

The Free Press Short Story

THE GREEN JADE PAGODA

ROY J. SNELL

KENNETH TOBIN thrust his hands far into his trousers pocket and gave vent to a huge sigh of satisfaction. Why not? Was he not working at his first real job since college some seven or eight years ago? "Pretty tough that was," he thought to himself. "To come out all dressed up with a college education and no place to go, not a thing to do. But now I—" What was that? He cast a quick apprehensive glance about him in every direction. His hands were out of his pockets now. They were strong, capable hands ready for action. "I thought I heard a sound, like a person dragging his leg across the floor. But no one seems to be here." He was alone, on guard. This room, where rare objects of Chinese art were on display at a world's fair in Chicago...

form in time to see the green jacket disappear inside a small car. Before that train could get under way Kenneth had just time to fairly throw Mary into one of those narrow cars, then to leap in beside her. Instantly there came the sputter of electric sparks and the train went rattling and rumbling away into a world of darkness, chill and damp, a seemingly endless tunnel, low and narrow, beneath the city of Chicago. It was a strange and rather terrifying experience, this rattling on and on into the semi-darkness of the narrow tunnel. What tunnel was this? Kenneth did not know. He heard the girl almost gasping. "Little wonder, she was from China. What could she know about Chicago? Just above them lurked death, the flashing and sputtering line of fire, a live wire. They had but to stand up and life would end abruptly. One fact gave Kenneth a sort of grim satisfaction. The man they were after rode just ahead of them. He could not lose them. "The train came to a sudden jarring halt. Being cautiously to his knees, Kenneth looked about just in time to catch sight of a streak of green that rose from a car ahead and vanished into the darkness. Before he could change his position a sputter came, a jerk and they were away again. "What's behind the egg?" he thought to himself. "All like a dream." "To the girl he said, "He's gone." "I'm sorry," came from the dark. Once again they rattled on through endless space. When again the train slowed up, Kenneth was ready. One glance toward a square of light above and they were away up a long, narrow stair. Take a miracle, the light of day burst upon them in a passageway leading to the street. Outside the door stood a man. "What place is that?" asked Kenneth, glancing back at the tunnel's entrance. "That?" The stranger gave him an inquiring glance. "There's the jade pagoda in its usual place." "Well," sighed Kenneth. "We've lost the man. We'll have to find the pagoda." "How?" Her eyes opened wide. "I've got an idea." The idea involved thirty-three telephone calls, which are up thirty-three tickets, nevertheless the last call brought a faint hope. "Yes," came from the other end of the wire. "This is the Stockton Storage Company. Yes, there was a Chinaman stored some good here yesterday. We'll be open until nine." "You see," explained Kenneth to Mary MacDowell, the girl from China, "sometimes when people take things without asking, when they store them with other goods in a warehouse. That makes them hard to locate." "And you think..." "There's a chance. Least we can do is to get over there to see." "If we find the green jade pagoda," she said, as they rattled away on the elevated train, "everything will be as it was." "Not," Kenneth sat up straight. "We will have to find the man who stole it. That's the only thing that will clear his name. They'll say he took the pagoda, then, because he frightened and brought it back." "But how can you know he really meant to steal it?" "How?" Kenneth stared at her. "Oh! I know how it is here in America," she exclaimed, "but in China it is very different. I'll tell you all about it sometime. But make me one promise: you said once that you disliked Chinese people, but you are a little ashamed of it."

WHAT'S BEHIND THE EGG?

What's behind the egg—every man's plain breakfast egg? The answer to that simple-sounding-to-the-Pipman question will be given at the Royal Winter Fair at Toronto next month—told from square feet in extent, taking up almost a whole floor. The sole problem not to be solved is the age-old Hindu puzzle: "Which came first—the first egg to hatch or the first hen to lay it?" The forthcoming exhibition is being arranged by the combined Canadian poultry industry of Canada, including most of the supply manufacturers. Novel in Canada, it is very much worth attention by poultry producers alert to the newer trend in their vocation, and not less by consumers alive to the newer trends in nutrition and household economy. The two-fold aim is to show poultry producers the most advanced methods and to acquaint the public with what makes quality in eggs and poultry. Exhibits will feature in a large, attractive display by the Dominion Department of Agriculture carrying the theme of the whole: Incubators in operation, including feeding exhibits to demonstrate nutrition for the growing chicks, production of the highest quality eggs, with displays of the finished products graded and packed for market are included. Breeders of R.O.P. (record of performance) and registered poultry are taking space to demonstrate their effort through careful breeding to improve the quality in the Royal Fair's egg and poultry. They have looked for this purpose to the best incubators in operation, which is sponsored by the Ontario branch of the Poultry Industry Committee, and with these exhibits planned to stand as a pleasing unit to the whole Fair, new life, it is believed, will be given to growing activity in the nation's varied agriculture.

SHOULD WE GLAD

Father: "Are you glad you prayed for a little sister?" Small Son: "Yes," after a glance at the twin— "and aren't you glad I stopped when I did?"

A POSSIBILITY

"Your sons tip me more generously than you do, sir," a taxi-cab driver said to a wealthy city gentleman. "That's quite possible," was the reply. "He has a rich father. I haven't."

SO CONSIDERATE

First Lady at the Opera: Why does she always shut her eyes when she sings? Second Lady: She's so kind-hearted she hates to see people suffer.

MERELY THROWN OUT

Daughter: (tearfully) When you refused to let him marry me did he go down on his knees? Father: I dunno. I didn't notice where he lit.

BOYS WILL GIRL

Jennie: Why don't you eat your apple, Harry? Harry: I'm waiting for Jack Smith to come along. Apples taste much better if there's another boy-looking on.

Ontario Conservatives Hold Meeting



At a meeting of the Ontario Conservative Association, held in Toronto, it was decided to hold the long-awaited Conservative Convention to select a new leader for the party on December 30th. C. B. Frost, President of the Association is shown here talking things over with J. A. Macdowell, ex M.P.P.

HE'D BE PLEASED TO

Angie: Who had been endeavoring to look something for six hours was sitting gleefully at his desk when a mother and her small son came along. "Oh," cried out the youngster, "let me see you catch a fish!" "The mother said severely addressing the angle, "Don't you do it. Not until he says please."

CLEAR ENOUGH

Judge: I'd be satisfied with about any man you took a job of proof-try as well. Plaintiff: That's right, sir. I was caught and Sunday school that money about don't being impudish.

WILL MET

An M.P. anxious to see a procession in his constituency and thinking he was well known to the people of that city, happened a native on the shoulder, demanding: "Make way there." "Glad to see you, yet pushing!" was the reply. "Do you know who I am?" inquired the individual M.P. "I am a representative of the people." "Had," granted the native, standing unmoved, "but who is the bloomin' people ourselves?"

SOME INDICATION

Broken is there any truth in the rumor that Angus McTavish has bought that filling station at the corner? Green: Well, I don't know for sure, but the "free air" sign was taken down yesterday.

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