

# THE GREEN DOOR.

### A Bold Adventurer Finds a Romance in Solving a Mystery.

By O. HENRY.

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Suppose you should be walking down Broadway after dinner, with ten minutes allotted to the consumption of your cigar while you are choosing between a diverting tragedy and something serious in the way of vaudeville. Suddenly a hand is laid upon your arm. You turn to look into the thrilling eyes of a beautiful woman who is bent on diamonds and Russian money. She thrusts hurriedly into your hand an extremely hot battered roll, dashes out a tiny pair of scissors, snips off the second button of your overcoat, meaningly ejaculates the one word "paralelogram" and swiftly flies down a cross street, looking back fearfully over her shoulder.

That would be pure adventure. Would you accept it? Not you. You would flush with embarrassment. You would sheepishly drop the roll and continue down Broadway, fumbling feebly for the missing button. This you

and "cross" and "pale" operations of "paralel" operations.

The adventurous piano salesman halted at the corner and considered. Then he crossed the street, walked down a block, recrossed and joined the upward current of people again. With out seeming to notice the negro as he passed the second time he carelessly took the card that was handed him. Ten steps away he inspected it. In the same handwriting that appeared on the first card "The Green Door" was inscribed upon it. Three or four cards were tossed to the pavement by pedestrians both following and leading him. These fell blank side up. Rudolf turned them over. Every one bore the printed legend of the dental "parlor."

Rarely did the arch sprite adventure need to beckon twice to Rudolf Steiner, his true follower. But twice it had been done, and the quest was on. Rudolf walked slowly back to where the giant negro stood by the case of rattling teeth. This time as he passed he received no card. In spite of his gaudy and ridiculous garb the Ethiopian displayed a natural barbaric dignity as he stood, offering the cards surreptitiously to some allowing others to pass unnoted. Every half minute he chanted a harsh, unintelligible phrase akin to the jargon of car conductors and grand opera. And not only did he withhold a card this time, but it seemed to Rudolf that he received from the shining and massive black countenance a look of cold, almost contemptuous disdain.

The look struck the adventurer. He read in it a silent accusation that he had been found wanting. Whatever the mysterious written words on the cards might mean, the black had selected him twice for the role of a witness and now seemed to have condemned him as deficient in the will and spirit to engage the enigma.

Standing aside from the rush, the young man made a rapid estimate of the building in which he conceived that his adventure must lie. Five stories high it rose. A small restaurant occupied the basement. The first floor, now closed, seemed to house millinery or furs. The second floor, by the twinkling electric letters, was the dentist's. Above this a polyglot babel of signs struggled to indicate the abodes of palmists, dress-makers, musicians and doctors. Still higher up draped curtains and milk bottles white on the window sills proclaimed the regions of domesticity. After concluding his survey Rudolf walked briskly up the high flight of stone steps into the house. Up two flights of the carpeted stairway he continued and at its top paused. The hallway there was dimly lighted by two pale jets of gas, one far to his right, the other nearer to his left. He looked toward the nearer light and saw within it a man in a green coat. For one moment he hesitated; then he seemed to see the courtly smile of the African juggler of cards, and then he walked straight to the green door and knocked against it.

Moments like those that passed before his knock was answered meant the quick breath of true adventure. What might not be behind those green panels, chambers at play, cunning rogues baling their traps with subtle, all beauty in love with courage and thus planning to be sought by it, danger, death, love, disappointment, ridicule—any of these might respond to that temerarious rap.

A faint rustle was heard inside, and the door slowly opened. A girl not yet twenty stood there white faced and tottering. She loosed the knob and yawned weakly, groping with one hand Rudolf caught her and laid her on a faded couch that stood against the wall. He closed the door and took a swift glance around the room by the light of a flickering gas jet. Next but extreme poverty was the story that he read.

The girl lay still as if in a faint. Rudolf looked around the room excitedly for a barrel who—no, no; that was for drowned persons. He began to fan her with his hat. That was successful, for he struck her nose with the brim of his derby, and she opened her eyes. And then the young man saw that hers, indeed, was the one missing face from his heart's gallery of intimate portraits. The frank gray eyes, the little nose, curling pertly outward; the chestnut hair, curling like the tendrils of a pea vine, seemed the right end and reward of all his wonderful adventures. But the face was woefully thin and pale.

The girl looked at him calmly and then smiled.

"Painted, didn't it?" she asked weakly. "Well, who wouldn't? You try going without anything to eat for three days and see."

"Himmel!" exclaimed Rudolf, jumping up. "Wait till I come back." He dashed out the green door and down the stairs. In twenty minutes he was back again, kicking at the door with his toe for her to open it. With both arms he hugged an array of wares from the grocery and the restaurant. On the table he laid them—bread and butter, cold meats, cakes, pies, pickles, oysters, a roasted chicken, a bottle of milk and one of red hot tea.

"This is ridiculous," said Rudolf, blusteringly. "To go without eating. You must quit making election bets of this kind. Supper is ready." He helped her to a chair at the table and asked, "Is there a cup for the tea?" "On the shelf by the window," she answered. When he turned again with the cup he saw her, with eyes shining rapturously, beginning upon a huge dill pickle that she had rooted out from the paper bags with a woman's unerring instinct. He took it from her laughing and poured the cup full of milk. "Drink that first," he ordered, "and then you shall have some tea and then a chicken wing. If

you are very good you shall have a pickle tomorrow. And now, if you'll allow me to be your guest, we'll have supper."

He drew up the other chair. The tea brightened the girl's eyes and brought back some of her color. She began to eat with a sort of dainty courtesy like some starved animal. She seemed to regard the young man and the food he had rendered her as a natural thing—not as though she understood the conventions, but as one whose great stress gave her the right to do what she pleased with the return of strength and comfort came also a sense of the true conventions that betwixt and she began to tell him her little story. It was one of a thousand such as the city jays at, every day, the shaggy's story of insufficient wages, further reduced by "fines" that go to swell the store's profits; of time lost through laziness and then of lost positions, least hope and—the knock of the adventures upon the green door.

But to Rudolf the history sounded as big as the liad or the epics in "June's Love Test."

"To think of you going through all that!" he exclaimed.

"It was something nerve," said the girl solemnly.

"And you have no relatives or friends in the city?"

# COMIN' THROUGH OF UNC' NATHUN.

### Story of a Watch Night Meeting on a Southern Plantation.

By LEYBURN FITNER.

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"Miss Lily," queried old Ellen as she combed my hair for the night, "peary to me yo' don' quite 'member yo' prom-ised talk yo' water, somehow."

"Well, Ellen, that's rather hard. What have I done now?"

"Well, honey, each year when New Year's comes round I jes' natch'y ask yo' to go to watch night, to the cul-lud church, wif me, an' yo' jes' say, 'I peary to me I'd talk to go right on, but I jes' ain't speels' right, or de yo's campin' comin', or de yo's some other kind ob scuse, but yo'—allus

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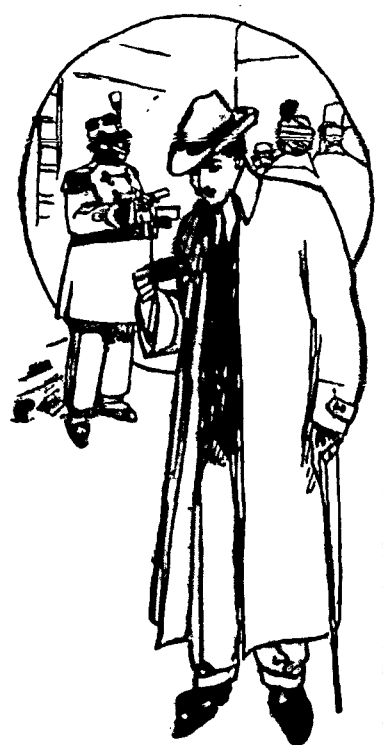
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THE OTHER SIDE WERE WRITING THESE WORDS, 'THE GREEN DOOR.'

would do unless you are one of the blessed few in whom the pure spirit of adventure is not dead.

In de big city de twin spirits, Romance and Adventure, are always abroad seeking worthy warriors. As we roam de streets they slyly peep at us and challenge us in twenty different guises.

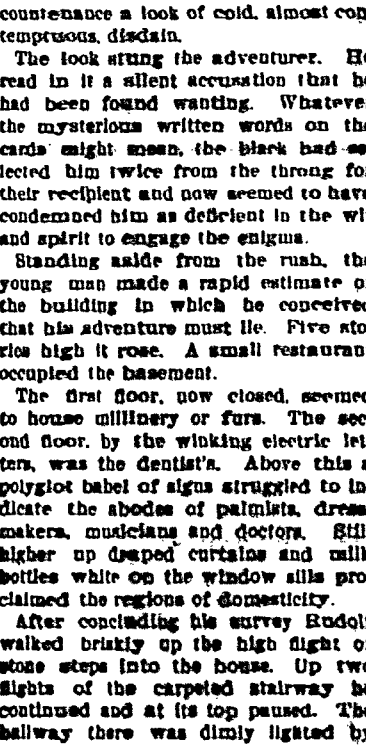
Rudolf Steiner was a true adventurer. Few were the evenings on which he did not go forth from his small bedchamber in search of the unexpected and the egregious. The most interesting thing in life seemed to him to be what might lie just around de next corner. Sometimes his willingness to tempt fate led him into strange paths. Twice he had spent de night in a station house. Again and again he had found himself de dupe of de glib and mercurial tricksters. His watch and money had been de price of one flattering statement. But with unadmitted ardor he picked up every glove cast before him into de merry lists of adventure.

One evening Rudolf was strolling along a cross town street in de older central part of de city. Two streams of people filled de sidewalks, de some hurrying and de restless contingent that abandons home for de spacious welcome of de thousand candle-power table d'hoie.

The young adventurer was of pleasing presence and moved serenely and watchfully. By daylight he was a salesman in a piano store. He wore his tie drawn through a topaz ring instead of fastened with a stickpin, and once he had written to de editor of a magazine that "June's Love Test," by Miss Libbey, had been de book that had most influenced his life.

During his walk a violent chattering of teeth in a glass case on de sidewalk seemed at first to draw his attention (with a quiver) to a restaurant before which it was set, but a second glance revealed de electric letters of a dentist's sign high above de next door. A giant negro fantastically dressed in a red embroidered coat, yellow trousers and a military cap discreetly distributed cards to those of de passing crowd who consented to take them.

This mode of dentistic advertising was a common sight to Rudolf. Usually he passed de dispenser of de dentist's cards without reducing his store, but tonight de African slipped one into his hand so deftly that he realized it there, smiling a little at de successful feat.



AN ARRAYS OF WARES FROM DE GROCERY AND DE RESTAURANT.

what represents it presented me with a dollar, cash, to distribute a few of his cards along with de doctah's. May I offer you one of de doctah's cards, sah?"

At de corner of de block in which he lived Rudolf stopped for a glass of beer and a cigar. When he had come out with his lighted weed he brushed his coat, pushed back his hat and said stoutly to de lamp-post on de corner: "All de same, I believe it was de hand of fate that doped out de way for me to find her."

Which conclusion, under de circumstances, certainly admits Rudolf Steiner to de ranks of de true followers of Romance and Adventure.



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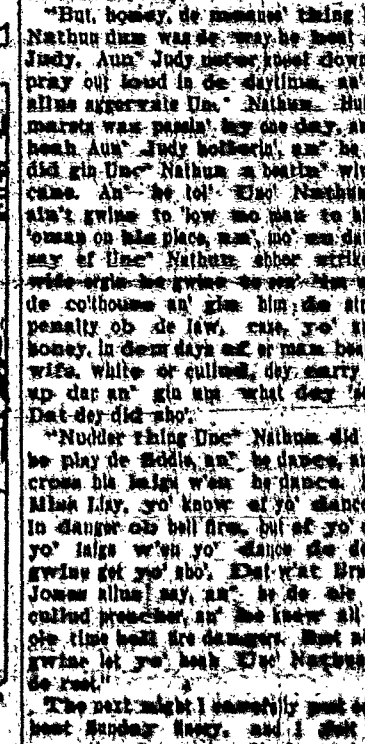
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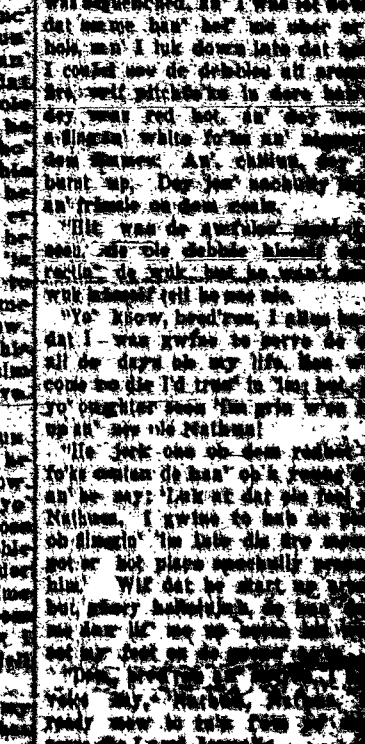
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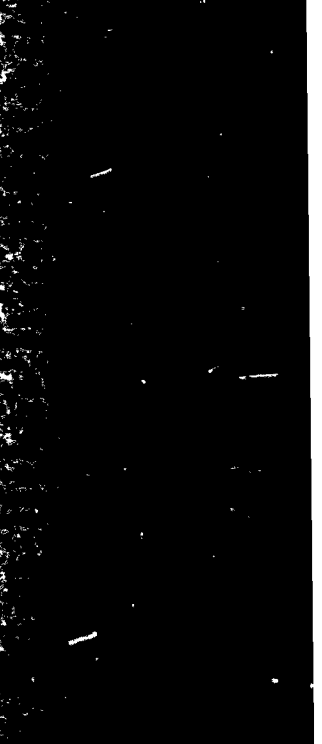
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