

# The Main Chance

BY Meredith Nicholson

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## CHAPTER XIV.

The man who admitted Wheaton to the Porter house let him elect between the drawing room and the library, and he chose the latter instinctively, as less formal and more appropriate for an interview based on his dual social and business relations with the Porters. Wheaton heard the swish of Evelyn's skirts in the hall with a quickening heartbeat. Her black gown intensified her fairness; he had never seen her in black before, and it gave a new accent to her beauty as she came toward him.

"It was a great shock to us down town to hear of your father's illness. He seemed as well as usual yesterday."

"Did you think so? I thought he looked worn when he came home last evening. He has been working very hard lately."

Wheaton had never seen her so grave. He was sincerely sorry for her trouble, and he tried to say so. There was something appealing in her unusual calm; the low tones of her voice were not wasted on him.

"Father asked me to send for you this morning, but he had grown so ill in a few hours that I took the responsibility of not doing it. But something in particular was on his mind, some papers that Mr. Fenton should have. They are in his box at the bank, and I was to give you the key to it. It is something about the Traction Company. You can attend to this easily?"

"Yes, certainly. Mr. Fenton spoke to me about the matter this afternoon. It is very important and he wished me to report to him as soon as I found the papers. No doubt they are in your father's box," he said. "He is always very methodical." He smiled at her reassuringly and rose. She did not ask him to stay longer but went to fetch the key. It was a small, thin bit of steel.

"I'll return the key to-morrow, after I've found the papers Mr. Fenton wants."

"Very well. I hope you will have no difficulty. Father evidently wished all the papers he has concerning the company to be given to Mr. Fenton. Now, this probably is of no importance whatever, but several years ago father gave me some stock in the street railway company. It came about through a little fun-making between us. We were talking of railway passes—you know he never accepts any."

Wheaton blinked—"and I told him I'd like to have a pass on something, even if it was only a street car line."

She was smiling in her eagerness that he should understand perfectly.

"And he said he guessed he could fix that by giving me some stock in the company. I remember that he made light of it when I thanked him, and said it wasn't so important as it looked. He probably forgot it long ago. I had forgotten it myself—I never got the pass, either! but I brought the stock down thinking that Mr. Fenton might have use for it." She went over to the mantel and picked up a paper, while he watched her; and when she put it into his hand he turned it over. It was a certificate for one hundred shares, issued in due form to Evelyn Porter, but was not assigned.

"It may be important," said Wheaton, regarding the paper thoughtfully. "Mr. Fenton will know. It couldn't be used without your name on the back," he said, indicating the place on the certificate.

"Oh, should I sign it?" she asked, in the curious fluttering way in which many women approach the minor details of business. Wheaton hesitated; he did not imagine that this block of stock could be of importance, and yet the tentative business association with Miss Porter was so pleasant that he yielded to a temptation to prolong it.

"Yes, you might sign it," he said.

Evelyn went to her father's table and wrote her name as Wheaton indicated.

"A witness is required and I will supply that." And Wheaton sat down at the table and signed his name beside hers, while she stood opposite him, the tips of her fingers resting on the table.

"Evelyn Porter" and "James Wheaton." He blotted the names with Porter's blotter, Evelyn still standing by him, slightly mystified as women often are by the fact that their signatures have a value. He felt that there was something intimate in the fact of their signing themselves together there. He was thrilled by her beauty.

On his way down the slope to the car, Wheaton felt in his pocket several times to be sure of the key. There was something the last bit uncanny in his possession of it. Yesterday William Porter would no more have entrusted the key of his private box to him than he would have burned down his house. He read into his errand a trust on Porter's part that included Porter's daughter, too; but he got little satisfaction from this. He was only the most convenient messenger available. His spirits rose and fell as he debated. He went to the side door of the bank and knocked for the watchman to admit him.

"Going to work to-night, Mr. Wheaton?" asked the watchman.

"There are some papers in Mr. Porter's box that I must give to Mr. Fenton to-night. They are in the old vault." This vault was often opened at night by the bookkeepers and there was no reason why the cashier should not enter it when he pleased. The watchman turned up the lights so that Wheaton could manipulate the combination, and then swung open the door. Wheaton thanked him and went in. Two keys were necessary to open all of the boxes; one was common to all and was kept by the bank. Wheaton easily found it, and then he took from his pocket Porter's key which supplemented the other. His pulses beat fast as he felt the lock yield to the thin strip of steel, and in a moment the box lay open before his eyes. He had flashed on the electric light bulb in the vault and recognized instantly Porter's inscription "Traction" on a brown bundle. He then opened his own box and took out his Traction certificate and carried it with Porter's packet into the directors' room.

He sat playing with the package, which was sealed in green wax with the plain oval insignium of the bank. The packet was larger than he had expected it to be; he had no idea of the amount of stock it contained; and he knew nothing of the bonds. He felt tempted to open it; but clearly that was not within his instructions. He must deliver it intact to Fenton, and he would do it instantly. He hesitated, though, and drew out the certificate which Evelyn had given him and turned the crisp paper over in his hand. Each of them owned one hundred shares of Traction stock; he was not thinking of this, but of Evelyn, whose signature held his eye. It was an angular hand, and she ran her two names together with a long sweep of the pen.

His thoughts were given a new direction by the noise of a colloquy between the watchman and some one at the door.

with a sneer. "Now, Jim, I'm going to say something to you. The chances are that Porter's going to die. I guess he won't be able to vote his stock to-morrow. I suppose you've got it or know where it is." He eyed the bundle on which Wheaton's hand at that moment rested nervously. I want that stock, Jim, and I want you to give it to me to-night."

"Margrave," said Wheaton, "you must be crazy, or a fool."

"Things are going pretty well with you, Jim," Margrave continued. "You have a good position here; when the old man's out of the way, you can marry the girl and be president of the bank. It's dead easy for a smart fellow like you. It would be too bad for you to spoil such prospects right now, when the game is all in your own hands, by failing to help a friend in trouble. I gave you your first job when you came here—"

"I appreciate all that, Mr. Margrave," Wheaton broke in. "You said the word that got me into the Clarkson National, and I have never forgotten it."

"Well, I don't want you to forget it. But see here: as long as I recommended you and stood by you when you were a ratty little train butcher, I think you owe something to me. One night last fall a drunken scamp came into my yard and made a row. I was about to turn him over to the police when he began whimpering and said he knew you. He wasn't doing any particular harm and I gave him a quarter and told him to get out; but he wanted to talk. He said—"

Margrave dropped his voice and fastened his eyes on Wheaton—"he was a long-lost brother of yours. He was pretty drunk, but he seemed clear on your family history, Jim. He said he'd done time once back in Illinois, and got you out of a scrape. He told me his name was William Wheaton, but that he had lost it in

# FARM AND GARDEN

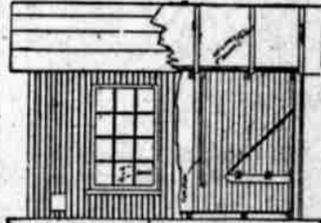
## Farm Poultry House.

For a farmer's poultry house I know of nothing that will give better satisfaction than a moveable colony house, such as is used at Macdonald College, Que., a photo and plan of



FRONT VIEW.

which accompanies. This house is 8x12 feet, floor built on two skids and accommodates 25 hens and 3 males in the winter and half as many more during the summer. A team of horses can draw it to any part of the farm that may be desired. This gives fresh ground to the hens, and feed that might otherwise go to waste, can be made use of. For farm use the studding need not be so high, and the house can be built of available material. A loose board ceiling over which is placed straw provides for the absorption of moisture and even in the



PLAN OF INTERIOR.

coldest days, hens are quite comfortable. A farmer can add to his equipment one house at a time, and gradually work up to the desired number.—F. C. Elford.

## Cocklebur.

A good many farmers are still struggling with the cocklebur nuisance. It is possible to rid the ranch of this pest in one year and realize a profit on the operation. Any time before the weeds have attained much height take a plow and harrow to the field and before the day is done sow one and one-half bushels of good kafir corn to each acre plowed. Harrow well and the next day repeat the operation until the cocklebur territory has been thoroughly covered. When the kafir seed is in the dough mow or bind with a harvester and you will have one of the very best crops or roughage to be had. Remove this crop from the field as soon as convenient. Two years or so of this kind of tillage will clean out the burrs and the operation is certainly worth while.—Denver Field and Farm.

## Pump for the Garden.

A good pump should be part of the equipment of every garden. For the small garden a good bucket, compressed air or knapsack pump will be most satisfactory, while for larger gardens a barrel pump, with an attachment for spraying several rows when occasion demands, or an automatic pump geared to the wheels of the truck, will be found more economical of time and labor. The small compressed air sprayer is handy, as it leaves both hands free for use, and is, therefore, useful if it is desired to spray two or three small trees, possibly with the use of a stepladder to reach their tops.

## Fertilizers.

Fertilizers may be divided into two general classes—direct and indirect, or nutritive and stimulant. A direct or nutritive fertilizer is one which furnishes nourishment to the growing crop. Nourishment means simply nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash. These are the three ingredients which must be renewed through the medium of manures and fertilizers. A stimulant or indirect fertilizer is one which does not furnish an actual plant food to the soil, but by its stimulating action renders available some plant food

which previously existed in the soil in an insoluble or unavailable condition.

## Horses and Corn Growing.

In growing corn one of the factors that is seldom rated at its true worth is first-class motive power. Anyone who has plowed, harrowed, planted and cultivated with an ill-matched, short-weighted, high-strung team knows how difficult it is to do good work. No farm hand thus handicapped can render a service that is satisfactory to a good farmer. Farm teams should be evenly matched as to age, size and temperament. Weight is essential. Teams should be big enough to keep a reserve power constantly on tap; they should draw any implement with ease and at a steady, lively pace. If they are of standard draft type and are shifted occasionally from one class of service to another they will go through the season without breakdowns. This depends, however, to a large extent on how they are fed and managed. Much depends also on the ease and comfort which they enjoy in the collar; sore necks and galled shoulders, due to poorly fitted collars, prove serious obstacles to good, continuous work. Corn-belt farms should be equipped with heavy draft teams; the highest type of diversified agriculture in that territory depends on this reliable, efficient motive power. Big horses bear a close relationship to a big corn crop.—Chicago Live Stock World.

## Testing Milk.

In some sections many of the best dairymen are adapting the Holland plan of combining and hiring men to visit each herd one day in the month and test the milk of each cow, thus giving the owners an idea of which cows are the ones that are paying for their keep. This plan is a very sensible one and should be encouraged. The cost is comparatively small, as the tester boards with the family while he is doing his work and is carried to the next place the day he has completed his work. This insures regularity in the work. In Michigan this plan has greatly increased the average production per cow. Wisconsin, too, has taken up this matter. It is good business and it may become popular, but some of our dairymen are hard to turn from the beaten paths of their fathers.—Farmers and Drivers' Journal.

## When Orchards Fall.

The ashes from apple, pear and peach trees contain about 70 per cent of lime, and the crops of fruit borne every year also contains lime. When orchards fall it is always profitable to apply lime, and it should be done at least once in five years. Wood ashes are preferable to lime for orchards, but the lime is much cheaper. Lime will also prove of benefit to grass that may be growing in an orchard, and it is destructive to certain grubs and other orchard enemies. It is best applied by plowing the orchard land and broadcasting the lime over the surface.

## The Real Value of Sheep.

The census report cannot give the real value of sheep. Outside of the value of sheep as producers of meat and wool, there is a benefit conferred by them to land. Pastures occupied by sheep become richer every year, and bushes, weeds and briars, which so readily grow where they are not desired, are kept down by sheep and their places occupied by grass. The poorest kind of land, if given up to sheep, even if it is necessary to allow feed to them, will be made productive in a few years.

## Why Pity the Farmer?

Mr. Mann of Gouda Springs, says a Kansas newspaper, loaded a large, fat hog into his automobile and took it to market in Arkansas City, where he got a good price for the porker. It took him a mighty short time to get the hog to town and get the cash for it. A few minutes' scrubbing fixed the auto so that it did not smell like a barnyard, and the hog probably enjoyed the ride. What's the use holding meetings trying to improve conditions of farm life?

## Feeding Sheep.

There are several points in feeding sheep that must not be overlooked. The feed lot must be dry, with plenty of clean, dry bedding; the animals must have plenty of clean, pure water, and the feed troughs should be kept clean. These should be arranged so that the sheep cannot foul them with their feet. Another point is to keep them from becoming excited or frightened. To this end it is better that one person feed them all the time.

## The Sorrel Horse.

There is no color of horse so insensible to heat as the sorrel. There is seldom any coat so silky or responds so quickly to good care as the sorrel, and many horsemen claim there is seldom any horse with such sound feet and limbs or possessing the endurance of the sorrel.

## American Wheat.

The United States annually exports more wheat flour than all the other countries of the world combined—15,000,000 out of 25,000,000 barrels.



WROTE HER NAME AS WHEATON INDICATED.

He heard his own name mentioned, and thrusting the certificates into his pocket, he went out to learn what was the matter.

"Mr. Wheaton," called the watchman, who held the door partly closed on some one. "Mr. Margrave wishes to see you."

As Wheaton walked toward the watchman, Margrave strode in heavily on the tile floor of the bank.

## CHAPTER XV.

"Hello, Wheaton," said Margrave, cheerfully. "I've had a hard time finding you. Let's go into the directors' room; I want to see you."

The main bank room was only dimly lighted, but a cluster of electric lights burned brilliantly above the directors' mahogany table, around which were chairs of the Bank of England pattern.

"Have a seat, Mr. Margrave," said Wheaton formally. He had left the door open, but Margrave closed it carefully. Porter's bundle of papers in its manila wrapper lay on the table, and Wheaton sat down close to it.

"What you got there, greenbacks?" asked Margrave. "If you were just leaving for Canada, don't miss the train on my account."

"That isn't funny," said Wheaton, severely.

"Oh, I wouldn't be so sensitive," said Margrave, throwing open his overcoat and placing his hat on the table in front of him. "I guess you ain't any better than some of the rest of 'em."

"I suppose you didn't come to say that," said Wheaton. He ran his fingers over the wax seal on the packet. He wished that it were back in Porter's box.

"We were having a little talk this afternoon, Jim," began Margrave in a friendly and familiar tone, "about Traction matters. As I remember it, in our last talk, it was understood that if I needed your little bunch of Traction shares you'd let me have 'em when the time came. Now our friend Porter's sick," continued Margrave, watching Wheaton sharply with his small, keen eyes.

"I don't know that it's so serious. I was at the house this evening."

"Comforting the daughter, no doubt."

the shuffle somewhere and was known as Snyder. I started him toward Porter's where I knew you were doing the society act. I heard afterward that he found you."

"And so you sent that scamp over there to make a row. I didn't think you would play me a trick like that."

"Now, Jim," Margrave continued magnanimously, "I don't care about your family connections. You're all right. You're good enough for me, you understand, and you're good enough for the Porters. My father was a butcher and I began life sweeping out the shop, and I guess everybody knows it; and if they don't like it, they know what they can do."

(To be continued.)

## Fatherly Advice.

"Dad," said the country youth who had just graduated from the district school, "I have long cherished a desire to go on the stage, and have at last decided, with your permission, to—"

"My boy," interrupted the old granger, "all the world's a stage. You hitch the mules to the big red plow and transfer the outfit to the ten-acre lot behind the barn, where you can enact the star role in that beautiful drama entitled, 'Down on the Farm.'"

## A Good Foundation.

Mrs. Youngwed—This is the first bread I ever made, darling.

Youngwed—Well, dear, you ought to build up an excellent reputation as a housekeeper on it.

## Mrs. Youngwed—Why?

Youngwed—Because you have started with an almost indestructible foundation.

## Unlucky Thirteen.

Mrs. Diggs—There goes Mrs. Bryweeds. She has been married and divorced twelve times.

Mrs. Diggs—Indeed! I wonder if she will marry again?

Mrs. Diggs—I hardly think so. She is superstitious.