

The Main Chance

BY
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CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

Wheaton's hand rested again on the packet before him; he had flushed to the temples, but the color slowly died out of his face. It was very still in the room, and the watchman could be heard walking across the tiled lobby outside. A patrol wagon rattled in the street with a great clang of its gong. Wheaton had moved the brown parcel a little nearer to the edge of the table; Margrave noticed this and for the first time took a serious interest in the packet. He was not built for quick evolutions, but he made a sudden movement around the table toward Wheaton, who was between him and the door.

"What you got in that paper, Jim?" he asked, puffing from his exertion. Wheaton did not speak, but he picked up the parcel and took a step toward the door, Margrave advancing upon him. Wheaton reached the door, holding the package under his arm.

"Don't touch me; don't touch me," he said, hoarsely. Margrave still came toward him. Wheaton's unengaged hand went nervously to his throat, and he fumbled at his tie. The sweat came out on his forehead. It was a curious scene, the tall, dark man in his evening clothes, pitiful in his agitation, with his back against the door, hugging the bundle under one arm; and Margrave, in his rough business suit, walking toward Wheaton, who retreated before him.

"I want that package, Jim." "Go away! Go away!" The sweat shone on Wheaton's forehead in great drops. "I can't, I can't—you know I can't!"

"You coward!" said Margrave. "I want that bundle." He made a gesture and Wheaton dodged and shrank away. Margrave laughed again; a malicious mirth possessed him. But he grew suddenly fierce and his fat fingers closed about Wheaton's neck. Wheaton huddled against the door, holding the brown packet with both hands.

"Drop it! Drop it!" blurted Margrave. He was breathing hard. A sharp knock at the door against which they struggled caused Margrave to spring away. He walked down the room several paces with an assumption of carelessness, and Wheaton, with the bundle still under his arm, turned the knob of the door.

"Hello, Wheaton!" called Fenton, blinking in the glare of the lights.

"Good evening," said Wheaton. "How're you, Fenton?" said Margrave, carelessly, but mopping his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Here are your papers," said Wheaton, almost thrusting his parcel into the lawyer's hands.

"All right," said Fenton, looking curiously from one to the other. And then he glanced at the package, as if absent-mindedly, and saw that the seal was unbroken.

"Good night, gentlemen," he said. "Sorry to have disturbed you."

"How much Traction was in that package?" asked Margrave, closing the door. "I don't know," said Wheaton, smoothing his tie. The watchman could be heard closing the outside door on Fenton.

"No, I don't think you do," returned Margrave. "You'd fixed it pretty well with Fenton. If he'd only been a minute later I'd have got that bundle. I didn't realize at first what you had there, Jim, until you kept fingering it so desperately. Now there are those shares you own, Jim. I hope we won't be interrupted while you're getting them for me."

Wheaton hesitated. "I'm going from here to the Gazette office. You know they do what I tell 'em over there. They'd like a little story about the aristocratic Wheaton family of Ohio. Porter's girl would like that for breakfast-to-morrow morning."

Wheaton hung between two inclinations, one to make terms with Margrave and secure his friendship at any hazard, the other to break with him, let the consequences be what they might.

"Hurry up," said Margrave impatiently; "this is my busy night and I can't wait on you. Dig it up."

Wheaton's hand went slowly to his pocket. As he drew out his own certificate with nervous fingers, the certificate which Evelyn Porter had given him an hour before fell upon the table.

"That's the right color," said Margrave, snatching the paper as Wheaton sprang forward to regain it.

"Not that! Not that! That isn't mine!"

Margrave stepped back and swept the face of the certificate with his eyes. "Well! I knew you stood next, Jim," he said, insolently, "but I didn't know that you were on such confidential terms as all this. And you witnessed the signature. How sweet and pretty it all is!" The paper exhaled the faint odor of satchel, and Margrave lifted it to his nostrils with a mockery of delight.

"I must have that, Margrave. I will do anything, but I must have that—you wouldn't?"

Margrave watched him maliciously, thoroughly enjoying his terror.

"How do you know I wouldn't? Give me the other one, Jim."

Still Wheaton held his own certificate; he believed for a moment that he could trade the one for the other.

"I'm not going to fool with you much longer, Jim; you either give me that certificate or I go to the Gazette office as straight as I can walk. Just sign it in black, the way the other one is. I'll witness it all right."

Wheaton wrote while Margrave stood over him, holding ready a blotter which

he applied to Wheaton's signature with unnecessary care.

"I hope this won't cause you any inconvenience with the lady, but you're undoubtedly a fair liar and you can fix that all right, particularly"—with a chuckle—"if the old man catches in."

Wheaton followed Margrave's movements as if under a spell that he could not shake off. Margrave walked toward the door with an air of nonchalance, pulling on his gloves.

"I haven't my check-book with me, Jim, but I'll settle for your stock and Miss Evelyn's, too, after I get things re-organized. It'll be worth more money than—Please give the young lady my compliments," with irritating suavity. He stopped, smoothing the backs of his gloves placidly. "That's all right, Jim, ain't it?" he asked, mockingly.

"I hope you're satisfied," said Wheaton, weakly.

"I'm never satisfied," said Margrave, picking up his hat.

Wheaton wished to make a bargain with him, to secure his own immunity; but he did not know how to accomplish it. Margrave had threatened him, and he was afraid to ask a promise of him. Wheaton did not follow him to the door, but Margrave seemed in no hurry to leave. The watchman went forward to let him out at the side entrance.

"If he'd only been sure the old man would have died to-night," he reflected as he walked up the street, "he'd have given me Porter's shares, easy." He went to his office, entertaining himself with this pleasant speculation. "If I'd got out of the bank with that package he'd never dated a sequel," he presently concluded.

CHAPTER XVI.

John Saxton was a good deal the worse for wear as he swung himself from a sleeper in the Clarkson station and bolted for a down-town car. Coal mining is a dirty business, and there are limits to the things that can be crowded into a

long strides, but it did not open as he grasped the knob. He kicked it sharply, but there was still no response from within.

"What time is it, Saxton?" he asked over his shoulder, without abating his pounding or knocking.

"Five minutes of nine," Saxton was aware now that something important was in progress. He did not know Fenton well, but he knew that he was the attorney for Porter and the Clarkson National, and that he was a serious character who did not beat on doors unless he had business on the inside. Fenton now called out loudly, demanding admission. There was a low sound of voices and a sharp noise of chairs being pushed over an uncarpeted floor; but the knob which Fenton still held and shook did not turn.

On the inside of the door Timothy Margrave and Horton, the president, Barnes, the secretary, and Percival, the treasurer of the Clarkson Traction Company, were holding the annual meeting of that corporation, in conformity with its articles of association, and according to the duly advertised notice as required by the statutes in such case made and provided. They had, however, anticipated the hour slightly; but this was not, Margrave said, an important matter. His notions of the proper way of holding business meetings were based on his long experience in managing ward primaries.

Horton, the president, called the meeting to order. "Well, boys," said Margrave, "there ain't any use waiting on the other fellows. Business is business and we might as well get through with it. I vote twenty-five hundred and ninety-seven shares of the common stock of this company; you gentlemen haven't more than that, have you?" The fact was that the three officers present owned only one share each.

"I move," said Barnes, "that we proceed to the election of officers for the ensuing year."

"And I move," said Percival, "that the



HIS FINGERS CLOSED ABOUT WHEATON'S NECK.

suit-case. He had been crawling through four-foot veins of Kansas coal in the interest of the Nippon Trust Company, and had been delayed a day longer than he had expected. He continued to be in a good deal of a hurry after he reached his office, and he kicked aside the mail which rustled under the door as he opened it, and knelt hastily before the safe and began rattling the tumblers of the combination. He pulled out a long envelope and then with more composure consulted his watch.

It was half-past eight. He took from his memorandum calendar the leaf for the day; on it he had posted a cutting from a local newspaper announcing the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Clarkson Traction Company. The meeting was to be held, so the notice recited, between the hours of 9 a. m. and 5 p. m. of the second Tuesday of November, at the general offices of the company in the city of Clarkson. The Exchange Building was specified, though the administrative offices of the company were on the other side of town. Before setting forth Saxton examined his papers, which were certificates of stock in the Clarkson Traction Company. They had been sent to him by a personal friend in Boston, the trustee of an estate, with instruction to investigate and report. Having received them just as he was leaving for Kansas, there had been no opportunity for consulting Porter or Wheaton, his usual advisers in perplexing matters. Traction stock had advanced lately, despite newspaper attacks on the company, and he hoped to sell his friend's shares to advantage.

Saxton had never been in the Exchange Building before, and he poked about in the dark upper floors, uncertainly looking for the rooms described in the advertisement. Another man, also peering about in the hall, ran against him.

"Beg pardon, but can you tell me—"

"Good morning, Mr. Saxton, are you acquainted in this rookery?" It was Fenton, who carried a brown parcel under his arm and appeared annoyed.

"No; but I'm learning," John answered. "I'm looking for the offices of the Traction Company. Its light seems to be hid under a bushel."

"I'm looking for it, too," said Fenton. "Some humorist seems to have changed the numbers on this floor."

They traversed the halls of several floors in an effort to find the numbers specified in the notice. Fenton occasionally kicked at a door in his rage. Saxton called to him presently from a dark corner where he held up a lighted match to read the number on the transom.

"Here's our number, but there's no name on the door."

Fenton advanced upon the door with

secretary he instructed to cast the ballot of the stockholders for Timothy Margrave for president.

"Consent," exclaimed Barnes, hurriedly.

Steps could be heard in the outer hall, and Margrave looked at his watch.

"I move that we adjourn to meet at my office at two o'clock, to conclude the election of officers." He gathered up his certificates and prepared to leave.

(To be continued.)

Too Wise to Be Hasty.

He was an unruly youngster. A writer in the New York Sun says that he had not been in the car five minutes before all the women present and most of the men were explaining to anybody who would listen what they would do with the boy if he belonged to them.

To the general babel there was one woman who contributed nothing. She was a gentle, gray-haired body, who remained unruffled by the small tempest raging.

"If that child belonged to me," said the woman beside her, "I'd make him mind if I had to half kill him, wouldn't you?"

"I don't know," said the quiet woman. "I don't know what I should do."

"You don't?" exclaimed the positive woman. "Well, I know. But then, maybe you are not used to children? Maybe you never had any of your own?"

"Oh, yes," said the little woman, "I brought up thirteen. That's why I don't know what I should do."

Similar Symptoms.

It was the open season for baseball as a man limped into the police station, with a black eye and one arm in a sling.

"Say, captain," he said, addressing the officer in charge, "I want protection."

"Oh, you do, eh?" queried the officer. "Are you a married man or an umpire?"

Some System.

"I'm hunting up all my famous ancestors."

"I've got your scheme skinned. I'm hunting up all my ancestors who were crooks."

"But why?"

"To prove what a fine fellow I am in spite of my handicap."—Cleveland Leader.

HOW A "DREADNOUGHT" IS HAMMERED INTO SHAPE.



ONE OF THE STEAM HAMMERS AT PORTSMOUTH (ENG.) DOCKYARD.

The dockyard at Portsmouth, England, affords employment for 8,000 to 8,500 men, who are to be seen streaming in armies in and out of the Main, Marlborough and Unicorn gates when the bell rings for them to begin or leave work, their wages bill totalling \$55,000 to \$60,000 a week. The modern yard may be said to date from 1843, when it was determined to greatly enlarge it and introduce steam power. In 1864 it was still further enlarged, and now covers between 300 and 400 acres of ground with its basins, docks, building slips, factories, storehouses and workshops. Here we find drawing offices, machinery for punching, bending, cutting and shaping steel plates, all of which operations, thanks to the powers conferred by steam, hydraulics and electricity, they appear to carry out with no more difficulty than if they had been dealing with butter or plasticine. In the large smithy, a huge brick building, there are no fewer than 120 fires arranged in a quadrangle.

Of the enormous steam hammers invented by James Nasmyth—one of which is shown in the picture at work on a big forging—there are a full dozen, one at any rate weighing no less than seven tons. Portsmouth yard boasts as many as seventeen great docks of various sizes and importance. One or two of these can take a Dreadnought and seven King Edwards or Nelsons. There are three large basins, known as the fitting, rigging and repairing basins, and the smaller steam basin. The largest of these is 1,000 feet in length and the next smaller 900 feet. Around the basins are numerous shears and cranes for lifting guns, armor plates, portions of engines and other heavy material in and out of the ships as they lie alongside the basin walls. They are worked by hydraulic or steam power, and the largest pair of shears is capable of raising a weight of 160 tons. But we have by no means exhausted the tale of the various establishments which have their habitat within the long encircling walls of Portsmouth dockyard. Besides the workshops already enumerated there are the rope, mast and block-making houses, the boat-building sheds, the stores of gun mountings, cables and the long rows of ships' anchors forming a perfect alleyway of iron. Neither must the coalyards be overlooked, with their mountains of black diamonds surrounded by rows and rows of cranes and derricks for filling ships' bunkers and railway trucks. Then there are the fine houses occupied by the commander-in-chief and the admiral superintendent, with their gardens and the terrace of houses in which other and lesser functionaries have their abode. Here, too, is the establishment in which naval and marine officers spend months of study in various war courses, dealing with the higher phases of naval strategy and tactics, and also the navigation school and the big fire station containing five steam engines, nine manuals, two fire escapes and twenty-five hose reels.

GOOD SHORT STORIES

When the Lusitania arrived in New York from Liverpool a short time ago a group of passengers were gathered on the pier vainly looking for a porter to cart their trunks over to the express wagon. Just as they were becoming thoroughly discouraged an exceedingly jovial and energetic colored man came bustling up with a small trunk. "Here I am, ladies and gentlemen. Don't worry about yo' trunks. Leave it all to me. Jus' don't worry. I'll tend to you"—and then, in a final burst of confidence—"you sho' can trust me—I'm an adopted son of Mr. Cunard."

He was telling a thrilling story out of his wallet of a thousand and one hair-breadth escapes over in Santiago, don'tcherknow, and his pretty listener was leaning anxiously toward him, hanging on his every utterance. "The wolves were upon us," he said, "bellowing and roaring, as I have so often heard them. We fled for our lives. I don't deny it; but every second we knew the ravenous pack was gaining on us. At last they were so near that we could feel their muzzles against our legs—" "Ah!" gasped out the lady. "How glad you must have been they had their muzzles on!"

To the leader of a band in Omaha, jocularly spoken of in that locality as "the worst in seven different States," there once came a man with a request that the band play at a cousin's funeral. "Is it a military funeral?" asked the leader. "Not at all," was the reply. "My cousin was no military man—in fact, he was never even interested in matters military. Nevertheless, it was his express wish that your band should play at his funeral." The leader was surprised and flattered. "Is that so?" he asked. "Yes," responded the other. "He said he wanted everybody in Omaha to be sorry that he died."

A professional man in town who regards his time as valuable has devised an effective plan for handling obstreperous and persistent conversationalists. He has on his desk a small alarm clock. When a visitor of unpleasant propensities is announced this man picks up his clock, sets the alarm for three minutes ahead, and receives his caller. Time goes by, and then the clock does its duty. The busy man starts as he hears the sound, consults his watch, and then rises with a hasty apology. "I'm mighty sorry we won't be able to discuss that longer," he says, "but I've an important engagement at this hour, and simply must keep it."

A couple of city men were playing golf when they saw an old gentleman looking at them wistfully. They asked him to join the game, which he did with alacrity. He was mild in speech and manner and played well. But once when he made a foolish he ejaculated vehemently the word "Asouan!" A few moments later, when he had made another bad play, he repeated: "Asouan!" The fourth time he said this one of his new-made friends said: "I do not want to be inquisitive, but will you tell me why you say 'Asouan' so often?" "Well," said the old gentleman, "Isn't that the biggest dam in the world?" He was a Presbyterian clergyman.

Prevaricating Figures.

Those to whom the mathematical mind has not been given will appreciate the fun an Irishwoman, Mrs. La Touche of Harristown, has with numbers in "The Letters of a Noble Woman."

"I do hate sums," Mrs. La Touche confesses to a friend. "There is no greater mistake than to call arithmetic an exact science. There are permutations and aberrations discernible to minds entirely noble, like mine; subtle variations which ordinary accountants fail to discern; hidden laws of numbers which it requires a mind like mine to perceive."

"For instance, if you add a sum from the bottom up, and then again from the top down, the result is always different."

Needless Trouble.

"Did you wash the fish?" a woman asked her new servant. "Shure, an' phat's the use of wash'n anything that's always lived in the water?" asked the girl.

Old Favorites

The Fatal Wedding.

The wedding bells were ringing on a moonlight winter's night. The church was decorated, all within was gay and bright; A mother with her baby came and saw the lights aglow. She thought of how those same bells chimed for her three years ago. 'T'd like to be admitted, sir," she told the sexton old. "Just for the sake of baby, to protect him from the cold." He told her that the wedding there was for the rich and grand. And with the eager, watching crowd, outside she must stand.

Chorus—

While the wedding bells were ringing, while the bride and groom were there, Marching down the aisle together, as the organ pealed an air— Telling tales of fond affection, vowing never more to part, Just another fatal wedding, just another broken heart.

She begged the sexton once again to let her pass inside. "For baby's sake you may step in," the gray-haired man replied.

"If any one knows reason why this couple should not wed, Speak now or hold your peace forevermore," the preacher said.

"I must object," the woman said, with voice so meek and mild. "The bridegroom is my husband, and this is our little child."

"What proof have you?" the preacher asked. "My infant," she replied. She raised her babe, then knelt to pray, the little one had died.

Chorus—

The parents of the bride then took the outcast by the arm. "We'll care for you through life," they said, "you've saved our child from harm."

The outcast wife, the bride and parents quickly drove away. The husband died by his own hand before the break of day. No wedding feast was spread that night, two graves were made next day—

One for the little baby, and in one the father lay. The story has been often told, by firesides warm and bright, Of bride and groom, of outcast, and the fatal wedding night.

RECORDS OF OLD KASKASKIA

Oldest and Most Authentic Documents Now at St. Louis University.

The members of the Mississippi Valley Historical Society visited the St. Louis University on mass recently and inspected the old historic trove, of which the university has lately become the custodian—a set of documents concerning the history of this vicinity which are among the oldest and most authentic records of the past in America, the St. Louis Republic says. They are the Kaskaskia records in which the first entry is dated 1695. They continue, with but a few gaps, down to the present time. Few records in the east antedate these and none in the west. They were begun in Illinois, near Peoria, before some of the thirteen original colonies were planned.

The records have been a gold mine to historians for years, but their riches will never be exhausted. John Gilman Shea came west to see them thirty years ago; Edward G. Mason wrote a minute description of them, which is one of the publications of the Chicago Historical Society.

Prof. C. W. Alvord, president of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, wrote of them in a work which has just been published by the United States government. At the time he wrote he could not locate them. They were then at Fort Gate; but the bishop of Belleville, in order to better preserve them, has placed them in the archives of the St. Louis University. They are kept in a great iron, fire-proof, combination safe.

The records are those of the baptisms, marriages and burials of the people of old Kaskaskia, near Peoria; and of the later Kaskaskia, sixty miles down the river from St. Louis.

Bridge Builder's Career.

Anybody standing on the Brooklyn bridge and looking northward up the East River will see three striking examples of the genius and ability of Gustavus Lindenthal, who, a matter of thirty years ago, was a mason and carpenter doing journeyman's work in Philadelphia, the Bookkeeper says. The three examples of his later development are the Manhattan bridge, which is nearing completion and is about 1,500 feet north of the Brooklyn bridge; the Williamsburg bridge, and, finally, the enormous Queensborough bridge, that was opened to traffic recently. But this is not all. Far to the north of these three huge spans between Manhattan and Long Island there is another creation of Mr. Lindenthal's brain—the Hell Gate bridge, designed to carry the heaviest loads of any bridge in the world, connecting the mainland lines of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad with the Long Island Railroad, and thus, by way of the tubes under the North River, bringing about a direct rail route from New England into the west.

Breaking It Gently.

Jack—Perhaps you don't like my style of dancing.

Orme (in distress)—Well, there is rather too much sameness about it.

Jack—Er—how may I vary it?

Orme—Suppose you tread on my left foot once in a while.