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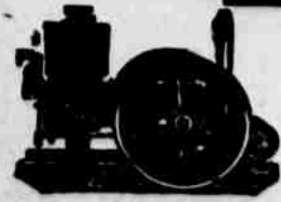
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**MOMENT OF REVENGE**

BY NELLIE CRAVEY GILLMORE.

Carlotta sat down weakly on the edge of a chair. She was pale and panting for breath.

"Derrick a make-believe, a cheat—a liar!" The words escaped her involuntarily. It was appalling, that the man she called her husband and worshiped with absolute trust and confidence for ten solid years should have betrayed her faith so grievously. The day had been oppressive and tiresome, doubtless for the very reason that Derrick had telephoned her to run up to Milwaukee for a few hours and could not return before midnight. So she had started out for a long walk to pass away the time, had gained only three squares when Derrick himself whizzed directly past her in a runabout—and sitting beside him, one of the most beautiful creatures she had ever seen.

She could not eat, so she walked absently out on the veranda. Presently one of the city clocks near struck ten, and her husband ran lightly up the steps, whistling merrily.

"By the way," she said, "your train must have gotten in quite two hours ahead of time."

"But I didn't go after all. The funniest thing happened. I got as far as the depot, where I met Chantry—just in from St. Louis. He was in a peck of trouble, and nothing would do but I must help him out. It was a tight fix and I concluded that I must stay and help him."

Lancaster bent suddenly and looked into her face, conscious for the first time of her determined coldness.

"What's the matter, dear? Are you ill?" She walked into the house. Lancaster, his face full of bewilderment, followed her immediately. He made several attempts to speak to her, but she evaded him emphatically. At breakfast the next morning she treated him with the same unapproachable iciness.

When he had left the house for his office Carlotta went into the library. A moment later the maid brought in a telegram.

"Expect me on the 11:40 train, Billy."

William Carrington had been with his regiment in the Philippines for half a score of years, and this was his first visit home. Billy was her only brother, and Carlotta had accorded him more than usual amount of sisterly devotion. Putting aside her grievance, she set merrily to work to prepare a room for him.

She went first into Derrick's dressing room, and saw that things were in order. While she was there, a sudden thought flashed into her ingenious brain. She could never, never be guilty of a really dishonorable act, but she would make Derrick pay, in part, for his treatment of her. It was barely probable that he would recognize her brother at once, after a dozen years. But a feeling of alarm made her stop suddenly, reconsidering. Then a smile of inspiration rippled over her face; she would unload the pistol!

When Carrington came, she was sitting on the veranda, waiting to welcome him. After a little, they went up to her boudoir for a "cozy chat" over old times.

Suddenly the gate clicked, and she heard his bounding step up the stairs. Now for her revenge! She rose abruptly and went over to Billy's chair and sat down in his lap, just as she used to do in the old days.

Lancaster went first to his own room, then turned, as usual, toward his wife's boudoir.

The sight that met his gaze froze the blood in his veins; and almost instantly transformed it to lava. He backed quickly into the adjoining room and laid his hand on the revolver lying on the table. Standing where he was, he aimed three deliberate shots at the culprit; the trigger clicked flatly, and no sound issued from the empty chambers.

Billy burst out laughing.

"Why, Derrick, old man! Surely you have not forgotten—"

"By the Eternal!" ejaculated Lancaster. "You!" Decidedly "got" for once in his life, he looked toward Carlotta. She stiffened and drew back from his threatened embrace.

"Not till you have exonerated yourself—if you can!—of driving down State street at full speed with—"

Her voice trailed to an ignominious standstill.

"So! Well, my dear, had you allowed me to finish my discourse last evening all would have been well. As I was trying to tell you, Chantry came up from St. Louis to marry a young lady who was to meet him here from Buffalo. Her train arrived half an hour after his, and it seemed that she was very much disconcerted; the old man was following—had got wind of the elopement and put detectives on Chantry's trail, and hers. His idea was to go on to the Palmer, have me meet Miss Preston and take her out to his aunt's at Woodbine. They expected to be married there at noon and—"

Carlotta swayed toward her husband. Her cheeks were crimson with the sudden flowering of roses, and her eyes glad and ashamed.

With a gesture of swift vehemence Lancaster opened his arms and Carlotta, smothering a sob of joy, collapsed limply into their eager embrace.

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Every chronic bore imagines that he is the most fascinating man in town.—Chicago News.

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