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# The Vanishing Men

BY **RICHARD WASHBURN CHILD**

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...me only smiled, and Muriel's pink fingers being near upon the glass, he touched them lightly. After a long pause, he said: "I was looking around the country."

"I do not believe you," the girl said, jumping up with startling suddenness. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"Into the house. I have a headache."

She had often insisted that she never had headaches, as if not having headaches was a part of a proper program for a woman who intends to marry correctly, have children correctly and be correctly buried with a correct husband's tears. Perhaps this came into her mind, for at the vine-covered portico she turned, put her arm against one of the ancient stone pillars and, making a pretty picture with her high color and her lean young body, she called out: "Do you want a

convention. The depression which fell upon the girl, as if a shadow cast by the dusk, gathering about them as they came back from Saint Dunstan's tower after ten miles in the wind, gave no warning of crisis to him. And certainly he was under no obligation to foresee that which the night would bring forth.

At dinner he discovered that he could talk to Mrs. Benham; to his astonishment he found that behind her beam there were a great many years of orderly thinking whose product, not consumed by her family, had been put up into the shelf in many careful layers, like bolts of cloth with an unfathomable pattern. It was almost worth while to have Muriel so silent; it was almost a relief to turn away from her long Hyne-Jones face with its sensitive lips contrasting with her stern eyes and beamed upon sunnily by the broad strong face of her mother. Peter took a delight in making this beam expand into a laugh. He was never so whimsical. Each time he leaned forward toward the white-haired widow who, with her middle-Victorian figure, weighed at least two hundred pounds, Muriel stared at her mother with a look which might have been the expression of jealousy.

Peter, as he chatted with Mrs. Benham, faced the long French windows in a curved bay at the end of the dining room. The floor was covered with ferns and flowering plants in pots, giving forth to the room at all meals that smell of warm dark earth which fills greenhouses, but just outside the reflection of his own dinner coat on the long panes of the doors, there was the blue stone driveway of the house and the path to the side door. Upon this path Peter thought he had seen a flash of white. It might have been a reflection of his own white linen; he had only seen this flick of movement out of the corner of his eye as he put down his gilt coffee cup.

"What did you see?" asked Muriel suddenly.

"I? Why, I thought I saw a white spot in the dark out there—like a person's face."

Muriel stiffened. "I don't know who it could be," she said. "Lucy, turn on the light outside the North door."

Peter smiled, but only because he had thought of how red English malids could be—just as red as valets wore white.

The smile disappeared the moment the electric lamp above the outer door just behind the French windows threw down its light like an overturned bucket of yellow liquid. A woman was standing there, and Peter believed that as she had stood in the dark, unseen, she had been looking straight into his face. She wore no hat and her hair piled up in immense snake-like coils was the color of certain frost-turned leaves of autumn which are neither red nor gold, but both colors at once.

"Her Irish mother!" he almost said aloud. He knew by her hair and her great dark eyes in which, even from a distance, there appeared the gleaming of heat described by young Benham. The British officer had not overdrawn her beauty. There was a still grandeur about it, a permanence, a thing making it awful as well as alluring; it was like the beauty of Grecian sculpture dug from the dust and transformed by miracle into living warmth glowing through a skin which compared to Muriel's was cold white, was as heavy cream to its shimmering milk. She stood in the posture which Peter learned later to know was characteristic—a posture of one who waits with resignation. For what? Heaven knows. Perhaps for a reincarnation into a life less troubled, less besmirched with small affairs.

That she wore a white draped gown over which a wrap of flame color hung from her half-lane shoulders DeWolfe did not notice. She was one who could not be described in detail, and her clothes made no impress, though they illuminated colors and contrast in any other case might have left a vivid picture. One never saw her except as a whole—a woman too short of stature, if one measured, but the height of a goddess if one only looked; a girl whose face, though capable of a great range of expression, nevertheless changed its mood as slowly as the clouds in the sky change their contours; a human being whose personality belonged, it appeared, to the kind of personalities which are found usually only in a deep forest, or belong to a pinnacled mountain range. Any detail was nothing.

"She has come to see my mother," said Muriel.

"So she has?" admitted Mrs. Benham, leaning on through the window.

"I might have known who it was. I heard a high-powered car, but it doesn't like to be driven almost into our dining room, so she stopped on the South wing. Let's go into father's den Peter. Bring the cigars in there, Lucy."

No protest appeared possible. Mrs. Benham had leaned and nodded, and the American could not see occasionally

say, "Oh, no. I want to stay."

He turned once as he left the dining room. The woman outside was still waiting at the door for Mrs. Benham to wobble to the latch, the waterfall of light still covering her, still waiting in, apparently at Peter, and with a smile and warmth thrown toward him like a message from her great dark eyes.

He could not wipe away the impression of that look. In it there had been a call, an understanding, a password, a magic formula. To shake it off he walked nervously about Mr. Aspin's study, stepping before the photographs of members of the house of commons who had been Benham's friends, but were like the ends of so many empty spoons to Peter's eyes at this moment. He read an inscription on a portrait of General Wolsley, he touched an ivory idol from Benares.

"Let's light the fire," suggested Muriel in a weak and trembling voice.

"All right," said Peter, and struck a match.

He did not smoke.

"Why not?" asked the girl.

"I have a headache," he said with a laugh.

"Come here, then. Lie down on father's sofa. I don't mind. Be comfortable, Peter."

(Continued next week.)

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walk this afternoon—to Besman wood?"

Peter nodded his assent vigorously, and when she ran into the house he threw himself back into the grass and through half-closed eyelids watched the ever-changing patterns in cottony clouds and the flight of wheeling martins.

Muriel began that afternoon walk with great gaiety of spirits, as if, perhaps, she had found a triumph over some difficulty, a victory at the end of twenty-one years of preparation for victory. As soon as they had struck off across the downs she threw her arms toward the sky and sang into the wind an old haunting song of quaint and engaging melody.

"Let's learn the song together," she said to Peter. "Look over there on the

corner of the west line of Section twenty (20), Township one (1) South, Range one (1) East of the Willamette Meridian; thence east one-half (1/2) mile to the center line of said Section twenty (20); thence north one-half (1/2) mile and east one-half (1/2) mile to the northeast corner of said Section twenty (20); thence north three-fourths (3/4) mile to the southeast corner of the northeast quarter (NE 1/4) of the northeast quarter (NE 1/4) of Section seventeen (17) in Township one (1) South, Range one (1) East of the Willamette Meridian; thence west one-half (1/2) mile to the center line of said Section seventeen (17); thence north one-half (1/2) mile to the northeast corner of the southeast quarter (SE 1/4) of the southeast quarter (SE 1/4) 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 24, 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 5 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. e. 41-45

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"Do You Want to Take a Walk This Afternoon—'tis Besman Wood?"

edge of the horizon. That square tower, that Saint Dunstan's—the very tower in which the fox sought sanctuary in the song—the old song, written six hundred years ago, they say."

Peter, with his usual adaptability, acquired both words and music. He sang. He danced upon the rolling green plain. And at last, seizing Muriel's waist around the belt of her sporting coat, he swung her almost off her feet and together they whirled merrily—two tiny tops spinning upon the vast expanse. When they stopped, the girl, almost dizzy, and breathless, clung for a moment to his coat and looked up into Peter's eyes. He could feel her warm breath upon his chin.

Peter was not lacking in perception; he knew at once that his visit at the Benhams' must come to an end. All the cold assurance in Muriel's face, all the steady, stable English look had gone. No refusal of hers to vote or smoke a cigarette or adopt an article of clothing in any way might have unsexed her could have proclaimed her as a woman rather than as a companionable playmate as completely as did this searching, half-troubled, hungry look in her swimming, brimming eyes.

"Come on, now," he said as if to a private soldier who had disobeyed orders. "Let's walk. Let's walk hard and fast and long."

He was wondering now whether he had made his journey to Beaconshire in vain; whether, indeed, his willingness to solve the puzzle that Benham had told him was waiting for him had not been a piece of folly leading to nothing. When he and the girl had dipped down the slope into the single track path that led across the moor he nearly walked blindly into the silver stream through the rushes that grew at the water's edge.

"You are not vexed?" asked Mrs. Benham invitingly.

"Vexed!" exclaimed DeWolfe. "With you? God bless you, dear, no!"

She looked at him gratefully, watching him as she walked by his side a good deal as a setter might look up to catch a glance of approval from a man. Peter expected no storm from her. He knew he must pack up his things and go back to London. This was only fair to Benham, and certainly fair to Benham's sister, who had let herself imagine so much from an acquaintance with a stray American who inwardly believed that to live a lifetime of Muriel's program of days and years would be a close second to a term in jail or to having a berth in a Wall Street broker's office. He supposed, however, that if not actually, at least metaphorically, Muriel had read a book on "How to Keep One's Balance." He did not figure upon the explosive forces which can be generated in a conservative family, as if occasionally the fundamentals of mankind liked to show their half-concealed existence of which all are aware, each for himself, but never as to our unloving neighbor. Muriel, in fact, was just the person the fundamental human forces would pick out to give a glorious exhibition of blowing up the crusts of restraint. Peter, like most of us, had heard a slight crack in her cover, but like most of us he had endeavored to keep the strength of habit and

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**NOTICE**

**TUNNEL ELECTION NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given, that on the 20th day of October, 1925, a special election will be held within the district hereinafter described, to determine whether Proposed Tunnel District Number 1, being that portion of the counties of Washington and Multnomah, in the State of Oregon, described as follows, to-wit:

Beginning at a point which is the center of the Northwest quarter (NW 1/4) of Section nine (9) Township one (1) South, Range one (1) East of the Willamette Meridian within the corporate limits of the city of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon; thence east three-quarters (3/4) of a mile to the southeast corner of the Northeast quarter (NE 1/4) of said section nine (9); thence northerly along the east line of said Section nine (9) to an intersection with the center line of Arthur Street, if extended; thence easterly along the said center line of Arthur Street and its extension thereof to the center line of Front Street; thence northerly along the center line of Front Street to the center line of Sherman Street; thence easterly along the center line of Sherman Street and its extension to the harbor line of the west bank of the Willamette River; thence north along the westerly harbor line of the Willamette River to a point in the center line of Sixteenth Street, if extended; thence southerly along what would be the center line of Sixteenth Street, if extended, and the center line of Sixteenth Street to the center line of Washington Street; thence westerly along the center line of Washington Street to the center line of Fourteenth Street; thence southerly along the center line of Fourteenth Street to the center line of Columbia Street; thence easterly along the center line of Columbia Street to the center line of Tenth Street; thence southerly along the center line of Tenth Street to the center line of Hall Street; thence easterly along the center line of Hall Street to the center line of Broadway Street; thence southerly along the center line of Broadway Street to the center line of Broadway Street; thence easterly along the center line of Grant Street; thence southerly along the center line of Grant Street to a point which is One Hundred (100) feet west of the west line of Sixth Street; thence southerly parallel with and one hundred (100) feet west of the west line of Sixth Street to the south line of Sheridan Street produced; thence easterly along the south line of Sheridan Street produced to a point which is one hundred and thirty (130) feet west from the center line of Marquam County Road also called Terwilliger Boulevard; thence southerly and westerly parallel with and one hundred and thirty (130) feet northerly from a point at the division of said Marquam Road and Terwilliger Boulevard to a point which is one hundred and thirty (130) feet northerly from a point at the division of said Marquam Road and Terwilliger Boulevard and in the center line of both said road and boulevard; thence westerly parallel with and one hundred and thirty (130) feet northerly from the center line of Marquam County Road to a point where such line intersects the northerly line of Marquam

Since the above was written and published, it has been found that the high school at Beaverton is not available for use as a polling place, therefore those in Washington County will vote at what is known as Swenson's real estate office on Broadway instead of at the high school.

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