

TERROR

Light Literature

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[For Terror]
A PICTURE.

On this wall were pictured quaintly,
(By whose hand I do not know)
Features sad, but very saintly,

Years ago.

Lustrous eye and drooping eyelid—
Lip that mocks the roses bloom—
Clustering hair, from sun and sky hid,
In my room.

Hidden within a corner shady,
Which no stranger's eye explores;
Was she sweetheart, wife or lady
Of Dolores?

I know not! a glance, a stanza,
To the picture on the wall!—
On her breast I pin a pansy,

That is all,
And that is all,
H. L. SPENCER.

THE MARKED ARM.

A CIRCUMSTANCE FROM REAL LIFE.

Click! In the dead of night a sharp sound wakened Mrs. Halifont. The room was dark. Not even a gleam of moon or starlight fell through the curtains of the windows. It was a very strange sound indeed, but she saw nothing, heard nothing more.

She sat up, leaning on her dimpled left elbow, and put out her right hand and touched her husband's shoulder. He lay upon his pillow sound asleep, and did not awake at her touch.

"It must have been a dream," said Mrs. Halifont; and her young head—"she was only the bride of a year—nestled down again closer to her husband's arm, and she slept again. Click!

This time the sound did not arouse Mrs. Halifont. It was her husband who awakened. He did not pause to listen, but grasped the revolver beneath his pillow and jumped out of bed at once. In an alcove in the next room stood a safe which contained money and valuables. It was not one of the wonderful new safes which defy fire and burglars, but an old one that had been in the family a long while. Mr. Halifont knew on the instant that some one was opening the safe.

A man of courage, who never hesitated in the hour of danger—one, too, who had a warm regard for his worldly possessions, Mr. Halifont strode at once into the room, where he knew housebreakers were at work, and running in

the dark against a powerful man, tackled him at once.

The light of a lantern flashed across the room. There were two more men. Three against one.

The sound of blows, struggling, and the report of a pistol aroused the young wife once more. Amidst her terror, she had the good sense to light the gas.

It shone upon a spectacle of horror. Her husband weltering in his blood, wrestling with a gigantic man, whose features were concealed by a mask of black crape; a man, the upper part of whose person was clothed only in a knitted woolen shirt, of some dark color, with sleeves that left his great arms bare. On the right one, the one which clutched Mr. Halifont's throat, was a red mark, or brand, a scar, a birthmark. It would have been impossible for Mrs. Halifont, even in a calmer moment, to tell what it was; but it indelibly impressed itself upon her mind, as she bravely cast herself into the struggle, and fought with all her might to drag the horrible hand from her husband's throat, screaming all the while for aid.

A blow a kick would have silenced her. The burglar must have known that, but there are very bad men who could not use violence towards a woman to save their own lives. This man could not. His companions had flown with their booty, help might arrive at any moment. With a given effort he wrenched himself from the clutch of his victim, and let go his throat and sped away. It was not too soon; assistance arrived, now that it was too late, but Mr. Halifont did not live to tell the story. He was mortally wounded. His young wife watched by his bedside until he breathed his last, then dropped beside it senseless.

For weeks she raved in wild delirium of the murderous hand, of the great muscular arm, with the scar upon it, and called upon them all to save her husband's life; but she was young and had a fine constitution. After a while her health returned, and at last her mind regained its equipoise.

She removed from the city and took up her abode in a lonely country place, with a favorite sister for a companion. She had resolved, as all widows who have loved their husbands do at first, to remain a widow forever. And indeed, though many men would have gladly tempted one young, beautiful and wealthy, to change her mind on this point, she seemed to care less for any one of them than for the kitten which purred upon her knee, or the little black and tan terrier which ran by her side along the garden paths. She was nineteen when her husband was murdered; at thirty-two she was still true to his memory.

Is any one forever true to another's memory out of a romance—any one who does not die young? In this, the lapsing summer of wo-

man's life, when she pretended to believe that autumn had actually come, temptation to inconsistency assailed her. For many years a fine house upon a neighboring estate had been empty, but now there came to take possession of it a gentleman not yet forty. A widower with plenty of money and no children, a handsome man, well built and stalwart, with magnificent black hair, and eyes that were like black diamonds, Spanish eyes—indeed he called himself a Spaniard, and his speech betrayed a foreign accent.

The dark eyes and the blue ones met, a few neighborly words exchanged, a call followed soon. Mrs. Halifont felt a new emotion creeping into her heart. She felt pleased and flattered by the stranger's admiration. Then she knew she was loved and rejoiced—and so discovered that she herself loved again.

At first she was angry with herself, then she wept over her inconstancy, but at last she yielded utterly. After all, it was the love that made her untrue—since she had loved she could never pride herself on being faithful again, and so she listened to the sweet words, that, despite herself, made her happy, and promised to marry Colonel Humphries.

When a widow does marry a second time, she generally contrives to make a fool of herself.

Mrs. Halifont had certainly not done so foolishly as some widows do. She had neither chosen a little boy, or a titled Italian without money enough to keep himself in macaroni. Her future husband was older than herself, and too rich to be suspected of any intention of being a fortune-hunter, but, after all, no one knew him. He came into the neighborhood without letters of introduction to any one, and whether he won his fortune by trade, or came to it by inheritance, remained a mystery.

There were those who shrugged their shoulders and declared that Mrs. Halifont would regret not having chosen some one of whom more was known—some retired merchant, some gentleman of fortune whose father had been known to her friends. Nothing, to be sure, could be said against this Spaniard or Cuban, with the English name; but who knew anything in his favor?

However, no one said this to Mrs. Halifont, and if any one had, words never changed a woman's fancy yet. Mrs. Halifont believed in Colonel Humphries and meant to marry him.

Indeed, the trousseau was prepared, the wedding fixed, all was ready, and Ida Halifont believed herself to be a very happy woman. She once more built castles in the air. Her old sorrow seemed to fade away in the distance. She was a girl again.

At last only twenty-four hours lay between her and her wedding day.

She was busy in her sewing room on this last