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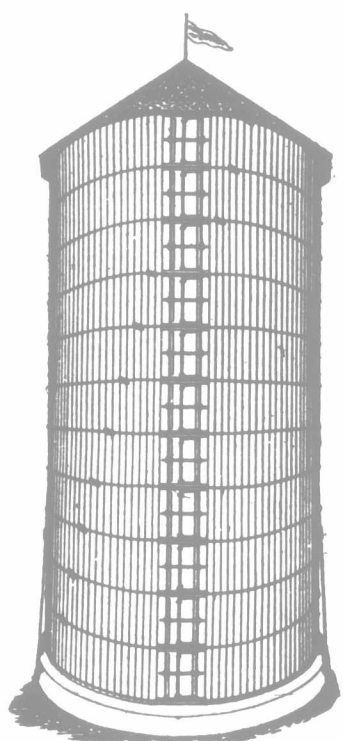
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pause. "It isn't in human nature to love a girl like you and then forget her so lightly. What was his name? Perhaps I have met him. We foreigners in the studios generally know something of each other, and I have been in Paris nearly eight years."

"His name was Vayne—Christopher Vayne," answered Evelyn.

They had reached the entrance doors of the Salon as she spoke, and the latter, as they swung to behind them seemed to take up and prolong the rhythm of the name.

"You know him?" questioned Evelyn, breathlessly, as she saw a startled change of expression cross her companion's face.

"I have heard of him," answered Nancy, recovering herself; "but I will tell you later, when—we have seen 'The Lady in Green and Gold.'"

She led the way straight to the end of the gallery as she spoke, and though inwardly surging with emotions that Evelyn had fondly imagined were laid aside long ago with an old green gown, she was forced to follow her friend through the crowded room in silence.

Nancy's look of startled surprise, however, had done its work, and in the few paces that it took to measure the length of the gallery memory rolled back the dead years from the sepulchre of the past, and Evelyn saw herself a school-girl again at Miss Jay's academy, and Christopher Vayne, a boy with a paint box, who taught the native rustics to see their fields and barns through magic glasses.

Even the stray bunches of forget-me-nots that Nancy had remembered—foolish language of the schoolgirl heart as they seemed in these later days—were very precious in this hour, with their resurrected visions of things and imaginings that, alas! the mills of time and happening had bruised so badly.

Foolish, foolish days! They yet came back to Evelyn now in the crowded rooms of the Salon like the scent of clover on a summer wind.

Even Miss Jay's academy and all the schoolgirl sentiment for which it stood crossed her vision again, and then passed away, and in its place Evelyn saw the schoolgirl, now a woman, with all the sentiment transmuted into the fine gold of love, and the boy a man of passion and burning ideals, while the forget-me-nots took other forms which neither poet nor painter, nor forget-me-not have ever yet made their own.

But, even as they reached the end of the gallery, these, too, passed away in their turn, and, of all that had gone before, nothing remained but a girl in a green gown, looking through an English hedge, down the road a man had once gone, on his way to Paris.

"This is it," said Nancy, suddenly, as they stopped in front of a large painting, before which a little crowd of people had silently gathered.

Evelyn looked up as her friend spoke, and for the moment was conscious of nothing but a shimmering mass of green and gold; then slowly from out the tangle of foliage a girl's eyes met her own, eyes almost lost in the strong shadow in which the face was painted, but whose spirit seemed to reach out to the other girl's troubled consciousness with a suggestion of infinite calm.

All the subdued noise and chatter seemed to have left this end of the room, and something of the strange spirit of serenity and tenderness which the painter had embodied in his ideal seemed to have communicated itself to the frivolous Parisians who stood there rapt and silent in front of his masterpiece.

And yet, like all the great things of art and life, the picture was simple.

Just a girl in a green gown, parting a tangle of green boughs as if to send yet one more lingering glance to some one who was going away, and for symbolism might have served as a flash of his youth to a man when he is tired and gray.

The luminous landscape in the background rendered the figure at a first glance little more than a silhouette, and the cool foreground was barely relieved here and there by a flash of sunlight that played through the green leaves like the gleam of a fairy's wing.

One gleaming touch of light caught the gold of the hair, and a few high lights defined the outline; otherwise the figure as it stood there, with its back to the dazzling sunlight and its face looking

straight out of the picture, was wrapped in shadow.

And out of the shadow, in turn, smiled the wonderful eyes—eyes suggesting vague questionings to Evelyn, and to which she began to feel she alone possessed the key.

"Don't you think it might be a portrait of yourself?" whispered Nancy, with a curious glance at her friend.

Evelyn did not answer. Strange answers to those vague questions began to float through her mind, and with it all there grew and grew a sense of familiarity with every detail of the picture.

The very boughs seemed like old familiar friends, and the girl who parted them? Ah! Now she saw the likeness Nancy spoke of. It was indeed herself—the old real self that Nancy had questioned her about less than an hour ago—the self Evelyn fancied had been laid aside long ago with an old green gown.

"Come," said Nancy, who was watching her friend closely, "and I will tell you the story of the man who painted 'The Lady in Green and Gold.'"

"He came to Paris six years ago, and he was English," she began abruptly, as they found a quiet corner and sat down. "He was young, he was brilliant, and before long became the shining light of Lemaire's. There was no future too great to prophesy for him, the master said, and if you add to this that he loved and was loved by a beautiful girl, and that every one was his friend, you will have a picture of this man as he was then. Now try to realize what it must have been to lose all this in less than a minute—just one little minute of time, and love and talent and even a future were swept away. It was at a railway station," Nancy went on quickly, for Evelyn's face was white with appeal, "and there was a great crowd."

"Many of the people were tipsy, for it had been a fete day, and in the rush that was made for the incoming train a mother and her two little children—oh! Evelyn, wasn't it awful?—were thrown down on the rails. It was all over in a moment, and nobody ever quite knew how he did it; but Christopher Vayne was on the platform, and—"

"Saved them. Oh! he saved them?" whispered Evelyn, passionately.

"Yes, he saved them, but his arm—the engine caught it," explained Nancy, with a shudder. "It was his right arm, and the doctors, when they saw it, said that he would never paint again. They amputated it and saved his life, but he was in the hospital for a long time," Nancy went on, after a pause, in which she dared not look at her companion's face, "and when he came out he was, as Dick puts it, 'absolutely broken and done for.' Dick, I forgot to tell you, was his friend and fellow-student at Lemaire's, and the first thing Mr. Vayne did when he came out of the hospital was to ask Dick to write a letter. He had nothing left, he said, for any woman to waste her years over; so Dick wrote the letter. It was to a girl in England, whose name Dick had forgotten; but in essence it told her that the one who sent it had changed his mind."

"Oh! don't, Nancy, don't!" pleaded Evelyn, piteously. "Just tell me what happened afterward."

"He left Paris and disappeared. No one—not even Dick—knew what became of him. It was supposed he had committed suicide in his despair, but for five years no trace of him was ever found. Then a week ago Paris was startled by 'The Lady in Green and Gold.'"

"You mean"—began Evelyn, a dawning comprehension in her eyes.

"He painted it with his left hand! That last day when he left Dick and went out into the dark alone he had nothing but a dim little hope for company. He took it away with him to a lonely village in the Ardennes, and there slowly but surely began to fan it into a flame. Little by little it grew as he worked on patiently through the lonely years—one—two—three—then four, then five, and he came back to Paris with 'The Lady in Green and Gold.'"

"Oh, splendid! Splendid!" repeated Evelyn, with shining eyes.

"Wasn't it? Just think of him away there in his lonely village, working on year after year till he mastered that unruly hand. Literally he had to become as a little child and begin life all over again. Ah, that was heroic, if you