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The Vanishing Men

BY **RICHARD WASHBURN CHILD**

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(Continued From Last Week)

Unfortunately the unpleasant flavor which had attached itself to the memory of his visit to Beconsdale Heath still clung. He could see Lady Benham—that good old soul who had insisted that she never be addressed by her title—beaming at him as she told him how sorry she was that business had called him away so suddenly. He felt guilty of the polite lie he had told to make his exit from the lives of the Benhams. He could see Muriel's cold, hard expression when, having preserved her lips to him, she found no response and told him at once that she hated him. He would never see her again.

and though it had been none of the fault, or at least not in large measure, there would be a certain impression in her mind that he had wilfully dislodged her from her correct and virtuous pedestal, and Colonel Eversty Benham—a good friend, provided with a sense of humor—could not fail to see the affair through his beloved sister's unimaginative eyes. Peter had tried to reach him and found that on forty-eight hours' notice he had gone to Meapotauna.

Above all, Peter had gone to England to do a certain thing—to meet the strange Brena Selcoos and at Benham's challenge dissolve the mystery which surrounded her. All that he had accomplished so far had been to look long into her wonderful eyes from a distance and hear from Muriel that terrible and unrepeatable and undisclosed horrors awaited the man upon whom this extraordinary young woman, with her mixture of Grecian and Irish blood, her gorgeous hair and Jersey-cream skin, her American origin and her inexplicable English isolation, bestowed her favor.

Peter had always said that many men were really two persons—one, the actor in life, clothed with a body of flesh and bone; the other, a second personality without tangible reality, but who, as a counselor possessed of a voice almost audible, often advised egotism, sometimes played the role of conscience, was always a friend, but sometimes took on a diabolical, patronizing manner. It was this invisible friend who had advised Peter to shut himself up with his attempts at verse writing and had led him to procure a passage home; it was Peter himself who knew very well that he would not go on board the Aquitania, that he had come to England to meet some kind of a witch woman, that he had seen her great dark eyes peer and saw them gazing at him out of every corner now, that he had committed himself to finding out all that was to be known of her and that in the end he would do some unobservant, break-neck thing to throw himself with a crash of conventions into her lap and note what happened afterward.

Peter's determination, making ready to reject every advice of his counselor and invisible second personality, was completely wasted. Brena Selcoos acted first.

On the third afternoon of his restlessness, when the night was falling and the fog loomed on the exterior of the window panes of his room like a pile of wet sheep's wool, he had started a lyric twenty-two lines and twenty-two lines lashed for meter or expressive word, had crumpled up the sheet of paper and thrown it at a wastebasket. His pencil was blunt; the crumpled sheets, in the evil gray light of late afternoon, having missed their receptacle, lay around the floor as if DeWalt's product were not poetry but snowballs.

"In a nice clump to be writing verses," he said to himself in the mirror. "You look less of a poet than a lion-tamer."

Some of Peter's friends who are able to realize that this man who can play polo like a centaur actually is the author of the lines beginning, "Call ye to the souls of shadows," would have agreed with him. There were stripes of interlocking muscle upon his bare brown forearms and a firmness about his mouth, both tightened a little by his service with the army, and if there is a poet in him it is as a Virginia farmer once told him, "a streak of something," perhaps noted a part of that fundamental essence of Peter which calls him to a many-sided life.

As he looked at his own troubled face in the mirror the telephone bell rang.

"Are you there?" inquired the operator, using the conventional London phrase. "Right! Wait, please."

He heard a voice which came out of distance like a voice which comes nearer through a damp grove of dark green trees, like an aroma which comes forward on the wind, until it rises slowly to its full power. When the words were distinguishable he knew that some one was asking for him.

"Yes," said he, for the moment enthralled by the warmth and rhythm of that voice.

"I must see you."

Brena Selcoos had come to find him. She had taken the initiative; she had come to London. He did not have to say, "Who is this?" She had come.

Something, however, in that phrase, "I must see you," said with intensity by that extraordinary woman, about whom the Benhams knew so little and perhaps Muriel so much, filled Peter for the moment with an inexplicable dread. This sudden chill of self-preservation was not founded upon the reputation of that telephonic, "I must see you," uttered by a female and always fore-runner of the unpleasant, nor was it based upon the suspicion which he had always had when, to use one of his own phrases, "a man ought to know that no woman who comes toward one is safe," nor indeed did it rise from the fact that he gave new credit to Muriel's absurd warning that men who knew Brena Selcoos disappeared like broken soap bubbles. The dread that Peter felt was like a dread common-

ated by some subtle message in a human voice which expressed some eternal fear. It came, perched upon his soul for a second, and then was gone. He became at once the usual Peter, thinking quickly, alive to the dangers of a woman who would follow a stranger to London, suspicious of her and above all thoroughly delighted to risk himself in any tangle she cared to weave for him.

"Where are you?" he said genially. "At Mulberry's," she said. (To be continued next week.)

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the resident tax payers of Road District No. 47, Washington County, Oregon, is hereby called and will be held at Cooper Mountain School in said Road District No. 47, Washington County, Oregon, on the 6th day of November, 1925, at the hour of 8 o'clock P. M. of said day, to discuss the advisability of levying a special or additional road tax in said district, to determine what, if any county roads or portions thereof in said district shall be improved, in any special manner, and the character and extent of such improvement or improvements they shall make thereon, and to levy such special or additional tax, not to exceed ten mills on the dollar, on all taxable real and personal property in said road district, as a majority of such resident tax payers of said road district shall deem advisable for the purpose of raising money with which to defray the expense of such special improvement or improvements in said Road District No. 47, Washington County, Oregon.

Dated this 14th day of October, 1925.

E. J. Ward, County Judge.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the resident tax payers of Road District No. 61, Washington County, Oregon, is hereby called and will be held at Huber Commercial Hall in said Road District No. 61, Washington County, Oregon, on the 7th day of November, 1925, at the hour of 7:30 o'clock P. M. of said day, to discuss the advisability of levying a special or additional road tax in said district, to determine what, if any county roads or portions thereof in said district shall be improved, in any special manner, and the character and extent of such improvement or improvements they shall make thereon, and to levy such special or additional tax, not to exceed ten mills on the dollar, on all taxable real and personal property in said road district, as a majority of such resident tax payers of said road district shall deem advisable for the purpose of raising money with which to defray the expense of such special improvement or improvements in said Road District No. 61, Washington County, Oregon.

Dated this 14th day of October, 1925.

E. J. Ward, County Judge.

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the resident tax payers of Road District No. 11, Washington County, Oregon, is hereby called and will be held at the Union Chapel in said Road District No. 11, Washington County, Oregon, on the 2nd day of November, 1925, at the hour of 2 o'clock P. M. of said day, to discuss the advisability of levying a special or additional road tax in said district, to determine what, if any county roads or portions thereof in said district shall be improved, in any special manner, and the character and extent of such improvement or improvements they shall make thereon, and to levy such special or additional tax, not to exceed ten mills on the dollar, on all taxable real and personal property in said road district, as a majority of such resident tax payers of said road district shall deem advisable for the purpose of raising money with which to defray the expense of such special improvement or improvements in said Road District No. 11, Washington County, Oregon.

Dated this 14th day of October, 1925.

E. J. Ward, County Judge.

Adv c 47-48

NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that a meeting of the resident tax payers of Road District No. 26, Washington County, Oregon, is hereby called and will be held at the Barnes School House in said Road District No. 26, Washington County, Oregon, on the 7th day of November, 1925, at the hour of 2 o'clock P. M. of said day, to discuss the advisability of levying a special or additional road tax in said district, to determine what, if

any county roads or portions thereof in said district shall be improved, in any special manner, and the character and extent of such improvement or improvements they shall make thereon, and to levy such special or additional tax, not to exceed ten mills on the dollar, on all taxable real and personal property in said road district, as a majority of such resident tax payers of said road district shall deem advisable for the purpose of raising money with which to defray the ex-

penditure of such special improvement or improvements in said Road District No. 26, Washington County, Oregon.

Dated this 14th day of October, 1925.

E. J. Ward, County Judge.

Adv c 47-48

penditure of such special improvement or improvements in said Road District No. 26, Washington County, Oregon.

Dated this 14th day of October, 1925.

E. J. Ward, County Judge.

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