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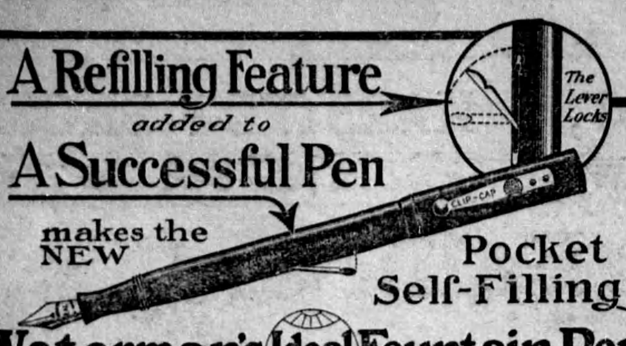


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# The Green Seal

By CHARLES EDMONDS WALK

Author of "The Silver Blade," "The Paternoster Ruby," "The Time Lock," etc.

CHAPTER X.

I was given no time to wonder at Struber's revelation. Almost as he spoke a sound of hurrying footsteps in the hall directed my attention to the outer door. I made haste to open it, and was not surprised to see the chief of police himself, and with him a uniformed policeman and two men whom I rightly took to be plain-clothes men. All were frankly eager and curious. Even their dull and jaded professional interest was quickened, I daresay, by the outre end of Steve Willets, murderer, train-robber, burglar, escaped convict, and the devil only knows what else. From a long, satisfying survey of the still figure by the safe they presently turned to a more businesslike and purposeful examination of the inner office and the door opening from it into the hall through which the entry had been made, all the while listening with close attention while Struber recounted his and my experiences. Then the chief asked a question or two and turned to regard me quizzically.

"Looks as though you and Heinie would have to split the reward," said he. "It's Steve all right."

At my uncontrollable expression and gesture of repugnance he laughed and added: "Oh, you don't have to take it. Heinie won't kick."

"It's all his," I assured him.

At this juncture Coroner Harris arrived; and as Struber had foretold, this phase of the proceedings was unimportant. Harris was an earnest young chap, manifestly ignorant of the ring, without knowledge of whose history the mark in the dead man's palm bore no significance for him, and no question was asked that revealed an inclination to draw Miss Fox into the affair.

The inquest which I attended the next afternoon — Monday — brought nothing further to light, determined nothing that was not obvious to everybody; though by that time, the sensational aspects of the affair having been duly aired by the local press, a gaping mob was in attendance.

The newspapers on Monday, by the way, intuitively hit upon the one feature of the matter that I was desirous of keeping secret—for the present, at any rate—which was the story of Charley Yen's death and my ownership of the ring. Trust a newspaper chap not to forget a thing of that sort! An avid horde of reporters cornered me Sunday evening at my club, and there was no wriggling out of that corner. Thus it was that the inquest showed how Willets's death was in the nature of merited retribution overtaking the evildoer when least expected. Struber bared his yellow teeth at me in a knowing grin when Coroner Harris accepted this interpretation and let it go at that without trying to dig deeper.

And Monday's papers also brought out another phase, one that the police had discussed before leaving my office Sunday, to-wit: the circumstance of Willets's disguise. Had he, ever since his escape from San Quentin, been living in one or another of the state's larger Chinese colonies, going and coming at will under the very noses of the police, who were so energetically hunting for him? The details of importance as bearing upon something of vital moment that happened later.

If such were the case, certain details of interest were suggested. Willets must have possessed not only an intimate knowledge of the language and an extraordinary ability to act the role, but also he must have had their friendship and good will to an astonishing degree. Or else he was greatly feared by them. In appearance and physique he was not unfitted for the part without the necessity of much make-up, being naturally of a swarthy complexion, yet not an undersized man by any means.

As was expected, however, inquiries pursued in Chinatown were fruitless. In all colonies of that nationality of any considerable size there is at least one man, sometimes two or more in open warfare with one another, who exercises literally the power of life and death over his particular following of compatriots; and by means of a perfect though underground system of espionage he keeps well informed of all that happens within his bailiwick; nothing escapes him.

At this time one Lao Wing Fu enjoyed the distinction of being the autocrat of Chinatown. He was a wealthy, intelligent, highly educated member of the race, possessing a command of English and a knowledge of its literary traditions that might have shamed many an American born citizen making more pretensions in the same respect. It was a matter of policy with him to keep on good terms with the police. Between them there was a tacit working agreement which undoubtedly was advantageous to both sides, though the police were well aware that Lao Wing Fu observed his part with a true Oriental sense of obligation. The police also were not blind to the fact that sometimes they were instruments of the crafty Chinaman's revenge, or of punishment; but if a criminal were delivered into their power with the evidence assuring conviction ready made, what mattered Lao Wing Fu's motives?

It was also a part of his policy never to accept or share in a monetary reward, the police being allowed to appropriate the whole; so it is not remarkable that he should have enjoyed a definite degree of immunity and protection.

On the whole the understanding was perhaps beneficial to the public weal, because the Chinese are a secretive, clannish race, difficult for the Caucasian mind to understand, and Lao Wing Fu was shrewd and circumspect, modest and retiring, never in any way embarrassing the powers that be by presuming upon their indulgence.

When, therefore, this bland, impassive Celestial disclaimed all knowledge of Steve Willets's masquerade, Struber knew it was useless to press his inquiries further in this direction.

"Why he should cover that cold-blooded crook," Struber remarked to me a day or two later, "sure gets my goat. The trail leads right across Alameda Street to Chinatown and then goes straight up in the air. The Chink bulls on our force ain't worth a seagull tamale when the big glass-crash says stand mum, and the different kinds of ways they don't savvy the ins and outs of this thing is sure interesting to listen to. Seein' though that we've got Willetts safely planted it don't make any particular difference. You can take it from me—a white man togged like Steve was can't walk a block in L. A. without every Chink in town knowing it by night. I don't care how good an actor he might be."

Struber had a pretty clear idea of what Kipling meant by "West is West, and East is East."

So much for Lao Wing Fu. He commands our attention, because we are to meet him upon an intimate footing by and by.

I have gone ahead of my story somewhat to dispose of the foregoing factors. It will be recalled that I was to meet Detective Struber at the Citrus Exchange Bank at ten o'clock Monday morning. I was at my office considerably before nine, and both Stub and Miss Fox were ahead of me. Stub, I have somehow gathered the idea, was uniformly on hand at eight o'clock.

"There was a brace of Chinks here to see you," he informed me as soon as I entered. "They didn't wait long."

"What did they want?" I asked. I had little traffic with the Chinese population, and I couldn't imagine why I had been favored with such a call."

"Dunno. Told 'em when you ought to be here and they sat down. I went downstairs a minute; when I got back they'd beat it."

I turned inquiringly to Miss Fox. She shook her head. "They had come and gone before I arrived," said she.

Dismissing the matter from my mind as being of no consequence, I passed on into the inner room to get the wrapping which had been around the diamond parcel, and also the ivory box which had contained the diamond. The former I found without difficulty in the drawer where I had placed it. It was my conviction that the small box had been with it; but it was not there now. I rapidly rummaged through the remaining drawers, but without bringing to light the missing box.

Puzzled, I leaned back in my swivel-chair and tried to remember where I had put the thing—in this particular drawer, I was positive. I recalled wrapping the diamond in the tissue-paper the preceding Monday; I recalled my hesitation over entrusting it to my office safe, and next my final determination to carry the gem home with me and to place the jade ring in its box in the safe instead. All this I had done, and then I closed and locked the safe door, an operation broken in upon by Miss Fox's cry of alarm upon reading the account of Steve Willets's escape.

After a while I had returned to my desk, and it was then I put the wrapping-paper in the drawer. Had I done likewise with the little box? In the back of my head I believed that I had, but would not have sworn to it; the momentary diversion caused by Miss Fox's agitation dimmed my recollection of the occasion.

Once again I went through all my desk drawers, and this time I came upon the box containing the ring. The two boxes being exactly duplicates, this one could very well be made to serve my purpose, but unless I wanted to twist the truth, not without stirring up a lot of unlicensed speculation that would involve Miss Fox, which was not a part of my purpose this morning. The detail could be dispensed with; I could do without the box; and the one containing the ring I buried once more under the bale of old papers where I had concealed it the day before.

I had not removed my hat, and now I went into the outer office and paused by Miss Fox's desk, where she was arranging a bouquet of hyacinths in the Japanese vase. Their sweet odor filled the room, a fragrant incense to her loveliness.

"How would you like to take a walk this morning?" I asked.

She flashed a look up at me from beneath her long lashes.

"Business or pleasure?" she returned lightly.

"Why," I replied, "if I am obliged to go alone it will be purely business—not of a particularly pleasant sort either. If you accompany me the occasion will be all pleasure, yet the business will be attended to, too. Untangle that if you can."

"After that," she said demurely, "I could hardly refuse."

She bestowed upon the hyacinths a parting pat which produced the final miracle of perfect arrangement, got her hat and jacket, and turned to her desk once more to gather up notebook and pencils.

"You won't need them," I told her.

She stood a moment hesitating. "Oh," doubtfully, "then it really is to be a holiday jaunt."

"Does that possibility chill your eagerness to go?" I complained, for I was sensitive to all her moods.

A tinge of color stole to her cheeks, and she lowered her gaze.

"No," she said softly.

Instead of the notebook and pencils she took up her gloves, and by putting them on seemed to stamp the occasion with her approval and to recognize in it a certain degree of formality. Together we called forth to the accomplishment of an errand that had now been shorn of its every disagreeable feature.

Then suddenly I was struck all of a heap. I must have sworn aloud, for Miss Fox turned to me with a look of shocked disapproval. It occurred to me that the lovely girl beside me had heard nothing of yesterday's tragedy; the shock the news would be to her, and that it had fallen upon me to impart it, filled me with dismay.

All along it had been so impossible to associate her, even in the remotest manner, with the notorious bandit, that until this moment the thought had never entered my head that the latest victim of the green jade seal was—her father. Her father—dying so wretchedly! Gracious Heaven, how dreadful!

I stole a glance at her. The color was still vivid in her cheeks, notwithstanding the reproof and surprise in the fine eyes, they sparkled with animation: clearly, just now she was not thinking of her wretched father at all. Her spirits were high, she glowed with life and pleased anticipation of what the morning's adventure might bring forth. I trembled before her beauty; the charm that radiated from her enveloped me like a glorified mist—and at the same time my heart sank.

She turned to me abruptly. "Oh, Mr. Ferris! Isn't it good just to be alive on a morning like this!"

No wonder I had sworn. Imagine me having to crush her with sorrow and shame and melancholy!

We had not walked far until I stopped in perplexity. She glanced at me and must have detected the trouble in my face, for she asked quickly: "What's the matter?"

I tried to smile—and I wanted to weep. "If you don't mind, I believe I'd rather ride than walk this lovely morning," I said.

She was at a loss to account for my strange humors, but I could not tell her here upon the street; and as for my office, it was the last place in the world wherein to break the intelligence. Fine mornings are so common in Los Angeles that we who belong here, alas! grow indifferent to them; but I was determined she should have all the encouragement and support that this perfect day could give. So I signalled a taxi, which she entered without question or demur.

There is no need of enlarging a painful episode. Miss Fox had not yet seen the morning papers. And I had to tell her the whole story. She was shocked, of course, inexpressibly shocked; her feelings were torn and bruised and lacerated until I felt like a brute. As soon as she had steadied a bit she said to me:

"It would be foolish to pretend that I have any feeling of grief, as if a loved one were gone, for I haven't—not a bit. It's the awful horror of it—the idea that that man—my father—should have been what he was and should have come to such an end; the thought of what I will have to look back to as long as I live. While he was alive there was a hope—a possibility—that his heart would be softened; that he would try to redeem the past as far as could be done by living a better, cleaner life, even if it must be lived in prison. But to be blotted out as he was—"

A shudder convulsed her; words failed her. I took her hand in mine and tried with all my might to conjure up an assuasive word; but there was little enough, in all conscience, that one might offer by way of comforting her. Her distress wrung my heart; she knew that, and I fondly hoped that thereby her burden of woe was in a measure lightened.

"Believe me," I said, gently patting the little gloved hand, "it is all for the best; try to look at it in that way. He will soon be forgotten, and your sense must tell you that that is for the best too. You and he had nothing in common; your lives were far apart; the very nature of your own honest, useful mode of life will train you to forget. I know. The law of compensation works alike in all things. The load will be lessened for you."

"God knows I want to forget," she said bitterly.

## *Gen. Kuropatkin Restored to Favor*

Russian Army leader disgraced for alleged incompetence in the Russo-Japanese War, now said to be in command of Grenadier Corps.

I had given the chauffeur ample scope to air his knowledge of Los Angeles streets, by the vague direction, "Anywhere—just so we are back by ten;" and during the talk that held Miss Fox and me so deeply engrossed he had whirled us down to Seventh Street and across to where that thoroughfare becomes Wilshire Boulevard. Here he slowed down and inquired: "Will you have time to run out to Arnaz and come back by way of Pico Street?"

Under his scrutiny I released the hand that had until now remained passively in mine. The machine came to a stop, and I addressed Miss Fox.

"I suppose I had better take you home."

But to my surprise she objected to this proposal. "I would rather not," she said with some embarrassment. "I would rather be"—she paused and the color rushed to her cheeks—"I prefer to go on just as though nothing had happened," she finished shyly. "It is best."

My heart leaped. I jerked out my watch. To the chauffeur: "Turn north," I curtly directed. "We'll just about have time to get back by way of Sunset Boulevard." And we swung round into Vermont Avenue.

I gazed at the girl beside me until she turned her troubled eyes to mine. I bent down to her.

"Did you mean," I asked breathlessly, "that you would rather be with me?"

No trace of her momentary shyness and confusion remained.

"Yes," she said.

(To be continued.)

## COWFIGHTS IN SWITZERLAND.

### Last Remnants of a Custom That Is Rapidly Disappearing.

Much has been written about the bloody bullfights in Spain and southern France, but the cowfights of Canton Wallis, or Vallais, as the French Swiss call it, in Switzerland, although quainter and more interesting,—besides being far more humane,—have already been heard of beyond the borders of the tiny state.

The favorite arena is the grazing ground of Phion, near Sitten, or Sion. The time is the beginning of July, when the cattle go to the upper Alpine pastures; and there are sometimes 250 cows in the procession. The winner, known as the "Queen," marches during the whole year at the head of the line, and the herd to which she belongs has throughout the season an undisputed right to the richest and sweetest grass.

The little Walliser cow of the Eringer valley is a dark brown or black animal, of an excitable temperament, with sharp-pointed horns and gleaming eyes. She climbs like a goat, and well knows how to find her way over the steep and rocky pastures of Wallis, which are often seven or eight thousand feet above sea level.

To excite the cow to the utmost, the herdsman frequently gives her during the fortnight before the battle a daily ration of bread steeped in wine; but a regulation that is strictly enforced forbids the owner to interfere during the fight either by word or deed.

The journey up the mountain side is usually over about eleven o'clock in the morning, and before noon all the cows are assembled on the battlefield, where the pastor of the neighboring village pronounces a blessing over them. The field is then cleared and the arena marked off.

Each owner fastens on the horns of his cows a sort of thimble with an open top, and to prevent serious accidents he files off to the level of the metal the sharp points that protrude. The peasant girls, in picturesque dresses and four-cornered, broad-ribboned hats, group themselves in the back-ground, and the crowd of excited male spectators—a certain number of tourists are always found among them—forms into a half circle. The cows, lowing and tearing up the earth with their horns, run to the middle of the ring. They regard one another with threatening looks, and apparently measure the strength and weakness of their antagonists. They paw the ground, and finally rush upon one another, thrusting vigorously with their horns. One by one the weaker and less eager fighters withdraw humiliated from the strife, and the number of competitors is soon reduced to about thirty.

The fighting consists chiefly in concussions of head and horns—not in efforts to inflict wounds on the vulnerable parts of the body. The conqueror presses forward; the worsted cow sinks on its knees, rises again, rapidly yields ground, and finally, with backward springs, gives up its place in the combat, and is driven out of the arena. Even insignificant wounds are unusual, and a veterinary is seldom present.

The interest centres in the queen of the previous year. Foaming at the mouth, her hide shining with perspiration, she bellows forth defiance, and seeks fresh encounters. Several cows come near, apparently accepting her challenge, hesitate a moment, and then draw back.

The culmination of the excitement is, naturally, the strife between two queens; the struggle of a former victor for the restoration of her rights, or the dethroning of the last year's queen by a new champion.

To the student of animal psychology these cow-fights offer a curious problem. The cow is the emblem of stolidity and stupidity; yet in the cow-fights of Canton Wallis the cow appears as an exceedingly spirited and ambitious animal. She remembers the battle of the preceding year. She feels the joy of victory and the shame of defeat. She gauges her own strength, and accepts or refuses a challenge according to the dictates of her judgment. She knows that to-day it concerns her to strive for the victory, although all the rest of the year her owner will energetically repress any belligerent inclinations on her part. She has an obscure apprehension of the fact that the assembled spectators expect something from her. She comprehends the rules of the game.

The cow-fights in Wallis are among the last remnants of the original and picturesque folk customs that are rapidly disappearing, and will probably soon be discontinued and forgotten.

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# PRACTICAL FARMING

### Replanting the Woodlot.

Special effort should be made to secure the reproduction of the trees removed from the farm woodlot during the cutting season just passed. In many cases sprouts are counted on for this reproduction and for certain purposes such as fuel, posts, and shelter, they can be relied upon to furnish the desired material. When this second crop is cut in its turn, however, the old stumps have lost most, if not all of their vitality and unless some vigorous seedlings have grown up in the meantime, the value of the woodlot is greatly impaired. Since it requires many years to build up a woodlot which has been allowed to run out, it is a wise plan to insure the production of some good healthy seeding trees each year by planting species in the openings created by the winters cutting.

During early life the sprouts, because of the advantage of a previously established root system, will outstrip the little seedlings and may deprive them of the requisite amount of light for good growth. Therefore, in the first thinning or cutting of the sprouts some special consideration should be shown the young seedlings.

The method of planting the seeds will depend upon the species used. Walnut, hickory and all of the oaks can be planted about two inches deep in a hole made with a dibble or spud. The smaller seeds such as red and white elm, maple and ash may be planted by removing the coarser litter from a small spot and putting on a few seeds, covering them very lightly with fine soil and a little litter.

In many cases it is better to raise or buy seedlings of the species having small seeds and transplant them in the desired location.

### Age of Horses.

The age of a horse is most easily determined by the cups in the teeth. At four years, the horse has his permanent front teeth. At five, there are deep black cavities in the centres of all lower nippers. At six, these cavities disappear in the two centre lower nippers. Two more lose their cavities for each year to the eighth, and then the two centre upper nippers lose their cavities, and each year two more, until at the age of ten the teeth are all smooth or retain only a small black speck. After the age of ten the length of the teeth and tushes must be judged—even then the age can be determined only approximately.

### Souring and Cover Crops.

Never turn the clover or other crop under without first thoroughly cutting up with a disc harrow, as the material ploughed under in a layer seriously interferes with the capillary action of the moisture in the soil. The effects of turning under in a layer are what is sometimes called souring the soil with green manuring crops. Double disc the cover crop two or three times with a sharp disc harrow before ploughing; plough well by taking a narrow furrow and edging rather than inverting the furrow; then double disc the land again rather deeply, and no injurious effect will result, however large the growth may be.

### Profits on the Farm.

You will not be likely to have a balance on the right side of your farm ledger if such a scene as this may be found on your farm. After a farmer has paid his good money for farm equipment it is wasteful to leave it out to take the weather wherever it was last used. The winter months is not a bad time to construct sheds and shelves for the equipment. There should be a place for everything on the farm and everything should be kept in its place when not in use.

### Just So.

"I saw a professor of magic remove thirty yards of ribbon, fourteen plumes and seven buckles from a hat."

"Enough material to trim it nicely," commented the party of the feminine part.

### A Wise Kid.

"Johnny, do you know that your mother has been looking for you?" asked the neighbor next door.

"Sure I do," replied Johnny; "that's the reason she can't find me!"

Miss Gossip—"Mrs. Fewyears tells me she wasn't 16 when she was married." Miss Telltale—"Well, I should say she wasn't. She was 29."

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