THE GREEN DOCTOR by O. Henry

Rudolf Steiner, a young piano salesman, was a true adventurer. Few were the evenings when he did not go to look for the unexpected. It seemed to him that the most interesting things in life might lie just around the corner. He was always dreaming of adventures.

Once when he was walking along the street his attention was attracted by a Negro handing out a dentist's cards. The Negro slipped a card into Rudolf's hand. He turned it over and looked at it. Nothing was written on one side of the card; on the other three words were written: "The Green Door". And then Rudolf saw, three steps in front of him, a man throw away the card the Negro had given him as he passed. Rudolf picked it up. The dentist's name and address were printed on it.

The adventurous piano salesman stopped at the corner and considered. Then he returned and joined the stream of people again. When he was passing the Negro the second time, he again got a card. Ten steps away he examined it. In the same handwriting that appeared on the first card "The Green door" was written upon it. Three or four cards were lying on the pavement. On all of them were the name and the address of the dentist. Whatever the written words on the cards might mean, the Negro had chose him twice from the crowd.

Standing aside from the crowd, the young man looked at the building in which he thought his adventure must lie. It was a five-storey building. On the first floor there was a store. The second up were apartments.

After finishing his inspection Rudolf walked rapidly up the stairs into the house. The hallway there was badly lighted. Rudolf looked toward the nearer door and saw that it was green. He hesitated for a moment, then he went straight to the green door and knocked on it. The door slowly opened. A girl not yet twenty stood there. She was very pale and as it seemed to Rudolf was about to faint. Rudolf caught her and laid her on a sofa. He closed the door and took a quick glance round the room. Neat, but great poverty was the story he read.

"Fainted, didn't I?" the girl asked weakly. "Well, no wonder. You try going without anything to eat for three days and see."

"Heavens!" cried Rudolf, jumping up. "Wait till I come back." He rushed out of the green door and in twenty minutes he was back with bread and butter, cold meat, cakes, pies, milk and hot tea.

"It is foolish to go without eating. You should not do it again," Rudolf said. "Supper is ready."

When the girl cheered up a little she told him her story. It was one of a thousand such as the city wears with indifference every day — a shop girl's story of low wages; of time lost through illness; and then of lost jobs, lost hope and unrealised dreams and — the knock of the young man upon the door.

Rudolf looked at the girl with sympathy.

"To think of you going through all that," he exclaimed. "And you have no relatives or friends in the city?"
"None whatever."

"As a matter of fact, I am all alone in the world too," said Rudolf after a pause.

"I am glad of that," said the girl, and somehow it pleased the young man to hear that she approved of his having no relatives.

Then the girl sighed deeply. "I'm awfully sleepy," she said.

Rudolf rose and took his hat.

"How did it happen that you knocked at my door?" she asked.

"One of our piano tuners lives in this house. I knocked at your door by mistake."

There was no reason why the girl should not believe him.

In the hallway he looked around and discovered to his great surprise that all the doors were green.

In the street he met the same Negro. "Will you tell me why you gave me these cards and what they mean?" he asked.

Pointing down the street to the entrance to a theatre with a bright electric sign of its new play, "The Green Door", the Negro told Rudolf that the theatre agent had given him a dollar to hand out a few of his cards together with the dentist's.

"Still it was the hand of Fate that showed me the way to her," said Rudolf to himself.