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The Green Seal

By CHARLES EDMONDS WALK

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

CHAPTER XVII.—(Cont'd).

"I'm trying to persuade Miss Fox of the wonderful merits of my Imperial Chinese remedy for removing birthmarks, tattoo-marks, and—"

"I heard you," I interrupted. "Who sent you here?"

"Bless you, sir, nobody sent me. For a limited time I'm giving the good people of Los Angeles an opportunity to avail themselves of this great boon, a secret that's been one o' the most prized possessions of the royal family o' China for countless centuries, and now, as a result o' the recent rev'lution, given to the public for the first time. Miss Fox happened to be next on my list."

"What made you imagine that Miss Fox might require, or be persuaded into attempting your peculiar specialty?"

The woman turned a broad sidewise glance upon Lois with the obvious intent of establishing a footing of confidence between them, from which I was just as patently to be excluded. But the girl met the overture stonily.

"There's a good many things about a young lady," the woman simpered, "that a gentleman scarcely could know."

"But this one particular thing," I pressed her uncompromisingly, "the circumstance that brought you here, you do know; is that it? How did you come by this knowledge?"

"Lord, no," she vehemently disclaimed. "I don't know of any disfigurements; how could I? I only learn by inquiring—unless they're on a body's face or hands."

It was plain that nothing was to be gained by interrogating her further, so I in turn reminded her, as civilly as I could, that canvassing was strictly prohibited in the building.

"Besides," I added, "I must request you not to interrupt Miss Fox at her work." And to bring the matter definitely to an end, with an air that could neither be mistaken or ignored, I went over and opened the door into the hall.

The woman's manner instantly changed. Her fat face flushed darkly, and in the covert glance she gave me as she swept past into the hall she could not hide a flash of malevolence. She said harshly, under her breath:

"Maybe before very long you'll be sorry for butting in. You'll know then I was only trying to do the young lady a good turn."

It was on the tip of my tongue to retort that I could not believe her motives to be disinterested; but I remained silent, and contented myself with closing the door behind her.

"Stub," I then said, "make the round of this floor and learn whether she really did call on any one else."

If, however, she were indeed some sort of emissary or spy, our opponents were too shrewd to be caught by so careless an oversight. As a matter of fact, the woman had made at least a perfunctory call at nearly every office on my floor, and had succeeded in disposing of some of her wares; but on his account Stub extended his investigation to the floor below, and the result confirmed my suspicions—the woman had not been seen there at all. The elevator must have brought her directly to the floor where my offices were situated.

So here, it seemed to me, was another veiled menace; I could not imagine in what shape it might possibly be realized; but some inner prompting nevertheless warned me of danger. Frankly, the episode worried as well as puzzled me, for how could this uncouth woman have possessed knowledge of Lois Fox's tattoo-mark, and why should she or anybody have any concern about removing it?

I glanced at Miss Fox. She was very pale and her pretty face wore a troubled expression. She looked at me strangely, as if filled with nameless terrors.

"Here, here," I chided, "this won't do. You mustn't let a mere coincidence like that disturb you."

She continued to regard me a moment before responding. "If I could be sure that it was only a coincidence," she said in a strained, dropped voice. "You are not."

Which was true: I was not. But I added:

"You know, I am on my guard, that is all. I am taking no more chances, after my own decidedly unpleasant experience. Be cautious and watchful; but don't look for a bogey in every unusual happening, and harm is not likely to come to you."

She breathed a deep sigh and resumed her work without further comment. I went back to my private room, taking the woman's card with me.

Once more seated at my desk, I examined the bit of pasteboard. It was of cheap quality, and its flamboyant announcements were smearily printed. The number given was on Main Street above First, which in itself was not a recommendation. Then I called police headquarters and had the good luck to catch Struber.

"I'll look her up right away," he assured me after I had related the incident. "Seems to me that name's familiar; I believe the old dame has a police court record."

After the appearance of the personal signed "James Strang"—that is, the one cautioning me to disregard the personal asking for information respecting the disposition of a "valuable mail parcel"—no other personals appeared addressed to me, though I watched all the papers for days. Struber and I had agreed upon the advisability of inserting one addressed to Strang, strongly urging him to communicate with me, but not until the first week in May did this appeal produce any result. It had begun to seem that Strang was determined upon ignoring it; then one morning I found my name and after it this single laconic but pregnant line:

Not ready to die yet. Wait.

It was unsigned.

At this stage events began to move swiftly. It transpired that the woman calling herself Madame Carcassi had once been fined in the Police Court for some petty swindle perpetrated at a time when she held forth as a clairvoyant and medium. At present, it appeared, she did in truth conduct a so-called "beauty-parlor" at the Main Street address, the medium business manifestly having upon parlous times.

"And," Struber supplemented his verbal report, "she sure enough can remove tattoo-marks, like she says, without leaving a scar." He grinned knowingly. "So can I; so can you; so can anybody. It's dead easy."

"I'm sure I can't," I contradicted.

"Just prick fresh cream over the design; when the scab's gone, so's the ink, 'leaving the skin as smooth an' clear as a baby's,' as the ad-vertisements say. I know. Tried it on myself once just to see if it'd work."

This information interested me and I made mental note of it for Miss Fox's benefit, resolving to lay the matter before some authority besides Struber.

"But look here, Struber," I said, "how did anybody learn about this particular mark, and why should they be so interested in having it removed?"

"It's been on her a long time, hasn't it? Anyway, how do we know Willets himself done it? We only have his word for it, and what's that worth? Nix. That pair o' croquet wickets means something and it was put there for a particular purpose; there's others besides those we know about that knows it's there."

"That's reasonable enough." Then I repeated: "But why should they be so eager to get rid of it?"

The shrewd eyes regarded me during a long silent pause. Then came the response:

"For a man who's so sharp in so many different ways, you're as a bat in others. Show me that ivory box again."

I didn't see what the carved box had to do with it, but nevertheless I got it from its hiding place in the desk drawer.

Struber slowly turned the cube-shaped receptacle in his fingers while he contemplated it thoughtfully.

"How many times you reckon you've examined this?" he suddenly asked. "A hundred anyhow, I'll bet. Yuh've even gone over it with a magnifyin'-glass—something I haven't done myself; yet one o' the first things that caught my eye you missed entirely." He handed it to me. "S'pose yuh look again."

I obeyed the suggestion, surveying every thread-like line intently in an effort to force it to yield whatever veiled meaning it might possess. Suddenly I glanced up with a surprised exclamation.

"Got it?" he asked indifferently.

"Great Caesar, no! The devilish thing's got me."

For this is what I all at once made out. The intricate fantastic design with which the six sides were covered had been carved upon a background which, up to this instant, I had accepted as simply a closely engraved reticulated pattern, a sort of uneven lattice or network effect. But now I perceived that the effect was produced by a more definitely significant design. The reticulations were formed by an intertwining or overlapping of innumerable facsimiles of the cryptic character on the death ring.

Struber gave the discovery time to soak in, then asked: "What yuh make of it now?"

"Nothing, confound it!" I owned up in a burst of temper. "The more I learn about this blessed muddle, the foggier my brain gets."

"It would come to yuh in time," he generously encouraged me—"bound to. But here's a theory I've been workin' on ever since Mrs. Fox's box was stolen—"

"By George!" I suddenly exclaimed, and sat blinking.

"What's got yuh now?" Struber mildly inquired.

"I'm not the only one who's been blind—Miss Fox never recognized the ideograph on her aunt's box, and she's been familiar with it all her life."

"That's just it; nothin' funny about that. How often do yuh think o' your ears or your nose, even when you're lampin' yourself in a mirror? Not at all unless they're a-hurtin'. Well, she's just as used to that mark on her throat; bet it don't come into her head once in a coon's age.

"Now if the Chink sign on her aunt's box had been plain and distinct, like it is on the ring, why, believe me, she'd a-spotted it long ago; but bein' a whole flock o' them all scrambled together, like when the cat's been playin' with the crochetin', she overlooked 'em, just like you did.

"The Chink sign was fresh in my mind the first time I see the box. Murder—or what looked like murder—had been done, with the ideograph, as you call it, left behind as a sort o' trademark. That made me think o' the time Charley Yen croaked. So yuh see, 'thout me knowin' it, a part o' my thinker was a-lookin' for the mark everywhere, an' spots it right off.

"But I started to tell yuh about my theory, what I've been followin' ever since Mrs. Fox's box was stolen.

"It's not the diamond the Chink's taking so many long shots to get, but anything and everything that has that double wishbone on it. It's the seal o' some tong, as I've said before, and the order's gone forth to gather 'em in. Seem to be makin' a pretty clean job of it, too. When yuh told me about the Carcassi woman's visit I knew I was right."

I pondered this aspect of the matter a minute with growing alarm. My suspicions about some hidden danger threatening Lois Fox were receiving a most unwelcome confirmation.

"You are sure, then," I asked, "that the Chinese are at the bottom of the mystery?—that Steve Willets is not the mainspring?"

"Don't everything fit in with my theory?" he returned. "Besides, Steve's croaked."

"Good gracious, man!" I groaned after another pause. "Has it occurred to you how such a conclusion affects Miss Fox?"

He nodded in a confident manner. "I was going to make a suggestion about that when you switched me off. There's just one thing to do: let her just as soon as possible have the thing removed. There's plenty o' high-toned specialists—lady operators, y'know—in the city, so it won't be embarrassin' for Miss Fox. I'll dope out a way o' spreading the news among the Chinks."

The idea of a refined girl having to endure such an ordeal was inexpressibly repugnant to me, so how would it appear to her? Still, if thus she might be saved from worse indignities the suggestion must at least be given serious consideration. After a moment's reflection I resolved to urge it upon her.

"How about the diamond?" I asked by and by. "I can't fit it into your theory."

Struber leaned abruptly forward and rapped with his knuckles upon my desk. He spoke with more earnestness than I had ever before seen him betray.

"Looky here, Mr. Ferris. Hasn't it ever struck yuh who this man Strang really is?"

I shook my head. His next words left me speechless.

"Who could he be but Sam Willets, Steve's brother?" After a moment he went on:

"What evidence have we that Sam was killed? None more than that he disappeared and hasn't since been heard from since. The body was never found, and a close search was made for it at the time, too. It's no new thing for men to drop out like that and take new names. Steve was always a crook, and while there's nothing on Sam he and his brother at one time were pretty thick. If you had a brother like Steve Willets wouldn't you feel like beatin' it somewheres else and hiding under an alias? Sure you would.

"But here's the way I look at it. Sam, he wasn't all bad; once away from Steve's influence he straightens up, gets ashamed of his past and cuts loose from it. He's James Strang and mebbe a respected citizen o' that Johore place. He must a-got rich, too. He learns about Steve's daughter and tries to make up for her rotten bad dad the best way he knows how; and be-lieve me, it ain't such a bad way, either. But right there's where his troubles began. He has one o' the boxes, and not knowing how much it's wanted by Chinks he uses it to carry the diamond in—it's a pretty nifty present itself. He's followed mebbe from the time he landed at New York, and he ain't long getting wise to it. O' course he think it's the diamond they're after, and there you are.

"Now then, I can't tell you why he's still hiding out, and that confuses some details. If the crazy dub would only come forward and join us, we'd look out for him and clear the whole thing up in a day."

The more I turned this theory over in my mind, the surer I grew that Struber was at least approaching the truth. One detail, however, led me to ask:

"If you are right, how can you reconcile the conflicting personals?"

"Dead easy," was the prompt reply. "The Chinks get wise to the diamond, and while gathering in the boxes why not grab the sparkler too? They're crooks, all right; they're not overlooking any chances like that."

"Then your theory is, that the earlier personal was designed to trap me into disclosing the diamond's whereabouts, and that Strang, alarmed by it, had the second inserted to warn me?"

"You've got me."

"He need not have worried. Whoever learns anything from me about that diamond will first have to show impeccable credentials."

There remained yet one question that I did not put into words; first, because I knew it would open up an avenue of inquiry that I shrank from entering upon, and secondly, Struber was even less better qualified to supply the answer than I was myself.

The question was this: How, and under what circumstances, had my father come by the death ring in the first place?

And then followed the subordinate questions: Why should he have guarded it so jealously all these years? And, what association had there been between my father and a desperate character like Steve Willets?

Candidly, I feared there might be certain pages of his past history that would better remain unturned.

And then, like a flash of inspiration, I thought of a source from which might be adduced the one clue needed to knit together the tangled skein of our perplexities into a whole, sound fabric.

(To be continued.)

Monstrous Names.

The longest name ever inflicted on an English child must surely be that of an unfortunate born at Derby in 1882, on whom her parents bestowed a name for every letter of the alphabet, says the London Chronicle: Anna Bertha Cecilia Diana Emily Fanny Gertrude Hypatia Inez Jane Kate Louise Maude Nora—I will cease the infliction until it comes to Zenobia! The Rev. Ralph Lyonel Tollemache Tollemache was another person with a craze for long names. He baptized his eldest son Lyulph Yderallo Odin Nestor Egbert Lyonel Toedmag Hugh Erehenwyse Saxon Esa Orme Cromwell Nevil Dysart Plantaganet.

A Sure Way.

"Do you know," he stammered, "you could make my wife mighty proud of me?"

"I could?" asked his boss. "How?"

"Just by raising my salary," was the reply.

When four years old, children are generally twice as tall as they were at birth.

An Irishman has said, "In oulden times they hanged thieves on crosses; now, begorra, the Kaiser hangs crosses on thieves."

German War Dog Now a Prisoner

This is the picture of a sad and forlorn prisoner in the French camp. He's a German "war dog."

MOTHER

SEIGEL'S SYRUP

The proof of Mother Seigel's Syrup is in the taking. That is why former sufferers, whose vitality was being sapped by Indigestion, say it is *just excellent* for stomach, liver and bowel troubles. Thanks to Mother Seigel's Syrup, they are now strong and well.

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If you are afflicted by Indigestion or other disorders of the stomach, liver and bowels take Mother Seigel's Syrup regularly for a few days; long enough to give it a fair chance to make its beneficial influence felt. Then note the improvement in your appetite, your strength, your general condition. 3015

HEADACHES, BILIOUSNESS CONSTIPATION INDIGESTION.

The 100 bottle of Syrup contains three times as much as the 50c size.

"Perfect Seal" Quart Jar.

Three Pounds of Syrup.

In 3 pound Glass Jars

Your grocer has "Crown Brand" Syrup in these new glass jars—or will get it for you. And be sure and save these jars for preserving.

"Crown Brand" is also sold in 2, 5, 10 and 20 pound tins.

143

THE CANADA STARCH CO., LIMITED, MONTREAL.

PRACTICAL FARMING

Farm Notes.

Pay attention to the little details.

Dead beets—those killed by weeds and lack of attention.

The farm home can and should be made more attractive.

One well fed hen is better than two half starved ones.

Sunlight is a natural tonic for the little pigs, and they revel in it.

What the grain grower takes from the soil, the dairy cow in times restores.

Actual experience is the only way in which success can be attained in bee keeping.

Economical feeding requires supplying the food nutrients in the right proportion.

To prevent rabbits gnawing the trees, mix fish oil or strong red pepper with whitewash and apply.

The two grains, Indian corn and Kaffir corn, are almost identical in chemical composition.

Nothing ever came so near turning December into June for dairy cattle and sheep as the silo.

Poultry keeping is more profitable than dairying—for the man who likes poultry better than he does cows.

Having the pigs farrowed as near one time as possible greatly simplifies the work of feeding and caring for them.

Don't forget to gather in road dust or sifted coal ashes, so that the hens will have something to wallow in this winter.

The story of the farm is written in the sweat of the farmer's brow, and punctuated with tears of sorrow and tears of joy.

Do not slight the milking, but get the last drop. There is no quicker way to decrease the flow of milk than to leave a little each time.

While still young, but full grown, the chicken is best suited for food. As it grows old, the flesh loses its flavor and increases in toughness.

Some farmers think it a waste of time to groom work horses in order to make them look sleek and shiny and would rather leave them in their natural state.

As long as there are points in the farming business that are unsettled, and as long as the man behind the farm wishes to make progress, there will be something for the farm papers to do.

Is the ram kept from the ewes in the day time or does he run with them all of the time. Better keep them apart, allowing him with them a few hours daily. Result: Better lambs and more of them.

The farmer or any other person that has the room, who fails to keep a flock of hens, is making a mistake. Besides the "home consumption" part of the programme, chickens and eggs are excellent products for the market and are always in demand.

Millet seed is not only an excellent poultry food, but, being very small, there is nothing better to scatter in the litter as an inducement for the fowls to get the exercise they require. Throw a handful in deep litter in the morning and it will keep the fowls busy and active all day.

It is really a crime the way some farmers are permitting the escape into gullies and creeks of so much manure. The records show that constant cultivation depletes the fertility of the soil, and the farmer who allows this valuable soil builder to escape is the one whose farm soon becomes barren. Preserve the manure.

When to Cut Alfalfa.

For all classes of animals except horses, alfalfa should be cut for hay when the new shoots or stems begin to appear at the crown. These are easily seen just as they come up among the old stems at about the beginning of blossoming time. Cutting earlier than this is not desirable or profitable, since the yield will be smaller and the hay will be more difficult to cure. It should not be allowed to get much beyond this stage for two reasons: (1) Although a somewhat heavier first cutting of hay can be secured by allowing it to stand longer than the time recommended, the hay is neither as palatable, nor as nutritious. (2) Leaving the first crop after it is at the proper stage to cut delays and reduces the second crop, since the new shoots coming from the crown are cut off with the first crop. When alfalfa is to be fed to horses, it may be allowed to grow slightly longer than when it is fed to cattle, but it should never be left until the second crop is injured in cutting the first crop.

Consumption is most common between the ages of 25 and 30.

Christmas Appeal

FOR

The Hospital for Sick Children

COLLEGE ST., TORONTO.

Dear Mr. Editor:—

Thanks for your kindness in allowing me the privilege of appealing at this Christmas time on behalf of the Hospital for Silk Children, Toronto.

In the 40 years of the Hospital's existence there have been treated within its walls 26,108 children as in-patients; 231,768 as out-patients; a grand total of 257,876 in and out-patients.

The Hospital for Sick Children gives a province-wide service, for little patients from every section of Ontario have sought its aid. Last year 499 patients were admitted from 232 places outside the city of Toronto. In 1914 there were 394 from 210 places.

Of the 2,838 in-patients last year 1,771 were medical cases and 1,067 surgical. In the orthopedic department of the 2,838 in-patients, 264 were treated for deformities, 21 Pott's disease of the spine, 10 lateral curvature of the spine, 10 bow-legs, 57 club-feet, 17 dislocations of hip, 42 tubercular disease of knee, hip, ankle, wrist and elbow; 76 infantile paralysis, 8 wry neck, and 21 miscellaneous.

Our battle is never-ending—is one that will continue while the world lasts, for it is the fight between the armies of life and death, to save the child life, the sick little ones, sons and daughters not only of our soldier men, but of the fathers and mothers still in this home-land province.

The Hospital is beating back disease and death, the enemies that assail the lives of little children as the British Empire is beating back Germany, Austria and Turkey, the enemies that assail the life of liberty.

So we appeal to the generous people of Ontario not to forget those so near and dear to us, who lie in the beds and cots of this great charity.

Will the people at large, as of old, respond to our call? Will they remember that every year is a war year for the Hospital, every day a day of battle, and that the Hospital needs money, not for its own sake, but for the children's sake?

The Hospital has waged its war for forty years. The people of Toronto and Ontario have been its friend, and this year of all years it requires help. Surely you will give to a charity that cares for every sick child in Ontario, for only as your money reaches the Hospital can the Hospital's mercy reach the children.

Every dollar is a link of kindness in the chain of mercy that joins the money in your pocket to the miseries of some child's life, some mother's heart.

Remember that Christmas calls you to open the purse of your kindness to the Hospital that the Hospital may open the heart of its help to the children.

Will you send a dollar, or more if you can, to Douglas Davidson, Secretary-Treasurer, or

J. ROSS ROBERTSON,
Chairman of the Board of Trustees,
Toronto.