

Major Grimston's Black Sheep

It was all Aunt Elizabeth's fault, for she wrote out to the guardian and gave him a highly colored list of my misdeeds. I know it was a highly colored one, for he told me so when he came home and saw for himself that I was not as black as she painted me, and besides that, I saw the letter afterward.

You see, she was an old maid, and perhaps she didn't understand what it was to be in my shoes. Anyway, we never, as the boys said, "pulled together" very well, and it was after that long, long list of all my sins which went out to India in the aunt's stiff Italian handwriting that I got the name of "Grimston's black sheep," and somehow it stuck to me. Give a dog a name, you know! For when my guardian—Major Gerard Grimston, V.C.—wrote home again he said:

"Give my love to the little— And then there followed the cleverest drawing you ever saw of a little coal black sheep, done in pen and ink in the letter.

The boys were awfully pleased with it, and they never called me anything else till he came home, when everything was changed in a most extraordinary way.

I lived with Aunt Elizabeth Jameson in the country, and it was only in the holidays that I enjoyed myself in the least—first of all, because the boys at the vicarage were at home then, and I was able to escape from my prison house and have a real good time with them, and besides that, I got away from lessons and practicing and everything else, which Aunt Elizabeth was so terribly particular about.

gold! It's awfully wet, though, you'll have your death of cold. Do you know you have grown uncommonly pretty, Ronnie, since you hair went up?"

There was something in his eyes which I had never seen there before, and I didn't feel altogether comfortable somehow. I gathered up my mass of wet hair and tucked it away under my battered hat.

"Well I can't stop to listen to your platitudes now, Tony," I said, "good night! Remember Major Grimston is coming to-morrow, so we shall all have to be on our best behavior."

"Specially the black sheep!" he shouted after me as I fled away through the little gate which led in to the stables.

I thought I should be able to scramble in unseen by the side door, sounded in my ears but, alas! just as I was making my way through the yard a terrible voice "Veronica!"

Then I knew that the worst had happened, for on raising my eyes I beheld the indignant countenance of Aunt Elizabeth.

To my horror there was a strange note in her—a man who bent a pair of half-amused half-astonished blue eyes upon me and my wild attire—a man with a bronzed face with a scar across his forehead a scar which somehow seemed familiar to me.

"And is this," he said, "the black sheep?"

"You!" I gasped, suddenly realizing that this was Major Grimston, V.C. "You! Why, you have come a day too soon!"

"And if I have, what matter?" he said, holding my hands and looking down at me with a quiver of a smile breaking across his nice face.

I looked to the needle with the result that I made my fingers horribly sore, and the work I did do was not much use to any one, but he was pleased.

It was so different trying to please him, and I began to think that perhaps I had been rather a black sheep. The boys came home for the holidays and Tony was not to go out to India after all. He had got some good home bullet, much to his joy.

The guardian hinted with me that season, and what times we had! It was simply splendid! He even took me to a big ball given by the duchess who lived near by and who was an old friend of his and asked me because she said she must see that capital little horsewoman. Nice of her, wasn't it? For Aunt Elizabeth is so stand off with the people about that she hardly ever goes anywhere.

I know I was awfully proud of Grimston, V.C., as they called him in his pink coat, with his broad shoulders above every one else in the room. I had a new silk frock for the occasion, all frillings and soft draperies, and I had lilies of the valley on my hair and on the dress I couldn't think who they came from till Tony dashed up to me, and I found out they came from him. I told the guardian, and he smiled a funny sort of smile and then turned away, as if he wasn't quite pleased with me.

I never shall forget that evening, because Tony asked me to be his wife. He was dreadfully in earnest about it, and I didn't know what to do, for I was always very fond of him, but as to marrying him—well, that was another matter altogether. I couldn't bear the thought of leaving the guardian yet. He had been so good to me—never scolded me or said unkind things as the others did when I had done anything more terrible than usual; but when he did speak—well, one couldn't help minding what he said and trying to do better.

It was a funny thing, and I never remember feeling that way about any one else.

"May I at least speak to Major Grimston?" he pleaded. "He'll perhaps put in a good word for me, Ronnie. Don't be hard on me, dear!"

"I'm not," I said, hastily, "but you know, Tony, dear, I don't think I could marry you, although I am fond of you!"

He laughed a miserable sort of laugh, and I was rather thankful when I saw my guardian making his way across the room to me.

"Do you know, Ronnie," he said, "that I have been home nearly four months?"

as he did for Miles Standish. What would you say if I were to answer you as Priscilla—

"As Priscilla did?" he cried. "Do you mean that, Ronnie? Will you say as she did, 'Why don't you speak for yourself?' Can you say it? O, child, if you only knew how I love you—how I have loved you all the time, only I thought you could never care for an old fossil like me, don't tremble so. I'm much older than you are, dear, but—will you stay with me always?"

He had me in his arms, and I was about to say happy I say much Aunt Elizabeth was terribly surprised, and I think she thought it was rather foolish from his point of view.

THE MAGI AND THE STAR The Rev. Joseph V. Tracy, D.D., of Boston, contributes to The Dolphin for December Part I of a striking paper, "The Magi and the Star." The object of this paper is to clear away to some extent the haze of ill-balanced surmise and unverified assertion which has clouded in about the personalities of the Wise Men and the brutal event of which their mission was the unintended occasion—the child murders of Herod the Great at Bethlehem. In this Dr. Tracy gives the benefit of his research among the best authorities in Scripture studies, Catholic and non-Catholic.

As to the profession and condition of the Wise Men, Dr. Tracy presents sound reasons for their classification with the Chaldean Magi, with whom, in the days of the Jewish captivity, the young prophet Daniel and his companions were closely associated. In the early days of the Church there was no thought of them as kings.

As to their identity, number and native land, it must be admitted that there is no authority for the names which pious legends have given them. The Fathers of the earliest times are silent about their number.

Father Le Canus bears witness that "from the earliest antiquity the paintings of the Catacombs represent indifferently two, three and four Magi offering to Jesus their gifts and their homage." Therefore the uncertainty that shrouds the question.

Continues Dr. Tracy The Wise Men of St. Matthew were, as we have seen, most probably members of the Magian order, strictly speaking. The native land of this caste or class, for centuries before as for centuries after Our Lord's birth, was Persia. This country at the beginning of our epoch was under the domination of Parthia, whose rulers recognized and respected the hierarchical position of the Magi. "Their own country," then, was above every other, Persia, an inference that is borne out by the traditions of the Syrian Church, the writings of the Greek Fathers, and by the early Christian paintings in the Catacombs, where we see them always robed in the costume of the people." (Fouard).

The Rationalists have made much of the absence of any mention of the slaughter of the innocents in the profane history of the time, and this has also troubled some Christians. "A careful analysis of the objection shows how groundless the nervous fear of the Christian is, and the futility of the Rationalistic objection. Other profane sources of information of Herod's reign than the Jew Josephus are most fragmentary and meagre, and in them no mention occurs of many important happenings. The silence of Josephus, on its side, admits of a very simple explanation. Synchphant of Rome (whether from selfish motives or because he saw the hopelessness of opposition to its power and thought to make the best of a hard lot for his people, it is hard to say), the supreme purpose of his life came to be, to read out of Jewish history whatever might be viewed as an abasement by his imperial patrons, and to read into it everything that could heighten the prestige of his race in the eyes of the conquerors. In pursuance of this end he dared to maintain that the war which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem was forced upon his people by the frenzy of some fanatic; and that the Messianic hope which, on account of the political claims attached to it, had proved the most powerful incentive to rebellion against Rome, was nothing more than "an ambiguous oracle" that, correctly interpreted, referred to Vespasian. "What did most elevate them in undertaking this war," he writes of the last effort of Jewish national life, "was an ambiguous oracle, that was found also in their sacred writings, how 'about that time, one from their own country should become governor of the habitable world.' The Jews took this prediction to belong to themselves in particular, and many of the Wise Men were thereby deceived in their determination. Now this oracle denoted the government of Vespasian, who was appointed governor of Judea."

What more natural, therefore, than that one who, following out a predetermined plan, suppressed everything Messianic that he could, would make no mention, even if he heard of them, of two such events as the visit of the Magi and the butchery at Bethlehem, the mere occurrence of which evidenced the existence, and emphasized the hold of the national expectation of deliverance from foreign oppression upon the people at large." Among the heads of people con-

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