The Main Chance

BY

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CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

John turned out the light, and while they waited for the elevator to come up for them Warry jingled the coins and keys in his pockets before he blurted:

"I say, John, I'm an underbred, low person, and am not worthy to be called thy friend, and you may hate me all you like, but one thing I'd like to know. Did she say anything about me when you passed us this afternoon—make any comment or anything? You know I despise myself for asking, but——"

Saxton laughed quietly.

"Yes, she did; but I don't know that I ought to tell you. It was really encouraging. She said, 'Miss Margrave has a lot of style; don't you think so?'"

"Is that all?" demanded Raridan, stepping into the car.

"That's all. It wasn't very much; but it was the way she said it; and as she said it she brushed a fly from the horse with the whip, and she did it very carefully."

In the corridor below they met Wheaton coming out of the side door of the bank. He had been at work, he said. Raridan asked him to go with them to the club for a game of billiards, but he pleaded weariness and said he was going to bed.

The three men walked up Varney street together. They were men of widely different antecedents and qualities. Circumstances, in themselves natural and harmless, had brought them together. The lives of all three were to be influenced by the weakness of one, and one woman's life was to be profoundly affected by contact with all of them. It is not ordained for us to know whether those we touch hands with, and even break bread with, from day to day, are to bring us good or evil. The electric light reveals nothing in the sibyl's book which was not disclosed of old to those who pondered the mysteries by starlight and rushlight.

Wheaton left them at the club door and went on to The Bachelors', which was only a step farther up the street.

"How do you like Wheaton by this time?" asked Raridan, as they entered the club.

"I hardly know how to answer that," Saxton answered. "He's treated me well enough. It seems to me I'm always trying to find some reason for not liking him, but I can't put my hand on anything tangible."

"That's the way I feel," said Raridan, hanging up his coat in the billiard room. "He's rigid, some way. There's no let-go in him. I guess the law allows us to dislike some people just on general principles, and Jim likes himself so well that you and I don't matter."

CHAPTER IX.

After the interim of quiet that Lent always brings in Clarkson, the spring came swiftly. There was a renewal of social activities which ran from dances and teas into outdoor gatherings. Evelyn had enjoyed to the full her experience at home. She had plunged into the frivolities of the town with a zest that was a trifle emphasized through her wish to escape any charge of being pedantic or literary. She was glad that she had gone to college, but she did not wish this fact of her life to be the haunting ghost of her days; and by the end of the winter she felt that she had pretty effectually laid it.

In June Mr. Porter began discussing summer plans with Evelyn. He eliminated himself from them; he could not get away, he said. But there was Grant to be considered. The boy was at school in New Hampshire, and Evelyn protested that it was not wise to subject him to the intense heat of a Clarkson summer. The first hot wave sent Porter to bed with a trifling illness, and his doctor took the opportunity to look him over and tell him that it was imperative for him to rest. Thompson came home from Arizona to spend the summer. He and Wheaton were certainly equal to the care of the bank, so they urged Porter, and he finally yielded. Evelyn found a hotel on the Massachusetts North Shore which sounded well in the circulars, and her father agreed to it. When they reached Orchard Lane he liked it better than he had expected. Every night he sat down with cipher telegrams, and constructed from Thompson's statistics the day's business in the bank. He received daily from New York the closing quotations on the shares he was interested in, and as he walked the long hotel verandas he effected a transmigration of spirit which put him back in his swivel chair in the Clarkson National.

In August Warry Raridan appeared suddenly and threw himself into the gaieties of the place for a fortnight. Mr. Porter asked him to sit at their table and marveled at the way Evelyn snubbed him, even to the extent of running away for three days with some friends who had a yacht and who carried her to Newport for a dance. During her absence Warry made all the other girls about the place happy; they were sure that "that Miss Porter" was treating him shabbily and their hearts went out to him. Warry sulked when Evelyn returned and they had an interview between dances at a Saturday night hop.

He sought for recognition as a lover; she had not praised the efforts he had been making to win her approval by diligence at his office; he took care to call her attention to his changed habits.

"But, Evelyn, I am doing differently. I know that I wasted myself for years so that I'm a kind of joke and everybody laughs about me. But I want to know—I want to feel that I'm doing it for you! Don't you know that would help me and steady me? Won't you let it be for you?" He came close to her and stood with his arms folded, but she drew away from him with a despairing gesture.

"Oh, Warry," she cried, wearily, "you poor, foolish boy! Don't you know that you must do all things for yourself?"

"Yes," he returned eagerly. "I know that; I understand perfectly; but if you'd only let me feel that you wanted it——"

"I want you to succeed, but you will never do it for any one, if you don't do it for yourself."

He went home by an early train next morning to receive Saxton's consolation and to turn again to his law books. Margrave, on behalf of the Transcontinental, had offered to compromise the case of the poor widow whose clothes lines had been interfered with; but Raridan rejected this tender. He needed something on which to vent his mad spirits, and he gave his thought to devising means of transferring the widow's cause to the federal court. The removal of causes from State to federal courts was, Warry frequently said, one of the best things he did.

Porter's vacation was not altogether wasted. As he lounged about and philosophized to the Bostonians on Western business conditions, his restless mind took hold of a new project. It was suggested to him by the inquiries of a Boston banker, who owned a considerable amount of Clarkson Traction bonds and stock which he was anxious to sell. Porter gave a discouraging account of the company, whose history he knew thoroughly. The Traction Company had been organized in the boom days and its stock had been inflated in keeping with the prevailing spirit of the time. It was first equipped with the cable system in deference to the Clarkson hills, but later the company made the introduction of the trolley an excuse for a reorganization of its finances with an even more generous inflation. The panic then descended any wrought a diminution of revenue; the company was unable to make the repairs which constantly became necessary, and the local management fell into the hands of a series of corrupt directorates.

There had been much litigation, and some of the Eastern bondholders had threatened a receivership; but the local stockholders made plausible excuses for the default of interest when approached amicably, and when menaced grew insolent and promised trouble if an attempt were made to deprive them of power. A secretary and a treasurer under one administration had connived to appropriate a large share of the daily cash receipts, and before they left the office they destroyed or concealed the books and records of the company. The effect of this was to create a mystery as to the distribution of the bonds and the stock. When Porter came home from his summer vacation, the newspapers were demanding that steps be taken to declare the Traction franchise forfeit. But the franchise had been renewed lately and had twenty years to run. This extension had been procured by the element in control, and the foreign bondholders, biding their time, were glad to avail themselves of the political skill of the local officers.

Porter had been casually asked by his Boston friend whether there was any local market for the stock or bonds; and he had answered that there was not; that the holders of shares in Clarkson kept what they had because they could no longer sell to one another and that they were only waiting for the larger outside bondholders and shareholders to assert themselves. Porter had ridden down to Boston with his brother banker and when they parted it was with an understanding that the Bostonian was to collect for Porter the Clarkson Traction securities that were held by New England banks, a considerable amount, Porter knew; and he went home with a well-formed plan of buying the control of the company. Times were improving and he had faith in Clarkson's future; he did not believe in it so noisily as Timothy Margrave did; but he knew the resources of the tributary country, and he had, what all successful business men must have, an alert imagination.

It was not necessary for Porter to disclose the fact of his purchases to the officers of the Traction Company, whom he knew to be corrupt and vicious; the transfer of ownership on the company's books made no difference, as the original stock books had been destroyed—a fact which had become public property through a legal effort to levy on the holdings of a shareholder in the interest of a creditor. Moreover, if he could help it, Porter never told any one about anything he did. He even had several dummies in whose names he frequently held securities and real estate. One of these was Peckham, a clerk in the office of Fenton, Porter's lawyer.

CHAPTER X.

Wheaton had not long been an officer of the bank before he began to be aware that there was considerable mystery about Porter's outside transactions. Porter occasionally perused with much interest several small memorandum books which he kept carefully locked in his desk. The president often wrote letters with his own hand and copied them himself after bank hours, in a private letter-book. Wheaton was naturally curious as to what these outside interests might be. It had piqued him to find that while he was cashier of the band he was not consulted in its larger transactions; and that of Porter's personal affairs he knew nothing.

One afternoon shortly after Porter's return from the East, Wheaton, who was waiting for some letters to sign, picked up a bundle of checks from the desk of one of the individual bookkeepers. They were Porter's personal checks which had that day been paid and were now being charged to his private account. Wheaton turned them over mechanically; it was not very long since he had been an individual bookkeeper himself; he had entered innumerable checks bearing Porter's name without giving them a thought. As the slips of paper passed through his fingers, he accounted for them in one way or another and put them back on the desk, face down, as a man always does who has been trained as a bank clerk. The last of them he held and studied. It was a check made payable to Peckham, Fenton's clerk. The amount was $9,999.00—too large to be accounted for as a payment for services; for Peckham was an elderly failure at the law who ran errands to the courts for Fenton and sometimes took charge of small collection matters for the bank.

A few days later, in the course of business, he asked Porter what disposition he should make of an application for a loan from a country customer. Porter rang for the past correspondence with their client, and threw several letters to Wheaton for his information. Wheaton read them and called the stenographer to dictate the answer which Porter had indicated should be made. He held the client's last letter in his hand, and in concluding turned it over into the wire basket which stood on his desk. As it fell face downwards his eye caught some figures on the back, and he picked it up thinking that they might relate to the letter. The memorandum was in Porter's large, uneven hand and read:

303
33

909
909

9999

The result of the multiplication was identical with the amount of Peckham's check. Again the figures held his attention. Local securities were quoted daily in the newspapers, and he examined the list for that day. There was no quotation of thirty-three on anything; the nearest approach was Clarkson Traction Company at thirty-five. The check which had interested him had been dated three days before, and he looked back to the quotation list for that date. Traction was given at thirty-three. Wheaton was pleased by the discovery; it was a fair assumption that Porter was buying shares of Clarkson Traction; he would hardly be buying foreign securities through Peckham. The stock had advanced two points since it had been purchased, and this, too, was interesting. Clearly, Porter knew what he was about—he had a reputation for knowing; and if Clarkson Traction was a good thing for the president to pick up quietly, why was it not a good thing for the cashier? He waited a day; Traction went to thirty-six. Then he called after banking hours at the office of a real estate dealer who also dealt in local stocks and bonds on a small scale. He chose this man because he was not a customer of the bank, and had never had any transactions with the bank or with Porter, so far as Wheaton knew. His name was Burton, and he welcomed Wheaton cordially. He was alone in his office, and after an interchange of courtesies, Wheaton came directly to the point of his errand.

"Some friends of mine in the country own a small amount of Traction stock; they've written me to find out what its prospects are. Of course in the bank we know in a general way about it, but I suppose you handle such things and I want to get good advice for my friends."

"Well, the truth is," said Burton, flattered by this appeal, "the bottom was pretty well gone out of it, but it's sprucing up a little just now. If the charter's knocked out it is only worth so much a pound as old paper; but if the right people get hold of it the newspapers will let up, and there's a big thing in it. How much do your friends own?"

"I don't know exactly," said Wheaton, evenly; "I think not a great deal. Who are buying just now? I notice that it has been advancing for several days. Some one seems to be forcing up the price."

"Nobody in particular, that is, nobody that I know of. I asked Billy Barnes, the secretary, the other day what was going on. He must know who the certificates are made out to; but he winked and gave me the laugh. You know Barnes. He don't cough up very easy; and he looks wise when he doesn't know anything."

"No; Barnes has the reputation of being pretty close-mouthed," replied Wheaton.

"If your friends want to sell, bring in the shares and I'll see what I can do with them," said Burton. "The outsiders are sure to act soon. This spurt right now may have nothing back of it. The town's full of gossip about the company and it ought to send the price down. Your friend Porter's a smooth one. He was in once, a long time ago, but he knew when to get out all right." Wheaton laughed with Burton at this tribute to Porter's sagacity, but he laughed discreetly. He did not forget that he was a bank officer and dignity was an essential in the business, as he understood it.

(To be continued.)

Cause for Grief.

Tall Actor—Ah, Rudolps, why that sad expression?"

Short Actor—I cannot help it, me lord. I die in the first act.

Tall Actor—Oh, it might be worse.

Short Actor—It couldn't be. There is a real chicken dinner in the second act.

A Plea for the Verities.

"Do you resent the caricatures they publish of corporation kings?"

"No," answered Mr. Dustin Stax; "only I wish they would be a little more consistent, and not make us look like jolly fat men, when most of us are fighting dyspepsia."—Washington Star.

Our Betters.

The Customer—I say, d'ye know you half poisoned me with those beastly mushrooms I had here last week?

A Mysterious Whisper—Then you owe me sixpense, 'Erbert. I told yer so.—The Sketch.

Digging Holes.

"Not all the digging up for garden is done in the back yard.

"No. One has to dig up considerably at the seed and hardware stores."—Kansas City Times.

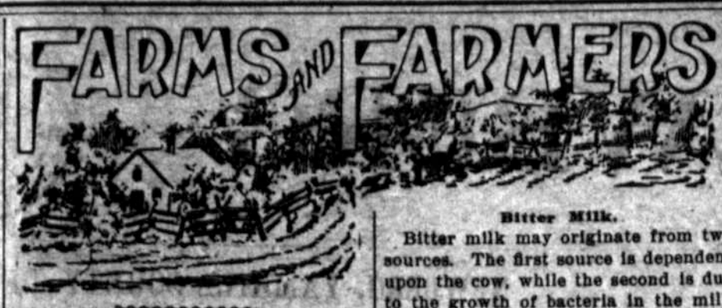
True Affection.

He—And you don't dislike me cause I'm poor, do you, Sadie?

She—Why, Eddie, I couldn't love you any more if your father owned a candy store.

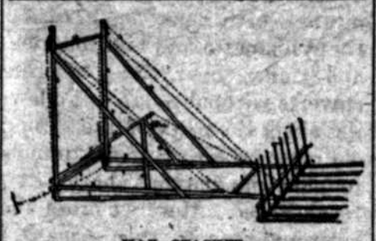
Consumers of meat in New York city are paying about 11 per cent more for their food than they did one year ago.

FARMS AND FARMERS



Good Hay Stacker.

The sizes of timbers used in this design for a hay stacker vary from 2 inches by 4 inches to 4 inches by 6 inches. The bottom pieces marked 1 are 12 feet long and 4 inches by 5 inches, the side uprights are 14 feet long; the cross piece 5 is 13 feet of 3-inch by 5-inch stuff; No. 6 is 2 inches by 5 inches, and is bevelled on the front edge to allow the hay to slide over it easily, when being shoved on by the sweep. No. 13 is 8 feet by 2 inches by 4 inches, with the higher end 8 feet above the ground, so that when the stacker is on the ground the weight box No. 14 will be about 2 inches from the two pulleys on the



HAY STACKER.

upper end of No. 13. The rope for raising the stacker should be either inch or inch and a quarter.

The teeth on the stacker can be made of 2-inch by 4-inch pine scantling 10 feet long and bevelled on the upper side to allow the hay to slide easily. The short upright teeth on the stacker head should be about 5 feet long. They are bolted to the long teeth about 2 inches from the stacker head No. 5 and rest against the stacker head No. 6. The stacker arms No. 4 should be bolted to No. 2 with a large bolt about 12 inches from the ground.

Clean Farming Profitable.

Honest, now, don't you like to see a farm kept clean of all unnecessary trash and the fields clean of weeds? It really adds to the worth of the farm. In the eyes of the man passing by it is a better farm than the one beside it of equal soil, though weed-grown and brushy.

A great many folks pay no attention to the roadsides. Where a hedge is the outside fence, we have seen hedge brush grow from roots that had been exposed by road grading, until travel had actually been turned to the opposite because of it. This doesn't speak very well for the carefulness of the farmer. Of course there is always so much to do on a farm that some of it never gets done—any one who has farmed for as short a time as one year knows this—but the time required to do a little cleaning up is really shorter than a busy man believes. It is getting started at the work that comes hardest. The excuse of the man who does not have a clean-looking farm is usually that he does not care about selling, and it is worth as much to him that way as any. He does not figure in anything for satisfaction.—Farmers' Mail and Express.

Summer Care of Horses.

A great many horses are laid up every summer with sore shoulders. This can be remedied in a very large measure with sense and care.

A good horse collar is the main part of the harness and it should be of the very best kind and fit the animal's neck perfectly.

The collar should be kept clean at all times and the horse's shoulders well washed and brushed daily.

Much dust and dirt arise in the fields and on the roads during the warm season, and this is caught and held on the moist and sweaty shoulders and collar, there to form hard lumps and ridges.

Every time the collar is put on the horse it should be examined for those ridges and lumps. If any are found they should be carefully brushed and rubbed away.

After each day's work, especially in warm weather, bathe and clean the shoulders with a mixture of warm water, salt and soda.

Hot water is one of the best known natural agents for relieving soreness.

What a Good Cow Will Make.

The milk produced by the average Missouri cow in a year will sell for about $50 at the creamery or when made into first-class butter. A good cow of the dairy breed will make at least $50 cash income every year. I have a list of about fifty Missouri farmers who report a cash income of $50 to $100 a cow every year, and these figures do not include the income from the sale of calves, and pigs fed on the skim-milk. "But," says one, "milking is a tremendous task." As a matter of fact, it takes only sixty hours, worth 15 cents an hour, to milk a cow twice a day for ten months.

The Honey Crop.

The annual honey crop of Maryland is 1,000,000 pounds, which is an average of only 20 pounds to each hive of bees. Prof. Thomas B. Symons of the Maryland Agricultural College believes that the average production of each swarm should be from 75 to 100 pounds.

Bitter Milk.

Bitter milk may originate from two sources. The first source is dependent upon the cow, while the second is due to the growth of bacteria in the milk after it has been drawn. The difference between these two classes of bitter milk is that the first has a decidedly acid taste when freshly drawn, while the second class is sweet when taken from the cow, but the bitterness occurs after standing for a short time and increases in intensity. Bitter milk when produced in the udder may result from improper feeding with such of our Colorado herbs as lupines, artemisia and the like, or with the raw Swedish turnips, cabbages, etc. Bitter milk may be observed during the last stage of lactation and has followed the infection of ducts with bacteria which act on the proteids as an enzyme, converting them into peptones and other products to which the bitter taste is probably due.—Field and Farm.

A Useful Bird.

A family of barn owls will number from three to seven birds. It is difficult to believe what a lot of vermin and rodents a family of owls will consume. An old owl will capture as much or more food than a dozen cats in a night. The owlets are always hungry. They will eat their weight in food every night and more if they can get it. A case is on record in which a half grown owl was given all the mice it could eat. It swallowed eight one right after another. The ninth followed all but the tail, which for some time hung out of the bird's mouth. The rapid digestion of birds of prey is shown by the fact that in three hours the little glutton was ready for a second meal and swallowed four more mice. If this can be done by a single bird what effect must a whole family of owls have on the rodents of a community?

Pure Water by Condensation.

In the big desert of Chili there is a considerable amount of brackish water, but no water that either human beings or stock can drink. Science, however, says the Los Angeles Times, has come to the aid of this rainless section of the country in the form of an ingenious desert waterworks, consisting of a series of frames containing 20,000 square feet of glass. The panes of glass are arranged in the shape of a V, and under each pane is a shallow pan containing brackish water. The heat of the sun evaporates the water, which condenses upon the sloping glass, and, made pure by this operation, it runs down into little channels at the bottom of the V and is carried away into the main canal. Nearly a thousand gallons of fresh water is collected daily by this means.

Conversation of Bees.

In an article on bees and ants by Gaston Bouwer in the Revue Hebdomadaire the writer contends that these insects carry on conversation among themselves and that, while this is done by means of their feelers, they are not entirely dependent upon them. "A whole colony," says Mr. Bouwer, "in an anthouse or a beehive often responds instantaneously to a signal which may have been given without contact. It is interesting to see an ant laborer for whom a burden is too heavy go to a fellow, make a sign or give a certain touch with his feeler, and then see the second insect join the first in lifting or moving the object."

If Things Were Reversed.

Moral: Respect the feelings of your horses and protect them from flies.—Farm, Stock and Home.

Scours in Pigs.

The following remedy for scouring in pigs is recommended by a veterinary surgeon: Wash their feed troughs thoroughly with hot water and soap. Rinse with cold water and then wash with soda and water. Do this every morning. Their milk should be kept as cool as possible and free from contaminating influences. Discontinue their run on grass. Put a little powdered sulphate copper in the water they drink—not over two or three grains to each pig.

Strawberries.

There are three common methods of growing strawberries—in hills, in narrow matted rows or in wide matted rows. We prefer the second method. Arrange the first strong runners by hand, spacing them properly and securing each one in place with a little soil or a small stone. Then, when each row is full, cut off the additional runners that may grow. Keep the ground hoed and cultivated until late fall. The finished row should not be wider than 15 or 18 inches.

TALK RICH OUT OF RICHES.

Critic Urges Criticism as Most Effective Weapon of the Poor.

Everything to-day depends upon talking. It is futile to sentimentalize about the vanity of speech or the solidity of action, like poor Carlyle. There is no action that we can profitably perform toward a millionaire, except strangling him. If we can, at every afternoon tea or society dinner, say everything that is calculated to make the wealthy people present feel very uncomfortable, we shall have done all that is immediately practicable and shall not have lived in vain, G. K. Chesterton says in Hampton's Magazine.

Thus, if I were an American, I should turn off every conversation until it came into collision with the subject of the trusts. If a young lady began speaking to me and said: "Have you seen the Velasquez at Vienna?" I should reply (untruthfully), "Oh, yes—magnificent when he worked in oils—which reminds me that this oil trust——" and so on. If the hostess said with a smile, "Will you carve the duck?" I should answer with unscrupulous enthusiasm, "Oh, I am quite at home with the cold steel; in fact, the steel trust, etc." And if at last people began not to want me at dinner parties, and timid conversationalists fell back on the weather, I should cry, "Have they yet started a sun trust, a wind trust, or a sea trust? That seems to me much healthier than ——" But you quite understand.

After I had done this for a year or two, even the trusts (though, as their name implies, full of innocent confidence) might have begun to suspect me.

There is indeed another reason why we must to a great extent rely (for the present) on speech rather than action in our dealings with the monstrosities of modern wealth. Unless our action is mere lynching (and I would never deny that there is something to be said for that), instead of what one calls political, it will not be action against the very rich, but in their favor. They hold all the handles of the political machine; and for the purpose of any prompt action they have only to move the handles. That the poor could conquer the rich at last I believe, because I believe in God—and also in man. But that the rich could conquer the poor by 8:30 to-morrow evening I am quite certain. The whole press would bellow the same tune over a million breakfast tables.

The servants of the rich would have run a million errands, the solicitors and agents of the rich would have struck a million bargains, before the ordinary stonebreaker had even found his pickax. The poor are sure—but slow.

Add to this that worst and wildest work of modern science (more blasphemous than its denial of God)—its invention of scientific war. The sergeant would obey the captain, the soldier would obey the sergeant, and the democracy would lie dead about the streets before soldier, sergeant or captain had realized that they were all obeying a swollen and cynical pawnbroker.

Wit of the Youngsters

Little Ethel (aged 3)—Tum on, gwanma; supper is weady. Grandma—Why, dear, you mean breakfast, don't you? Little Ethel—'Es, tourse I does, but I tan't say it.

Little Myra had been to parties on three consecutive days. "Oh, mamma," she cried, on her return from the third, "just think, I've had ice cream three times in congestion."

Anxious Mother—Harold, don't you know those are bad boys across the street for you to play with? Little Harold—Yes, mamma; but don't you know that I'm an awfully good boy for them to play with?

"Well, Bobby," said the minister who was making a duty call, "what do you intend to be when you grow up?" "An orphan," promptly replied Bobby, who was still suffering from a dose of parental discipline.

A Successful Expedient.

A certain prominent minister was compelled not long ago to give strict orders that, while he was engaged in the preparation of his sermons, his young son must be kept reasonably quiet. In spite of this, however, there arose one morning a most astonishing noise of banging and hammering, which seemed to indicate that the steam-heating pipes were being knocked to pieces. Hurrying out of his study, the minister encountered his wife.

"My dear, what in the world is Bobby doing?" he asked.

"Why, he is only beating on the radiator downstairs," was the somewhat surprised reply.

"Well, he must stop it," the minister said, decidedly.

"I don't think he will harm it, dear," his wife answered soothingly; "and it is the only thing that will keep him quiet."—Harper's Weekly.

Shrewd Scheme.

Traveler in Parlor Car—Porter, that man in front will give you a quarter for dusting him off, won't he?

Porter—Yessir!"

"Well, I'll give you half a dollar to leave the dust on him and not brush it off onto me."—Somerville Journal.