

Wichita Daily Eagle

MOTHER'S FACE

There's a feelin' comes across me— Comes across me often now— An' it deepest seems when trouble Lays her finger on my brow.

MY TRAGEDY

BY T. C. DE LEON

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NOT all the epics of our lives are written in heroic verse. Dull prose has oft-times bled as sacred blood, in social battle, as e'er was shed on freedom's fields of honor.

When Hal Harebrance again welcomed me under the old country home-wood, I felt as a very king coming to his own. For Betty was there—alone; and I was her brother's chosen class-chum, his equal with the gloves, his coach in classics and in—football.

At tea, the muffins were ambrosia, the Jersey cream nectar; and later, Betty's voice—in simplest ballads through it came—seemed music un-atched by my rather slim memories of the academy or the metropolitan.

"You'll not look for ceremony, Mr. Smythe," Miss Betty beamed across the table. "We're such old friends, you know; and I've promised Col. Markham a view of the mill-dam all this week he's been up here with us."

My hand; 'twas on me she smiled, as her middle-aged escort mounted like a cavalier, and the pair cantered off through dim vistas of trees.

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been down since last term, you know. Will you come? If not, there's the latest novel, or freshest magazine. Miss Betty's ride was to be brief; the mill-dam, but one short league away. I knew Hal's loitering habits about the place, so I declined the co-inspection and threw myself on the carpet-like turf, opened the novel and—thought! Six months more I would be a lawyer. I had already enough for two; the family firm was open to me, and prospects were bright. Why should not a fellow marry young? Betty was not a girl to linger; and—though she had been two years in the mid-whirl of society, an acknowledged belle and a bit spoiled—I knew she cared for—well, no one else. And I knew she did care—not so very little, perhaps—for her brother's chum.

Hours passed. That mill-dam must have moved further away! I tossed my novel aside; lounged slowly down the avenue, across the road, and up the rise beyond—still thinking. A high fence about the pasture barred my way; hand-on-rail, I was about to vault over. "I beg pardon, sir! But mind the bull! He's bad!"

"Mind the bull!" "I was on me she smiled, as her middle-aged escort mounted like a cavalier, and the pair cantered off through dim vistas of trees. "Who is the colonel?" I asked Hal carelessly, as he handed me a cigarette and struck a match.

Somewhat it was very listlessly that I lounged home; it was with a sharp twinge of accusing carelessness that I lifted Betty from the saddle when she cantered up. There was a deeper glow on her cheek; a softer, tenderer gleam in her dark eyes; more tremor in the voice that murmured—very low: "You are so good to me, always!" Then—blushing deeper still, and tripping on her long habit—she flashed me into the house, with downcast eyes.

"Mind the bull! He's bad." Days passed; and somehow I could not come to the point with Betty Harebrance. I was attentive, of course; kind, and sometimes tender, under the moonlight, while the colonel smoked with Hal on the broad piazza. The considerate old soldier gave me every chance. I knew he felt himself to be a sort of intruder; but the words I forced myself to speak were perfunctory, and Betty's ever murmured: "Oh! you mustn't," met ever-ready obedience, for a change. I did not understand myself; for I really did like the girl, and I knew, as well as man ever can, that she more than liked me. She was beautiful, accomplished, and had huge expectations from a grandaunt-tough, but very "warm" and equally ancient—in a distant southern state. But, strive as I might, I could not force my tongue to the words she would eagerly hearken to! And, even while with her, the rustic Europa glided between—goddess-like, grand-proportioned, garlanding her milk-white breast with the flowers of future hope.

Hal kept strangely busy about the farm; but his gun and dogs were not left idle. Daily I scoured the woods, making a rather poor "bag," but deep inroads into Miss Dolly Vance's acquaintance. "We met by chance," but we grew to know each other, in "the usual way."

So, just as sunset faded to the long, clear twilight, I wandered homeward with Dolly Vance. At the gate we paused. I spoke gently, gravely, of the danger of chance acquaintance; of the sorrow I would feel did our parting leave one pang in her palpitating but tender bosom. She listened silently; her face turned from me half-hidden by her hand. More than once a gasping, gurgling sound came from her heaving bosom; passing the rosy portals of speech, but leaving no word on them. Deeply contrite—pitiful for the sorrow I had wrought, so selfishly if unintentionally—I grew pathetic and seized her unresisting hand. Then—impelled by fate, or chance, or habit! my face drew nearer, and my lips pressed long and loud upon her rosy-bud twin.

"Oh, Lord!" screamed the daughter of King Aeneas, glaring wild-eyed past me to the road. Then, with sudden writhe, she slipped through my arms and fled into the house. Sad, self-reproachful, I turned away. Full in the open road behind me stood Jock Hardy, the young smith of the village near; a little and muscular Apollo of rustic pattern, albeit now as grimed with soot as limping Vulcan on Olympus Saturday night. Coolly I lit a cigarette, strolled slowly by, drew in and sent blue clouds through empty temptuous nostrils, nodding to the ead as I passed. He seemed going my way, for I heard the heavy thud of his feet behind me. It was near tea hour, so I hastened my pace. Jock hastened his, soon passing and standing in the path, full before me. Then he asked grimly: "Does you city fellers allers kiss gals?"

"What do you mean, fellow?" This loftily from me. "Nuthin' much," the young smith replied, doggedly. "Only yer kissed my sweetest; an' I'm goin' ter lick yer, rite now." Now, I was no small dab of an athlete myself, and especially proud of my "science"; but I glanced at the long, huge-muscled arms, swinging at his sides; at the great, sledge-hammer hands that ended them; at the wondrous depth of chest and flank, as he stood quiet, backed by the glooming, and I had fully made up my mind to end Betty's suspense that night—to engage myself to her, and fix the wedding just

the glint of his eye was evil, even through the dusk—would certainly not leave me very "fit." I could not hope to "knock him out" without a scratch; so diplomacy was best—a moral victory. I put on my loftiest air. "Fellow! you are insolent—and an ass!" "F'raps, but I'll lick yer, all a-same!" he responded quietly; and threw himself into an easy guard as he added: "Come on! Yer ain't feared, eh?" Like a flash—as on the brains of drowning men—I saw my past with Betty; all the happy future! I forgot the very existence of Dolly Vance. But in a trice, I threw myself into an attitude—I was "leading man" in college dramatics—slipped my hand to hip pocket, and cried: "Stand by, fellow! or I'll blow daylight through you!"

Standing, oak-rooted, Jock gave an evil grin as he dropped out slowly: "Yer ain't got no pistol; and bluff won't win! I'm goin' ter lick yer—good!" And he did. When I pulled together "the remnants of a fall'n tower" he left in that road, and staggered dizzily toward the house, I dared not show my bruised and bleeding face—my torn and dragged clothes—before the future bride. Painfully skirting the lawn, steadied by the fence, I entered the stable yard—just as Col. Markham lifted Betty from her foaming chestnut. "Oh! you poor, dear boy!" she cried, running toward me. "What's the matter? Did you meet the Vance's bull?" May the recording angel blot it out, but I muttered: "Yes, I did!—confound him!"

The old soldier turned my face to the waiting light, felt my ribs, and, through a suspicious twitch in his mustache, said tersely: "Raw beef and rest. Let me make you a toddy. Then, go to bed!" I was sore and feverish next morning, eating my breakfast upstairs, in smoking jacket and slippers, when came a soft tap on the door, and my gruff "Come in!" opened it enough to show Miss Betty's face, blushing rosiest red. "You poor, dear, unlucky boy!" she said gently. "Mamma is ill, and I had to come and look after you." How my own heart smote me for the pain I had given that loving one. But the door opened wider, and she added: "You see, I brought the colonel for you know—she was crimson now—you know—we are to be—I promised him, the day after you arrived! Are you in so much pain?" she added gently; for I groaned as I turned away. "A sudden twinge," I answered, not looking up. "I'll be all right—later!" After awhile Hal came up, all sympathy and offering aid. But his eyes twinkled with some suppressed joke as he added: "Confound that bull! I'll tell Mrs. Vance she must send him to the butcher!" I protested against any complaint, and he at last assented. Then he said, quietly: "Mamma has sad news. Death of

her old aunt in the south. But she leaves Bet a cool hundred thousand; so the colonel's a lucky fellow—eh, old boy?" I made no reply in words, but I am not sure that the recording angel had a tear ready this time to blot out my inward groan: "Curse the colonel!"

—Knownter—"Did Tappie marry that rich widow to whom he pretended to be an English lord?" Sayles—"No; he gave himself dead away. One afternoon when she wished him to call her little daughter, what did the blamed fool do but begin to bawl out: 'Cash! Cash!'—later Ocean.

—Dr. Mary Walker injured her right leg some years ago, and at times it causes her great inconvenience. To a friend who met her the other day and asked the fair doctor how her health was, she replied: "My right walker is a little stiff nowadays, but otherwise I am all right."

—Little Girl—"I am afraid this isn't the kind of tea mamma wants." Grocer—"Why?" Little Girl—"Well, she said she always paid two prices here, and I've only paid one for this." —A Brazilian recently saved his life by carrying a roll of one hundred pound notes inside his vest when a bullet came that way. Yet there are people who neglect so simple a precaution.—Tit-Bits.

Children Cry for Pitcher's Castoria.

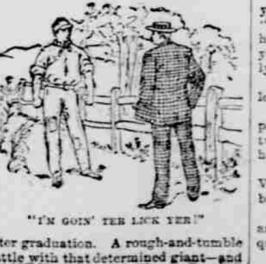
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"IT IS IGNORANCE THAT WASTES EFFORT." TRAINED SERVANTS USE SAPOLIO



"I'M GOIN' TER LICK YER" after graduation. A rough-and-tumble battle with that determined giant—and