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FIFTY-FIFTH YEAR.

BENTON, BOSSIER PARISH, LOUISIANA, THURSDAY, JUNE 22, 1916.

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## Mystery of a Jade Ring

Chinese Jewel Leads to a Romance in America

By CLARISSA MACKIE

The red auction flag fluttered over the door of the Japanese shop. Always fascinated by the charm of oriental things, Leslie Marston thrust aside the knowledge that her father was waiting to lunch with her downtown and stepped inside the shop.

The auctioneer was holding a small ivory box containing a unique ring of twisted gold dragons set with an oblong tablet of carved jade.

"And I am offered only \$5," he reproached the crowd.

"Please let me examine the ring," requested Leslie. She felt a great desire to possess the ornament. Her month's allowance was in her handbag. She recognized the ring as a beautiful example of Chinese jewel craft.

"Ten dollars," she said, returning the ring.

"Twelve," said a determined voice.

Leslie looked up and saw a broad shouldered, dark young man leaning against the wall. Grim and unsmiling, it was very evident that he, too, wanted the jade ring.

Leslie, spotted darling of fortune, wanted it also.

"Fifteen," said Leslie crisply.

"Sixteen," he came back.

"Eighteen," was Leslie's bid.

"Nineteen," said the man doggedly.

"Twenty-five," Leslie felt excited by this little adventure.

"Twenty-five—I am offered only \$25 for this beautiful ring," said the auctioneer contemptuously. "Why, it is worth five times as much! Won't you raise it, sir?" he appealed to the dark young man.

The latter shook his head. His lips were a straight line.

A new voice raised the bid to \$30. Leslie saw a tall, lean Chinese dressed in black garments.

The bidding rose steadily until the Chinaman dropped out of the contest, and the ring was sold to Leslie for \$30.

As she left the shop some one jostled her. She glanced up and saw the yellow countenance of the Chinaman glaring down at her.

"You no want ring—you sell to me!" he commanded arrogantly.

Before Leslie could reply a strong arm pushed the oriental aside.

"Is this man annoying you?" asked the dark young man of the auction room.

"He spoke to me," faltered Leslie. "I

with us, and you shall tell us why you wanted the jade ring."

But Jack Delorme did not tell why he was so deeply interested in the jade ring, perhaps because he was more interested in the girl who was wearing it. It was a case of love at first sight and that night Mr. Marston rather ruefully confessed as much to his wife.

"Jack Delorme's a fine fellow," he said, "and the son of an old friend of mine. They lived for years in China, but more recently in London, where his parents died. There was something wrong about old John Delorme's estate—he was supposed to be rich, but they couldn't find any tangible evidence of it. Jack convinced me that he is tracing some of the property. Leslie doesn't have to marry money, you know, Sara, and Jack comes of good stock," he ended significantly.

So Leslie's parents talked it over between them, while the love which had arisen so suddenly burned steadily, a pure, unwavering flame, during the months that followed.

Mrs. Fisk Delorme's monthly dances were usually preceded by an hour's entertainment.

Leslie and her mother arrived one evening and found the ballroom filled with a fashionable throng which was enjoying a clever vaudeville performance. Presently a world renowned tenor delighted them with his golden voice, and finally a tall figure clad in richly embroidered Chinese robes stalked upon the stage.

It was the Chinese of the auction room, the man who wanted the jade ring. Now he was preparing to mystify them with feats of magic.

As one in a dream Leslie heard his shrill staccato voice as he clacked out the "patter" of his act, and the sound rang in her ears long after the floor was cleared for dancing. Jack Delorme came in late and at once went to Leslie.

After her second dance he took her to the picture gallery, where they sat down under a group of tall palms.

"I hope you are not going away," said the girl wistfully. "Father said you were growing tired of New York."

Jack turned swiftly and caught her hands in his. "Don't say that—don't be kind to me!" he said hoarsely. "I can't bear it."

"Why?" whispered Leslie, with racing pulses.

"Why? Because I love you—any one must know that—and yet I cannot ask you to marry me. I'm poor—poor as Job's turkey! I had hoped I might make good, but fate intervened and took away the only chance I had."

"If I were poor you wouldn't hesitate?" she asked softly.

"Ah, darling, don't tantalize me!" he muttered in an agonized tone. "If you only knew how I loved you—how much I want you for my wife! Perhaps some day when I return if you are free—but, there, I cannot ask any girl to wait on my uncertain fortunes." He threw up his head proudly and smiled. "Forget my unhappy wails, Miss Leslie. Don't feel sorry for me."

"Ah, I can't help that," confessed Leslie. "I must always remember you. But please leave me alone now. I want to think."

The long gallery was empty now save for the slender red haired girl on the seat under the palms.

The sound of violins came alluringly from the ballroom, and the slip of feet on the polished floor was like the rush of waves on the shore.

Lost in thought, Leslie did not hear the softly padded footsteps as the Chinese magician approached. The yellow, clawlike hands were over her lips before she could scream out. Her eyes were almost black with fear as she regarded him.

"The ring!" he hissed. "I want it." She shook her head.

Holding one hand over her lips, he managed to rip the gloves from her fingers. Her hands were bare of rings.

With a ferocious snarl of disappointment he flung her away from him and vanished down the nearest stairway.

Assailed by a new terror Leslie hurried back to the ballroom and found Jack Delorme. "I am afraid for my father," she explained. "He saw that I was not wearing the ring and he probably thinks I left it home; he will go there and if I fetch him—I am afraid!"

"Where is the ring?" asked Jack quickly.

"Here," she said, pulling a fine gold chain from her bosom. Suspended from the chain was the jade ring.

"But why do you wear it there?" he asked amazedly.

A beautiful color came and went in her cheeks, but her eyes were downcast. She did not see the look of adoration in his eyes.

"I will take you back to your mother," he said, "and do not be alarmed. I will go at once and warn your father, and on my way I'll telephone the police station. I will return and report later." He gave Leslie into her mother's care and hurried away.

Breathlessly Leslie related the whole story to her mother, and to the girl's relief Mrs. Marston insisted upon calling the motor and returning home at once. They arrived shortly after Jack Delorme reached the house.

Just as they entered the hall there was the sound of a crashing fall overhead and two men came reeling down the stairs to fall in a heap at the bottom. Jack Delorme turned a blood stained face toward the alarmed women. His arms pinioned the Chinese magician to the floor.

Two policemen came running from the rear of the house, and Jack turned his prisoner over to their capable hands.

"What does this mean?" gasped Mrs. Marston. "My husband?"

"It's all right," assured Jack. "We got here just in time. Miss Leslie's fears were well founded. The man

had gained admittance to the bedrooms and was searching systematically when I tackled him. Mr. Marston is dressing. He will be down immediately."

The officers led their prisoner away, and the family gathered in the library, where Mr. Marston joined them.

"Well, my boy," he said to Jack, "I owe my life to you."

"Hardly that, Mr. Marston. He might not have reached your room, but I really think Miss Leslie had better not wear the ring. It seems to be badly wanted," he smiled ruefully.

"You wanted it yourself," reminded Leslie.

"I know, but I couldn't take it away from you."

"Why do you want it, Delorme?" asked Mr. Marston pointedly.

Jack paled. "It belonged to my father," he said reluctantly. "It was stolen from him by a dishonest servant and brought to this country. The thief sold it to the curio dealer. Two

Advantages and Disadvantages Contrasted in a New Bulletin of the Department of Agriculture—Advice For Construction of Concrete Highways.

The mileage of concrete pavement in the United States has increased rapidly, and it is likely to continue to increase, according to a new bulletin of the department of agriculture. This bulletin gives the estimated amount of concrete pavement in the United States in 1914 as 19,200,000 square yards. In 1900 it was only 364,000 square yards.

The principal advantages of concrete pavements which have led to this increase in popularity are said to be:

Durability under ordinary traffic conditions.

A smooth, even surface, offering little resistance.

Absence of dust and ease with which it may be cleaned.

Comparatively small cost of maintenance until renewals are necessary.

Availability as a base for another type of surface if desirable.

Attractive appearance.

The disadvantages of concrete as a road surface are:

Its noise under horse traffic.

The wearing of the necessary joints in the pavement and the tendency to crack, with its consequent rapid deterioration.

The difficulty of repairs when these become necessary.

In the past efforts have frequently been made to overcome these objections to a certain degree by covering the concrete pavement with a bituminous wearing surface. At the present time the specialists in the department hold that this cannot be economically justified, although it is possible that future investigation may change the situation in this respect. In the present state of road science, however, it seems that where traffic conditions are such that bituminous surface on a concrete road is practicable a bituminous surface macadam road would be equally practicable and certainly cheaper.

Where traffic is too heavy for macadam road the bituminous surface is likely to give way and the uneven manner in which it falls tends to produce excessive wear on portions of the concrete.

For a successful concrete road, hardness, toughness and uniformity are the most essential qualities. These can be secured to a great extent by care in the selection of the constituent materials and the proportions in which they are mixed. The cement, it is said, should always conform to some standard specifications for portland cement, such as those issued by the United States bureau of standards or the American Society For Testing Materials. The sand should not contain more than 3 per cent of foreign material, and sand with more coarse than fine grains is to be preferred. The coarse aggregate may consist of either crushed stone or gravel. In either case it is very desirable that the coarse aggregate be well graded in size between proper limits.

The proportion of cement to the sand and coarse aggregate combined should not be less than about one to five, and the proportion of sand to coarse aggregate not less than one and one-half to three, nor greater than two to three. A useful formula when gravel is used as coarse aggregate is one part of cement to one and one-half parts of sand to three parts of gravel. When crushed stone is used one and three-quarter parts of sand may be substituted in place of one and one-half parts.

In addition to discussing the engineering details of construction the bulletin calls attention to the fact that ordinarily from one-third to one-half of the total cost of constructing a concrete pavement is for labor after the materials are delivered.

The most economical method is to have the work of mixing and placing the concrete as nearly continuous as practicable. The work should be planned with a primary view of keeping the mixer going full time. The drainage structures, the grading and the sub grade should, therefore, be completed well in advance of the mixer and provision made for obtaining all of the necessary materials without delay. A common error is the failure to make adequate provision for delivering water on the work and the amount which a given stream is capable of supplying is frequently overestimated.

Congress and Good Roads.

"Congress will have the good roads question to answer at its forthcoming session, and the accumulating demand from all sections of the country makes clear that the issue must be met," asserts President John A. Wilson of the American Automobile association.

"With over 2,000,000 automobiles in use the motorists now make up an army of road users entitled to equal consideration with all other citizens," says Mr. Wilson. "But we have finally obtained nearly all those rights which belong to the average citizen. It is my belief that comprehensive highways improvement has only begun, for it is now receiving deserved attention from a growing number of men who have most to do with the affairs of the nation."

## POPULARITY OF CONCRETE ROADS

### Rapid Increase of Mileage in Recent Years.

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### GOOD ROAD MANAGEMENT.

Summarized briefly, the essentials to successful state highway administration, as demonstrated by the experience of the various state highway departments, are as follows: The elimination of politics as a factor in state highway work; the control by the state highway department of all work on which state funds are expended; adequate appropriations for continuous maintenance of highways under efficient supervision from the day the highways are completed; state supervision as to surveys, plans and specifications of roads and bridges constructed under bond issues and supervision of such other road and bridge work as requires considerable cash outlay and the exercise of engineering skill and knowledge.—Year Book, United States Department of Agriculture.

### BEAUTIFYING DIXIE HIGHWAY.

#### Southern Women Plan Conservation of Natural Growth.

With the Dixie highway, running from Chicago to Miami, ready to be dedicated and opened for practical purposes on next Thanksgiving day, the clubwomen of the states from the gulf to the great lakes are organizing for the purpose of permanently beautifying this transnational highway so that its scenic beauty from one end to the other will be a delight to the tourists.

The initial organization of the club women was perfected at Guyton, Ga., where about fifty women banded themselves together for the purpose of assisting in the Dixie highway movement in Effingham county, Ga. The movement is spreading, and it is sought to include the clubwomen along the entire route. The plan of the women includes the co-operation also of the boy scouts, the school children and the schoolteachers.

The first work which the women plan is the conservation and the preservation of the natural growths, trees, shrubs, flowers and grasses along the route. The importance of this work the women say, cannot be overestimated, and they are seeking immediate action.

To use the present growth as a key note and fill with masses until the grouping is that of Mother Nature herself is the plan and calls for the utilization of every natural advantage of the way from Chicago to Miami.

One effective plan being carried out by a woman's club is to secure the active co-operation of the various companies of boy scouts, giving each company a section of the highway to beautify by carrying away rubbish, cutting down weeds and planting trees. Exact tree planted along the section allotted to a particular boy scout company is named after a member of the company. The boy scouts, the school children and teachers as well as the clubwoman will make such plantings. No digging and no transplanting will be done except under expert and skilled supervision.

Keeping Roads in Order.

Macadam, concrete and other strongly surfaced highways for the present are primarily for the main roads, says the *Laporte Herald*. The thousands of side roads, which are little traveled, will have to get along without expensive pavements for many years.

But even these need not be in bad shape or impassable, as some of them are in rainy weather.

The modern cheap machine or grader, when used in the spring, is a great thing for roads and the tempers of those who have to use them.

More than this, the road drag can be used after each rain; the results are satisfactory wherever used. This, of course, applies to earth or gravel roads. A drag keeps them in line shape throughout the year.

What all some of our dirt roads is not that they are inherently bad, but that nobody takes care of them. If they are properly looked after with drags they won't be the butt of so many jokes.

Thousands of miles of them are going to be with us for a great many years; might as well see that they are as good as drags can make them.

Even a macadam road doesn't amount to much in a few years if it isn't taken care of.

The Oiled Earth Road.

The oiled earth road has proved generally satisfactory in Kansas, according to W. S. Gearhart, state engineer of that state. In the construction of such a road the earth from a strip in the center of the roadway from sixteen to eighteen feet wide is thrown to one side and the subgrade carefully crowned and rolled. Oil at a temperature of 250 degrees F. is then applied at the rate of from one and one-quarter to one and one-half gallons per square yard, and enough earth to absorb the oil (usually a layer about four inches deep) is graded back on to the road. The roadway is then thoroughly sprinkled and the earth, oil and water mixed by means of a disk harrow and a drag. The roadway is then compacted by a tamping roller, after which a second application of hot oil is made at the rate of about one and one-half gallons per square yard. Another layer of about four inches of fine earth is graded on to the road and the mixing and tamping repeated. On completion the wearing surface is from five to six inches thick.



HIS ARMS PINNED THE CHINESE MAGICIAN TO THE FLOOR.



"YOU NO WANT RING—YOU SELL TO ME!" HE COMMANDED ARROGANTLY.

believe he wants the jade ring. Will you please call a taxicab?"

In a moment he had signaled a taxi and placed her in it, stepping back with bared head.

"I am sorry about the ring," cried Leslie hastily, and her cheeks burned as he shook his head.

"It's all right," he said cheerfully as she rolled away.

All the way downtown Leslie Marston, who had never thought seriously about any man, was thinking about the young stranger who had wanted the jade ring and who had intervened when the Chinaman annoyed her.

Arrived at her father's offices in the Goliath building, it was a distinct shock to find the young stranger in conference with her father.

"Ah, Leslie," cried Mr. Marston, drawing her to him. "I thought you were never coming. Let me introduce Mr. Delorme, my new secretary. He's a nephew of Mrs. Fisk Delorme and very likely you'll meet him around at some of your junketings this season."

The young people shook hands, and Leslie told her father that Jack Delorme had already been of assistance to her.

"Some half crazed Chinaman," commented the older man when Leslie had finished. "Come on, Jack, and lunch

### Restless Flat Hunters.

The restlessness of the flat dweller is a national mystery. Why does he go forth inevitably in the spring to find another flat and to insert his family and furniture therein? As likely as not it is the flat which he abandoned five years ago. Since then he occupied four other flats, each a vast improvement over its predecessor, and he is now delighted with the new flat which he left in disgust five years ago. He has spent hundreds of dollars in arriving at this stage of happiness, but he will abandon the flat again next year and flit on in a moving van as large as a small chapel.

We falter, appalled at the task of discovering the flat dweller's purpose until we consider the strangely similar restlessness of the sick man who lies on one side until he can't stand it any longer and then, with the assistance of his devoted family, is turned over on the other side. The change is a delightful relief, although a few hours before he couldn't endure to lie on that side a minute longer.—George Finch in *Collier's Weekly*.

### A Real Regret.

Editor—I am obliged to decline your poem with thanks. I am very sorry, but—Poet—but what? Editor—The management insists upon my declining all poems that way.

### Funny to Her.

"Is he really a humorist?"  
"He certainly is," replied the sweet young thing. "He actually asked me to marry him."

### Easy Role.

Johnny—Papa, what is a philosopher?  
Pa—A man with a good liver, heart, stomach and bank account.—Chicago News.