not have allowed her mother and the New York reporters to shake her trust. With reaction piling upon her, its most bitter and tragic phases, Peter Constable conceded his failure as a lover, and turned to his secondary passion—Poker.

CHAPTER VIII.

Crusoe was not wholly unconscious of danger when the large bundle of New York papers was brought with the mails into the library. The ladies had busied themselves over a joint epistle from Mr. Stansbury, and were scanning the front pages of the journals, when a sudden exclamation from Mrs. Stansbury interrupted the lady's quiet. Crusoe was changed from guest to outlaw. Mrs. Stansbury had followed her mother upstairs, the former bearing the paper with her. A second account of the demoralizing incident was not difficult to find. Crusoe read the following hastily:

"The Madame de Stael, Mr. Peter Constable's splendid private yacht, cleared for West Indian ports this morning, having on board the young millionaire-owner and, it is alleged, Nicholas Stembridge, the notorious revolutionary, adventurer, and scoundrel."

"The purpose in common of the capitalist and the victim, between the soldier who falls on the field of honor and the man who meets a miserable death from preventable disease, for which his government is criminally responsible, is as wide as the celestial diameters. The one meets death compensated in the thought that his life is given in the protection of his country's flag and honor, the other is ignorantly forced to his grave through the neglect of the government that shamefully failed to protect the life he offered in its defense. This man represents the victim of the hell of war."

"Mr. Constable's friends aver that the young millionaire has had the considerate character of his companion on the voyage, and point out that Nicholas Stembridge, at his best, is a man of fascinating manners and rare personal accomplishments. It has been added also that Mr. Constable is of a most impulsive temperament, and apt to choose his companions from queer arteries of society. The young man's innocent intent, however, might more readily be accepted, were it not for the important fact that Nicholas Stembridge, who is known to have been in hiding for several days in New York, is on board the de Stael shortly before she sailed; positively recognized, it is said, by an astute and reliable member of the local detective force."

"What does this prince of manipulators do with all his money?" he asked slyly.

"Well, you see," Crusoe replied, "he has his army to pay, and he must pay the men pretty well, for the rumor is abroad that they would go on the cross for him. And then he is a golden glory of a spendthrift. I've heard that Paris looks for his second coming as for a Messiah, since he has promised the Tendrillon a punch from the Milky Way. • • • Here we are. Perhaps you don't think I was pleased to see your craft lying here this morning when I came in on the Pan-

"I presume you were," Constable replied idly.

"They were on the ship's ladder, Crusoe walking ahead. The sailor on the main deck of the Madame, caught a strange gesture from Constable's hand, and a stranger expression from the eye of his owner. The sailor did not understand exactly, but he stood ready for anything that might occur, and accordingly made haste to assist when Constable sprang forward and pinched the nose about the bridge. Crusoe

"I didn't like to do that, but I wanted to say what I wanted. I got a lot of my money this morning, and you complicated matters. It may be that I'm saving your life. The mountain yonder looks as if he were about to blow his brains out, and I couldn't be interrupted until I got certain ladies safely abroad from the town. As for the fascinating person you call Stembridge, he may be my guest, and may not. I'll see you about that later on. He's been square as a boxcar to me. You're a son. Your lines are different—that all. You'll get your five thousand that I promised to-day. Just sit tight, and call for anything you want. We'll be good friends." • • • Captain Negley, have Mr. Crusoe quartered pleasantly aft, and tell Macready to serve him with anything he desires. I'll be back with the ladies in about an hour. You'll have the ship keyed for a sprint to Port de France."

Constable hurried down the ladder, and at once laid his hands in the ligan, which was aimed at the low-hanging palm, back of which lay the tortured city. It was now twenty-five minutes to nine. He could make the plantation house slightly after the hour.

It was but a moment from the pier to the carriage, and then the half-strangled ponies struggled gallantly through Rue Victor Hugo and up the morn toward the plantation house. Uncle Joey's rig was the good evidence that the ponies had been brought.

Constable entered the house hastily at ten minutes past nine. There was a word of cheer upon his lips. No one was in the library or the music room; no one but a maid servant was on the lower floor. She was gathering up the litter of broken envelopes and newspaper wrappings upon the library table. Constable imagined that the maid servant regarded

board a ship that had been a thief's refuge.

"Rue de Rivoli was white and empty. The door of the shop was shut but not locked, and the little round window darkened with a cloth. Breen entered, slamming the door quickly, to keep out the hot, poisoned air of the street. The dark shop was as empty of humans as the thoroughfare, but a quick step sounded in the rear. Pere Rabaut entered from the ash-quilted court.

"What a day, M. Breen! The birds are dead and dying. Soronia is ill unto death."

"Soronia ill?" Breen said under his breath.

The old man hastened away. At the rear doorway, Soronia pushed by him. Her hair was unfastened, and the loose white garment that she wore was open at the throat. The father stared as if she were a specter. His lips moved, and he turned suddenly to the maid standing in front of the shop. She moved toward the American.

"Her eyes aroused him. The darkness had no power to dim them of expression for the passions were burning there as in the best of men. Her gaze was fixed in that he was there at all, in life or death or dream. His act of yesterday had wrought the ghastly pallor; the deadly illness was heart-starvation.

"She touched his shoulder and his cheek with chilling hands; there fell from her lips strange, low words of no language that he knew. Suddenly she caught his hand to her breast, whispering that she had feared she was dreaming.

"'We are not going on your yacht, Mr. Constable,'" the elder woman said coldly.

He sprang up the stairs and faced her in the dim light. Two or three times there in his life he had become cold like this, some traits of his breed equipping him with an outward calm, when the issue of the moment was won or lost, but lifted from him.

"'We are not going on your yacht, Mr. Constable,'" the elder woman said coldly.

"He was not given to the mother to decide or refuse, for the door behind her was opened and the girl stood in the aperture, her anguished eyes intent upon him.

"'I returned to announce that everything is ready,' he said quietly, 'and your mother tells me that you are not going.'

"'No, we are not going,' she repeated in a low, quivering voice.

"'It is too much for me to ask why?'

She did not answer at once, but seemed ready to penetrate his brain with her eyes. "Then, you have not seen the New York papers?" she said. "You may have this. The others are below."

(To be continued.)

## THE HELL OF WAR.

Deaths from Battle and Disease in Time of War Are Appalling.

"The splendid achievements of scientific medicine in civilian life in the prevention of disease, should be even more effectively obtained in an army, were only healthy men are accepted, and vigorous outdoor camp life should keep its units, who are subject to strict military discipline, in perfect physical condition. Health alone, however, is no guarantee against the insidious attack of the silent foe that lingers in every camp and bivouac."

"Where is Mr. Breen?"

"He went down to the city, sir."

Constable left the house and walked rapidly out the driveway, turning toward Saint Pierre. Here the man's pride intervened. He had committed a foul, perhaps, but no broad evil. The state of the press were farcical. Lara Stansbury should not have allowed her mother and the New York reporters to shake her trust. With reaction piling upon her, its most bitter and tragic phases, Peter Constable conceded his failure as a lover, and turned to his secondary passion—Poker.

"I can handle Stembridge very tidily, having your moral support," he declared.

"He's too old a bird to resist arrest when he's once cornered."

"Just as you say," Constable said swiftly. "Turn your rig about and follow on. My launch is ahead, at the Sugar Landing."

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The ladies had agreed to be ready at nine, in case Uncle Joey had returned with the mail by that time. His several errands must wait. The present matter would take the entire time, and must be done decently and in order. The driver was commanded to make good speed to the launch, which was in readiness. Crusoe would not have allowed her mother and the New York reporters to shake her trust. With reaction piling upon her, its most bitter and tragic phases, Peter Constable conceded his failure as a lover, and turned to his secondary passion—Poker.

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