

LILA'S REVENGE.

BY MRS. McVEIGH MILLER.

CHAPTER I.

From New York Weekly.

He came down from the Capitol and boarded the electric car on Pennsylvania avenue, a handsome man of thirty-five, stately, but with the pallor of dissipation on his aristocratic features, and with clothing of the shabby genteel type.

The only other occupant, a middle aged man, with a soldierly air, started, looked twice, then smiled.

"Claude Merrill, is it not?" and they shook hands cordially.

"Major Graves, I'm indebted to your kind remembrance. It must be quite ten years since we met, and I thought I had altered beyond your recognition. I'm down on my luck, you see," flushing with the consciousness of the warm overcoat that kept off the cold of the winter day.

"Ten years! Why it must be twelve!" cried the soldier, ignoring the latter part of the speech. Wasn't it in the White Mountains I saw you last? That summer you were so sweet on the little dark eyed girl with the prisoned song-bird in her white throat. I forgot her name, but it is Mrs. Merrill now, of course?"

"No."
"Possible? So, then, it was only a flirtation! 'Pon honor, I thought it a genuine case of 'spoons,'" laughed Major Graves.

"Don't Major! I cannot bear to remember those old days!" and Claude Merrill sighed from the bottom of his heart.

"You don't mean to say she died?" in a tone of awe. "Yet it must be so. She would never have jilted you; she loved you too well."

"And I worshiped Lila Lake, Major Graves, but I never asked her to marry me."

"Did she marry some one else?"
"I don't know. I never heard what became of Lila, but I'm a bachelor still, and if I knew where to find her now, I'd beg her to forgive me and to share my altered fortunes, if she would."

"She is dead, perhaps," said the soldier.

"I have often feared so—died perhaps of a broken heart—poor little Lila," sighed Claude Merrill, dropping into pathos, and thinking of Tennyson's hero weeping over the grave of his broken hearted little love.

"There I put my face in the grass, wept, listened to my despair; I repent me of all I did speak a little, Ellen Adair!"

Major Graves began to look greatly interested, but the car stopped just then, to admit several more passengers, and Merrill continued, in a lower voice:

"I see you're curious, and I wouldn't mind telling you the whole story, only—I must leave you in a few minutes. I got off near the White House, to call on Senator Lorton, who lives up that way. I was at the Capitol to see him, but the doorkeeper told me he'd gone home to help his wife receive her guests in the entertainment she gives for the foreign legation this afternoon."

"Oh, yes, Lorton's from your State. Splendid speaker, and young, too, they say—little over thirty. Friend of yours, of course?"

"Do I look like a Senator's friend?" with a sarcastic glance downward at his shabby clothing. "No, I've never met Lorton, but I'm trying to secure his influence to get me some something under the Government—high toned position if possible—if not, anything! I'm ruined—have run through my fortune, and must work now, for I've an aged mother and an invalid brother to support, you see, and I can't afford to be particular."

"No," assented the soldier. "But I'm not sanguine of success," continued Merrill, gloomily. "I've no real claim on Lorton, only that I voted for him, and am from his State. Then, too, he must know my family—the highest in the county, and once the richest. But I may fail. How is it with you major? Have you any influence you could use for me?" anxiously.

"None at all, I'm sorry to say. You see Merrill, my politics and the President's are of a different complexion entirely, and that cuts me out of any influence. But come and join me in a little supper tonight, and tell me what luck you had with Lorton—you must!" handing Merrill his address.

"Well, then, I will, thank you major. But this is my corner. Au revoir."

"Who is he, major?" asked an acquaintance as Merrill left the car.

"Old acquaintance—Claude Merrill, from down South. Quite a grand one—down on his luck now, and seeking Government work."

"Oh, ah?—I wish him luck!" and the subject dropped, but the major looked forward impatiently to the little supper that night.

The old days had their pain and their charm for him, too; for, unknown to all, the major—it had been plain captain then—had secretly cherished on affection for the beautiful girl who had, as he said, "a song bird in her white throat."

But Claude Merrill had monopolized her so completely that every one else seemed quite out of the running.

"And he let her go after all, the fool," the major muttered to himself, as he impatiently awaited his guest that evening.

The door opened. Through the curling blue smoke of his cigar he saw Claude Merrill's face, pale, strangely excited.

"Congratulate me," he cried, in a strange voice.

"With all my heart," and they shook hands.

"Tell me all about it," cried the major.

"Well, I saw the Senator. He was very kind. I am successful beyond my hopes. I get a good berth in the Pension Department with a big salary."

"No wonder you look excited! Why, man alive, your face is pale, your eyes wild, as if you had seen a ghost."

"Perhaps I have, major."

He drew a deep breath as he lighted a cigar and threw back his handsome head. His gray eyes glittered strangely.

"The ghost I care most to hear about is Lila Lake," said the soldier. "You promised this afternoon, you know—"

"Yes, I will tell you all," said Merrill. "Hark to the wind, how it raves! A stormy night, my friend."

"Yes, yes; but it cannot penetrate here, and supper will be served presently. Let us have the story first. Why did you not marry Lila? A lover's quarrel?"

"No."
"Then why the duce—"
"Softly, major. Your excitement makes me suspicious."

"A fig for your suspicions! I loved Lila Lake, myself! There! I thought you meant to marry her, or I would have offered her my hand."

"I wish you had, Major Graves. I was a better match, perhaps, then, as money goes, but your heart was the truer. Listen, then, and despise me."

Outside the winter wind raved wildly, moaning along the broad avenues like a dirge. The two men gazed at each other eagerly.

"You know my family, Major Graves. The best blood ran in our veins, and were rich, too. I was a catch in those days."

"Yes."
"And when I fell in love with Lila Lake, who was summering in the White Mountains I never dreamed but that she was of my own rank in life. Young, lovely, gifted, she was my ideal, and you know I spared no pains to win her heart."

"And you succeeded," groaned the major.

"Yes, her beautiful dark eyes and every tone of her sweet voice when she spoke to me told me that I was so sure of her answer I was in no hurry to speak, and the day that she left to return to the city I told her I should follow her the next week, and asked permission to call on her at her home."

"Yes?"
"She looked at me with such a sweet and trusting smile, and gave me a card with her address. It was on such an obscure street that I looked at her in uncontrollable surprise."

"She flushed, and murmured, half proudly:
"I don't live on Beacon Hill, you see. I am only a working-girl, Mr. Merrill!"

"She a working-girl!—that incarnation of beauty, grace, and talent! The ground seemed to reel beneath my feet. I stared at her

almost offensively, I know, in my great surprise, for she drew herself up proudly, and said, in a stiff little voice:

"I ought to have told you all about myself before, but I did not think it was any one's business unless—unless—they were particularly interested in me—and you—you have been very—very—friendly!"

—he blushed warmly here—"ro I will be frank with you, and then—then—you can call or not, as you please when you return to the city."

"She told me then that she was an orphan. Poor little girl, only seventeen, and an orphan! She lived with a widowed aunt at the address she had given me. But they were poor, and Lila, dainty, beautiful Lila, with her refined manners and elegant bearing, worked in a store—sold gloves, and even tried them on miming fine ladies at a glove counter."

"And on Sundays I sing at the cathedral, and I get as much for my contralto in the choir, for one single day, as I do for my whole week in the great Boston store," she added, with a little air of pride.

"Indeed, only for the singing I never could have saved money to come to the mountains and rest. It is very tiresome at a glove counter you know. One's side gets to aching so badly from leaning over and trying on people's gloves."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Mr. Morgan's Bill.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Feb. 8.—Yesterday Mr. Morgan, the leading Democratic member of the Senate

Committee on Foreign Relations, held a short conference with Secretary Foster, and the bill introduced by Mr. Morgan to-day is the probable outcome of the conference. Mr. Morgan is an enthusiastic annexationist, and it will be seen that in his measure he provides not only for Hawaii, but for any similar condition that may arise in the future. The full text of the bill, which is a very short one, is as follows:

That whenever the United States shall acquire dominion over any foreign country or place, by treaty or annexation or otherwise, the President of the United States, with the advice and consent of the Senate may appoint a governor for the same and a legislative council, to consist of any number of persons not less than five nor more than 25, whose acts shall be subject to revision or repeal by Congress, and unless the treaty of annexation or cession shall otherwise provide, said Governor or council shall constitute and conduct all provisional Government for such country or place until Congress shall otherwise provide by law.

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