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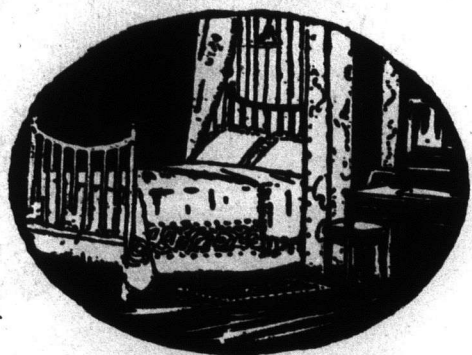
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BELFAST, IRELAND.

The Peacock Screen

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Then the man came back. I believe there is a saying that this feat is not possible. Still he came. His name was Douglas Hays, and Whiting brought him to call one Sunday afternoon.

Yvette, coming into the drawing-room, halted a very little in her slow, gracious step. Her eyes, when they first fell upon his face, widened and darkened. Perhaps a slow flush burned across her cheek. But she gave her hand unhesitatingly. Yvette had face.

"Yvette," said Whiting, "may I present Mr. Hays? Miss de la Fuente, Mr. Hays."

And Yvette smiled. "I think," she said, "that I remember Mr. Hays. The year I came out—was it not?"

Mr. Hays smiled in his turn, but somewhat stiffly. His surprise wrote itself almost imperceptibly upon a lean, sun-burned face. His eyes in that brown inscrutable setting were bright and blue like jewels, but the line of his mouth was hard.

"You've met before?" said Whiting in pleasant inquiry.

"Quite some time ago," the other man admitted, equally upon the surface of things. "It's good of you to remember, me—Miss de la Fuente." Only to Yvette's conscious ear did the slight hesitation suggest that he stumbled over the formal appellation.

"I never forget names," said Yvette indolently, and added as his eyes met hers, "but I have a dreadful memory—for faces. I am not sure I should have known."

"Possibly I've changed," he suggested. Whiting, from a corner of the davenport, put in an idle ear.

"Men of your type don't change a great deal, under, say fifty."

At which the two men crossed glances, courteously enough.

"Why, no," said Yvette, "you have not changed—as I remember you."

"Nor you," said Hays almost significantly.

"Mr. Hays," said Whiting, in the ensuing pause, "is a stranger in a strange land, Yvette. Never been here but once before. I've asked him to see 'Aida' with us to-morrow night."

"That will be charming," said Yvette. "It's very good of you," said Hays.

"You'll find the old Opera House interesting," said Whiting. He stood up slowly. "Think by any chance I'd find your mother in the library, Yvette? I've a message for her from my sister."

"All afternoon," said Yvette calmly, "she has been in the library with a volume of de Maupassant. One fancies she will be there still, Tony."

And Tony went out with a nod and a smile. The curtains fell to behind him.

Then the other man spoke. He leaned forward in his chair, elbows upon his knees, hands interlocked, and looked a little mockingly at his hostess.

"Hello, Yvette!" he said, as if he had

not seen her before. The words were flippant, almost with a touch of impertinence.

Yvette looked back at him straightly. Nevertheless, an uncontrollable excitement strained her cheeks.

"You have not changed," she said, "in the least. You were always daring."

"Dear me, yes!" he agreed. "Why not? The ladies like it, God bless 'em!" Then, very suddenly, he dropped his smiling pose.

"I had no idea," he told her, "that it was you I was to see. Whiting mentioned no names. You believe me?"

"You know him well?" asked Yvette. "I hadn't seen him in years until today. I knew him back East. He added curiously, "And you?"

"Oh!" said Hays. A little thereafter he smiled. "I congratulate him."

"Thank you," said Yvette.

Then the man looked into Yvette's eyes, and found them deep.

"Clean forgotten everything?" he suggested coolly.

"What was there to forget?" she asked him.

"Never dig in the ashes?" he hinted.

"Ashes are cold and uninteresting," said Yvette.

She smiled, too. When he stared a little rudely, she smiled the sweeter.

"It is almost impossible," she apologized, "to remember everything, across four years. I dare say there are a great many things of which you are thinking, that I have forgotten. One meets so many men when one is a debutante—"

"I should like to stake my reputation, of which I am excessively jealous," said Hays, "that you have not forgotten. There are some things which one does not forget, and die erste Liebe is one of them."

"Were you that?"

"I," said he, "was that—however unworthily."

Yvette shrugged.

When she did not speak the lines of Hays' face changed swiftly. A compelling youth spoke from his eyes, and the whimsical, lifting corners of his mouth. It was the look Yvette remembered.

"I've never changed," he said. "Believe me, Yvette—"

And at that juncture, rather appropriately, Whiting came back into the room.

"I found your mother," he said cheerfully, "and de Maupassant. Have you two revived your auld lang syne?"

Whiting's roses came next day upon the heels of Hays' less prodigal valley lilies.

Yvette wore the roses to the opera—and put the valley lilies in her room.

After the first act of "Aida," she questioned Whiting's pleasant hospitality abruptly.

"Tony—you know Mr. Hays well?"

Whiting shrugged. He drew his chair a little nearer, and lowered his voice.

"Fairly well, not intimately. Likable chap, eh? Something of a gallant cavalier. Where did you know him?"

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