

CAUGHT IN THE TRAP OF STREPT DEATH

BY CYRUS DERICKSON

HAVEN though it were risky, one day, while some of the officers of the Bengal Lancers were tiger hunting, they found a baby tiger three months old and took it back to Cantonments and presented it to their commanding officer, Colonel McBride. In



There was a roar and a bound, and he went down in a flash. The tiger had become full-grown and was in and out of the bungalow like a favorite dog. He was apparently tame, but now and then he moped and snarled and betrayed the ferocity lying dormant in his nature, but on such occasions he was given the whip and always crouched in submission at his master's feet. Like the average dog, the tiger had his likes and dislikes of men. Some of the officers never laid hands on his head without being rewarded by a low, deep growl, while he was ready to welcome and make friends with others. Among the former

have paid off much of his indebtedness with the money won during the first six weeks. Those not in the game praised his nerve and talked of his luck; those who always came out losers did a great deal of thinking, but were silent. At the end of two months whispers were heard again. No one could trace them to any authentic source, and they did not exactly charge the major with card sharpening, but when they reached the colonel's ears he listened and planned. He himself had been a heavy and conscious loser, and had not always been a philosopher as his gold changed hands. There had been games at his bungalow as well as elsewhere and the first time that Major Swift made his appearance there those in his company had considerable curiosity to know how he would be received by the colonel's pet.

The tiger no sooner caught sight of the

new officer than he ceased to frolic and became sulky and morose. There was no outbreak of temper, but he lay down and fastened his eyes on the major as if reading him through and through, and it was evident that there was dislike and distrust of the man. The beast continued his glare until the colonel's man was ordered to take him away and tie him up. The colonel had said nothing to any of the officers, but he had secretly determined to watch the major's play and discover if there was a cause for his winning the way he did. The major could have had no hint of it, and yet perhaps intuition had given him warning, and he was not himself at all. He played and won, but he also played and lost, and his losses were far greater than his gains. Seated at his right hand and taking no active part in the game was the colonel, and he never left his chair from first to

last. The major came out loser by £200 on the next night, he lost £25; on the third night £100. He made good his first two losses from his former gains, but when he rose from the third sitting he knew that he would have to borrow of a brother officer to pay his losses outside the officer's club. He had not been detected cheating, but he had been out of luck. The colonel may have put two and two together in his own mind and so perhaps might one or two of the players, but the party broke up with the greatest apparent good feeling all around, and half an hour later the colonel was in bed. He was a sound sleeper, and it was partly for this reason that at night the tiger was given free range of the bungalow. There were no sentinels stationed outside the place, but a native watchman slept on the veranda. At 2 o'clock in the morning this man slept and the colonel was

in dreamland. The tiger was stretched on the floor, blinking and dozing, when he suddenly pricked up his ears and opened wide his eyes. He had heard a step on the earth outside. It being in the heat of the summer, the doorways were guarded only by mats. Presently the animal saw one of these slightly move and he got the scent of a stranger. He did not growl or spring up, but the fire in his eyes grew brighter and his teeth began to show. The man, who slowly and carefully pushed the mat aside and crept into the room, which was one in which the guests had been entertained that night, ought to have caught the blaze of the tiger's eyes in the darkness, but he did not. With footfalls as gentle as a hare's he stole across the room to the colonel's desk. The desk had been carelessly left unlocked and he took from it a bag containing the money to be given to the winning horses of the races to be held a week later. There was £500 in the bag, and the robber had just turned from the desk to make his stealthy escape when there was a roar and a bound and he went down with a crash. It was hardly a minute before the tiger was on his hands and feet, and he was on his paws as he sprang had broken the man's neck, and teeth and claws were still at work. He was promptly shot, and then the colonel bent down and rolled the dead man over that he might see his face. "God, but it's the major!" he gasped out as he started back. "It's the Major and he has the bag of money clutched in his hand!"

THE BEAUTIFUL MISS MERRIAM

By Hattie T. Lummis.

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WITH Miss Merriam the incredible had happened. She was tired of hearing that she was beautiful. From her earliest recollections strangers had exclaimed over her pretty face, and her lovers, one after another, had rung the variations on the same theme. Miss Merriam listened politely to their extravagances and found herself extremely bored.

"To be loved for your face is like being loved for your fortune," Miss Merriam confided to her journal. "Beauty has wings just as truly as riches. If a man falls in love with your complexion, what is he going to do when you come down with the smallpox? If I were a pretty fool I might be perfectly satisfied with things as they are, but I know I'm worth loving for myself—if only they had the sense to find it out."

Unfortunately for themselves, Miss Merriam's admirers never suspected her peculiar views. If there had been one of their number shrewd enough to compliment her intellect instead of her dimples and to have talked about her sparkling wit rather than her sparkling eyes, he would have found her short cut to her heart. As it was, they were unanimous in deciding that the aforementioned article had been omitted from her composition. And Miss Merriam expressed her displeasure in the following paragraph in her journal: "I wish I might never hear I was beautiful again."

Rash prayers sometimes bring unwelcome answers. Not very many days later the city was electrified by the news that Miss Merriam had been thrown from her automobile at a well-known watering place and seriously injured. Pictures of the beauty appeared in all the leading newspapers of the country, with reference to her possible disfigurement. Miss Merriam's relatives when appealed to on this important point refused to say anything to relieve the suspense or to satisfy the popular curiosity. And the explanation of their reticence was apparent when Miss Merriam made her appearance in society a few weeks later. Across the fault-

less curve of the girl's cheek ran an un-sightly scar, a scar so aggressively prominent that it held the attention of the observer and made him forgetful of all else. It seemed likely that Miss Merriam was to have her heart's desire and never again be forced to hear that she was beautiful. Lloyd Hollister saw her for the first time at one of the opening functions of the season, a few days after his return from abroad. "Notice that girl over there," a friend said, pulling his sleeve. "Last spring she was the beautiful Miss Merriam," and see her now. Hard luck, isn't it?"

Hollister looked as directed. He saw a small head regally carried, a mass of dazzling hair and eyes that shot violet lights from under their arched brows. Then Miss Merriam turned her head and he saw the scar and nothing else. "I'd be sorrier for her," the man at his elbow went on, "if she hadn't turned down half the fellows in her set. I guess she thought she was good for a duke with that face of hers. Introduce you, did you say? Why, certainly, my dear fellow."

It was the innate chivalry of Hollister's nature which had prompted him to ask the honor of Miss Merriam's acquaintance. He was as sorry for the girl as he was disgusted with the cold-blooded comments of the man who had pointed her out to him. For the first few moments of their conversation he unscrupulously kept his eyes away from her. He could not bear to witness the beauty in eclipse, and he fancied that she who had been so used to reading admiration in the eyes of every man must wince at the pity which tact could not conceal.

Presently he found that admiration was getting the better of his sympathy. This quondam beauty was not crushed by her misfortune. She met this thunderbolt of her fate's spite with a gallant courage which quickened Hollister's pulses. Her easy gaiety, her apparent unconcernness of her situation, appealed to him as no woman's beauty had ever done. He made the discovery that Miss Merriam was brilliant, if not longer beautiful, and that her cleverness, unlike that of many of her sex, owed nothing to ill nature.

In the months that followed he saw a great deal of Miss Merriam. It was clear that the girl's liking for social pleasure remained unaltered by the change in her circumstances. She went everywhere,

and to all appearances enjoyed herself in spite of the sudden falling off in the number of her admirers. There had been a time when the man who wished a word with the beautiful Miss Merriam was obliged to fight his way through a double line of black coats, but Hollister had no difficulty in gaining her side whenever he went. Yet the deposed queen of hearts seemed so unconscious of anything about her which called for sympathy that Hollister suppressed his pity as if it had been a form of disloyalty. And after a time he no longer found this difficult. He admired Miss Merriam too much to be sorry for her. In every quality of mind and heart she met his ideal of what a woman should be. As for the scar, he looked at it now unthinkingly. Whatever he did he meant to act with his eyes open.

The night he asked her to marry him they sat in Miss Merriam's little library, where the flickering light of the grate fell full upon her face. No man worthy of the name is voluble when he lays his heart and life in the hollow of a woman's hand. Hollister stammered through his love-making like a boy. As he went on Miss Merriam turned away her face so that the profile was toward him. The light of the fire flashed on the scar, and it stood out in vivid relief. As a rule Hollister was not fanciful, but for an instant the gash seemed the mocking mouth of a demon, stretched in a fiendish grin.

Hollister waited for a long time for an answer to his question. Miss Merriam's face was averted and he could see that she was stirred by some strong emotion. When he made a movement to take her hand she turned toward him suddenly, and he saw that her eyes were brimming with tears.

"You are a brave man, Mr. Hollister," she said in a voice not quite steady. "Have you thought of this? Her fingers touched the scar with a strange, half-caressing gesture. "Have you thought what it will mean to have every passer-by look at your wife pityingly and whisper as you pass?"

"I love you," was Hollister's answer. "If there is a hard thing in your life it is my right to share it." Then his head whirled at the look of sudden adoration that leaped from her eyes.

"Oh, I wanted to find a man like you," Miss Merriam whispered. "I was sure there must be such a one in the world."

And then she was in his arms, with the poor, scarred cheek pressed to him, sobbing out her heart in a burst of exultant triumph that enraptured him without his understanding it in the least.

When they said good-night Miss Merriam clung to her lover as if reluctant to let him out of her sight. "I must see you in the morning, dearest," she said. "You must spare me a few moments." And Hollister, who was looking forward to the separation of a few hours as if it had been as many weeks, agreed with a sudden lightness of heart.

He wondered a little when he came next morning that she should keep him waiting. His heart leaped at every footstep in the hall for the first half-hour, and when at last she stole into the room, closing the door behind her, she took him by surprise. Hollister sprang to his feet, then stood staring blankly.

An enchanting face smiled up at him, a face rosy with blushes. He saw the play of the dimples and the curve of the cheek as if he were looking on it for the first time. The scar was gone.

"My God!" said Hollister helplessly, and he dropped into a chair, his own face dead pale. Miss Merriam ran to him and dropped on her knees beside his chair, looking into his eyes with a fascinating mixture of timidity and confidence.

"Forgive me, dearest. Don't be angry with me for deceiving you. If you only knew how tired I grew of men, you couldn't see anything in me to love but my pretty face. That little accident with my automobile was too good an opportunity to miss, and the scar was easily put on. An actress showed me how to do it, but I flatter myself that after a little I improved upon my teacher."

She smiled at Hollister shyly and did not seem to find his silence discouraging. "Please don't say you like me better the other way. I almost grew to hate my beauty when it blinded people to all the rest in me, but now I'm glad to have it give to the man who loved me for myself."

Several complexion specialists claimed the credit for removing the scar that had ruined Miss Merriam's beauty and reaped gold in the bargain. But the beautiful Miss Merriam never regained her title for the reason that her identity was soon merged in that of the beautiful Mrs. Hollister.

MYSTERIOUS LEOFRIC

By Martha McCulloch Williams.

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JANEY GATES was the beauty of Cane Creek neighborhood—even Sister Meakins admitted as much in spite of robust prejudice. Janey would have been likewise the belle if it had not been accepted as a fact ever since she put up her hair and let down her frocks that she was, in the neighborhood phrase, "mortgaged property." Phil Mayben had laid claim to her when she came hardily to his elbow. He had, further, let nobody dispute the claim, even after she came back from boarding-school, fearfully and wonderfully accomplished. He was a big fellow, square-jawed and square-headed, who cared nothing for books unless they dealt with figures. At figures he was marvelously quick and clever—so clever it was nothing for him to jump successive schoolmasters, even though they were college-bred, while he knew nothing higher than the neighborhood academy.

Possibly it was a triumph of this sort which had first incited the present schoolmaster, Leonard Trabue, to try conclusions with him in the field of Miss Janey's favor. Janey loved books in the freshest, most whole-hearted fashion—Trabue could talk books by the hour, and talk very well. Naturally he found himself welcome at the Gates homestead. Quite as naturally Phil Mayben resented his presence there, and showed it outright, after the manner of a masterful man crazily in love. Trabue, by fate and free will, and the obligation of hospitality, Janey was in a manner forced to take Trabue's part. The result was a very pretty quarrel, and the transfer of Phil's attentions to Miss Dora Meakins.

There had been no set engagement to break—that made Phil's attitude all the more aggravating. Janey was, for months, bitterly unhappy over the rupture, although she let nobody see it—not even her mother. Outwardly she was gay as ever, and so charming Mr. Leonard Trabue quite lost his head. He had meant at first only to punish that pestilent fellow, Mayben—incidentally, of

course, to divert himself and pass time otherwise heavy on his hands. Teaching was merely a stop-gap. Literature was his chosen vocation. He meant to enter upon it through the gate of newspaper work as soon as he could scrape together a few hundred dollars.

The Gateses were no rich folk, but still comfortably off, and Janey an only child. It is but just to say the fact had little to do with Trabue's falling in love. That came upon him unawares. But once he had realized his frame of affections, he took full cognizance of it. Might it not be easier to make himself immortal even here in the deep country, with a charming wife, and assured comfort, than out in the hustle and hurly-burly of a city? To settle it out of hand, he proposed plumply to Janey. He was dazed to get a refusal, distressed, almost tearful.

Next week the county paper printed, with flattering comments, a love rhyme, signed "Leofric." Cane Creek read it, because reading the paper through was certainly the part of thrift if not of Christian duty. Still it felt no curiosity as to the authorship until the rural press quite generally copied and praised the rhyme. A second bit of verse got reprinted in three city papers, so, upon the appearance of the third, Leofric's identity became a burning question—one that the editor himself could not answer. All he knew was that the copy came to him by the hand of Mr. Murdoch, a leading lawyer.

Spring came with such a rush that year

her his hopes, aspirations, plans. Love he barely named—might they not, he pleaded, be intellectual comrades? Sustained by her companionship, he felt himself capable of great things—he had already made a beginning, and she was all unwittingly the inspiration of what he had done.

There he tried to take her hand. Janey withdrew it gently. "Tell me all about it," she whispered, a hovering smile about her lips. Trabue bent her ear and said hurriedly: "You must not mention it, sweetheart, but I am Leofric—Leofric, who wrote desolate and despairing things because you refused him."

"Indeed!" Janey said, getting up from her mossy rock to slip past him. Then over her shoulder added: "You will please wait until after noon for your answer. I must go help about the dinner."

Dinner was so fine a feast Lawyer Murdoch declared he felt more than paid for his long drive out from town. He was Squire Gates' man of business and Janey's sworn friend. Therefore nobody wondered at their confidential talk aside, and even Phil Mayben smiled approval when the lawyer kissed Janey in greeting. But he was sure there was a stir as Lawyer Murdoch pulled Janey to the middle of the crowd, raised his voice, and said, with twinkling eyes: "Ladies and gentlemen, I like unmasking humbugs, so permit me to present to you—Leofric, the poetess of Cane Creek. Don't remember it against her that she is a poetess—it's all the fault of that scoundrel, Phil Mayben—"

It won't be any longer, Mr. Murdoch—"

WHAT TINY PETER DID

By Harriett G. Canfield.

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HILL PETER. Mrs. Grayson called. "Come in and get your face washed. The minister is coming to tea!"

Peter was little; he hated soap and water—and ministers, so he said, "Plague take it!" under his breath, and came in at a snail's pace.

"What's he comin' for?" he asked, resentfully, while his mother poked a washcloth uncomfortably around his ear.

"Excuse me," she said, "while I whip some cream for the peaches."

Peter's mouth watered—peaches and whipped cream! He didn't know they were to have that! No wonder the minister looked pleased! He watched him seat himself in the easiest chair in the room; it was directly under the stovepipe hole. An idea came into Peter's little closely-cropped head—he would fish the tidies from the back of the minister's chair! But scarcely had he dropped his hook and line when the minister looked up and caught him.

"Come down and see me," he said, just like an every-day man.

"Can't," Peter said.

"Why not?" the minister asked, getting up from his chair. "Have to catch the fish for supper?" he said laughingly, with a glance at the hook and line.

Peter blushed through his freckles. "No, sir," he said, "ma says I can't come down till I say I'm sorry."

had fits. Billy Barnes had said so. Peter was thinking seriously of getting his plover and treating Mr. Phillot to a shower bath when the door-knob turned and his Aunt Bertha came into the room. To his delight the minister rose from his chair.

"Why, Mr. Phillot!" she said, "what is the matter? Your face is so flushed; have you a fever?"

"No," Peter called down. "I guess it was a fit." Aunt Bertha looked up.

"Bertha's face was as red as the minister's." "Of course, Mr. Phillot doesn't come here to see me, Peter!" she said severely. Aunt Bertha had never spoken to him like that before. He shut his eyes to keep the tears back. When he opened them the minister was looking up at him.

"Come to the mine, Peter," he said, "and change places with your Aunt Bertha. It is she who tells a story—you are truth itself! I do come here to see her, but I've been afraid to say so. You see she doesn't care for me at all, Peter."

Peter wondered what it was.