# The Main Chance

BY

**Meredith Nicholson**

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CHAPTER XIV.

The man who admitted Wheaton to the Porter house let him elect between the drawing room and the library, and he chose the latter instinctively, as less formal and more appropriate for an interview based on his dual social and business relations with the Porters. Wheaton heard the swish of Evelyn's skirts in the hall with a quickening heartbeat. Her black gown intensified her fairness; he had never seen her in black before, and it gave a new accent to her beauty as she came toward him.

"It was a great shock to us down town to hear of your father's illness. He seemed as well as usual yesterday."

"Did you think so? I thought he looked worn when he came home last evening. He has been working very hard lately."

Wheaton had never seen her so grave. He was sincerely sorry for her trouble, and he tried to say so. There was something appealing in her unusual calm; the low tones of her voice were not wasted on him.

"Father asked me to send for you this morning, but he had grown so ill in a few hours that I took the responsibility of not doing it. But something in particular was on his mind, some papers that Mr. Fenton should have. They are in his box at the bank, and I was to give you the key to it. It is something about the Traction Company. You can attend to this easily?"

"Yes, certainly. Mr. Fenton spoke to me about the matter this afternoon. It is very important and he wished me to report to him as soon as I found the papers. No doubt they are in your father's box," he said. "He is always very methodical." He smiled at her reassuringly and rose. She did not ask him to stay longer, but went to fetch the key. It was a small, thin bit of steel.

"I'll return the key to-morrow, after I've found the papers Mr. Fenton wants."

"Very well. I hope you will have no difficulty. Father evidently wished all the papers he has concerning the company to be given to Mr. Fenton. Now, this probably is of no importance whatever, but several years ago father gave me some stock in the street railway company. It came about through a little fun-making between us. We were talking of railway passes—you know he never accepts any"—Wheaton blinked—"and I told him I'd like to have a pass on something, even if it was only a street car line."

She was smiling in her eagerness that he should understand perfectly.

"And he said he guessed he could fix that by giving me some stock in the company. I remember that he made light of it when I thanked him, and said it wasn't so important as it looked. He probably forgot it long ago. I had forgotten it myself—I never got the pass, either! but I brought the stock down thinking that Mr. Fenton might have use for it." She went over to the mantel and picked up a paper, while he watched her; and when she put it into his hand he turned it over. It was a certificate for one hundred shares, issued in due form to Evelyn Porter, but was not assigned.

"It may be important," said Wheaton, regarding the paper thoughtfully. "Mr. Fenton will know. It couldn't be used without your name on the back," he said, indicating the place on the certificate.

"Oh, should I sign it?" she asked, in the curious fluttering way in which many women approach the minor details of business. Wheaton hesitated; he did not imagine that this block of stock could be of importance, and yet the tentative business association with Miss Porter was so pleasant that he yielded to a temptation to prolong it.

"Yes, you might sign it," he said.

Evedyn went to her father's table and wrote her name as Wheaton indicated.

"A witness is required and I will supply that." And Wheaton sat down at the table and signed his name beside hers, while she stood opposite him, the tips of her fingers resting on the table.

"Evelyn Porter" and "James Wheaton." He blotted the names with Porter's blotter, Evelyn still standing by him, slightly mystified as women often are by the fact that their signatures have a value. He felt that there was something intimate in the fact of their signing themselves together there. He was thrilled by her beauty.

On his way down the slope to the car, Wheaton felt in his pocket several times to be sure of the key. There was something the last bit uncanny in his possession of it. Yesterday William Porter would no more have intrusted the key of his private box to him than he would have burned down his house. He read into his errand a trust on Porter's part that included Porter's daughter, too; but he got little satisfaction from this. He was only the most convenient messenger available. His spirits rose and fell as he debated. He went to the side door of the bank and knocked for the watchman to admit him.

"Going to work to-night, Mr. Wheaton?" asked the watchman.

"There are some papers in Mr. Porter's box that I must give to Mr. Fenton to-night. They are in the old vault." This vault was often opened at night by the bookkeepers and there was no reason why the cashier should not enter it when he pleased. The watchman turned up the lights so that Wheaton could manipulate the combination, and then swung open the door. Wheaton thanked him and went in. Two keys were necessary to open all of the boxes; one was common to all and was kept by the bank. Wheaton easily found it, and then he took from his pocket Porter's key which supplemented the other. His pulses beat fast as he felt the lock yield to the thin strip of steel, and in a moment the box lay open before his eyes. He had flashed on the electric light bulb in the vault and recognized instantly Porter's inscription "Traction" on a brown bundle. He then opened his own box and took out his Traction certificate and carried it with Porter's packet into the directors' room.

He sat playing with the package, which was sealed in green wax with the plain oval insignium of the bank. The packet was larger than he had expected it to be; he had no idea of the amount of stock it contained; and he knew nothing of the bonds. He felt tempted to open it; but clearly that was not within his instructions. He must deliver it intact to Fendon, and he would do it instantly. He hesitated, though, and drew out the certificate which Evelyn had given him and turned the crisp paper over in his hand. Each of them owned one hundred shares of Traction stock; he was not thinking of this, but of Evelyn, whose signature held his eye. It was an angular hand, and she ran her two names together with a long sweep of the pen.

His thoughts were given a new direction by the noise of a colloquy between the watchman and some one at the door. He heard his own name mentioned, and thrusting the certificates into his pocket, he went out to learn what was the matter.

"Mr. Wheaton," called the watchman, who held the door partly closed on some one, "Mr. Margrave wishes to see you."

As Wheaton walked toward the watchman, Margrave strode in heavily on the tile floor of the bank.

CHAPTER XV.

"Hello, Wheaton," said Margrave, cheerfully. "I've had a hard time finding you. Let's go into the directors' room; I want to see you."

WROTE HER NAME AS WHEATON INDICATED.

The main bank room was only dimly lighted, but a cluster of electric lights burned brilliantly above the directors' mahogany table, around which were chairs of the Bank of England pattern.

"Have a seat, Mr. Margrave," said Wheaton formally. He had left the door open, but Margrave closed it carefully. Porter's bundle of papers in its manila wrapper lay on the table, and Wheaton sat down close to it.

"What you got there, greenbacks?" asked Margrave. "If you were just leaving for Canada, don't miss the train on my account."

"That isn't funny," said Wheaton, severely.

"Oh, I wouldn't be so sensitive," said Margrave, throwing open his overcoat and placing his hat on the table in front of him. "I guess you ain't any better than some of the rest of 'em."

"I suppose you didn't come to say that," said Wheaton. He ran his fingers over the wax seal on the packet. He wished that it were back in Porter's box.

"We were having a little talk this afternoon, Jim," began Margrave in a friendly and familiar tone, "about Traction matters. As I remember it, in our last talk, it was understood that if I needed your little bunch of Traction shares you'd let me have 'em when the time came. Now our friend Porter's sick," continued Margrave, watching Wheaton sharply with his small, keen eyes.

"I don't know that it's so serious. I was at the house this evening."

"Comforting the daughter, no doubt," with a sneer. "Now, Jim, I'm going to say something to you. The chances are that Porter's going to die. I guess he won't be able to vote his stock to-morrow. I suppose you've got it or know where it is." He eyed the bundle on which Wheaton's hand at that moment rested nervously. I want that stock, Jim, and I want you to give it to me to-night."

"Margrave," said Wheaton, "you must be crazy, or a fool."

"Things are going pretty well with you, Jim," Margrave continued. "You have a good position here; when the old man's out of the way, you can marry the girl and be president of the bank. It's dead easy for a smart fellow like you. It would be too bad for you to spoil such prospects right now, when the game is all in your own hands, by failing to help a friend in trouble. I gave you your first job when you came here——"

"I appreciate all that, Mr. Margrave," Wheaton broke in. "You said the word that got me into the Clarkson National, and I have never forgotten it."

"Well, I don't want you to forget it. But see here: as long as I recommended you and stood by you when you were a ratty little train butcher, I think you owe something to me. One night last fall a drunken scamp came into my yard and made a row. I was about to turn him over to the police when he began whimpering and said he knew you. He wasn't doing any particular harm and I gave him a quarter and told him to get out; but he wanted to talk. He said—" Margrave dropped his voice and fastened his eyes on Wheaton—"he was a long-lost brother of yours. He was pretty drunk, but he seemed clear on your family history, Jim. He said he'd done time once back in Illinois, and got you out of a scrape. He told me his name was William Wheaton, but that he had lost it in the shuffle somewhere and was known as Snyder. I started him toward Porter's where I knew you were doing the society act. I heard afterward that he found you."

"And so you sent that scamp over there to make a row. I didn't think you would play me a trick like that."

"Now, Jim," Margrave continued magnanimously, "I don't care about your family connections. You're all right. You're good enough for me, you understand, and you're good enough for the Porters. My father was a butcher and I began life sweeping out the shop, and I guess everybody knows it; and if they don't like it, they know what they can do."

(To be continued.)

## POE'S AMBIDEXTROUS HOAX.

**Found Writing Poem with One Hand and a Story with the Other.**

Many traditions and stories of Edgar Allan Poe are still current at the Univeristy of Virginia, at Charlottesville, where he was a student, says James Bernard Lyon in the Home Magazine.

Poe was very proud of his penmanship. One day, so the story goes, a friend entered the room to find Poe writing busily with both hands.

"What are you doing?" asked the friend.

"Writing with both hands," said Poe.

"Both hands!' exclaimed the friend. "But how on earth can you make any progress in that way?"

"Easy enough. It is a theory of mine that it is a waste of time not to be able to use both hands at the same time. Both hands and brain may be trained, with care and attention, so that each hand may do its full share of work—each hand being employed on a separate task. It is not really an affair of the hands at all, in the last analysis, but an affair of the intellect. I am training my hands and brain now so that I can do twice as much work as the ordinary person in a given period of time. At the present moment I am writing a poem with my right hand; one that I confidently believe will startle the world. And with my left hand I am blocking out a wonderful story; a story which should capture thousands of readers.

"It will only be a short time before I will be able to take my examinations in this manner and dispose of two subjects simultaneously. It will save time and will give hands and brain their full duty."

**Fatherly Advice.**

"Dad," said the country youth who had just graduated from the district school, "I have long cherished a desire to go on the stage, and have at last decided, with your permission, to——"

"My boy," interrupted the old granger, "all the world's a stage. You hitch the mules to the big red plow and transfer the outfit to the ten-acre lot behind the barn, where you can enact the star role in that beautiful drama entitled, 'Down on the Farm.'"

**A Good Foundation.**

Mrs. Youngwed—This is the first bread I ever made, darling.

Youngwed—Well, dear, you ought to build up an excellent reputation as a housekeeper on it.

Mrs. Youngwed—Why?

Youngwed—Because you have started with an almost indestructible foundation.

We learn not at school, but in life.—German.

# HOT WAVE IS BROKEN

## Southwest Is Much Relieved by Cooling Breezes and Rain.

## CORN ESCAPED SERIOUS INJURY

**Many Prostrations and Some Deaths Reported From All Sections East of Rockies.**

Kansas City, Aug. 19.—Severe warm weather throughout the Southwest gave way to a limited extent last night before cooling breezes.

The day was the most trying Kansas, Missouri and Oklahoma have experienced for years. Despite the excessively high temperature, however, there were comparatively few prostrations. Eight deaths were recorded at Kansas City.

Oklahoma reported excessive heat. Government thermometers at McAlester registered 113; at Ardmore, 111; at Vinita, 101; at Oklahoma City, Guthrie and Tulsa, 106.

In Kansas City and Western Missouri the temperature was near the 100 mark all the afternoon.

**New York Has Big Downpour.**

New York, Aug. 19.—The steady downpour which during the last two days has broken all August rainfall records, is over. The city's rain gauges show a total precipitation of 5½ inches as the official record of the storm.

**Fierce Wind in Charleston.**

Charleston, S. C., Aug. 19.—As a result of a fierce wind and rain storm which passed over this city yesterday, all the telegraph wires leading into the city are down and communication with the outside world is by long-distance telephone. No loss of life is reported.

**Heat Record at Fort Worth.**

Fort Worth, Tex., Aug. 19.—With the weather bureau thermometer registering 111 degrees and street thermometers recording 120 degrees, yesterday was the hottest in the history of Fort Worth.

**Five Killed in St. Louis.**

St. Louis, Aug. 19.—Despite a decided drop in the temperature, five more deaths were recorded here yesterday as a result of the heat. Three of these were persons previously prostrated. The maximum temperature today was 89 degrees.

**Three Deaths at Norfolk.**

Norfolk, Neb., Aug. 19.—The heat claimed three victims in Norfolk and vicinity last night.

## ROBBERS BIND WATCHMAN.

**Desperate Attempt to Blow Safe of Portland Factory.**

Portland, Aug. 19. — Safecrackers made a desperate effort to get into the safe of the Dornbecher Manufacturing company yesterday morning and succeeded in badly damaging the safe with three charges of nitro-glycerine, but did not get at the contents.

E. R. Mickley was in the fireroom of the factory when he was suddenly seized by one of four men, all of them masked and armed. He was thrown down and his arms tied behind him.

They then went back to the factory, gathering up a sledge hammer and other tools, and went at the safe. They knocked off the knob with a hammer and drilling holes, set off in all three charges of nitro-glycerine. In the midst of their work a switch engine pulled into the siding to pick up cars from the factory, the brakeman entered the rear door to get his orders and was met by a volley of shots from the robbers, one of the bullets going through his hat. He promptly ran off and the engine backed down town, going back in half an hour with police aid. As the engine returned, Mickley was found but the robbers had gone, leaving a pint bottle of nitro-glycerine and all their tools in the factory office.

**Miss Elkins May Marry.**

Rome, Aug. 19.—Rumors are current here today that all the objections of the royal family to the marriage of the Duke of Abruzzi to Miss Katherine Elkins, of West Virginia, have been removed. The couple, according to the latest reports, will be married as soon as the duke returns his exploration trip in the Himalayas. United States Senator Elkins has repeatedly denied that his daughter was to marry the duke, declaring that if Miss Elkins is ever married it will be to an American.

**Powers Caution Cretans**

Canea, Crete, Aug. 19.—The foreign consuls here, on behalf of the international squadron now anchored in Canea bay, today notified the Cretan government that the Greek flag would be hauled down today. They warned the government that irreparable consequences will follow any attack made on a landing party. On account of this warning the Cretan authorities issued an appeal to the people not to obstruct the action of the powers.

**Troops to Quit Fort William.**

Winnipeg, Aug. 19.—The regular soldiers who have been on duty at Fort William returned to their barracks here today, leaving 30 special Canadian Pacific railway constables armed with rifles to maintain order. Five hundred men are now working on the docks.

**Good at Any Station.**

Tough Looking Passenger (presenting ticket)—Can I get a stopoff on this?

Conductor (inspecting it) — More than than; you get a kickoff.

(Pulls bell rope.)

**Thirst for Knowledge.**

"I will wait a moment," said the temperance lecturer at the close of his speech, "to answer any questions you may wish to ask."

"Can a person get drunk on sauer-kraut?" inquired an earnest woman in the audience whose husband had signed the pledge.

Mothers will find Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup the best remedy to use for their children during the teething period.

**How Careless.**

He—There was nearly a bad fire at the theater.

She—How was that?

He—The villain lit a cigarette and tossed the match into the snow!—Comic Cuts.

**Practical Patriotism.**

The thing for you to do now is to get busy so that you will have an income tax to be taxed when all the States agree to it. That's true patriotism.—Indianapolis News.

Lame back and Lumbago make a young man feel old. Hamlins Wizard Oil makes an old man feel young. Absolutely nothing like it for the relief of all pain.

**Prints of Man.**

"There is such a masculine touch about the dresses she wears."

"You mean that smudgy streak of finger marks along the line of buttons in the back?"—Houston Post.

Experience in England shows that in towns supplied with soft water the death rate is 19.2, while in towns that have a supply of hard water it is only 16.5.

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**Knew His Place.**

Housemaid—Please, sir, will you come at once, the drorin' room's on fire. Master—Well, go and tell your mistress; you know I never interfere in household matters.—Punch.

**His Little Kick.**

"In this matter of quick thinking," said the base ball umpire, "all the bouquets go to the players; and yet we fellows have to think as quick as they do, if not a little quicker. If a player works his thinker too slow all he gets is an error. If I do it I get a pop bottle."—Chicago Tribune.

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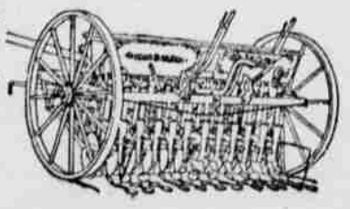

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