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...GAME in Season

MALINDA'S HOMECOMING

By NELLIE CRAVEY GILLMORE

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Malinda arrived at the decision abruptly; she would go home that night. Jack Cottrell's declaration of love the night before had, presumably, been the eye-opener to her position; in reality it was the climax of gradual disillusionment.

She had been living in a fictitious atmosphere that daily was growing more flat and intolerable to her sensitively constructed temperament. At first the open prominence and success she had achieved in her work had exhilarated her; now she was beginning to suffer the inevitable depression of the aftermath.

Yes, she would leave New York (and her career) that night. To be exact, she would take the seven o'clock train that would put her in her home town at five in the morning. At first she thought of telegraphing; then she decided to surprise them all. How would they receive her? She had deliberately gone against her family's wishes in this move, and refused stubbornly, during the months that followed, to listen to their persuasions to return home.

And Billy? Had she ceased altogether to occupy a place in his thoughts? For a time he had written to her regularly, until only an occasional line found its way to her address, and by and by did not come at all. Malinda sighed as she packed her trunk with trembling fingers, and every little while paused to dash the mist from her eyes.

Promptly at 8:45 she bought her ticket and boarded the train. She spent a restless night, and reached her destination more nervous and depressed than she cared to admit, even to herself. But as she quitted the stuffy car and walked swiftly down the avenue toward her old home, she felt the heaviness lift magically from her feet, and the buoyant blood begin to pulse through her veins.

Arondale was sparkling in the pale, pink dawn. On every side, the rose gardens were languid with bloom, and the verandas hung with curtains of wistaria. Malinda paused a second with her hand on the gate latch, a swarm of uncontrollable emotions suddenly upon her. But she calmed herself in a moment, and passed through into the wide, shell path that curled itself picturesquely among the flower-beds, up to a short flight of stone steps.

She ran quickly up to the door, and fumbled in her bag for her latch key. The high, paneled door yielded instantly, swinging back on noiseless hinges under her light touch.

Inside, everything looked familiar enough. The same highly polished floors gave back her image as she glanced down; there lay the identical rich old rugs of oriental patterns, scattered about among the antique chairs; the self-same masterpieces hung suspended from the frescoed walls; the stately stood just where it had stood on the night she went away.

With a deep-drawn breath that sounded surprisingly like a sigh of relief in her own ears, she threw herself into a chair to collect her tumultuous thoughts before proceeding to her own room.

After all, she reflected, it was a whole lot better to be at home—home, with her own people—than to be "sticking it out" alone among strangers, whatever the glory and profit. She was one of the few who had made the venture a winning one; yet had she been repaid for all she had missed in the intervening time? Strange she had been so utterly unconscious of the "aching void" until now in the flush of joy over her homecoming. And again she began to torment herself with wondering whether the triumphant results she was bringing home to her parents would in any measure compensate for her obstinacy.

Suddenly a whole regiment of clocks from here, there and everywhere began to strike six, and innumerable whistles shrieked the hour in various notes of warning.

Malinda started up in alarm, and, quietly crossing the length of the hallway, moved with half-hesitant steps up the deep, carved and carpeted stairway. The door of her sitting room stood ajar, and she entered noiselessly, depositing her bag and parasol on the familiar, spider legged table that held the student lamp.

For the moment a rush of feeling dimmed her eyes so that she could not see, but she pulled herself together quietly and glanced critically about the room, noting, with a little heart throb, that nothing, apparently, had been disturbed. Everything was just as she had left it—every picture and book. She bent toward the reading table with a swift rise and ebb of color. Her own photograph, the one she had given Billy Mowbray two years ago! He had, then, ceased to take even a friendly interest in her and gone so far as to send her picture back home—without a line to her. And then it came over her with a rush—why she had suddenly realized the emptiness of her life in New York; why she had come home and broken everything up at its very zenith. And now! A quick, mad desire to turn and slip away, out of the house, back to her work, took possession of her. Involuntarily, she picked up her parasol and bag and turned toward the door. But the sound of a footstep in the adjoining room, her bedroom, caused her to stop short.

The sight of a half-smoked cigar lying on the table caught her attention transiently. Her father! He must have cared very much indeed about his wayward girl, she mused, to be coming—perhaps living in her own rooms! A little sob caught in her throat, and she sank into a chair. It was out of the question to think of going back now after what she had discovered.

A second later the door at her back was pushed softly open and some one came in. Malinda bit her lips hard for self-mastery. Then a voice that sent the blood tingling to her temples spoke her name.

"Miss Lassiter!"

The girl was on her feet in an instant, pale, embarrassed, bewildered. She essayed to speak, but the word smothered on her lips.

"I'm awfully sorry," began Mowbray, apologetically, "but I thought you knew."

Malinda was regarding him dazedly, a horrible fear knocking at her heart. It had been almost a month since she had heard from home; could it be possible that—that anything had happened? The tears rushed blindingly to her eyes, and she staggered.

But Mowbray steadied her and pushed her gently back into the chair. "You mustn't," cried the girl, choking down a sob; "don't you see? I can't stay here—not another minute! But my mother and father—what has become of them?" There was tragic appeal in her voice and eyes.

"They are perfectly safe and well; I can assure you of that much, Miss Malinda. As soon as it is practicable I shall send you to them in my car. From present indications I presume your father's misfortune is unknown to you. It happens that he speculated heavily and lost; but not everything. However, it became necessary for this property to be disposed of. An almost despaired-of lift from fortune made me independent, and I bought it in."

When he finished talking Malinda was crying softly, the tears slipping in shining little rivers down her cheeks and dropping unheeded on her hands.

"When I learned that the place was for sale," proceeded Mowbray after a pause, "I resolved to have it at any cost. It seemed like—well, like being nearer to you, somehow, if you do not mind my saying it."

Malinda's tears ceased suddenly. "If it had to be anybody," she said in a low tone, "I would rather it were you."

Something in her voice, in her manner, and more than all in the determined avoidance of his eyes, made Mowbray suddenly bold. He bent swiftly and gathered her little cold hands into his warm palms.

"Malinda," he began eagerly, "let me tell you everything, now won't you? It isn't the time, nor the place, perhaps, conventionally speaking, but after what I've suffered the past year I can't let you get away from me again without hearing what I have to say. I think you must have known always, dear, that I loved you, didn't you? And you know, too, that it was because you were rich and I was poor that my lips were sealed. But I was working night and day, working as no man ever worked before—for none ever had so sweet and dear and precious an incentive—working to make myself worthy to ask you to be my wife."

He paused, out of breath from sheer emotion, the veins of his neck throbbing. In a second he went on: "In all probability your father will recover from this in a little while. They doubtless kept you in ignorance only to spare your anxiety, for your success had grown to be a matter of great pride to them and all of us. But somehow I knew that one day you would come back, and I was right, dear, in what I did."

Malinda felt the quick quivering and yielding of her fingers in his, and the next instant she had bent her cheeks upon them. No word was spoken.

"Will you come back home, sweetheart?" asked Mowbray after a long silence. "Our home?"

"I have come, Billy," she said, with a little tremulous inchant of her breath, "to stay."

College Community House.

Tenney Hall, a community house, has been opened at Smith's college. The object of this house is to help the poorer students by reducing their living expenses to the least possible amount. The students are to be housed and fed after the principles of a socialistic community. All expenses will be shared by the occupants of the hall, who will contribute just enough per capita to run the establishment. Each girl or group of girls in turn will be called on to do the housework and cooking so that the cost of servants may be avoided. The entire system will be under the supervision of the president of the college.

Invention of Machine Gun.

France is now in the midst of a controversy as to the identity of the man who invented machine guns. The invention has always been attributed to Gatling and Nordenfild, but it was recently asserted on some authority that the real inventor was a Japanese, in 1704, who was promptly killed for being too clever. It has now been put forward and hotly argued that what may be called French patents existed as far back as the fifteenth century, and some pieces in the Artillery museum are cited as evidence.

Children should be seen and not heard, but unfortunately all of that description are in the deaf and dumb asylums.

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