The Green Seal

By CHARLES EDMONDS WALK

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

CHAPTER XIV.—(Cont'd).

"I was not wide awake enough to wonder at such an unusual occurrence. A lighted lamp stood on the dresser, and, I remember, it was the presence of the lamp that convinced me next morning I hadn't been dreaming. Almost right away I drifted back to sleep; but not before I heard Aunt Lois whisper in a distressed tone: 'The Kiss of the Silent Death—God protect this poor, helpless, innocent baby!'

"That episode remains the most vivid of my early childhood. What could she have meant by those strange words? Did she refer to the mark? I never forgot them.

"Aunt Lois, you must understand, is naturally nervous and excitable, and as young as I was I made allowances for her disposition, without knowing why I did so. Children, you know, seem to understand such things intuitively. But as I grew older—I mean mature enough to speculate upon it—I used often to wonder what she meant by 'The Kiss of the Silent Death.' So one day I asked her."

She fell silent and sat for a while meditating. I did not interrupt, but I was thinking that Mrs. Fox must hold the key to the riddle, and if my tact and diplomacy could do it, it was up to me to persuade her to unbosom herself. Lois looked toward me again and took up the thread of her narrative.

"Poor, dear Aunt Lois. When I told her I had caught her crying over me in the middle of the night her confusion and distress of mind scared me so that I commenced howling at the top of my voice. She caught me up in her arms, declaring that she had meant only to mother me; that in the same way she often had tiptoed in to where I slept to see that everything was all right with me, and that I must run along and play and think no more about it.

"Her betrayal of her heart-hunger on that occasion made me for the first time realize keenly that I had no mother but her—that she had no child but me. I never got any fuller explanation, and after that, my curiosity, childlike, dwindled and finally died away.

"So it came about that after a while the details got to seem like a dream, and when I thought of the episode at all it was as such. But you must see, as I do now, how impossible such a dream would be for a child who had never heard of death.

"I understand better now. She was looking at my mark—my indelible badge of infamy—of murder—of God knows what!" She clutched at her bosom as if she would pluck the stain from her. "I can almost feel the horrible thing burning into my flesh! No wonder it filled her with pity and compassion!"

From whatever angle one might view it, it was in all conscience a monstrous thing that anybody could have been so inhuman as thus to brand and disfigure a helpless, innocent child with a mark of such abominable associations. It was much as if she rested under the stigma of a crime of which she was not only blameless but ignorant. And yet, had it not been put there, her very existence would have been snuffed out years and years before. This I was to learn later.

"The Kiss of the Silent Death"—verily, the touch of the accursed ring was patly described in this euphemistic phrase.

I had just reached a decision that I must see and talk with Aunt Lois and try to convince her that it was now her duty to tell what she knew; that the mystery hanging over her niece and foster child had assumed a phase that threatened her with nameless injury unless the handicap of silence were removed so that friends who were ready to help her might be armed with knowledge, when a sudden clamor of the telephone made Lois and me jump. Such was our nervous tension at the moment.

I grabbed up the instrument and clapped the receiver to my ear, and immediately recognized Struber's voice.

"That you, Mr. Ferris?" he asked. "This is Struber. Say, if you can let Miss Fox off she'd better come home right away. Don't scare her; her aunt's all right; but something was pulled off before I got here and the old lady's gone bug. Get me?"

I became aware that Miss Fox, white-lipped, tense with anxiety, was bending over me. She too had heard.

"Ask him," she hoarsely demand-"what has happened."

"Look here, Struber—Miss Fox heard you. You must make it more convincing that nothing serious has happened to her aunt."

He broke in quickly.

"Take my word for it, Mr. Ferris, Mrs. Fox is all right. She's simply been scared stiff, and her own kin can do more for her than a flock of dippy neighbors. I don't want to say too much over the phone."

I hung up and turned to the anxious girl.

"We can believe him," said I with conviction. "Goodness only knows what it is, but no harm has come to your aunt. I'll go with you."

This proposal seeming to be agreeable, I telephoned for a taxi, and by the time Miss Fox had donned hat, coat and gloves, and we had descended to the ground floor, it was waiting for us.

She gave the chauffeur the street and number, and I promised him he would lose nothing by forgetting speed ordnances. We turned into First Street and had proceeded perhaps half a block when Miss Fox looked back. My mind at the moment was to full to attach any importance to the act, and I thought no more of it until a minute or two had elapsed, during which she cast two more uneasy glances backward—as we mounted the viaduct across the Santa Fe tracks, and again as we climbed the acclivity along whose crest run Boyle and Pleasant Avenues.

The last time she mechanically clutched my arm.

"Look!" she exclaimed under her breath. "It is they!"

"They?" I dully echoed, rousing myself from my preoccupation. "Who?"

Her reply was another excited command.

"Look—quick!"

I turned barely in time to glimpse a long, speedy looking machine. It was about midway in the straight, level expanse of street stretching behind us, from the base of the hill to the viaduct, and hitting it up at a lively clip. They didn't mean to lose us, it was manifest, in the maze of winding streets of which we might now take advantage if we were so minded. But I had no intention of trying to elude them.

For there was no mistaking the car or its two muffled, be-goggled, unrecognizable occupants.

It was the gray automobile.

CHAPTER XV.

Precisely at what point the gray automobile abandoned its pursuit of us I did not observe; doubtless after its occupants, whoever they were, had satisfied themselves as to our destination. It was more than likely, too, that the low shadowy car proceeded to an advantageous position nearby, from which our departure might be noted and the chase once more resumed. I could not say. I was too much taken up with the cottage Miss Fox indicated as being her aunt's home.

Houses that people live in, to some extent at least, have a personality of their own, and they and their immediate surroundings reflect the characters of their tenants.

I saw a small cottage—a very small cottage, I might say, for it could not have owned more than five or six rooms—fairly smothered beneath a welter of gold of ophir roses whose myriad blossoms shone like newly minted money. The thick, tangled growth had clambered clear across the roof and back to the ground again on the farther side. All along the street the sidewalk was shaded by fine old pepper trees, and where you turned into the walk leading up to the cottage two uncommonly lofty Lombardy poplars stood sentinel-like, forming a noble gateway. There was a well-kept lawn bordered by every conceivable variety of rose, most of which were in bloom. There were, too, beds of other flowers and some agreeably arranged shrubbery—loquats, guavas, oleanders, privet and the like.

But I was most forcibly impressed, first, by the homelike air that hung about the place, and, next, by its detachment, as if it had withdrawn from the rest of the world to pursue a placid, unruffled existence independent of the quiet neighborhood environment.

Was it an atmosphere of secretiveness? Perhaps not. But the thought came to me.

It seemed impossible that any jarring note from the outside alien world could intrude here to shatter the serenity; yet, if Struber were to be believed, this was exactly what had happened.

Our machine stopped, and I was given a fresh demonstration of the detective's adaptability to his calling, which this time was his facility in effacing himself from observation. I did not see him at all until he detached himself from the trunk of one of the poplars against which manifestly he had been leaning, and approached to open the tonneau door.

Before my companion had time to voice her anxiety, he announced: "The old lady's all right now. She's alone." And at that moment I became aware of a covert surveillance from every house along the street. Truly, curiosity must have been rampant.

Miss Fox hastened up the narrow gravel walk and disappeared in the house. I lingered to hear the particulars from Struber.

That worthy also watched the graceful form until the screen door closed and hid it. There was a queer expression on his narrow features, and his crooked beak wrinkled with excess of inward emotion when he turned again to me. Pushing the fingers of one hand up along the back of his head and tilting his derby forward, he ruffled his hair in perplexity.

"Don't ast me," he forestalled my first question. "Nobody knows what's happened—only as I've doped it out. Wait till Miss Fox has had time to talk to her aunt, then we'll know whether I'm right or not. She's quiet enough now. I persuaded the neighbors to go home. Fussy lot, believe me. Nothing ever happened on this street before."

"What have you 'doped' out?" I was impatient to know. "And why should Mrs. Fox have been 'scared stiff,' as you expressed it? What scared her?"

"Dunno what scared her. It might a-been worse than that if I hadn't come just when I did. You see, the inside door was open; just the screen was shut. I knocked a couple o' times and didn't raise anybody. Then I walked in—in a hurry. I smelt chloroform."

"Chloroform!" I ejaculated in amazement.

"Yep, chloroform. I had a hunch I'd better not waste any more time knocking. And I wasn't any too soon, either. Found the old lady on the dining-room floor with a towel over her face. Towel was soaked with the stuff. I got rid of the towel; nobody but me got wise to the chloroform."

I could only stare in wonder and wait for him to continue.

"I was just going to hunt a doctor when she come to and see me. Then she went from one fit to another, so I rustled the neighbors and phoned you to get the young lady home."

It all seemed such an incredible proceeding that I could only slowly realize Struber's words. In this eminently respectable and quiet residence neighborhood the occurrence of violence of any description was inconceivable. The time was broad day, the immediate setting the most modest and quiet of all the houses, the particular victim of all others the one least easy to reconcile with the apparent outrage.

"Was it robbery?—burglary?" I asked.

"Well, you might call it both," Struber slowly admitted. "Somebody wanted something of the old lady's mighty bad to take such a chance. What's she got that's worth the risk? I've mixed with all sorts of crooks in my time, but never crossed ropes with one that'd a-pulled off a stunt like this unless he knew it'd put him on Easy Street the rest of his life. I'm waiting to find out what they was after, and whether or not they copped it."

We moved together up to the porch, where Miss Fox almost immediately joined us. Her aunt was lying down, easy now except for a nausea that was the natural after effect of the drug. In a low voice she suggested that we go over to a couple of lawn seats. She was deeply troubled.

"Mr. Struber, do you know what happened?" she asked as soon as she sat down in the bench facing the one Struber and I chose.

"Only what I've guessed, Miss Fox," he replied. "I was hoping your aunt could tell us about it."

The girl shook her head decisively.

"She can't tell much. She was busy in the kitchen when she was attracted by a slight noise at the front of the house. At first she paid no attention to it, but when it was repeated she came to the front door to investigate. All she saw was what she took to be a Chinese laundry man's wagon standing at the curb. It wasn't right in front of the house, but down a way, toward Mrs. Falkner's, next door.

"But you know the Chinese habit of walking right into one's house without knocking. She thought of this and turned to look into the front room; then she was seized from behind. Before she could scream or struggle, she says, a cloth was pressed over her face, she was dragged back away from the door, and knew nothing more until she came to and saw a strange man stooping over her. She never saw her assailant at all."

"That was me she saw," Struber explained. "The cloth was a towel and it was soaked with chloroform."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed the girl. Struber pursued:

"I made a quick search of the house before the neighbors got here, but it didn't look torn up any. Of course I couldn't tell if anything was missing. Then your aunt didn't see anybody?"

Miss Fox again shook her head. "No, nobody at all, except you. She was not given an opportunity. But I have discovered what they were after—what they took."

We waited expectantly.

"The little ivory box," she added soberly, her eyes on Struber; "the one you came here to see.

(To be continued.)

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Unnecessary Exertion.

Pullman Porter—Next stop is yo' station, sah. Shall I brush yo' off now?

Morton Morose—No; it is not necessary. When the train stops I'll step off.

No Nightly Visits.

Burglar (just acquitted, to his lawyer)—I will drop in soon and see you.

Lawyer—Very good; but in the daytime, please.

Half-a-guinea is the daily pay of quartermaster in the leading British cavalry regiments.

Up to date, at least 1,700 men of the London Police Force are serving with the Navy and Army, whilst a further thousand have been drafted out of the metropolis for the protection of dockyards and military stations in the provinces.

The Farm

A Few Pointers for Dairymen.

A poor milker never gets the best results from a cow. A nervous animal resents the bungling touch of a rough or inexperienced hand.

Why not encourage the little peculiarities of the well-bred dairy cow. She is simply a big milking machine and if her whims will produce more milk let her have them.

If we are going to select a bull we would select the one with the worst temper, all other things being equal. Because temper and vigor show male characteristics which should not be ignored.

A gentle sleepy bull that can be managed without a nose ring does not as a rule produce the best calves.

It is downright cruelty to keep a bull in a small enclosure in the summer, a victim to heat and flies—but many men who claim to be good dairymen, do this very thing.

How could we expect a cow to keep in good health and give pure milk when she is confined in foul and ill-ventilated quarters, winter or summer.

A pair of horse-clippers can be bought for $1.50 and the use of these once a month on the cow's flanks and udder will make it an easy matter to keep them clean.

How many cows on the average farm give milk containing more than twenty per cent. of butter-fat? Perhaps not more than one out of every 100.

The separator should never be allowed in the barn or near it.

A half dozen window sash, glazed, will make a dust-proof box in which the dairy vessels can be sunned and kept absolutely clean.

Any enterprising farmer living near a town of 5,000 or more can sell every pound of his butter at full retail prices or little above, the year round.

For several years we have bought farm butter from the same farmer, at two cents above retail market price, every month in the year and glad to get it.

Never attempt to keep summer butter for early fall prices, because it will not keep.

All milk should be aerated as soon as taken from the cow. This can be done by passing it through the saparator, but it is not as good as a device which divides the milk into many fine streams and then allows it to flow over a wide surface in thin sheets with plenty of ice to keep the surface cool.

If nothing better can be had, milk may be aerated by placing the cans in a trough of cold water and dipping the milk with a long-handled dipper and pouring it back into the can until it is thoroughly cool.

Never cover milk while warm, in the cans, as it will produce a musty odor.

The milker who will thump a cow for squirming under the attack of flies, ought to be hoisted out of the barn on the toe of the dairyman's boots.

Need not expect cows to keep up the milk flow during the tail-end of summer, unless you have plenty of soiling crops to feed. Dead grass does not produce milk.

The Value of Cow Peas.

They can be grown as far north as Dept corn can be grown and on land so poor that clover would not catch at all. They are called "the poor man's clover," because you can get such quick results. A crop of cow peas can be grown in three months, and it will be fully equal to a two years' crop of clover. You can sow the peas any time from May to August and can get a good big crop following an early crop taken off in June. Plowed under after the first frost, they will leave the ground in elegant shape for a crop next year. The seed costs about $2.50 per bushel and should be drilled in at the rate of one half bushel per acre.

Ration for Chicks.

A simple grain mixture is corn, wheat, and oats, a little more corn as the weather gets colder and less during the summer days. A little buckwheat and sunflower seed added to this mixture during fall and winter months is beneficial. Green foods, such as alfalfa, cabbage, sprouted oats or mangles should be fed freely. Fresh green cut bone or feed scraps and charcoal should also be supplied at all seasons of the year.

Inventors' Fortunes.

It is not always the greatest invention that brings the largest financial reward. Roller skates are said to have brought their inventor $3,000,000, while nearly half a million was realized by the man who first devised boot laces. The inventor of the safety pin, who took the idea from a reproduction of a Pompeiian cameo, made $10,000,000. On the other hand, Charles Beurseul, who discovered and described the principle of the telephone in 1855, died poor; Michaux, the inventor of the bicycle, ended his days in the utmost penury, and Frederic Sauvage, who is credited with the invention of the screw propellor, was imprisoned and died bankrupt and insane.

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GERMANY'S IGNOBLE BACK-DOWN.

By Chas. M. Bice, Denver, Col.

After much "crimination and recrimination" between the governments of the U. S. and that of Germany, the Kaiser has at last yielded to the American demand respecting submarine depredations.

Some people call this a diplomatic victory for the Yankee nation; but others are equally insistent that Germany has yielded only because "the waters were made too hot" for her by the activity of the British naval force. Whatever may be the real cause of Germany's acceding to America's demand, the result is equally glorious and reassuring. Regret, disavowal and indemnity are all conceded by Germany, with the assurance that the Teuton will hareafter be good. We are assured that the Kaiser's order to his submarines has been made so drastically stringent that the recurrence of incidents similar to the Arabic and Lusitania cases is considered out of the question.

At the outset of the negotiations Germany asserted her right in unmistakable terms to continue her original submarine policy, and stated in its first note that "the German Government is unable to acknowledge any obligation to grant indemnity in the matter, even if the commander of the submarine should have been mistaken as to the aggressive intentions of the Arabic." But, in the note a month or so later, we were informed by Count Bernstorff, that Germany is willing to negotiate concerning the amount of the indemnity to be paid for the disaster, and this is expressly stated, whether the submarine commander was convinced or not, that the Arabic intended to ram the submarine; and Germany has gracefully yielded to the testimony of the British officers to the contrary. The Imperial government, in the same note, assured America that "the attack of the submarine was undertaken against the instructions issued to the commander," and that "the Government disavows the act and has notified the commander, Schneider, accordingly."

We have some recollection of a "war zone" decree, and the liberal dimensions thereof, as set by the German naval officials, but all this is now a mere reminiscence, it seems, and we are to hear no more about it.

This is a signal and surprising victory for the whole world, for it fixes the limits of submarine activity for all time, and demonstrates how illy founded were Mr. Bryan's direful apprehensions that found expression in his resignation as a cabinet officer. What a chance for immortal glory his evil genius induced him to throw away!

This is not merely an American victory. In principle the U. S. has been defending the rights of all neutrals, and all will rejoice over the success of American diplomacy.

The result will make it easier to broaden and strengthen the code of international rights when the present war is ended. Force has bowed to rectitude, and morality has dominated power once more. President Wilson's statesmanship, inflexible will and lofty courage have again triumphed, and though harassed at home by the impatient, and heckled by Teutonic sympathizers, he deserves and will receive the adoration of a grateful people.

Certain papers in this country that stand for America's preparedness, however, are disposed to belittle the achievement, and claim, if there is a triumph, it is naval rather than diplomatic, for, say they, "Germany has abandoned her submarine warfare against merchant shipping and the rights of neutrals because the British fleet has made the submarine question a dead issue."

What about the Lusitania? demand these papers. That question is still unsettled.

But Germany's answer in the case of the Arabic, and the concessions therein made, and principles enunciated, should easily apply to the Lusitania when the time comes to settle that dispute. It is enough to know that the weapon she relied upon has been struck from her hand, and that ends it.

The President got nearly everything he demended, bit by bit, and the American public kept its head and backed the President. The war-tooters and peace-at-any-price fawners, and the angry hyphenated citizens have had their day in court. The public has had enough of them. Whether the President "muddled through" in the diplomatic controversy, as some claim, or not, we have escaped the danger of being dragged into an ignominious war.

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