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A BLACK SPOT.

BY LAVINIA H. EGAN.

I was lying stretched at full length on the long sofa in the library. It was a drowsy afternoon in spring, and I had been asleep. Even after I awoke, the sweet drowsiness of slumber was on me, and I lay for some time with closed lids in that thoughtless, dreamless state between sleep and waking. Suddenly I became aware of a presence in the room, and opened my eyes expecting to see my aunt. Instead I saw a flash of black before my eyes, a flash that shimmered and quivered like superheated air and disappeared while I was blinking my eyes to see what it all meant, but I was alone in the room. The thing gave me a queer sensation, and I lay quite still for some moments shutting and opening my eyes to see if the black flash re-appeared. But it did not; there was only a sort of tired feeling back of my eyes.

"Malaria," I said resignedly, and I went to look for Amelia to get her to make me a lemonade. I found the little maid watering the flowers down in the paved court. I leaned over the banisters with my face in my palms lastly watching her swab the dusty alcove, her deft little hands glistening like copper where the sun touched their wet brown fingers.

"Do you believe in ghosts, Amelia?" I asked wearily. "Oh, yes, Mamselle," said the little maid in her pretty French, as she turned her scarred, brown face up to look at me. "Don't you?"

"Of course not," I answered, "but I'm thirsty, Amelia."

Then she flicked the water from her copper fingers, and went away to mix me the cool drink of lemon and lime juice which no one could make so well.

When the little maid was gone, Aunt Cilla poked her big white kerchieved head from the kitchen door, and then came tolling up the steps.

"You been sleep in de libry, ain't you, honey?" she said when she had waddled quite close to me.

"Yes," I answered wonderingly. "Das a mighty po' place to sleep, chile," she said.

"Why, Aunt Cilla?" I asked.

"Case 'tis," she answered laconically, nodding her head backwards toward Amelia, who was coming up the steps behind her.

"I's jess tellin' Mamselle she better tek me you git de feather duster and bresh de dust off'n dem bananas and dat palm 'fo' you sprinkles 'em, 'Mells," said the old woman as she waddled away.

"All right, Aunt Cilla," said the little maid, as she left me to my lemonade and to wondering what the old woman meant.

But whatever she meant she would not tell me. For days, in the eagerness of my thoroughly aroused curiosity, I besought the old woman, and finally offered to bribe her if she would tell, till at last the poor old thing threw herself down on her knees at my feet.

"Don't mek me tell you, honey chile," she said. "'Tain't nothin' gwine to hurt you; ef dere was I'd tell you ef I kill me. Bgt, 'tain't nothin' 'tall gwine to hurt you, only I done been conjured, an' ef I tell de hoodoo would git me. 'Fo' Gawd das de truth, honey," and there were tears rolling down the old woman's black cheeks.

Of course this served to excite my fancy all the more concerning the shimmering black spot in the library and in the meantime I had a second experience of it. It was much the same sort of experience as the first, except that I had not been asleep. I simply lay down on the sofa and closed my eyes, opening them suddenly, when the black spot shimmered and danced and was gone.

I had told my aunt upon the first day of our possession, that the house we took was worthy to be haunted. I have always wondered why my aunt selected it. It was, in many respects, the least prepossessing of any that the agent showed us, yet to be sure it had a grandeur about it, a sort of stately, stuccoed, Creole grandeur which was altogether charming to our eyes that beheld New Orleans for the first time. But the house was plain and tall and straight and square; there were no quips and cranks about its appearance on the outside, though the interior was all that the most fanciful heart could wish.

I frankly confess that the black spot in the library set me to thinking that romances may be better framed than realized, particularly as I could not speak to my aunt about it. We had come South for her health, and it became my constant care to keep her from knowing about the spot.

Nevertheless, I set myself to find out what it meant. I rummaged all over the house, in every crack and corner, and found many secret closets and hidden springs that I had hitherto been ignorant of. But besides these my search was almost fruitless; there was not a scrap of manuscript, nothing to tell of any former history of the house or of its inhabitants. One day, however, when I had about concluded my efforts would be in vain, Amelia was helping to arrange some books and magazines in the big, empty wall case in the library. Suddenly the little maid let fall a heavy volume. The book had slipped from a pile which she was attempting to lay on the shelf and striking heavily against the back of the case, opened a secret door therein concealed, and dropped with a sort of broken fall into the niche behind. It is needless to say I lost no time in searching amid the dust and cobwebs of the little closet where I found two small oil pictures and a little plaster bust. With eager hands I brushed the dust from the pictures, and, taking them to the light, found one to be the portrait of a delicate, sweet-faced boy with timid blue eyes and fair hair. Across the back of the canvas was written: "Jean, aged ten years." The other picture was of a lad seemingly fifteen or sixteen years of age, a handsome, black-haired, black-eyed boy whose expression I did not like. The plaster cast was the head of a grinning Faun, so stained and dust covered as to be scarcely recognizable. Beside the dust and grime the Faun was further disfigured by a crack but poorly patched, running entirely around the head, cleaving the right cheek and slanting downward through the mouth, and dashing squarely across the face, so that it splattered both eyes, was a hideous black ink spot.

Here at last was a clue to the mystery, but what it would lead to I could not even conjecture. Was it the shimmering black spot I had seen so often now, which darted across the Faun's face as I set it on the high library mantel between the two portraits? Perhaps it was only a passing shadow, for some one had crossed the threshold.

"Fo' awd, missy, honey, whar-bouts you git dem things?" said Aunt Cilla as she entered. "Better put 'em back whar dey come 'fom, honey, better put 'em back."

By his time the old woman had reached the fireplace, and stood looking up at the pictures.

"Fo' 'till Massa Jean," she said caressingly, "fo' 'till lamb."

"Who is the other boy, Aunt Cilla?" I asked.

"Dat Massa Pierre, missy, ol' Marster's older gran'son," the old woman answered hesitatingly.

"Jean's brother?" I asked.

"No, no, missy," she said quickly; "de 'till Jean's cousin."

"Tell me about them."

"Dere ain't much to tell, missy," she said slowly. "I wish dere was mo'. Dere ain't nothin' 'tall but jess dat de 'till boys uster to live here wid ol' marster, an' den when ol' marster died, he lev' everyting to Pierre an' po' 'till Jean nothin'."

"How long ago has that been?" I asked.

"Long ago," the old woman answered; "when de boys was 'till fellaers, soon arter dese pictures was painted."

"And what has become of the boys, Aunt Cilla?"

"De Lawd only knows, honey," she said earnestly. "I wish I did. Massa Pierre he went abroad, an' 'till Jean he's livin' dere yet. It's him you rent de house 'fom. He's got mo' houses here, too, whar de same-gate looks arter. But po' 'till Jean, Massa Jean, I wish I knowed whar he is, po' lamb. I been tryin' all dese years to fin' out. Ef I knowed—" The old woman paused abruptly.

"If you know, Aunt Cilla," I suggested, "What then?"

"Nothin', honey; nothin'," remonstrated the old woman hurriedly, and she left off carving little Jean's picture and left the room.

One day late in summer, with the little Amelia for company, I was walking along a narrow street above Canal, "up town," as we had come to call it, following the fashion of our neighbors. It was hot and sultry, with not a breath of air to stir the dusty leaves that hung limp on the languorous trees. Suddenly, on the hot pavement before me danced the black spot; then waving and skimming it rose and flashed before my eyes, blinding me. I staggered and would have fallen, but the little maid caught me.

A moment later I was on the cool inside of the little shop before which we had been passing and a kind-faced, blue-eyed, white haired old man was bending over me, feeling my pulse.

"You became faint, is it not, mademoiselle?" he asked gently.

"Yes; it is the heat, I think," said I.

"Ah, yes, the heat no doubt," he said with a smile, "and the malaria." He gave me something to drink, something that was very cool and acid, and by-and-by he called a cab and handed me into it as tenderly as if I had been a child. I glanced back at him as he stood in the little office door, and read on the window beside him the sign painted in gilt letters: "Doctor Jean."

weak, so Amelia brought some pillows and propped me up on the leather couch in the library because it was cooler there. Late in the afternoon when the sun crept round that way for a farewell touch, the little maid closed the blinds, drew back the red tapestry curtains and fanned me to sleep.

I must have dozed for some time, for suddenly I awoke with a sense of heaviness and oppression. The black spot flashed before my eyes, then shimmered and danced across the room till it rested like a scar, blood-red, across the face of the Faun, which in another moment fell to the floor with a loud crash.

I remembered to have screamed and covered my face with my hands, and then I must have been unconscious for a long time.

When I came to myself I was in my own room, and the white haired old man from the little up-town office was bending over me. My aunt was there, too, smiling lovingly at me as she came round again, and Aunt Cilla was turning my pillows while the little maid fanned me.

"You are much better, mademoiselle, is it not so?" said the old man in his soft French.

"Have I been very ill?" I asked.

"Yes, perhaps, mademoiselle."

"Long?"

"Three weeks."

"And the black spot—do you know about it?" I asked.

"You told me while you were ill," the old man answered. "But it has gone now."

"Tell me about it," I said.

"It is a long story and mademoiselle is weak," he said gently, "a story about two boys, Pierre and Jean, whose portraits you found in the little closet, and about a will that was hidden in the Faun's head and which was not found till that day when you were taken ill."

"I remember," I interrupted him, "the Faun's face was cleft with a blood red scar."

"The old man smiled.

"The Faun's head had been broken," he said, "and mended again with wax. The heat of the sun melted the wax and parted the old skin. There are red curtains to the library window, mademoiselle; doubtless that accounts for the blood-red scar as the cast fell in two before your excited gaze."

"But the black spot?" I persisted.

"I'd a told you 'bout it befo', missy, honey," said Aunt Cilla, "eg Massa Pierre hadn't hoodooed me. I knowed 'bout it, 'cause I was here 'fo' it started, an' I heard folks what 'till hee talk 'bout it eber since. But Massa Pierre he hoodooed me, an' I's skkered to tell. I dunno how come," the old woman went on, "but Massa Pierre was ol' Marster's favorite. Look lak Massa Jean was too gentle an' good fer to please him," and Aunt Cilla turned her eyes humbly to the old white haired man beside me in a way that set me thinking. "So ol' marster mek a will an' left everyting to Massa Pierre. Massa Pierre he was allus bol' an' reckless, an' one day, when I went up dere in de libry to tek ol' marster a cup o' coffee Massa Pierre was dere talkin' to him, an' axin' him fer money. An' somehow 'nuther ol' marster wouldn't let him have it, an' Massa Pierre got mad, an' jerk up de big lak bottle an' strike 'till Jean's head. It hit him side de head, den glances an' strike 'till Jean's face an' break it open. Den ol' marster rim up 'in his wrath an' he tell Massa Pierre dat he gwine disinherit him, an' tur 'im to leave de house. 'Twasn't long after dat 'fo' ol' marster died, an' de very day of de funeral, dese as dey's takin' de corpse out, Massa Pierre cum walkin' out er de libry, an' him been come sense de day marster ordered him off. He had a paper in his hand an' look like he didn't want de folks to see him. 'Cuse he pulled me in de libry an' shut de do', an' he rub a hoodoo bag on my face, an' gin me de paper an' tol' me ef I didn't stroy it my flesh would rot an' my bones would crumble. Den he rub me wid de hoodoo bag agin, an' when I came to myself, he's gone an' de folks was all gone to de funeral."

"So dat's when I crum de paper in de Faun's head an' got some wax an' stick it togedder an' put it away in de libry 'till I got Massa Pierre 'fom findin' it out. Presently de lawyers come an' foun' de will where ol' marster lev' everyting to Pierre, an' so he took it all an' went away, an' 'till Jean he was to have nothin'—de lawyers sent him off to his ma's kinfolks, an' ol' Massa Cilla what loved him so, she never heard no mo' 'fom him, po' lamb. And agin de old woman looked at this little man."

"And the paper in the Faun's head?" I asked.

"Was the second will," explained the old man, "leaving everyting to Jean."

"And you are Jean?" I said.

"And I am Jean," he answered gently, "but you must go to sleep now, mademoiselle."

A Feast of Kisses.

Halmagen, in Roumania, possesses a public festival which is probably unique in the world. It is a little town of about 1,000 inhabitants.

on the morning of its annual fair day, the population from about eighty villages come trooping in in swarms. To them go out all the young women, married or single, each bearing a small flower garlanded vessel of wine, and all attended by their godmothers. This last precaution is taken from motives of deference to Mrs. Grundy. As the visitors approach the young women offer to each a taste of wine and a kiss. This strange custom is supposed to have its origin in the escape of some Halmagen women, after being carried off by the Turks. As they neared their own homes, overcoming joy vented itself in embracing every neighborly face at sight—

Unequal Eyes and Features.

A person's eyes are out of line in two cases out of five, and one eye is stronger than the other in seven persons out of ten. The right is also, as a rule, higher than the left. Only one person in fifteen has perfect eyes, the largest percentage of defects prevailing among fair-haired people. The smallest vibration of sound can be distinguished better with one ear than with both. The nails of two fingers never grow with the same rapidity, that of the middle finger growing the fastest, while that of the thumb grows slowest. In fifty-four cases out of one hundred the left leg is shorter than the right.

TO STUDY HEREDITY.

Decline of English Birth Rate to be Investigated.

Eugenics is the name of a new science which Dr. Galton expounded to the Sociological Society recently, and which the society intends to systematize. Its first aim is the study of heredity, in order to arrive at laws which govern it. To determine how far the decline of the birth rate is indicative of national deterioration and what conditions produce "shriveling" families is also part of the work of the new science.

George Bernard Shaw sent a contribution to the discussion, which showed that his views on the marriage question are decidedly more than an age before his time.

"We have never deliberately called a human being into existence," he said, "but we have wiped out millions. We kill a Tibetan, regardless of expense, and in defiance of our religion, to clear the way to India for the Englishman; but we take no really scientific steps to secure that the Englishman, when he gets there, will be able to live up to our conception of his superiority."

"In spite of all the romances, men and women are amazingly independent in their attachments; they select their wives and husbands far more carefully than they select their partners and cooks. I am afraid we must make up our minds either to face a considerable shock to public opinion in this matter, or let ourselves alone."

Benjamin Kidd asked the society whether it wished to produce the perfect individual or a good social unit, and quoted the bees as a sample of good society, whose members were not perfect individually.

"H. G. Wells put forward rather a startling declaration. Many supposed criminals appear to me to be persons superior in many respects, in intelligence, initiative and originality, to the average judge. I will confess I have never known either. This was a surprise of Dr. Galton's proposal that criminals should not be allowed to perpetuate their race. He summed up his views of sociology in the doctrine that it is in the sterilization of failures that the possibility of an improvement of the human stock lies."

Fighting a Japs Diet.

The Japanese army, in campaigning in Asia, has as its bill of fare rice and dried fish. This is the uniform food. The rice is prepared in a manner that makes it most nutritious. It is first boiled until it is thick and glutinous. Next it is placed on a china slab, rolled out and cut into squares. The squares are then placed in the sun to dry and left until they become as hard as a ship biscuit and are ready to be stored.

A certain number of squares are allowed to each soldier a day.

The soldier prepares his meal by breaking up a square in boiling water and adding the dry fish. In a few minutes he has a thick soup which is full of nourishment.

If the fighting Japs cannot procure boiling water to cook his rice, he cooks as a biscuit.

WASHINGTON LETTER
(Special to the Journal.)

FATHER HOLLY ON GREGORIAN MUSIC.

Father Norman Holly, professor of church music at the Deaneville Seminary, near New York city, preached yesterday morning at the church of the Holy Trinity in Georgetown upon the changes in the church music decreed by Pope Pius X.

Father Holly has just returned from Rome, where he was fully instructed by the Pope in the details of the modifications. He is compiler of the pontifical commission for the Vatican edition of the liturgical books, being the only American among the thirty composers that commissioned.

"The 'Mota Propria' or document wherein the Pope made known his wishes regarding the changes," said Father Holly, "is not a mere expression of preference on the part of the Pontiff, but is the strict law of the church, and has been since its promulgation November 22, 1903. While all churches are expected to comply with its terms as soon as possible, in the case of country churches and missions, where it is impossible to get male substitutes for the present female choir, the present conditions will be allowed to continue until circumstances permit a change."

He then set out the specific changes ordered in the Mota Propria. First is the exclusion from the music of the mass, vespers, and benediction all music of operatic tendency, no matter what its form, and in the words of the Pope, "anything written in imitation of Italian opera."

THINKS IT NO INNOVATION.

"The Pope's action," said he, "is not an innovation, but is a return to the forms that prevailed for hundreds of years in all services of the church, and were not abandoned until the sixteenth century. The music to be used is the style known as the Gregorian chant, after Pope Gregory I, who lived in the beginning of the seventh century."

These chants reached their perfection in the tenth century, and for 500 years remained the exclusive type of church music. They are characterized by simplicity, dignity, and solemnity, and are far more fitting to the solemn character of the Catholic worship than the comparatively light and trivial operatic style that has crept in during the past few years.

Another modification is the exclusion of women from the choir. Only male voices will be permitted, and the Pope expresses a decided preference for boys in the treble parts rather than men with falsetto voices. To this end he suggests the establishment of schools for choir boys.

TO REVIVE CONSERVATIONAL SINGING.

A third is the introduction of conservational singing, which is a form of singing that should join in the suppression of band music, just as the choir is suppressed to do so. At benediction, sing will be expected to join even in those instances where by the choir which are integral parts of the service."

Still another change is the reduction of all musical instruments, except the organ, from the services. Especially will this rule be enforced in the case of brass instruments and those operated by percussion, like the cymbals and drum. Soft-toned instruments may be permitted, if applications are made to the bishop and the ordinary approval.

While the Pope will grant reasonable time for the necessary changes, it is a mistake to suppose that he will stand firmly by his position and smother all churches that can afford it to adopt the new system.

It may be added in this connection, that church music reform has made slow progress in Washington. Only a short time ago a full orchestra was used in one of our churches. The committee, appointed by the Cardinal to lay the necessary steps toward harmonizing the church music in the archdiocese with the Holy Father's recommendations and commands, has not yet made its report, as far as I could learn. At any rate, if it has made a report, nothing has been done. There are, however, a few churches here that have been successful in organizing Gregorian choirs, and the rest will no doubt follow in due time.

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ABOUT THE GREGORIAN

Without any knowledge of the Gregorian chant, after three hundred years of the Dublin 'Waddy' process, the community lost the famous Downside, and Bach, have been the possession of the Gregorian chant. The Lord Bishop of Ferns has issued a high class program, and a short time the future must contain the present condition, and many applications from provinces of the Gregorian chant have been received. The Benedictine choir in Ireland, including the choir of Westford, is conducting and is willing to do the Gregorian chant in the country. The choir of Westford, is conducting and is willing to do the Gregorian chant in the country. The choir of Westford, is conducting and is willing to do the Gregorian chant in the country.

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