

# The Siege of Laurel Hall

By Elmore Elliott Peake

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She crossed the first time, so it seemed, when she reached the orchard, but she did not count herself out of danger until she had crossed the stable yard and gained the buildings. All was still as death there save for the occasional stamp of a horse, and it was evident that the marauders were for the present giving their undivided attention to the house. Mahomet did not whinny at May's approach, as she had feared he might, but only rubbed his soft nose against her face.

Saddling and bridling him was the work of but a minute, and after spreading straw upon the floor to deaden his footsteps she led him out. She did not mount for half a mile or more, or until she had rounded the inlet and left the house behind, she entered the animal cautiously through the sand. But once safely out of earshot May dexterously straddled the saddle, stretched herself upon Mahomet's withers and wound her arms around his neck. It was an old trick of hers, and Mahomet knew well its meaning. For a moment he snorted and trembled in a kind of ecstatic anticipation. Then suddenly lowering his head with what a timid person might have thought a vicious motion he stretched his powerful black body close to the ground and was off like a bolt.

Riding was the girl's passion, and more than once in the past, along secluded stretches of road, she had put Mahomet's mettle to just such a test as this from pure love of danger and excitement. But tonight great issues hung upon her daring, and as she shot through the night, knowing not what dangers lay ahead in the impenetrable gloom, but blindly trusting in Mahomet's sagacity as they thundered over bridges, plunged down declivities or climbed the steep beyond; as she clasped the horse's thick neck and felt the play of his great muscles beneath her arms, she pressed her cheek into his flying mane, closed her eyes and abandoned herself to the ecstatic joy of wild delight. And this in spite of the cause of the danger threatening the dear ones behind. Occasionally a low hanging cloud brushed her back. Once the heavy odor of a flowering magnolia struck her nostrils for an instant, and she was conscious of the altered temperature as she descended into the chilliness of a valley, or mounted the warmer height beyond.

Fifteen minutes had scarcely passed, though May had no idea of the flight of time, when Mahomet turned as by instinct down the lane to the Cotton club stables. Two or three minutes more sufficed to wake the hostler, put him into possession of the facts and send him raving desperately across the channel of the elms. After that it seemed a dreary lapse of time to the impatient woman before anything further happened. Then she distinctly heard in the still of the night the pounding of the negro upon a door. A light appeared at a window, then another and another. Voices, quick and imperative, next sounded across the water, and then came hurried steps upon the gravelled walk.

When the boat reached the mainland again seven men besides the negro stepped out, and in a brief space of time seven saddle horses were ready. Middleton's demeanor was a sharp disappointment to May, for in her excited fancy she had fondly pictured him as she waited at the stables as kneeling remorseful over their estrangement of the day before and as tenderly sympathetic with her in her present trouble. Instead he was as cool as a man organizing a fox hunt, and he inquired for particulars of the attack with a brisk equanimity that seemed positively heartless to May. Yet even while smarting under her disappointment she could not but admire Middleton's promptness and decision and the readiness with which he assumed the captaincy of the expedition.

The ride back was not so rapid, as May, sitting her horse in conventional fashion, could not set such a pace as she had in coming. Moreover, Mahomet was weary. Still they reached the head of the inlet in about twenty minutes. Here they dismounted, tied their animals and went on foot.

All was quiet at the stables, but two of the party were left behind as sentinels. All was quiet at the house also, and no demonstration had evidently yet been made. The party halted at the bathhouse on the inlet a hundred yards from the mansion. Some of the conspirators were doubtless concealed in the shrubbery, and what next to do was the question.

"I am positive that I saw their boat at the mouth of the inlet," whispered May, "and I think we ought to scuttle it and cut off their escape."

bing companion into the shelter of a clump of willows, he stealthily tiptoed toward the sleeping sentinel. He held his shotgun before him, both barrels raised, and had the negro risen certainly would have been only to close his eyes again in a dreamless sleep. But he did not stir, fortunately for all, and Middleton tiptoed slowly on, nearer and nearer, slower and slower, scarcely seeming to move at all, until at last he stood directly behind his unsuspecting victim.

May's heart pounded until she thought it would burst at the dread possibility of a twig or a shell snapping beneath Middleton's feet. Then her heart suddenly stood still. The negro had raised his head in a listening attitude. For a moment it seemed to the girl as though the universe—had whirling earth, the circling stars—had come to a standstill and with it her vital functions. Middleton, ever cool, stood as motionless as the stump before him, the muzzle of his gun almost against the head of the unconscious black. Then the latter's head drooped forward again, and May saw Middleton club his gun and lift it in the air. Shuddering, she closed her eyes and stopped her ears with her fingers.

When she looked again the negro was stretched senseless upon the sand, face downward. Middleton was bending over him, binding his hands behind his back. May stepped swiftly forward, lifted the anger from the sand and turned toward the boat. At that moment a volley of shots rang out in the direction of the house. An instant later a return volley was fired. Middleton dropped his prisoner, lifted his gun and, seizing May's hand, hurried her up the slope to the shelter of some syringas. They had barely time to drop down in these when five or six men rushed head skelter down the slope within fifteen feet of the crouching pair.

A moment later the keel of the long boat grated on the beach as the desperadoes shoved off. May impetuously arose. Middleton hastily pulled her down again, but not before the flying sauzagers had caught her outline against the sky, and the next moment they poured a volley of shot into the bushes. Most of it went harmlessly over the couple and Middleton instantly arose and discharged the contents of both barrels into the longboat, evidently with effect, for an angry, involuntary yelp went up from one of the inmates. Then Middleton turned, just in time to catch his companion in his arms as she swayed dizzily toward him.

For a moment May's head rolled limply, she apparently wounded blind, and then fell heavily upon Middleton's bosom. Her waterproof had slipped from her shoulders, and as Middleton, momentarily at fault, looked fixedly down upon the relaxed form he loved so well a slowly widening spot of crimson appeared over her right breast. For an instant a strange coldness around his heart rendered Middleton helpless; then, recovering himself, he swiftly unbuttoned the lounging robe and threw it open, exposing the scarless girl's nightgown beneath. Across that white expanse trickled a dark stream the width of a finger. Pushing the robe still farther back until her shoulder was bare, Middleton saw, with the most profound gratitude, that the wound was safely above the lungs.

Slipping his handkerchief under her arm, he drew it over her shoulder, across the wound, and tied it tightly. As he finished May stirred slightly. Next she gave a little gasp, opened a pair of dull, unseeing eyes and murmured faintly, "What is it?" "Light!" said Middleton, soothingly. "It's only a flesh wound, but you are weak yet."

"How foolish of me to faint!" she murmured. "How could I answer they heard footsteps cautiously approaching. Middleton laid his finger on May's lip, for in the darkness it was impossible to distinguish friend from foe. The next moment, though he called out, "Benjamin!" in a low tone, and when the figure had come still nearer he added: "Go back to the house and get a shutter and two of the boys. Miss Elphinstone is shot, but not bad; only a flesh wound in the shoulder. I'll explain later."

As Benny's footsteps died away the wounded girl looked up into Middleton's face with a curious, steadfast gaze—a gaze baffling description, but as if freighted with the essence of the being back of it.

"Dan," she said in a low, quivering voice, "can you hold me in your arms and see me bleed from a bullet wound and call me Miss Elphinstone?" "I dare not call you anything else after what you said at the clubhouse," he answered.

Benjamin soon returned with a shutter and a band, but May insisted upon walking and, as usual, had her way. The dooryard, when they reached it, presented a scene of confusion. There was a railing to and fro with lanterns, a babel of voices and wide-eyed groups of blacks. Two prisoners, both slightly wounded, lay on the grass, and to these was soon added the negro whom Middleton had knocked over and who had either been handed over or overlooked by his flying comrades. May was the only one of the defenders who had lost a drop of blood, and she was restored to her anxious father's arms before he had learned of her wound.

"Blood will tell, Danny, if I do say it myself," said the prudent general in the sitting room when quiet had been somewhat restored and old Penelope was dressing May's shoulder in the next room. "That girl risked her life to save those horses. She knew I was safe enough. If a woman never loved anything more than a horse, Dan, I should say her heart wasn't far from the right place. Yes, by Jupiter, if she never loved anything but a mule!"

The general seemed a little mystified at the whimper of laughter which escaped Clara Gaylord at this last remark. But Middleton seemed to understand it well enough, for he gave the roguish young woman a warning glance, to which she paid not the least attention.

**PROFESSIONAL EATERS.**  
Indians Employ Substitute to Consume Food For Them.  
One of the most striking customs of the past that are preserved by the Indians of today is found among the tribes on the Devil's Lake reservation in North Dakota. An official of the Indian service gives the following account of this peculiar practice:

"From time immemorial the Devil's Lake Sioux have adhered to an old custom in regard to the treatment of a guest. According to their etiquette, it is the bounden duty of the host to supply his guest with all the food he may desire, and as a rule the apportionment set before the visiting Indian is much in excess of the capacity of a single man.

"But by the same custom the guest is obliged to eat all that is placed before him, else he grossly insults his entertainer. It was found that this practice would work a hardship, but instead of dispensing with the custom the Indian method of reasoning was applied, and what is known as the professional eater was brought to the front.

"While the guest is supposed to eat all that is placed before him, it serves the same purpose if his neighbor assists in devouring the bountiful repast, the main object being to have the plate clean when the meal is finished.

"It is not always practicable to depend upon a neighbor at table to assist in getting away with a large dinner, and in order to insure the final consumption of the allotted portion visiting Indians call upon these professional eaters, whose duty it is to sit beside them through a meal and eat what the guest leaves. The professional eaters are never looked upon in the light of guests, but more as traveling companions with a particular duty to perform.

"These eaters receive from \$1 to \$2 and even \$3 for each meal where they assist. It is stated by the agent of the Devil's Lake reservation that one of the professional eaters has been known to dispose of seventeen pounds of beef at a sitting. That they are capable of eating an almost fabulous amount I myself can testify."—Hygienic Gazette.

## NEW SHORT STORIES

**Not Down to That.**  
The late Phil May spent several years when a very young man in Australia. There he made his first success as a comic artist, but not until he had experienced his share of ups and downs.

Six months after he left England a London friend, who has since achieved fame as a dramatic critic, also went out to Australia to seek his fortune.

He, too, soon encountered ups and downs, and during one of the latter

**"I DON'T EAT HERE."**  
happened upon a cheap restaurant in an obscure street of Sydney to order a frugal meal. After studying the bill of fare earnestly he looked up at the waiter and was startled to recognize in this person his friend May.

"Phil," he said solemnly, "is it possible that you work here?" "Sir," answered May, drawing himself up with great dignity and throwing his napkin over his arm, "it is possible that I work here. I do work here. But, sir, I'd have you understand that I don't eat here. I'm not down to that yet!"—Saturday Evening Post.

**Agreed With Parker.**  
Parker stories are scarce. There is no public man about whom fewer anecdotes are told. This is due largely to his reserved life and reticence, although no one loves a good joke or story better.

One is related at the Judge's expense. A very able New York attorney, who was quite deaf and very sensitive, was arguing a case before the court of appeals. He dwelt at length upon a fundamental legal principle. Finally Judge Parker interrupted.

"It would seem, Brother —, that you infer that this court is not well versed in this elementary law point."

Now, the attorney didn't catch what was said, but he made it a rule to agree always with what the court said. So, smiling and bowing, he said: "Precisely, your honor, precisely. You have stated the proposition correctly."

## USE OF PERSONAL PRONOUN

**Why the Uneducated Appear Always to Be Talking of Self.**  
All the uneducated appear almost always to be talking about themselves, but it is easy for a superficial observer to exaggerate the extent to which this is the case. For instance, if you discuss with a cultivated man a question of morals or the wisdom or rectitude of any particular line of conduct, he will tell you what he thinks right or what he thinks wrong or what strikes him as wise or foolish, with very little use of the personal pronoun. He can see the situation from the outside. But if you discuss it with an uneducated man he is incapable of this detached attitude of mind.

The uneducated man can see only pictures of the circumstances to himself by picturing himself in the midst of them. What he thinks right and wise is, no doubt, often a great deal better and wiser than what he would actually have done. "Such and such a thing was wrong; I should not have done it," he says; or "Such and such was foolish. Now, had it been me, I should have done so and so."

To the sophisticated listener he gives an impression of appalling self-righteousness and even perhaps of hypocrisy, but the impression is a mistaken one. He argues in the vocative case, because it is the one in which he can most easily express himself.

Some people, it must be admitted, attract attention from those who have no weakness for making them. We are not alluding to those persons who by a method of deft cross questioning manage to abstract information with which they have no business. Such information is not confided by its original owner, but stolen from him, or at least wormed out of him. The people we mean have that in their face and bearing which makes all the world at home with them. Whoever meets them may know that they are incapable of giving a snub or a rebuff to any one who claims their sympathy, he never so silly. They go about the world unarmed and unafraid, and to give human nature its due, un hurt. Unconsciously, it is they who make the first confidence, telling those who see them, even for the first time, that they are sympathetic and detached, and as shrewd as they are harmless.—London Spectator.

## CHEEK, PUSH AND CASH.

**Three Essentials, Says a Cynic, to Success in Life.**  
Fighting for cards to entertainments, pushing up by hook and by crook, giving dinners and dances (typewriter descriptions of which are given to any journalists who wish for them)—these things are essentially opposed to "that eyes which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere."

These influences are very widespread. To "get on" is the great object of every one, and to get on one must drop as many refinements as possible. They "do not pay." This may seem cynical, but it is unfortunately true. Cheek, push and cash are the three essentials to success, and if the last be lacking the two former are necessary for its getting.

This is all false, unworthy. It is only the veneer of a butterfly class. The aristocracy is one with the upper middle classes in its rejection of these influences. Refinement is not dead among us, but it is overshadowed. Sane and serious people are sickened by the frothy life that goes on about them. If it really brought enjoyment to its devotee it would be justified, but that it does not is amply evidenced by the discontented, artificial faces under the vulgarly elaborate dresses. Better things will come, better things exist now beneath this false surface, but the man who beats the drum can drown the strains of the violin. Just now the drum is very loud. Let us lower our voices and wait.—London Outlook.

## QUEER ENGLISH BELIEFS.

**Superstitions That Still Abide With the Country Folk.**  
There is a well known weed; with dark blotches on it, not unlike blood stains. I have been twice assured with the utmost seriousness by an old woman that "where you find them there a growing there's been a battle long ago."

The same dame once seemed rather in a hurry when buying a setting of eggs from me about tea time, and I found the reason was that she believed you had no luck with eggs if you did not set them before sundown. This is curious, for, though the modern poultry keeper might make the nest and place the eggs in it during the daytime, he would probably defer putting the "broody" on them till dusk that she might have the best chance of setting down quietly.

## WOMAN AND FASHION

**Early Fall Suit.**  
This is one of the smartest of the early fall suits and will be found an excellent model to follow in making up a traveling suit in heavy linen or pongee. The little plaited jacket is



TRAVELING COSTUME.

very stylish and universally becoming. It is fitted by shoulder and underarm seams, and two broad side plaits are arranged at each side of the front and back. The skirt is a particularly attractive model, laid in deep plaits that are stitched down to about flounce depth. It fits closely over the hips and flares modestly at the lower edge.

## Jeweled Buttons.

Some of the new jeweled buttons are elaborate and expensive enough to take the place of jewelry. There are imitation turquoises, agathists and emeralds set with rhinestones which look like brooches instead of buttons. It is quite a fad to use one of these large buttons on each side of the collar in front to give the little smart touch so much desired. These buttons come in all shapes and sizes, some of which are as large as a silver dollar.

## For Autumn Wear.

In Paris the coat sleeved basque coat and plain skirt are among the smartest costumes for traveling wear. They are neither trimmed nor adorned with braid or the material used in tucks, but plain effects prevail. Rather long fitted coats with matching skirts are being made by fashionable tailors, and walking costumes for winter are to be fur trimmed, the fur being used on the coat rather than on the skirt.

## Sensible Little Frocks.

A mother who likes to see her two little daughters dressed in white and pale colors has made some simple but dainty frocks of cotton crepe in white, pale blue and pale pink. These must not be ironed, but shaken several times during the drying process. If made with shirred round skirts, they keep their shape admirably and with pretty berthas or 1830 collars make dainty afternoon frocks.

## An Effective Skirt.

The skirt that is snug over the hips, yet provides abundant fullness below, remains a favorite and is promised new life beneath this false surface, but the man who beats the drum can drown the strains of the violin. Just now the drum is very loud. Let us lower our voices and wait.—London Outlook.

## SEVEN GORED PLAITED SKIRT WITH STRAP EFFECT.



SEVEN GORED PLAITED SKIRT WITH STRAP EFFECT.

As her slender sister, a feature by no means always found in full skirts of any sort. The model is made of brown Henrietta in the new shade known as the union and is exceptionally smart, the material being one of the latest whims of fashion. It can, however, be reproduced in all reasonable suitings and in all materials in vogue for separate skirts.

The quantity of material required for the medium size is eight and three-quarter yards twenty-seven inches wide, five yards forty-four inches wide or four yards fifty-two inches wide.

## The Latest Ideas in Sashes.

Sashes of soft ribbons, such as lousine and liberty taffeta, are shown with the ends knotted at intervals and caught with a small artificial flower in the same tint as the ribbon. Yellow roses, rosebuds and cowslips are used with canary color sashes, forget-me-nots with blue, almond blossoms and roses with pink and pappy buds and geraniums with cardinal ribbon.

## Helen's Sense of Humor.

Helen's sense of humor did not leave him until the last. A few days before his death Hector Berlioz called on him just as a tiresome German professor was leaving after worrying him with his uninteresting conversation. "I am afraid you will find me very stupid, my dear fellow," he said. "The fact is I have just been exchanging thoughts with Dr. —."

## Then Chaos.

"Why, Mary," said her mistress, "I told you to make up my room an hour ago, and here it is in terrible disorder."

## NEW ZEALAND GEYSERS.

Among them is said to be the Big Geyser. It is reported to have the most magnificent geyser in the world, but its reputation is based upon the statements of travelers who have never been to New Zealand and who know nothing of its natural wonders.

Leaving Auckland by a fast express train, a journey of eight hours brings one to Rotorua, where may be seen the most splendid geyser which is probably to be found anywhere in the world. To give one some idea of the magnitude of the geyser I need mention only the height of some of the surrounding objects. Over the "Inferno crater," which contains a seething lake of water, is a small shelter about 450 feet above the plain. The surface of the water in the geyser basin when at rest is about forty feet below this plain. The height of the eruption must often be about 900 feet. This is by no means exceptional. Higher "shots" have been recorded. I have myself seen a shot computed at 1,200 feet. Some months ago the area of the basin was measured in a small boat by a Mr. Buckeridge and a guide. They found that the area is about two and a half acres, from which it may be inferred that this geyser may well be called the largest in the world.

The geyser plays about twenty-two times each month, but very erratic and gives no warning when it is about to erupt. The theory is advanced that the basin is somewhat like a funnel and that when the water and stones are ejected the larger stones return and jam in the neck, thereby choking the outlet, so that an enormous pressure of steam must shift them. When the pressure is sufficiently great to blow out the obstructions it naturally would eject water to a great height. The theory, however, is at best rather fanciful.

This geyser is not the only one to be seen in the vicinity. Others may be mentioned, such as the Pohutu, Wairoa, Feather, Papakura and others, besides mud volcanoes.—Scientific American.

## ASIATIC TIGER PROVERBS.

A tiger's meal—a glutinous repast. To face the tiger in his lair—great bravery. A winged tiger—cunning added to power and ability.

After the Chinese tigers—total devastation of a country. A tiger of wood—a harmless being with a dangerous exterior. To bring up a tiger and have him turn upon you—ingratitude. "Malingoloo," a man against a person with an unchangeable temper. A tiger with a broken back—rage and fury which are powerless. To let go the tail of a tiger—to avoid one danger and encounter another. To turn from a deer and meet a tiger—the danger of too much caution. Devoured by a tiger—said of a man who wishes to be concealed from his creditors.

You must enter the tiger's den if you would secure a cub—what is risk having to be not incurred without work, and trouble.—Washington Post.

## Strange Fate of an English Earl.

"I came across a bit of treasure the other day," writes a Washington author who is down on Cape Cod. "It is the log book of the schooner Hera, which sailed from Boston on a day in the seventies. She sailed with a new first mate on board. "He seemed an ambitious man, and he understood navigation. The captain suspected him of a desire to be master of a vessel himself some day, but there was little about him to suggest that he was anything but a sailor. The third day out he was caught by the down haul of the mizzen and went overboard. His body was never recovered. When the Hera came back from her voyage she was met by two Englishmen. They had crossed the water posthaste to find that first mate. Somebody had died in England, and—well, the man who was lost off that Yankee schooner was Earl of Aberdeen."—Washington Post.

## Bore on Too Heavy.

"This won't go for only one stamp," said the village postmaster to old Uncle Kiah as the latter handed him a bulky and much sealed missive. "Whuf for? What's de maddah wid dat?" "Too heavy," replied the postmaster, balancing it on his hand. "Umph! I told dat boy so when he was a-writin' of it. I t'ole him he was writin' too heby a han', but he kep' on a-bearin' down an' a-bearin' down on de pen, lak a load o' hay. I'll take it back, sah, an' mek him writ' wid a pencil. I ain't gwine spen' no mo' 2 centses jes' for his pigheadness."

## An Odd Record.

The late Miss Julia Moore, Sir John Moore's niece, like many very old people, was extremely proud of her age and lost no opportunity of showing it. When she was asked by a friend if she was going to see the coronation of King Edward VII, she answered: "No, I have been out of London for the last three coronations, and I don't care to alter my record." What an exaltation one must feel at being able to say a thing like that!

## Strength.

"Some scientists" has declared that there is as much strength in three eggs as there is in a pound of beefsteak," said the observer.

"Well," replied the actor, "I met an egg once that would have eliminated the other two eggs from that proposition."—Exchange.

## Praying For the Sister.

Mrs. Bitter—"I just hate that woman. I hope she'll lose all her money, get some disfiguring illness, be run down by a train—Rev. Goodhart—Sister, sister! We are told to pray for our enemies. Mrs. Bitter—Well, I'm praying for all those things for her."—Philadelphia Press.

## Not the Landlord's Fault.

A traveling man found a hair in his order of beef at a Muscatoh hotel and complained to the landlord about it. "I can't help it," the landlord replied. "I bought it for combed honey."