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BY
Meredith Nicholson
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CHAPTER V.—(Continued.)

A few days after Evelyn Porter came home, Wheaton followed Raridan to his room one evening after dinner. Raridan had set The Bachelors an example of white flannels for the warm weather, and Wheaton also had abolished his evening clothes. Raridan's rooms had not yet lost their novelty for him. The pictures, the statues, the books, the broad couch with its heap of var-colored pillows, the table with its candles, by which Raridan always read certain of the poets—these still had their mystery for Wheaton.

"Going out to-night?" he asked with a show of indifference.

"Hadn't thought of it," answered Raridan, who was cutting the pages of a magazine.

"Don't let me interrupt if you're reading," said Wheaton. "But I thought some of dropping in at Mr. Porter's. Miss Porter's home now, I believe."

"That's a good idea," said Raridan, who saw what was wanted. He threw his magazine at the cat and got up and yawned. "Suppose we do go?"

The call had been successfully managed. Miss Porter was very pretty, and not so young as Wheaton expected to find her. Raridan left him talking to her and went across to the library, where Mr. Porter was reading his evening paper. Raridan had a way of wandering about in other people's houses, which Wheaton envied him. Miss Porter seemed to take his call as a matter of course, and when her father came out presently and greeted him casually as if he were a familiar of the house he left relieved and gratified.

CHAPTER VI.

Raridan was at the station to meet some guests of Evelyn's, as he had promised. He had established a claim upon their notice on the occasion of one of his visits to Evelyn at college, and he greeted them with an air of possession which would have been intolerable in another man. He pressed Miss Warren for news of the Connecticut nutmeg crop, and hoped that Miss Marshall had not lost her accent in crossing the Missouri.

Annie Warren was as reserved and quiet as Evelyn could be in her soberest moments; Belle Marshall was as frank and friendly as Evelyn became in her lightest moods. Evelyn had been the beauty of her class; her two friends were what is called, by people that wish to be kind, nice looking. Annie Warren had been the best scholar in her class; Belle Marshall had been amongst the poorest; and Evelyn had maintained a happy medium between the two. And so it fortunately happened that the trio mitigated one another's imperfections.

Evelyn had discussed with her father ways and means of entertaining her guests. He preferred large functions. He wished Evelyn to give a lawn party before the blight of fall came upon his flowers and shrubbery; but she persuaded him to wait until after a pending carnival. The ball of the carnival was near at hand and she proposed that they give a small dinner in the interval.

"I'll ask Warry and Mr. Saxton. People were already coupling Saxton's name with Raridan's."

"Oh, yes, that's all right."

"I don't want very many; I'd like to ask the Whipples;" she went on, with the anxious, far-away look that comes into the eyes of a woman who is weighing dinner guests or matching fabrics.

"Can't you ask Wheaton?" ventured Mr. Porter cautiously, from behind his paper.

"If you say so," Evelyn assented. "He isn't exciting, but Belle Marshall can get on with anybody. I'm out of practice and won't try too many. Mrs. Whipple will help over the hard places."

Finally, however, her party numbered ten, but it seemed to Wheaton a large assemblage. He had never taken a lady in to dinner before, but he had studied a book of etiquette, and the chapter on "Dining Out" had given him a hint of what was expected. It had not, however, supplied him with a fund of talk, but he was glad to find, when he reached the table, that the company was so small that talk could be general, and he was thankful for the shelter made for him by the light banter which followed the setting of chairs. Saxton went in with Evelyn, who wished to make amends for his clumsy reception on the occasion of his first appearance in the house.

General Whipple persuaded Miss Marshall to tell a negro story, which she did delightfully, while the table listened. Southerners are, after all, the most natural talkers we have and the only ones who can talk freely of themselves without offense. Her speech was musical, and she told her story with a nice sense of its dramatic quality.

They had their coffee on the veranda, where the lights from within made a pleasant dusk about them. Porter's heart was warm with the joy of Evelyn's home-coming. She had been away from him so much that he was realizing for the first time the common experience of fathers, who find that their daughters have escaped suddenly and inexplicably from girlhood into womanhood; and yet the girl heart in her had not lost its freshness nor its thirst for pleasure. She had carried off her little company charmingly; Porter had enjoyed it himself, and he felt young again in the presence of youth.

General Whipple had attached himself to one of the couples of young people that were strolling here and there in the grounds. Porter and Mrs. Whipple held the veranda alone; but were unconsciously watching Evelyn and Saxton as

they walked back and forth in front of the house, talking gaily; and Porter smiled at the eagerness and quickness of her movements. Saxton's deliberateness contrasted oddly with the girl's light step. Such a girl must marry a man worthy of her; there could be no question of that; and for the first time the thought of losing her rose in his heart and numbed it.

Evelyn and Saxton had met the others, who were coming up from the walks, and there was a redistribution of the house; it was too beautiful to go in, they said, and the strolling abroad continued. A great flood of moonlight poured over the grounds. A breeze stole up from the valley and made a soothing rustle in the trees.

Evelyn and Wheaton heard the sound of the piano through the open windows, and a girl's voice broke gaily into song.

"It's Belle. She does sing those cool songs wonderfully. Let us wait here until she finishes this one." The sun-porch opened from the dining room. They could see beyond it, into the drawing-room; the singer was in plain view, sitting at the piano; Raridan stood facing her, keeping time with an imaginary baton.

A man came unobserved to the glass door of the porch and stood unsteadily peering in. He was very dirty and unbalanced himself in that abandon with which intoxicated men baffle Newton's discovery. He had gained the top step with difficulty; the light from the window blinded him for a moment he stood within the inclosure blinking. An ugly grin spread over his face as he made out the two figures by the window, and he began a laborious journey toward them.



RARIDAN STOOD FACING HER, KEEPING TIME.

He tried to tiptoe, and this added further to his embarrassments; but the figures by the window were intent on the song and did not hear him. He drew slowly nearer; one more step and he would have concluded his journey. He poised on his toes before taking it, but the law of gravitation now asserted itself. He lunged forward heavily, casting himself upon Wheaton, and nearly knocking him from his feet.

"Jimmy," he blurted in a drunken voice.

Evelyn turned quickly and shrank back with a cry. Wheaton was slowly rallying from the shock of his surprise. He grabbed the man by the arms and began pushing him toward the door.

"Don't be alarmed," he said over his shoulder to Evelyn, who had shrunk back against the wall. "I'll manage him."

This, however, was not so easily done. The tramp, as Evelyn supposed him to be, had been sobered by Wheaton's attack. He clasped his fingers about Wheaton's throat and planted his feet firmly. He clearly intended to stand his ground, and he dug his fingers into Wheaton's neck with the intention of hurting.

"Father!" cried Evelyn once, but the song was growing noisier toward its end and the circle about the piano did not hear. She was about to call again when a heavy step sounded outside on the walk and Bishop Delafield came swiftly into the porch. He had entered the grounds from the rear and was walking around the house to the front door.

"Quick! that man there—I'll call the others!" cried Evelyn, still shrinking against the wall. Wheaton had been forced to his knees and his assailant was choking him. But there was no need of other help. The bishop had already seized the tramp about the body with his great hands, tearing him from Wheaton's neck. He strode, with the squirming figure in his grasp, toward an open window at the back of the glass inclosure, and pushed the man out. There was a great snorting and thrashing below. The bill dipped abruptly away from the side of the house and the man had fallen several feet, into a flower bed.

"Get away from here," the bishop said, in his deep voice, "and be quick about it." The man rose and ran swiftly down the slope toward the street.

The bishop walked back to the window. The others had now hurried out in response to Evelyn's peremptory call, and she was telling of the tramp's visit, while Wheaton received their condolences, and readjusted his tie. His collar and shirt-front showed signs of contact with dirt.

"It was a tramp," said Evelyn, as the others plied her with questions, "and he attacked Mr. Wheaton."

"Where's he gone?" demanded Porter, excitedly.

"There he goes," said the bishop, pointing toward the window. "I dropped him gently out of the window. The shock seems to have inspired his legs."

"I'll have the police," began Porter.

"Oh, he's gone now, Mr. Porter," said Wheaton, coolly, as he restored his tie. "Bishop Delafield disposed of him so vigorously that he'll hardly come back."

"Yes, let him go," said the bishop, wiping his hands on his handkerchief. "I'm only afraid, Porter, that I've spoiled your best canna bed."

CHAPTER VII.

The following Sunday morning after church, as Wheaton reached his room he found an envelope lying on his table, much soiled, and addressed, in an un-

formed hand, to himself. It contained a dirty scrap of paper bearing these words: "Jim: I'll be at the Occidental Hotel to-night at 8 o'clock. Don't fail to come. "BILLY."

Wheaton tore up the note with irritation and threw it into the waste paper basket. He called the Chinese servant, who explained that a boy had left it in the course of the morning and had said nothing about an answer.

The Bachelors did not usually muster a full table at Sunday dinner. All Clarkson dined at noon on Sunday, and most of the bachelors were fortunate enough to be asked out. Wheaton was not frequently a diner out by reason of his more slender acquaintance; and to-day all were present, including Raridan, the most fickle of all in his attendance. It had pleased Wheaton to find that the others had been setting him apart more and more with Raridan for the daily discipline they dealt one another. They liked to poke fun at Raridan on the score of what they called his mad social whirl; there was no resentment about it; they were themselves of sterner stuff and had no patience with Raridan's frivolities; and they were within the fact when they assumed that, if they wished, they could go anywhere that he did. It touched Wheaton's vanity to find himself a joint target with Raridan for the arrows which the other bachelors fired at folly.

Wheaton after dinner went to his room and made himself comfortable. He re-read the Sunday papers through all their supplements, dwelling again on the events of the carnival. He had saved all the other papers that contained society news, and now brought them out and cut from them all references to himself. He resolved to open a kind of social scrap book in which to preserve a record of his social doings. He remembered a complaint often heard in Clarkson that there were no eligible men there; he was not sure just what constituted eligibility, but as he reviewed the men that went about he could not see that they possessed any advantages over himself. It occurred to him for the first time that he was the only unmarried bank cashier in town; and this in itself conferred a distinction. He was not so secure in his place as he should like to be; if Thompson died there would undoubtedly be a reorganization of the bank and the few shares that Porter had sold to him would not hold the cashiership for him. It might be that Porter's plan was to keep him in the place until Grant grew up. Again, he reflected, the man who married Evelyn Porter would become an element to reckon on with; and yet if he were to be that man—

He slept and dreamed that he was king of a great realm and that Evelyn Porter reigned with him as queen; then he awoke with a start to find that it was late. He sat up on the couch and gathered together the newspaper cuttings which had fallen about him. He remembered the imperative summons which had been left for him during the morning; it was already 6 o'clock. Before going out he changed his clothes to a rough business suit and took a car that bore him rapidly through the business district and beyond, into the older part of Clarkson. The locality was very shabby, and when he left the car presently it was to continue his journey in an ill-lighted street over board walks which yielded a precarious footing. The Occidental Hotel was in the old part of town, and had long ago ceased to be what it had once been, the first hostelry of Clarkson. It had descended to the level of a cheap boarding house, little patronized except by the rougher element of gentlemen and by railroad crews that found it convenient to the yards. Over the door a dim light blinked, and this, it was understood in the neighborhood, meant not merely an invitation to bed and board, but also to the Occidental bar, which was accessible at all hours of the day and night, and was open through all the spasms of virtue with which the city administration was seized from time to time. The door stood open and Wheaton stepped up to the counter on which a boy sat playing with a cat.

"Is William Snyder stopping here?" he asked.

The boy looked up lazily from his play. "Are you the gent he's expecting?" "Very likely. Is he in?" "Yes, he's number eighteen." He dropped the cat and led Wheaton down a dark hall which was stale with the odors of cooked vegetables, up a steep flight of stairs to a landing from which he pointed to an oblong of light above a door.

"There you are," said the boy. He kicked the door and retreated down the stairs, leaving Wheaton to obey the summons to enter which was bawled from within. William Snyder unfolded his long figure and rose to greet his visitor.

(To be continued.)

How It Sounded.

Since this is a confession, it may as well be a frank and truthful one. I am not jealous of my husband's first wife—at least I hope I am not. But when he looks depressed, or when I see that he is not so happy as I would like him to be, I am conscious of an uncomfortable doubt. I have tried to bring my sense of humor to bear upon this pain, too, and sometimes have succeeded fairly well—sometimes I have failed dismally. A trying trick that my dear husband has is that of sinking into an absent-minded reverie or abstraction; and he sometimes so far forgets himself to call me "Mary" instead of "Sarah." Once when he had been particularly forgetful and dreamy he did this three times in one evening. At last my resentment and appreciation of the ridiculous sprang to arms. With the fourth "Mary" I answered sweetly:

"In heaven, dear! Won't I do?"

I had heard of another wife who had done this, and it had sounded funny to me when I heard the story; but when I uttered the unseemly and unrefined speech I was overcome with shame, my anger fled, and, bursting into tears, I begged my husband's pardon, and I told him so.

"I am hurt," he said; "I had no idea that the memory of my poor girl, or that my thought of her, distressed you. Since it does, I shall be more careful in the future, my dear wife, and try not to talk of her."—Success Magazine.

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