

# The Vanishing Men



BY RICHARD WASHBURN CHILD

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Few young men have been so enthusiastically and actively a part of the life of their times as has Richard Washburn Child.



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From 1910 to 1912, 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 every story that he writes. One of his best productions in this line is "The Vanishing Men" in which is presented a thrilling story of a beautiful woman who is the victim of a man whose life is shadowed by an inexplicable horror. A writer less skilled or less true in his art than Mr. Child, would give a writer's quality to such a story, 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 inaccessible, that is not completely dispelled even when the puzzling mystery is unraveled. The range of action extends from the battlefields at the close of the great war to an English country house, to India, Texas

to New York and finally to the desert regions of the Southwest.

(Continued from last week)

"Well, I said nothing about it. 'Afraid of forewell dinners?" Peter smiled.

"Home," said he. "Bring your sister over to America. She'll probably think it a jolly little unflashed country."

Benham clasped DeWolfe's hand and panted; he had seen the American covered from head to foot with blood out of his own arteries when Peter had brought him in with the aid of an artillery horse. It was an indignity not to be beguiled with demonstrations.

"No longer," said DeWolfe.

He climbed down from the broken wall of the house where the Englishman had been billeted and with a nod of farewell walked away, leaving Benham perched there—a black figure as if cut out of black cardboard pasted on the sunset glories of the skyline.

He walked a hundred paces and stopped. He looked at a group of peasant children bringing in fagots, but laughing and jostling each other.

"You have attained it," said Peter, a little light dancing in his eyes under his heavy brows as fireflies sparkled behind a hedge.

The girl tossed the ball up and caught it in her white skirt spread from knee to knee as she sat cross-legged upon the edge of the Benhams' lawn. This lawn began again after the interruption of the square tennis court and rolled gently down to a line of trees at the bottom of the hill that half hides the little town of Becon with its nestling red brick houses with their chimney pots and roofs tempered by the smoke of coals on point fires.

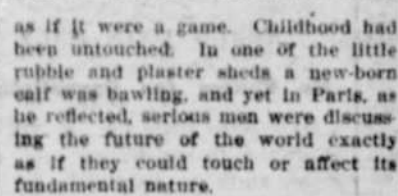
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Peter smiled and waved his hand



as if it were a game. Childhood had been untouched. In one of the little rubble and plaster sheds a new-born calf was bawling, and yet in Paris, as he reflected, serious men were discussing the future of the world exactly as if they could touch or affect its fundamental nature.

He walked on. The trees trained against the high wall spread their branches like fans, edged at the tips with the pink blossoms of a new year, symbolic of the eternal round of promise, fruit and decay.

"It goes so soon," said DeWolfe aloud, and this voice which spoke was just as if some old friend had given him counsel as they strolled together in the dusk. He turned. The Englishman waved to him from the wall and held one arm aloft in a gesture of farewell; Peter could see every finger on his hand as if they all were painted in sepia on the velvet gold of the sky.

"By the by," called Benham, "the strange lady is half a Greek. I say 'Can you hear? Her father was a banished patriot—a fighting professor of chemistry or something."

Peter smiled and waved his hand. He turned the corner of the wall and stepped into the cobble street where the wild wagons of some French artillery maneuver were rumbling deeper into the ruts of War worn in the ancient stones.

Only at nine that evening did he hear more. Benham called him by the service wire of the signal corps. "Saying good-by, that's all," said the Englishman, lying glibly. "Good luck. And I forgot to say that her mother was Irish."

"Send me that letter to your family, care of the American post office at Boulogne," said Peter calmly after a moment in which Benham wondered whether the line had been cut off. "I'm off for England tomorrow."

He put his cigarette down and allowed it to burn the edge of the table, staring at the wall with its maps and blue-prints, his eyes full of wonder.

This explains, in part, why the reason for his going to London was typical of Peter DeWolfe.

## CHAPTER II

Muriel Benham was savagely a woman. She conceived woman as a species as distinct from males as flora is distinct from fauna. The acquisition by women of the right to vote had been the occasion for mourning, as Peter found out before Mrs. Austin Benham had beamed through two meals, first upon her guest and then upon her lovely daughter.

The widow of Austin, as DeWolfe discovered after a week of agreeable surliness of the calendar, was a true beamer. She did not beam with the insincere beam of affection, but with the beam of an expansive nature oozing good will and demonstrativeness through the crevices it could find in the walls of a life which was like a vessel of conventionality, containing, according to all the traditions of her husband's family, a liquor of precious quality, not to be spent freely. She believed in new things and in a new world, but she beamed upon Muriel not because she agreed with her but because, not daring to voice an opinion, she could still love her daughter for being so healthy and so irreproachable.

Muriel considered herself as deflected by duty and adaptability to being a woman, and being a woman meant that her brown hair must be made attractive and stable for tennis—a game which she executed with a good deal of dash, in a costume designed to keep freckles off a milk-white skin. Even her forearms were covered in the same white, but from 14 to 16, who could play a hotly hit tennis match, because just as it was a

summary woman's quest to be well exercised and in fine condition of the muscles, so also was it her duty to be milk-white in an evening dress. The same thought made her appear before Peter in the hedge-walled garden before breakfast in a part way and part fluffy gown, with a basket of roses hung on one elbow and flower scissors in the other hand.

"You do all things so well," said Peter with a great delight filling his being. "There is a thoroughness in your method which positively upsets me. I looked at the library in your study and as far as I can see you have spent your twenty years collecting, among others, books on how to do things—how to ride a horse, how to play golf, how to knit, how to cast a fly, how to speak Italian, how to grow roses, and who knows what else."

The English girl was sincerely grateful to Peter. She said: "To know the way, to practice the methods—these are the sure steps toward results; but you must not think I take myself too seriously, as my brother probably told you. I think it is all as nothing compared to the skill of being a woman—a fit woman—a woman whose one aim is to be a woman."

"You have attained it," said Peter, a little light dancing in his eyes under his heavy brows as fireflies sparkled behind a hedge.

The girl tossed the ball up and caught it in her white skirt spread from knee to knee as she sat cross-legged upon the edge of the Benhams' lawn. This lawn began again after the interruption of the square tennis court and rolled gently down to a line of trees at the bottom of the hill that half hides the little town of Becon with its nestling red brick houses with their chimney pots and roofs tempered by the smoke of coals on point fires.

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Office Hours 10 A. M. to 5 P. M.  
Rooms 2 & 3, Rosal Bldg.  
BEAVERTON ORE.

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## Mortician

Beaverton, Oregon

### My Favorite Stories

By IRVING S. COBB

#### Driven Beyond His Strength

The late Paul Armstrong had two favorite stories. One of these he called by the title "Fanny and the Pilsener," and while it was funny, it would never do for publication in a newspaper having a family circulation. The other was what is known as a parlor story. It dealt with a down-and-outer, who made a precarious living as a sandwich man, escaped from and back, like a turtle in its shell, between broad boards which bore advertisements for a dairy lunch, he marched the Bowery all day long for wages barely sufficient to keep body and soul together.

One day, as he plodded his weary route, he saw a shining coin lying upon the sidewalk. Instantly he set his foot upon it, and then, stooping with a difficulty because of his wooden waistcoat, he clutched it in his eager fingers and raised it to his eyes. Then his heart inside of him gave a great throb of joy. It was a twenty-dollar gold piece. He was wealthy beyond his wildest ambitions.

Across the street was an excavation for a new building. He hurried thither. Standing on the edge of the digging he unbuckled the straps which bound the squares of planking to him and, kicking them to pieces with a glad exultant cry, he flung the shattered elements of his servitude down into the hole below. Then straightway he departed for the nearest saloon, and staking in, a triumphant figure even in his flapping tatters, he slipped his precious gold piece down upon the bar and called for a drink of whiskey. It was to have been the first of a long and gorgeous succession of drinks of whiskey.

Someone jostled him in the aisle. He turned his head to see who could be

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