

# The Main Chance

BY Meredith Nicholson

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## CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

"You beat me! You haven't the slightest idea who the other shareholders are; the company is thoroughly rotten in all its past history, and here you go plunging into it up to your eyes. And they say you're the most conservative banker on the river."

"I guess you don't have to get me out of many scrapes," said Porter.

"When's the annual meeting?" asked Fenton.

"It's day after tomorrow—a close call but I'll make it all right."

"Mr. Porter, I want you to remember that I haven't given you any advice at all in this matter. It's an extra hazardous thing that you're doing. Now, I don't know anything definitely about it, but I've got the impression that Margrave's parading your lines in this business."

"Where'd you get that?"

"It's this way," said Fenton, in his quietest tones. "A Baltimore lawyer that I know wrote me a letter asking me about Margrave's responsibility. It seems that my friend has a client who owns some of these shares. A good deal of that stock went to Baltimore and Philadelphia, you may remember. I assume that Margrave is after it."

"Wire your friend right away not to sell!" shouted Porter, pounding the table with his fist.

"I did that this morning, and here's his answer. I got it just before you came in. Margrave evidently got anxious and wired them to send certificates with draft through the Drovers' National. They're probably on the way now." He passed the telegram across to Porter, who put on his glasses and read it.

"Now," continued Fenton, "I don't know just what this means, but it looks to me as if Margrave was hot on the track of the trolley company himself; and Tim Margrave isn't a particularly pleasant fellow to go into business with, is he?"

"But the bondholders would still have their chance, wouldn't they, even if he got a majority of the stock?"

"Well, you haven't any bonds, have you? First thing I know you'll be telling me that you've got a few barrels of them," he added, jokingly. He could not help laughing at Porter.

"My dear boy, I've got every blamed bond!"

Fenton sat gazing at him in stupefied wonder. He walked around the table and put his hand on Porter's shoulder. He was trying to keep from laughing, like a parent who is about to rebuke a child and yet laughs at the cause of its offense. Porter evidently thought that he had done an extremely bright thing.

"As I understand you, you have bought all of the bonds and half of the stock."

"About half. I'm a little—just a little—short."

"Will you kindly tell me what you wanted with the stock if you had the bonds?"

"Well, I figured it this way, that the franchise was worth the price I had to pay for the whole thing, and if I had the stock control I'd save the fuss of foreclosing. You lawyers always make a lot of rumpus about those things, and a receivership would prejudice the Eastern market when I come to reorganize and sell out."

Fenton lay back in his chair and laughed, while Porter looked at him a little defiantly, with his hat tipped over his eyes.

"You'd better finish your job and make sure of your majority," said Fenton. His rage was rising now and he did not urge Porter to remain when the banker got up to do. He was not at all anxious to defend a franchise which the local courts, always sensitive to public sentiment, might set aside.

"I'll see you in the morning first thing," said Porter at the door, which Fenton opened for him. "I want you to go to the meeting with me and we'll need a day to get ready."

The lawyer watched his client walk toward the elevator. It occurred to him that Porter's step was losing its elasticity. While the banker waited for the elevator he leaned wearily against the wire screen of the shaft.

Fenton then sat down with a copy of the charter of the Clarkson Traction Company before him, and spent the remainder of the day studying it. He had troubled much over Porter's secretive ways, and had labored to shatter the dangerous conceals which had gradually grown up in his client. Porter had, in fact, a contempt for lawyers, though he based on Fenton more than he would admit. Fenton, on the other hand, was constantly fearful that his client should undo himself by his secretive methods. He had difficulty in getting all the facts out of him, and when they were imperatively required.

The next morning Fenton was at his office early and sent his boy at once to ask Mr. Porter to come up. The boy reported that Mr. Porter had not been at

the bank. Fenton went down himself at 10 o'clock and found the president's desk closed.

"Where's the boss?" he demanded. "Won't be down this morning," said Wheaton. "Miss Porter telephoned that he wasn't feeling well, but he expected to be down after luncheon."

## CHAPTER XIII.

Porter's illness was proclaimed in the first editions of the afternoon papers, which Wheaton saw at his desk. News gains force by publication, and when he read the printed statement that the president of the Clarkson National Bank was confined to his house by illness, he felt that Porter must really be very sick; and he naturally turned the fact over in his mind to see how this might affect him. The directors came in and sat about with their hats on, and Wingate, the starch manufacturer, who had seen Porter's doctor, pronounced the president a very sick man and suggested that Thompson, the invalid vice president, ought to be notified. The others acquiesced, and they prepared a telegram to Thompson at Phoenix, suggesting his immediate return, if possible.

Fenton spent the afternoon in court. He intended to call at the Porters' on his way home, and stopped at the bank before going to his office, thinking that the banker might be there; but the president's desk was closed.

"How sick is Mr. Porter?" he asked Wheaton.

"He's pretty sick," said Wheaton. "It's typhoid fever. I spoke to Miss Porter over the telephone a few minutes ago, and she did not seem to be alarmed about her father. He's very strong, you know."

But Fenton was not listening. "See here, Wheaton," he said, suddenly, "do you know anything about Porter's private affairs?"

"Not very much," said Wheaton, guardedly. "I guess you don't and I guess nobody does, worse luck! You know how morbidly secretive he is, and how he shies off from publicity—I suppose you do," he went on a little grimly. He did not like Wheaton particularly. "Well, he has some Traction stock—the annual meeting is held to-morrow and he's got to be represented."

"He never told me of it," said Wheaton, truthfully. "His shares are probably in his inside pocket, or hid under the bed at home; but we've got to get them if he has any, and get them quick. If he has his wife he'll probably try and send word to me. I suppose I couldn't see him if I went up."

"Miss Porter telephoned me to come—on some business matter, she said, and no doubt that's what it is."

"Then I won't go just now, but I'll see you here as soon as you get down town. I'll be at my office right after dinner." He paused, deliberating. Fenton was a careful man, who rose to emergencies. "I'll come directly back here," said Wheaton. "No doubt the papers you want are in one of Mr. Porter's private boxes."

"Can you get into it to-night?"

"Yes; it's in the vault where we keep the account books, and there's no time lock."

Late in the afternoon Wheaton had been unusually busy with routine work, and the directors had taken an hour of his time. He had turned away from Fenton to answer a messenger from Margrave, then he went toward the Transcontinental office with a feeling of foreboding. As he crossed the threshold of the private office, the sight of Margrave's fat bulk squeezed into a chair that was too small for him, impressed him unpleasantly; he had come with mixed feelings, not knowing whether his friendly relations with the railroader were to be further emphasized, or whether Margrave was about to make some demand of him. His doubts were quickly dispelled by Margrave, who turned around fiercely as the door closed.

"Sit down, Wheaton," he said. He was breathing in the difficult choked manner of fat men in their rage. "Now, I want you to tell me something; I want you to answer up fair and square. I've got to come right down to brass tacks with you and I want you to tell me the truth. How much Traction has Billy Porter got?"

"I don't know what right you're got to ask me such a question," Wheaton answered, coldly.

"No right—no right!" Margrave panted. "You miserable fool, what do you know or mean by right or wrong either? I can take my medicine as well as the next man, but when a friend does me up, then I throw up my hands. Why did you tell me you knew what Porter was doing, and lead me to think—"

"Mr. Margrave," said Wheaton, "I didn't come here to be abused by you. If I've done you any injury, I'm not aware of it."

"I guess that's right," said Margrave, ironically. "What I want to know is what you let me think Porter wasn't taking hold of Traction for? You knew I was going into it. I told you that with the fool idea that you were a friend of mine. You told me the old man had stopped buying—"

"And when I did I betrayed a confidence," said Wheaton. "I had no business tell you anything of the kind."

"When you told me that," Margrave went on in bitter derision, shaking his finger in Wheaton's face—"when you told me that you told me a lie, that's what you did, Jim Wheaton."

"You can't talk to me that way," said Wheaton. "When I told you that, I believed it," and he added, with a second's hesitation, "I still believe it."

"Don't lie any more to me about it. I can take my medicine as well as the next man, but—swearing his big head back and forth on his fat shoulders—"when a man plays a trick on Tim Margrave, I want him to know when Margrave finds it out. I never thought of you, Jim. I've always treated you as white as I know how; I've been glad to see you in my home—"

"I don't know what you're driving at, but I want you to stop abusing me," said Wheaton, with more vigor of tone than he had yet manifested. "I never said a word to you about Mr. Porter in connection with Traction that I didn't think true. The only mistake I made was in saying anything to you at all; but I thought you were a friend of mine. If anybody's been deceived, I'm the one."

"Let me ask you something. Haven't you known all these weeks when I've been seeing you every few days at the club, and at my house several times—he dwelt on the second clause as if the breach of hospitality on Wheaton's part had been the grievous offense—"haven't you known that the old man was chasing over the country in his carpet slippers buying all that stock he could lay his hands on?"

"Oh my sacred honor, I have not. When we talked of it I knew he had been buying some, but I thought he'd stopped, as I let you understand. I'm sorry if you were misled by anything I said."

"Well, that's all over now," said Margrave, in a conciliatory tone. "I've been relying on your information; in fact, I've had it in mind to make you treasurer of the company when we get reorganized. That ought to show you what a lot of confidence I've been putting in you all this time that you've been watching me run into the soup, clear up to my chin."

"I'm honestly sorry," began Wheaton. "I had no idea you were depending on me. You ought to have known that I couldn't betray Mr. Porter."

"You ought to be sorry," said Margrave, dolefully. "But, look here, Jim, I don't believe you're going to do me up on this."

"I'm not going to do anybody up; but I don't see what I can do to help you."

"Well, I do. You gave me to understand that you were buying this stuff yourself. You still got what you had? Now, how many shares have you, Jim?"

"Just what I bought in the beginning; one hundred shares."

Margrave took a pad from his desk and added one hundred to a short column of figures. He made the footing and regarded the total with careless interest before looking up.

"How much do you want for that, Jim?"

"To tell the truth, Mr. Margrave, I don't know that I want to sell it."

"Now, Jim, you ain't going to hold me up on this? You've got me into a pretty mess, and I hope you're not going to keep on pushing me in."

"What I have wouldn't do you any good."

"But it might do me some harm! Now, you don't want these shares, Jim. You're entitled to a profit, and I'll pay you a fair price."

"I can't do anything to hurt Mr. Porter," said Wheaton. He remembered just how the drawing-room at the Porters' looked, and the kindness and frankness of Evelyn Porter's eyes.

"Yes, but you've got a duty to me. You can bet your life that if it hadn't been for you, I'd never have been in this pickle. Come along now, Jim, I've got a lot of our railroad people to go in on this. They depend absolutely on my judgment. I'm a ruined man if I fail to show up at the meeting to-morrow with a majority of these shares. It won't make any difference to Billy Porter whether he wins out or not. He's got plenty of iron in the fire. I don't know as a matter of fact that I need these shares; but I want to be on the safe side. How much shall I make the check for, Jim?"

"You can't make it for anything, Mr. Margrave, and I want to say that I'm very much disappointed in the way you've tried to get it from me. I can't imagine that these few shares of stock I hold can be of real importance in deciding the control of this company. I don't say I won't give you these shares, but I can't do it now."

Margrave's face grew red and purple as Wheaton walked toward the door.

"Maybe you think you can bring more out of Porter than you can out of me. But I'll take this out of you and out of him, too, if I go broke doing it."

(To be continued.)

## What He Escaped.

"I was mighty sorry to learn that your wife had left you, old fellow."

"Oh, well, it might have been worse." "I am glad you can find the philosophy that enables you to look at it in that way."

"Sure; haven't you heard that the coming gowns for women will have 500 buttons?"—Exchange.

## Trials of Foreign Travel.

"Did you do much sightseeing when you went abroad?"

"No," answered Mr. Dumro. "Mother and the girls did the sightseeing. I had to put in my time finding the places where they cash letters of credit."—Washington Star.

## Returned With Thanks.

Blinner—I was under the impression that the new editor of Blank's Magazine was a young man.

Rhymer—I thought so, too; but he appears to have reached his declining years.

## Did Not Watch.

Ellen—Are you going abroad this spring?

Ernest—No.

Ellen—Why not?

Ernest—My means are too narrow to be abroad.

## Means of Success.

Claude—Oh, Minnie, I love an honest Minnie—Treat it kindly, Claude, try in a strange place.—The Herald.

## Springing.

She—Man springs from a horse's back—And women from a horse's back.



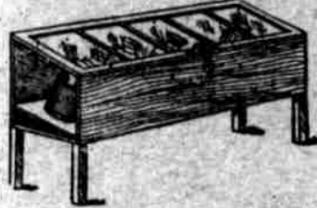
## A Good Strainer Is Necessary.

Dirt-carrying bacteria once in the milk has done its harm, and no number of strainers of any kind yet invented can take out the pernicious germs. The best strainer for the average dairyman is a metal vessel, as shown in the cut, with a wire screen of 100 wires to the inch. A wire screen on a strainer should be replaced as soon as it becomes broken or rusted. The only satisfactory way to clean the screen of a strainer is with a small, stiff brush. The best kind of a strainer is one with the screen on the sides, rather than on the bottom, for then there is no undue pressure, which sometimes forces small particles of dirt through the screen. The screener cannot be counted upon to make up for previous carelessness in milking. Scientists say that a poor strainer may even in-



BEST TYPE.

crease the bacterial content of milk. In using cheesecloth or thick linen for straining milk it should not only be boiled after use, but should then be wrapped in a paper and baked in the oven for thirty minutes and then kept wrapped up until time to use again.—Farm and Home.



SUNNING BOX FOR DAIRY UTENSILS.

Commercial Egg Farms. The production of market eggs is probably the safest branch of the poultry business, and the amount of capital invested need not be very large. In the New England States, New York and New Jersey there are many commercial egg farms, keeping from 500 to several thousand hens. The farmers, too, in this section of the country keep large flocks for eggs for the Eastern markets, and all seem to be doing well and making money. What we need in the South is more egg farms. Lands are cheap, material for housing and labor cheap, and, again, it is not necessary in the South to build such expensive houses. We have every advantage in the Southland for producing eggs at a less cost than our Northern brothers, and with quick and satisfactory railroad facilities to the Eastern markets the South should become the greatest poultry producing section of the entire country.

Other branches of the poultry industry may pay better than egg farming, but none are attended with so little worry and risk and are so certain of steady returns and a fair remuneration for the time and money expended.

## Milking.

Milking under quiet, favorable conditions is quite important, for the following reasons plainly set forth by John Burroughs, the eminent naturalist, in speaking of the supposed power of cows to "hold-up" their milk. Says Mr. Burroughs: "Most farmers and country people think that the 'giving down' or 'holding up' the milk by the cow is a voluntary act. In fact, they fancy that the udder is a vessel filled with milk, and that the cow releases or withholds it just as she chooses. But the udder is a manufactory; it is filled with blood from which the milk is manufactured while you milk. This process is controlled by the cow's nervous system; when she is excited or in any way disturbed, as by a stranger, or by talking away her calf, or any other cause, the process is arrested and the milk will not flow. The whole process is as involuntary as in digestion in man, and is disturbed or arrested in about the same way."—Missouri Dairyman.

Stock Patch and Orchard. When one of our Western farmers goes down East he is impressed with the fact that the stock patch, the orchard, the poultry yard and the dairy are relatively of vastly greater importance than in this country where broad fields of grain, alfalfa, spruce and sugar beets are in fashion and big herds of beef cattle swallow the landscape. The great stock farms of the West are mainly such as may be readily transported over long dis-

## Early Plowing Always Best.

Last summer we got a field of wheat stubble about half plowed when other work called us away. The remaining stubble was turned under early this spring, and the whole field planted to corn. The corn on last summer's plowing is now several inches taller than that on the land plowed this spring, and is ranker and better in every other way.

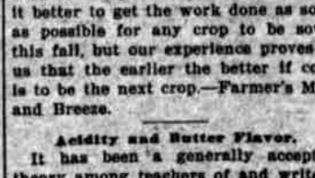
There is a difference between summer and fall plowing, the difference being in favor of the summer plowing. Turning a green growth into the soil seems to be very much better than turning an equal growth under, but waiting until it has matured and dried before doing it. Here on this farm we aim to do all the plowing possible this summer. It may be hot work but the days are long and one does not need to hurry the teams. Not only is it better to get the work done as soon as possible for any crop to be sown this fall, but our experience proves to us that the earlier the better if corn is to be the next crop.—Farmer's Mail and Breeze.

## Acidity and Butter Flavor.

It has been a generally accepted theory among teachers of and writers on dairy subjects that the production of good butter necessitates the development of a certain amount of acid in the cream, for two reasons, to develop a desirable flavor and to improve the keeping quality. Recent investigations by the United States Department of Agriculture indicate, however, that butter made from Pasteurized sweet cream has better keeping qualities and remains free from objectionable flavors for a longer time than butter made from sour cream. If these facts are established it might seem that in the years to come only sweet cream would be bought for butter making.

## A Hog Shelter.

The form of individual hoghouse shown in the illustration is 6 feet square on the ground and both doors are hinged so they will open and close readily; 12 foot boards make the side and roof. Use good soft pine flooring, as it is lighter and much easier to move when necessary than heavier lumber; four pieces 2x4 inch and 8 feet long are for sills; two pieces 2x4 inch and 6 feet long are for ridge and plate. The door in the roof can be opened when the sun shines. Sunshine is the best tonic known for little pigs in early spring, and the door



INDIVIDUAL HOGHOUSE.

is essential when the sow needs attention at pigging time as a means of entrance and, as is sometimes the case, a very hasty exit.—Breeder's Gazette.

## Dairy Notes.

Butter methods are gradually gaining favor.

Working to the best advantage means using brains.

Keep one calf growing all the time, but don't feed it too much.

Cold and overfeeding will kill the young calf more quickly than anything else.

Don't try to keep a cow for milk and beef. She will disappoint you every time.

The man with a "dual purpose" dream usually wakes up to find that he is in the beef business.

It's just about as hard to get a good header out of a scrub as it is to make water run up hill.

The creamery patron has his monthly cream checks while the other fellow has the store bill.

Every hand separator is built to take care of a certain amount of milk. Don't feed it above capacity.

The ordinary man may be judged by the company he keeps, but the dairy farmer is judged by the cows he keeps.

The best way to insure high prices for dairy products is to make them so good that the market can't help buying them.