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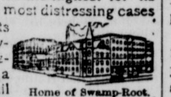

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For Sale by

THOMAS W. ELIASON,

CHESTERTOWN, MD

Their Green Gown.

By CLARISSA MACKIE.

Copyrighted, 1908, by Associated Literary Press.

"I'd love to go, Aunt Lily, but you know I haven't a decent thing to wear." Mildred looked wistfully at the invitation in her hand.

Miss Weston thoughtfully turned a worn little ring on her slim finger as she surveyed her pretty niece.

They looked very much alike, Miss Lily and young Mildred, only the aunt was slender to thinness and her once golden hair had faded to ashen blond, but her eyes were as beautiful and long lashed and full of depth and sweetness as they had been fifteen years ago, and her skin was as fair and her lips were as red as Mildred's.

"The check book tells a sorry tale, dear," she said at length, "but perhaps I can help you out of my magic clothes press."

"Aunt Lily! I can't take anything more from you. You have given me your embroidered muslin and the pink silk—and I have worn them out. Don't tempt me!" The girl covered her ears and closed her eyes tightly.

"Don't be foolish, Mildred," protested Miss Weston. "I want you to go to the Patterson dance, and you must have a new gown. My green tissue can be altered and will make you a sweet frock. Come to my room and try it on."

Reluctantly Mildred followed her aunt to the pretty front room where the older woman spent much of her time.

The furniture was rather old fashioned, but of fine quality, for it had

"I HAVE SEEN YOUR GOWN BEFORE, MISS LANE."

been purchased in the days before Lily Weston had lost most of her fortune.

Miss Weston spread the green gown on the bed and surveyed it with a strange yearning in her eyes. It was of fine silken tissue in a tender leaf green and embroidered here and there with a tiny golden flower.

A pair of green slippers with gold buckles and green stockings were tucked in one corner of the box from which the gown had been produced.

"It is lovely, Aunt Lily! I suppose you have worn it to dances too."

"I wore it more than once, Mildred, and had the happiest times of my life. Now you must wear it, and I hope you will be equally happy." She bent and kissed the girl tenderly, and Mildred felt a warm drop on her cheek, but when she looked at her aunt Miss Weston was smiling.

"Come," she said blithely, "get your workbasket."

Mildred danced with tireless energy at the Patterson ball. The green gown was vastly becoming to her fair beauty, and she had never looked more charming.

Lester Stearns had succumbed to her loveliness and in the fragrant coolness of the conservatory he asked Mildred to marry him. She was radiant with happiness when Mrs. Patterson approached her, followed by a tall stranger.

"Mildred, dear, Captain Gray has requested an introduction to 'the girl in the green gown!' Miss Lane—Captain Gray! Now, Mr. Stearns, you may take me into the supper room." With a little nod she was gone with the reluctant lover.

Mildred looked at her new acquaintance, and decided at once that she would like him. He was a man in the prime of life, with a brown, rugged face that told of an out of door life. Strength and kindliness were in his gray eyes and vigor in his large, well muscled frame.

"I have seen your gown before, Miss Lane," said Captain Gray abruptly.

"You must be mistaken," laughed Mildred. "I have never worn it until this evening."

"It was worn by another girl," he said thoughtfully, "a girl who looked just as you do. It is fifteen years ago that I saw her last, and she wore the green gown."

"It must have been Aunt Lily," said Mildred constrainedly.

"It was Lily Weston—then."

"It is Lily Weston now," said Mildred, "and she is just as sweet and lovely now as she ever was, I am sure!"

"I am sure of that, too," he remarked gravely.

"I had no frock to wear tonight, and I wanted to come so badly, and Aunt Lily brought this out of her treasure chest and fixed it for me. I know it was the dearest thing she owned, yet she lent it to me."

"She was always unselfish and loyal to the core, and I could never understand"— He paused and looked at her strangely, wistfully.

"What?" asked Mildred warmly. She suspected a romance in the past of sweet Aunt Lily.

"I am a simple sailorman, Miss Lane, and I confess to not understand the ways of women. I was a lieutenant in the navy when I met Lily Weston and fell in love with her. We became engaged and were to be married. This green gown I brought to her from China, and she wore it several times while I was on leave. We had a foolish quarrel one night, my last night ashore. It was a matter of trifling jealousy on my part, and before the evening was over I had seen my folly. I wrote on a programme that I was repentant and asked her to meet me in a certain cozy nook on the stairs." He paused and sighed.

"And?" suggested Mildred.

"She was surrounded by admirers, and as I had no other opportunity I slipped the programme into her hand as we passed each other while dancing."

"And then?"

"She never came. I waited until after midnight, and then when I had seen her depart with her friends I left. I have never seen her since." Captain Gray's voice shook a little as he concluded his story.

"How utterly ridiculous!" exclaimed Mildred. "Why, it seems to me if you truly loved each other you would not have quarreled, and yet you have never forgotten Aunt Lil, and she—why, it is your picture that is on her dressing table—a young officer in a cap and uniform!"

"You are sure?" The captain bent over her eagerly.

"Positive. Come and see us tomorrow, Captain Gray. I—am sure she will be glad to see you," cried Mildred impulsively, holding out her hand.

"Thank you, I will," he said resolutely.

* * * * * * *

When she reached home Mildred flew straight to her aunt's chamber, where Miss Weston sat reading and awaiting the girl's return.

"Aunt Lily," cried Mildred excitedly, "have you kept the ball programme you had the last night you wore this gown?"

Miss Weston stared a moment, and then her eyes grew said and retrospective. "I—believe so, dear," she said at last, "but please do not ask to see it!"

"I must, auntie. Please show it to me."

Without a word Miss Weston opened a small sandalwood box on her dressing table, and from it she took a yellowed lace handkerchief, a withered bunch of roses, a little green and gold fan and lastly a dance card, crumpled and faded.

"Here," she said, holding it out in her hand.

"Look at it, Aunt Lily, and see if there is not a message written on it—a plea for forgiveness by some one you cared for long ago." Mildred's voice quivered with excitement.

Miss Lily read and grew white. "What is it?" she stammered pitifully. "I don't understand."

Mildred took her in her loving young arms and told the story, and then and there Lily Weston laid bare her heart to the girl. It had been a miserable mistake—she had never read the message penciled on the programme, and she had grieved all the years.

"He is coming tomorrow, Aunt Lily," whispered Mildred, and then she tiptoed away, radiant in the knowledge that her aunt had at last attained the happiness that had lain so long within her reach, quite unexpected.

"It is all due to the green gown," whispered Captain Gray to his long lost sweetheart when he came the next day.

Down in the garden Lester Stearns was repeating his words of love to Mildred. "I think it was due to the green gown that I really knew," he murmured tenderly.

No Private Interview.

"Could I have a few minutes' private conversation with you?" he asked as he stood at the open door of a lawyer's office.

"Can't you speak right out from where you are?" asked the lawyer in reply after looking the man over.

"I'd rather make a private matter of it."

"What is the nature of your business?"

"Confidential—strictly private and confidential, sir."

"Well, I have no time to grant you a private interview. If you have anything to say, you can let her go right here. Now, what is it?"

"I—I wanted the loan of a quarter, sir," stammered the man.

"Oh, you did! And you wanted a private interview to ask me that?"

"Yes, sir. I knew that would hurt both our feelings if I were refused in public—yours because you couldn't afford to loan me the money and mine because I couldn't get it. Can you grant my request, sir?"

"No, sir."

"And does it hurt you feelings?"

"Not a bit. You are mistaken on that point."

"And my feelings are the only ones hurt?"

"Yours alone."

"Just so," said the man as he bowed and backed out. "I beg your pardon. I was mistaken. You have the money and no feelings, and I have the feelings and no money. Impassable chasm; no use in trying to bridge. Good day!" —Washington Post.

Getting Ready.

"What is your son doing this year?"

"Fitting himself for college."

"In what school?"

"Oh, in the sporting goods store and in the pipe section."

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