

### THE TIGER GIRL

By JACK LANTON

The girl who was about to enter the room, stood on the stair at the sound of voices below. She heard her own name mentioned and waited. Her hair shone tawny in the window light, and her face was suffused with a glow. The golden lashes falling over yellow-black eyes glistened like sunny dewdrops. She stood calm, expectant.

"I call her the tiger-cat," her husband was saying. "We had one once just like her, subtle, ever ready to pounce with her hidden claws, always for that which was—or was not—her own. Claiming by cunning or force, if might be. And yet, we could not part from the thing. It had an endearing manner of cuddling up to one, creeping with its yellow head or looking parrot-like with cushioned outstretched paws. That is Pauline. When I lose patience with her completely, Martin, I have scolded her confession. 'Pauline is sure to come it over on me one way or another. She can charm and dominate anyone as well as men on those occasions when it suits her purpose.'

The small person on the window seat turned so that the listener could see her face.

"Aren't you bitter, Martin?" she inquired.

"Bitter?" Mrs. Drake's tone expressed exasperation.

"It is you who should be bitter, Nell, with that woman taking Paul from you, before your very eyes. And only for a passing whim to show her powers, not that a public exhibition is necessary, merely known; for the men follow her about for a smile or a frown."

"I do not think," Nell said slowly, "that Pauline will throw Paul over."

Nell paused between the door and the stairs.

"Maybe," she suggested, "it might be better, Martin, to try to tame the tiger."

The golden-haired girl on the stair seemed to move as the one whose lover she had taken, came wide-eyed toward her.

"You heard?" Nell asked in consternation. Pauline nodded. She held out her white fingers aimlessly in the sunlight and studied their shining nails. "The tiger's claws," she quoted.

The hall was silent and deserted. Nell sinking down upon a lower step smiled bravely up at the girl.

"Pauline," she said, "tell me something of your earlier life in that far-away West. I think that you must

have been brought up with people different from us. People living by a different code. To be so cynical one must be unhappy. It hurt me to hear you talk at sincerity. Now I believe in the good in every one."

The tiger-cat gazed through her half-closed lids. "Even yet?" she asked hesitantly.

"Even yet," answered Nell. Pauline smiled forward.

"And I must take your lover from you tomorrow," she declared.

"Take him and keep him forever!" She laughed, impulsively touching her pink finger-tips to Nell's arm. "With my claws," she repeated.

"Claws?" Nell quietly replied. "I think it best to slip some claws. I will use that."

The golden girl's smile was marred.

"You're so wicked."

"Remember Paul," Nell went on firmly. "Do you believe that he would still care for you if he knew that you had deserted me? Only because you had done so, surely? Pain is not that kind. His sense of honor is strong and he must believe beyond all question in the woman he loves. Or else he would have left."

When the maid brought up our letters this morning one wronged letter was tossed into my lap. She had mistaken the name, and I, thinking of other things, took upon the envelope absently and began to read. There was no other beginning to the letter than the word "dear." It was from a broken-hearted man, whom it seems you had long ago charmed for your school girl diversion. But when you had carried the episode to the point of a runaway marriage merely to prove your triumph, you returned immediately after the secret ceremony to your parents, with a desire that the marriage be annulled.

"This they were able to accomplish because of your minority. But the man, it seems, continued true to his love and sends now a further plea after all the years. Some men might overlook such a letter, but to Paul it would be the undeniable revelation of your nature."

"And you are going to show it to him?" Pauline asked fiercely. From the pocket of her gray frock little Nell drew the letter. With her hands she folded it into the hands of her rival. "No," she said. "I'm going to give the letter to you. I happen to believe, you see, in good in others. So I shall leave it to yourself to be true. You will have to find your own way."

The clock on the landing ticked loudly, then the tawny girl spoke. "You have tamed your tiger, my dear," she said, "and you shall have your precious Paul. I never wanted him anyway." But when she reached the

top of the stair she stood, her finger-tips pressed to her eyes; when she looked at the shining nails they were wet with tears. Pauline smiled from the lobby. "Clipped!" Mrs. Drake whispered, and turned away.

### THE ROMANCE OF WORDS

"COOTIE"

PROBABLY more new words entered the English language since August 1, 1914 than in any similar time in history. "Boobie" and "cannon" have "Big Bertha," "Archie" and "blighty" are only a few of the terms which, though coming prior to the outbreak of hostilities, were comparatively unknown on this side of the Atlantic. But few of the new words caught the popular fancy and at the same time aroused public interest like "cootie."

Some of the English words which were introduced to the United States during the war were introduced to them at an earlier date. For example, a Southern stockman of a certain breed of either a porridge, based on a fowl with feathers on its legs. To characterize the word means "unpleasant, uncomfortable" while the natives of Gloucestershire used it to refer to something that wriggled or squirmed. It was very evidently the latter definition coupled with the fact that a large coot might be said to resemble a certain kind of bird that gave rise to the nickname—though it is an interesting fact that kati is the Sanskrit word for "bird" and kati, in Hindi, means "crotch."

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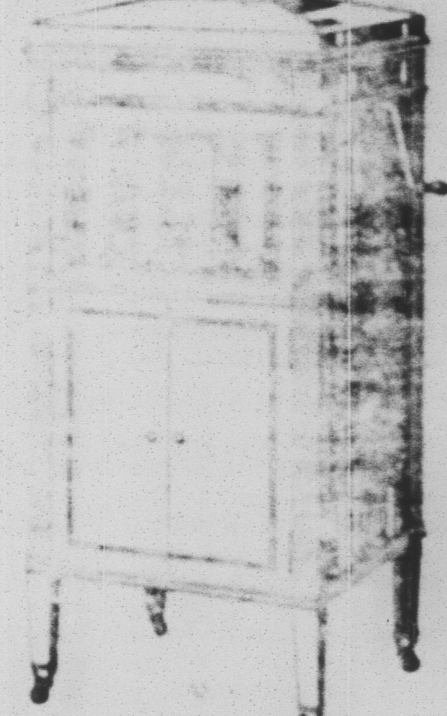
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