The Vanishing Men

BY

RICHARD WASHBURN CHILD

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Few young men have been so eminently and actively a part of the life of their times as has Richard Washburn Child. His great distinction as a lawyer and diplomat, as an equally prominent in the literary field, especially in the writing of brilliant short stories and highly interesting novels, he was born in 1881, graduated from Harvard in 1906 and practiced law until 1917, when he became attached to Treasury department at Washington as an assistant in war finance work. After the war he became editor of Collier's Weekly and in 1921 was appointed ambassador to Italy by President Harding. He served until February, 1924, and during the time was founder of the Council on Foreign Relations and chief representative of the United States at the conference of Genoa and the conference of Lausanne.

Richard Washburn Child.

Since about 1910, Mr. Child has been prominent as a writer of excellent fiction. He is exceedingly fond of writing mystery stories and gives a genius and distinction to this form of the novel that have been achieved by very few modern authors. One of his best productions in this line is "The Vanishing Man," in which is presented a baffling enigma dealing with the strange story of Brena Selcoss, a beautiful woman whose influence on the lives of men is felt, at all what she would wish it to be. Pure as she is, a malignant fate seems to assert itself in the case of every man who becomes interested in her. In spite of her bravery and determination her life is shadowed by an inexplicable horror.

A writer less skilled or less true in his art than Mr. Child, would give uncanny qualities to such a story. He would invest it with improbable episodes and with shadowy, unreal characters; but here is a story alive with flesh-and-blood people and matter-of-fact incidents. Distinctly of the world of today, yet it has a haunting quality as of something entirely inexplicable, that is not completely dispelled even when the puzzling mystery is cleared up. The fame of action extends from the battlefields at the close of the great war to an English country house, to Dallas, Texas to New York and finally to the desert regions of the Southwest.

CHAPTER I

He had gone to London the moment he was out of uniform, and he had gone there for a reason typical to him.

For most Americans a single track success is an inspiration of life; there is a raw meat satisfaction in hewing to the line until some tree falls and also an instinct for playing the latest game. If it is money-making, or trade, or industrialism or production-efficiency, the rank and file go panting after it until some one rings for the undertaker. I have always thought that the source of the imagination which was responsible for Peter DeWolfe's tastes, policy and conduct was most difficult to uncover. The true sense of play, not only applied to play but to all the endeavors of life, even those which are usually accounted grim—like war and marriage—is a rare flower to bloom on the American soil; it is still more rare a blossom to find growing in a family tree rooted, as Peter's was rooted, in a bed of money and only fertilized by that humdrum conventional pretense of our large cities which at latest accounts is still giving many persons the same old pale stories.

This rare flower bloomed in Peter and saved him from doing the common places with himself which rich young men who have become orphaned bachelors usually do. It made Peter a great deal more like those individuals, rare enough even abroad—the whimsical Englishman, the adventurous Frenchman, the humorous Spaniard and the practical-Russian, who, though they be the white crows of their respective flocks, exceed in numbers the Americans who value full living above that rather uninteresting and easy prize which is called "Success."

Peter took an interest in living. The common run of bachelors who are provided amply with millions accept the alternative of going to the devil or going to business; DeWolfe's imagination came to his rescue and provided him with a third choice which, in his quiet way, he seized about the time he left college. It was to live for the sake of living.

To some this might have meant self-indulgence; to Peter it meant an indulgence of mankind. To some it might have meant fads and whims, such as hunting big game from airplanes at the source of the Nile; Peter would do that very thing, perhaps, but it was an incident not half as interesting to him as an oil field he developed in Texas or a settlement house he promoted in New York. He kept himself as a very neat, well-cleaned slate upon which life could write if it wished; if it failed to do so Peter wrote on it a little himself—enough to keep himself useful. The same man who invented the DeWolfe millimeter also set down from time to time some charming verses, and the public knows at least one short lyric from the "Leaves of Argonne" which he wrote in the hospital before his promotion to major.

Dark skin, blue eyes, thin sensitive lips, the appearance of one well bathed in ice-cold water, the flexible lean waist of a good horseman, the long muscular fingers of a good tennis player who had not lost the delicacy of touch which made him something less than a distinguished performer upon a cello—these were the outward introductions which made that particularly admirable little group of British gentlemen officers find his acquaintance so quickly.

Eversby Benham of the R. A. F. must bear the blame for the months in which DeWolfe found his great adventure at a time when to Peter adventure had become dull beyond words and the mind-image of himself sitting on a New York park bench, surrounded by engaging little foreign brats, listening to a hurdy-gurdy in the summer dusk, was the most exciting and delicious picture conjurable from his resourceful imagination of what a wonderful moment of life after a whirl with war could be. For it was Benham, who only later went home to the office of the air ministry, and who has since distinguished himself in the development of civil flying, who first steered the young American across the path of Brena Selcoss.

"Are you going back?" said Benham.

"Home," said DeWolfe, with an attempt to say the word without sentiment.

"Red Cross ladies, Waacs, beautiful high caste Parisiennes and even the charming daughter of your what's-his-name at the peace conference—and still a bachelor! By the by, DeWolfe, what happened to your lady with the gorgeous arms at that flubby little cafe on the south bank of the Seine?"

"An engaging, goddess," said DeWolfe. "She is, I believe, a petticoat buyer. She tried to convert me into the Methodist faith. Those beautiful arms are for the neck of some Y. M. C. A. man with glasses and a tickling cough. She borrowed thirty francs from me and then went off to see a daughter of hers who is driving an ambulance near Coblentz."

"You are well armored, Peter," Benham had said, gazing with a reflective and perhaps mischievous smile across the flat fields of France with their filled squares and wisp-armed trees and thin mists of dusk. "By the by, I say, doesn't this landscape remind one of Corot's paintings?"

DeWolfe grinned.

"What would make you fall in love with a woman?" asked Benham.

"Almost anything," Peter replied. "But that's not the problem; the problem is what will prevent a man falling out?"

"You're saying that any woman—that is, with the thing you Americans call a 'come-on, good or bad—may make a man fall in love with her?"

"I was saying that we are all hypocrites. Such a woman would touch us all—affect any of us—me, for instance. We are made ready by a wise nature. 'Stand by for love,' she says, and youth stands by, Benham. But what's the use, if that's all? Life is a long pull. No dimpled chin should be allowed to turn the tide. No discourse of brilliance chatted off like a disk record in a conservatory. No nose-full of the faint odor of violets nor a rating of the old man. That's what I mean. That's why most men marry; but I am hardened by too many inspections of dimpled chins."

"From a discreet distance?"

"Exactly."

"You want more than that pull of the moment or the month."

"To make me give up my own quarters in New York where the sun comes in upon my bare ankles and my coffee, and my Jap brings the newspaper and the cigarettes? I should be glad to say so!"

"You should try Brena Selcoss."

"Who is she?" asked Peter carelessly, as he tried his arm out of its bandage sling.

"You like the name?"

"I confess—"

"Of course—so many names of women—just the names—give a man a thrill. Most extraordinary! She's an American and—"

He paused.

"Well, what?" asked DeWolfe.

"A puzzle," said Benham. "But then you are not interested in women."

"To tell the whole truth, they are my only interest except food," Peter said. "The devil of it is that if a man saw ten thousand of 'em he didn't want and couldn't love he'd always expect year after year until he was ninety that the first over the thousand would be the one. Well, that's what leads us on. We all say, 'No, thank you,' when the dish is passed, but we all look to see every last piece on the dish just the same."

"Brena Selcoss is a friend of my sister," said Benham. "I must say she takes the breath out of me. It's that queer combination of beautiful fresh youth with the flavor of all the guile and conspiracy of the ages. She's a Saint Cecilia or a Lucrezia Borgia. But that's not bothering my mother."

"What bothers her?"

"Funny thing. We don't know who she is. From Texas, I believe. With some money. But why does a girl from the United States come down to Berconshire Heath and buy a cottage next to our place and live in a garden and stay out of London and read lying flat on the grass and see nobody and evade all questions? And the look in her eyes!"

"What look?" asked DeWolfe in the hush.

"Fear," said Benham.

"Fear?"

"Yes, fear. And besides there is something about her that tells a person that she is waiting—marking time—treading water—staring out over life—just like a watcher on the shore stares out across the empty sea."

"Maybe she's thinking of an ice cream soda."

"There's nothing of that kind of thing in her," the British officer replied with positiveness. "Your ice cream soda and millinery and looking-glass lady has a personality of a pink color. Brena Selcoss is the color of firelight on the walls of an old temple."

"You might go on to say that she gives the impression of an Inca princess. Some dried mummy from the sands of a prehistoric citadel. Bathed in some magic liquid, her limbs expanded to the lovely contour of girlhood, her face warmed with a renewed coursing of spirited blood."

"You've seen her," exclaimed Benham.

"My dear fellow, I've never seen her; but I confess that as you talk about her I feel a little as if I had known her—long ago."

Benham said, "Perhaps you could lift the cover—"

He stopped suddenly.

"And I'd like to have you meet Muriel, too. She's a very decent sort of sister. I've a mind to give you a letter to my mother and send you over the Channel to loaf around in flannels at our place in the country."

"I'm leaving Brest tomorrow night on a transport. Sorry."

"Oh!"

(Continued next week.)

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"Flowers Die"

SULPHUR CLEARS ROUGH, RED SKIN

Face, Neck and Arms Easily Made Smooth, Says Specialist

Any breaking out of the skin, even fiery, itching eczema, can be quickly overcome by applying a little Mentho-Sulphur, declares a noted skin specialist. Because of its germ destroying properties, this sulphur preparation begins at once to soothe irritated skin and heal eruptions such as rash, pimples and ring worm.

It seldom fails to remove the torment and disfigurement, and you do not have to wait for relief from embarrassment. Improvement quickly shows. Sufferers from skin trouble should obtain a small jar of Rowles Mentho-Sulphur from any good druggist and use it like cold cream.

Tunnel Election Notice

(Continued from page two)

of Range one (1) West of the Willamette Meridian; thence north one half (½) mile to the quarter corner on the east line of said section thirty-one (31); thence west one (1) mile to the quarter corner in the west line of said Section thirty-one (31); thence south one-half (½)

(Continued from page three)

mile to the section corner common to Section thirty-one (31) Township One (1) North, Range one (1) West Willamette Meridian, Section thirty-six (36), Township One (1) North, Range two (2) West, Willamette Meridian, Section One (1), Township One (1) South, Range two (2) West Willamette Meridian, and Section six (6), Township One (1) South, Range One (1) West, Willamette Meridian; thence west four (4) miles to the Northwest corner of Section Four (4), Township One (1) South, Range two (2) West, Willamette Meridian, thence south two (2) miles, more or less, to the center line of Tualatin River; thence easterly and southerly following the meanderings of Tualatin River and in the center thread thereof to a point where said center line intersects the east and west center line through the center of Section eighteen (18), Township two (2) South, Range one (1) West of the Willamette Meridian; thence east approximately one and one-fourth (1¼) miles to the center line of Section seventeen (17) in said Township and Range; thence north two and one-half (2½) miles to the quarter corner in the north line of Section five (5) of said Township and Range thence east two and one-half (2½) miles to the southeast corner of Section thirty-one (31) in Township one (1) South, Range one (1) West of the Willamette Meridian; thence North one (1) mile to the northeast corner of said Section thirty-four (34); thence east two and three-fourths (2¾) miles to the southwest corner of the southeast quarter (SE¼) of the southeast quarter (SE¼) of Section thirty (30) in Township one (1) South, Range one (1) East of the Willamette Meridian; thence north one (1) mile to a point in the north line of said Section thirty (30) which is one-fourth (¼) mile west of the northeast corner of said Section thirty (30); thence east one-fourth (¼) mile to the northeast corner of said Section thirty (30); thence north one-half (½) mile to the quarter corner on the west line of Section twenty (20), Township one (1) South, Range one (1) East of the Willamette Meridian; thence east one-half (½) mile to the center line of said Section twenty (20); thence north one-half (½) mile and east one-half (½) mile to the northeast corner of said Section twenty (20); thence north three-fourths (¾) mile to the southeast corner of the northeast quarter (SE¼) of the northeast quarter (NE¼) of Section seventeen (17) in Township one (1) South, Range one (1) East of the Willamette Meridian; thence west one-half (½) mile to the center line of said Section seventeen (17); thence north one-half (½) mile to the northeast corner of the southeast quarter (SE¼) of the southwest quarter (SW¼) of Section eight (8) in said Township and Range; and thence following a straight line in a northeasterly direction to the place of beginning, shall be organized as a tunnel district under the provisions of an act of the legislative assembly of the state of Oregon, approved February 26, 1921, and entitled "An Act providing for the organization of tunnel districts, for the construction, operation, and maintenance of tunnel systems, and for the payment of the cost of such systems and expenses incident thereto."

Also for the election of three directors of said tunnel district.

Every person, male or female, over the age of twenty-one years whether a resident of said district or state, or not, who is the owner of 5,000 square feet or more of land situated within the district and whose name appears on the last assessment roll, or who is the purchaser of land within said district on contract, if such contract is signed by the vendor and witnessed by two witnesses and contains a provision to the effect that such purchaser shall be considered the owner thereof within the meaning of the "Oregon Improvement District Act" is a qualified elector at said election. The electors shall be required to cast ballots which contain the words, "Tunnel District—Yes" and "Tunnel District—No."

Polling places for said election will be located at the following places:

High School of Commerce, Fifth and Harrison Streets, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon;

Fire Engine House, Fourth and Taylor Streets, Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon;

Fairvale School House, at Fairvale, Multnomah County, Oregon;

High School Building, at Beaverton, Washington County, Oregon.

Which election will be held at 8 o'clock in the forenoon and will continue until 8 o'clock in the afternoon of said day.

Dated this 6th day of July, 1925.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, OREGON.

By E. J. Ward, Chairman.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY, OREGON.

By F. W. Livermore, Commissioner

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF WASHINGTON COUNTY OREGON.

By J. M. Hiatt, Commissioner.

Adv c 41-45

A village is a place where everybody knows everybody else so well that it isn't worthwhile to snub anybody.

Quart of Water Cleans Kidneys

Take a Little Salts if Your Back Hurts, or Bladder is Troubling You

No man or woman can make a mistake by flushing the kidneys occasionally, says a well-known authority. Eating too much rich food creates acids, which excite the kidneys. They become overworked from the strain, get sluggish and fail to filter the waste and poisons from the blood. Then we get sick. Rheumatism, headaches, liver trouble, nervousness, dizziness, sleeplessness and urinary disorders often come from sluggish kidneys.

The moment you feel a dull ache in the kidneys, or your back hurts, or if the urine is cloudy, offensive, full of sediment, irregular of passage or attended by a sensation of scalding, begin drinking a quart of water each day, also get about four ounces of Jad Salts from any pharmacy; take a tablespoonful in a glass of water before breakfast, and in a few days your kidneys may act fine.

This famous salts is made from the acid of grapes and lemon juice, combined with lithia, and has been used for years to flush and stimulate the kidneys; also to help neutralize the acids in the system, so they no longer cause irritation, thus often relieving bladder weakness.

Jad Salts is inexpensive; makes a delightful effervescent lithia-water drink which everyone should take now and then to help keep the kidneys clean and active and the blood pure, thereby often avoiding serious kidney complications. By all means have your physician examine your kidneys at least twice a year.

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