

# The Main Chance

BY  
**Meredith Nicholson**

Copyright 1903  
THE BOSS-MERRILL COMPANY

## CHAPTER XV.—(Continued.)

Wheaton's hand rested again on the packet before him; he had flushed to the temples, but the color slowly died out of his face. It was very still in the room, and the watchman could be heard walking across the tiled lobby outside. A patrol wagon rattled in the street with a great clang of its gong. Wheaton had moved the brown parcel a little nearer to the edge of the table; Margrave noticed this and for the first time took a serious interest in the packet. He was not built for quick evolutions, but he made a sudden movement around the table toward Wheaton, who was between him and the door.

"What you got in that paper, Jim?" he asked, puffing from his exertion.

Wheaton did not speak, but he picked up the parcel and took a step toward the door. Margrave advanced upon him. Wheaton ~~opened the door~~ holding the package under his arm.

"Don't touch me; don't touch me," he said, hoarsely. Margrave still came toward him. Wheaton's unengaged hand went nervously to his throat, and he fumbled at his tie. The sweat came out on his forehead. It was a curious scene, the tall, dark man in his evening clothes, pitiful in his agitation, with his back against the door, hugging the bundle under one arm; and Margrave, in his rough business suit, walking toward Wheaton, who retreated before him.

"I want that package, Jim." "Go away! go away!" The sweat shone on Wheaton's forehead in great drops. "I can't, I can't—you know I can't!"

"You coward!" said Margrave. "I want that bundle." He made a gesture and Wheaton dodged and shrank away. Margrave laughed again; a malicious mirth possessed him. But he grew suddenly fierce and his fat fingers closed about Wheaton's neck. Wheaton huddled against the door, holding the brown packet with both hands.

"Drop it! Drop it!" blurted Margrave. He was breathing hard.

A sharp knock at the door against which they struggled caused Margrave to spring away. He walked down the room several paces with an assumption of carelessness, and Wheaton, with the bundle still under his arm, turned—the knob of the door.

"Hello, Wheaton!" called Fenton, blinking in the glare of the lights.

"Good evening," said Wheaton.

"How're you, Fenton," said Margrave, carelessly, but mopping his forehead with his handkerchief.

"Here are your papers," said Wheaton, almost thrusting his parcel into the lawyer's hands.

"All right," said Fenton, looking curiously from one to the other. And then he glanced at the package, as if absent-mindedly, and saw that the seal was unbroken.

"Good night, gentlemen," he said. "Sorry to have disturbed you."

"How much Traction was in that package?" asked Margrave, closing the door.

"I don't know," said Wheaton, smoothing his tie. The watchman could be heard closing the outside door on Fenton.

"No, I don't think you do," returned Margrave. "You'd fixed it pretty well with Fenton. If he'd only been a minute later I'd have got that bundle. I didn't realize at first what you had there, Jim, until you kept fingering it so desperately. Now there are those shares you own, Jim. I hope we won't be interrupted while you're getting them for me."

Wheaton hesitated. "I'm going from here to the Gazette office. You know they do little I tell 'em over there. They'd like a what story about the aristocratic Wheaton family of Ohio. Porter's girl would like that for breakfast to-morrow morning."

Wheaton hung between two inclinations, one to make terms with Margrave and assure his friendship at any hazard, the other to break with him, let the consequences be what they might.

"Hurry up," said Margrave impatiently; "this is my busy night and I can't wait on you. Dig it up."

Wheaton's hand went slowly to his pocket. As he drew out his own certificate with nervous fingers, the certificate which Evelyn Porter had given him an hour before fell upon the table.

"That's the right color," said Margrave, snatching the paper as Wheaton sprang forward to regain it.

"Not that! not that! That isn't mine!"

Margrave stepped back and swept the face of the certificate with his eyes.

"Well! I knew you stood next, Jim," he said, insolently, "but I didn't know that you were on such confidential terms as all this. And you witnessed the signature. How sweet and pretty it all is!" The paper exhaled the faint odor of a watchet, and Margrave lifted it to his nostrils with a mockery of delight.

"I must have that, Margrave. I will do anything, but I must have that—you wouldn't—"

Margrave watched him maliciously, thoroughly enjoying his terror. "How do you know I wouldn't? Give me the other one, Jim."

Still Wheaton held his own certificate; he believed for a moment that he could trade the one for the other.

"I'm not going to fool with you much longer, Jim; you either give me that certificate or I go to the Gazette office as straight as I can walk. Just sign it in blank, the way the other one is. I'll witness it all right."

Wheaton wrote while Margrave stood over him, holding ready a blotter which he applied to Wheaton's signature with unnecessary care.

"I hope this won't cause you any inconvenience with the lady, but you're undoubtedly a fair liar and you can fix that all right, particularly"—with a chuckle—"if the old man catches in."

Wheaton followed Margrave's movements as if under a spell that he could not shake off. Margrave walked toward the door with an air of nonchalance, pulling on his gloves.

"I haven't my check-book with me, Jim, but I'll settle for your stock and Miss Evelyn's, too, after I get things re-organized. It'll be worth more money than. Please give the young-lady my compliments," with irritating suavity. He stopped, smoothing the backs of his gloves placidly. "That's all right, Jim, ain't it?" he asked, mockingly.

"I hope you're satisfied," said Wheaton, weakly.

"I'm never satisfied," said Margrave, picking up his hat.

Wheaton wished to make a bargain with him, to secure his own immunity; but he did not know how to accomplish it. Margrave had threatened him, and he wished to dull the point of the threat, but he was afraid to ask a promise of him. Wheaton did not follow him to the door, but Margrave seemed in no hurry to leave. The watchman went forward to let him out at the side entrance.

"If he'd only been sure the old man

hoped to sell his friend's shares to advantage.

Saxton had never been in the Exchange Building before and he poked about in the dark upper floors, uncertainly looking for the rooms described in the advertisement. Another man, also peering about in the hall, ran against him.

"Beg pardon, but can you tell me—"

"Good morning, Mr. Saxton, are you acquainted in this rookery?" It was Fenton, who carried a brown parcel under his arm and appeared annoyed.

"No; but I'm learning," John answered. "I'm looking for the offices of the Traction Company. Its light seems to be hid under a bushel."

"I'm looking for it, too," said Fenton. "Some humorist seems to have changed the numbers on this floor."

They traversed the halls of several floors in an effort to find the numbers specified in the notice. Fenton occasionally kicked at a door in his rage. Saxton called to him presently from a dark corner where he held up a lighted match to read the number on the transom.

"Here's our number, but there's no name on the door."

Fenton advanced upon the door with long strides, but it did not open as he grasped the knob. He kicked it sharply, but there was still no response from within.

"What time is it, Saxton?" he asked over his shoulder, without abating his pounding or knocking.

"Five minutes of nine," Saxton was aware now that something important was in progress. He did not know Fenton well, but he knew that he was the attorney for Porter and the Clarkson National, and that he was a serious character who did not beat on doors unless he had business on the inside. Fenton now called out loudly, demanding admission. There was a low sound of voices and a sharp noise of chairs being pushed over an uncarpeted floor; but the knob which Fenton still held and shook did not turn.

On the inside of the door—Timothy



HIS FINGERS CLOSED ABOUT WHEATON'S NECK.

would have died to-night," he reflected as he walked up the street, "he'd have given me Porter's shares, easy." He went to his office, entertaining himself with this pleasant speculation. "If I'd got out of the bank with that package he'd never dared squeal," he presently concluded.

## CHAPTER XVI.

John Saxton was a good deal the worse for wear as he swung himself from a sleeper in the Clarkson station and bolted for a downtown car. Coal mining is a dirty business, and there are limits to the things that can be crowded into a suit-case. He had been crawling through four-foot veins of Kansas coal in the interest of the Neponset Trust Company, and had been delayed a day longer than he had expected. He continued to be in a good deal of a hurry after he reached his office, and he kicked aside the mail which rustled under the door as he opened it, and knelt hastily before the safe and began rattling the tumblers of the combination. He pulled out a long envelope and then with more composure consulted his watch.

It was half-past eight. He took from his memorandum calendar the leaf for the day; on it he had posted a cutting from a local newspaper announcing the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Clarkson Traction Company. The meeting was to be held, so the notice recited, between the hours of 9 a. m. and 5 p. m. of the second Tuesday of November, at the general offices of the company in the city of Clarkson. The Exchange Building was specified, though the administrative offices of the company were on the other side of town. Before setting forth Saxton examined his papers, which were certificates of stock in the Clarkson Traction Company. They had been sent to him by a personal friend in Boston, the trustee of an estate, with instruction to investigate and report. Having received them just as he was leaving for Kansas, there had been no opportunity for consulting Porter or Wheaton, his usual advisers in perplexing matters. Traction stock had advanced lately, despite newspaper attacks on the company, and he

Margrave and Horton, the president, Barnes, the secretary, and Percival, the treasurer of the Clarkson Traction Company, were holding the annual meeting of that corporation, in conformity with its articles of association, and according to the duly advertised notice as required by the statutes in such case made and provided. They had, however, anticipated the hour slightly; but this was not, Margrave said, an important matter. His notions of the proper way of holding business meetings were based on his long experience in managing ward primaries.

Horton, the president, called the meeting to order.

"Well, boys," said Margrave, "there ain't any use waiting on the other fellows. Business is business and we might as well get through with it. I vote twenty-five hundred and ninety-seven shares of the common stock of this company; you gentlemen haven't more than that, have you?" The fact was that the three officers present owned only one share each.

"I move," said Barnes, "that we proceed to the election of officers for the ensuing year."

"And I move," said Percival, "that the secretary be instructed to cast the ballot of the stockholders for Timothy Margrave for president."

"Consent," exclaimed Barnes, hurriedly.

Steps could be heard in the outer hall, and Margrave looked at his watch.

"I move that we adjourn to meet at my office at two o'clock, to conclude the election of officers." He gathered up his certificates and prepared to leave.

(To be continued.)

## Stellar Symptoms.

It was the open season for baseball as a man limped into the police station, with a black eye and one arm in a sling.

"Say, captain," he said, addressing the officer in charge, "I want protection."

"Oh, you do, eh?" queried the officer. "Are you a married man or an umpire?"

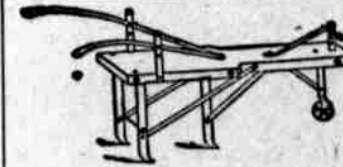


## Homemade Ditch Digger.

A complete homemade ditch digger may be made by following the description here given.

The bed piece, five and a half inches long, is cut out of a hard plank two and a half inches thick, bolted at each end and in the middle to prevent splitting. The rear half is nine inches wide and the front half six inches wide.

The diggers are made of steel bars two and a half inches wide, three-quarters of an inch thick and twenty-four inches long. They are fastened to the plank by a right angle turn and bolted. The two rear diggers are held firmly by a rod with nuts inside and



THE DIGGER EQUIPPED.

out, the points being spread out so that the bed piece can easily drop into the space when the ditch is two feet or more in depth. The front digger is the same size, but set in the middle. All are held firmly by brace rods and sharpened like the flat end of a pickax. A wheel is set under the front end to steady the movement and is braced backward. An adjustable draw iron is placed above, through which the rod may pass at any height suited to the depth of the ditch.

The handles are also adjustable, raising them as the digger drops lower.

In hard subsoils one will save the cost of this simple device in digging seventy-five rods of ditch. In our hardpan sections of the east, which always need drainage, one does not feel encouraged to dig ditches with pick and shovel when more than half the energy is required to loosen the dirt. With this machine the toughest subsoil when dry handles as rapidly as loose sand.

## Keeping Cream Sweet.

The first step in keeping cream sweet is to keep it as clean as possible. Clean cream cannot be produced by filthy methods of milking nor by handling the cream or milk in unclean utensils. Milk cans, stirrers and pails should be thoroughly scalded in hot water and dried and exposed to the sunlight and pure air.

The next step is to remove the animal heat from the cream as soon as possible after separating. Run the cream from the separator into a convenient utensil for cooling. A 3 or 5-gallon shotgun can is most convenient. Cool the cream in well water by stirring. In a few minutes it can be reduced to the temperature of the water. After the cream is cooled it can be added to the cream contained in the supply can used in delivering cream to the station. The cream supply can, while being filled and held for delivery, should be kept in water at as near the temperature of freshly pumped water as possible. The average temperature of well water in Kansas is about 55 degrees. With it cream can easily be held at 58 or 60 degrees, and at this temperature will remain sweet for delivery in good shape at the station.—Kansas Farmer.

## Weed Seeds in Manure.

It is well known that there is considerable risk of introducing new weeds by the purchase of manure and hay and other feeding stuffs. E. I. Oswald, of the Maryland experiment station, undertook to obtain more definite information on this point, especially as regards dissemination through manure, by studying the effect of the fermentation of manure handled in different ways and of passing through the digestive systems of animals on the vitality of various seeds, including seeds of about fifty of the worst weeds found in Maryland.

In experiments in which the manure remained for six months in a barnyard heap and for a short while in piles, as when shipped in carload lots from cities, it was found that in the first case there was no danger, and in the second case little danger of distributing live weed seeds.

## Red Clover vs. Alfalfa.

Some of the old-time dairymen are coming around to the belief that red clover such as was grown around Denver twenty-five or thirty years ago, is better forage for the production of milk than is alfalfa as grown nowadays. Certain it is that we are not now getting the quality of milk that was produced a quarter of a century ago, when nearly everybody had a little patch of clover. It was quite natural, however, that we should have

exchanged the old friend for the new, for the reason that red clover is biennial in its habit of growth and under the most ideal conditions will not furnish more than two cuttings of hay in a season. On the other hand, alfalfa is a perennial plant, and when once established will continue to produce four and frequently five crops in a season for several years in succession, and this is why our dairymen have clung to it through all these years like a pup to a root. We are loth to concede that red clover is the better forage in the production of milk, but it does look that way, and we know farmers in different parts of the State who are taking up its culture quite extensively.—Denver Field and Farm.

## A Fruit Tree Doctor Fake.

The latest fake practiced on farmers is done by a man who visits the place and claims that he has been sent out by the State to examine fruit tree diseases, says an exchange. The fellow will go over the orchard and mark all trees which he claims are affected. Shortly after his visit a confederate will appear and say that he has a preparation which will cure the disease for which the tree is condemned and will contract to inject a fluid into the roots for a certain price. Both men are swindlers and should be run off the place with a shotgun. The only men empowered to inspect orchards are the county inspectors, who are known to most fruit growers.

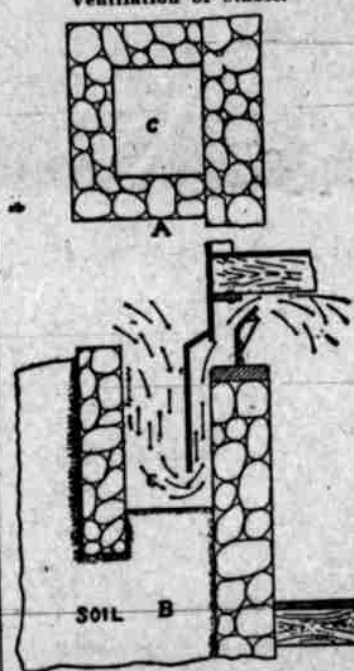
## Scalding Peach Borers.

The hot water cure is recommended by many for peach tree borers. It is a somewhat drastic treatment—for the borer—though it does not hurt the tree. The borers work either at or directly beneath the surface of the ground, around the trunk. The tree may be hilled up in the form of a saucer, the dirt packed a little and the scalding water poured in. This will invariably bring out any borers. It is not believed to hurt the tree, although an excess of water should not be used. An emulsion of 1 part of natholeum to 150 parts of water is also recommended.

## Cabbage Worms.

The common cabbage worm is among the best known of all garden pests, both as a larva and in the adult stage, when it becomes the common spotted, white cabbage butterfly. The young plants should be sprayed with arsenate of lead, 1 ounce to a gallon of water, and the foliage kept covered until they begin to head up well. Water heated to 130 degrees Fahrenheit will destroy all worms which it hits, without injury to the plants.

## Ventilation of Stable.



This diagram shows method of constructing a fresh air intake where the soil comes to or near the top of wall as found in many bank barns. An excavation is necessary and a retaining wall is built around the open space marked C.

## Grain or Butter?

Every dairy butter maker whose product is known to be of uniform good quality can now easily contract all of their surplus at 25 cents per pound the year round. And yet the quality designated as "common country butter" nearly always sells below that price, and during four or five summer months goes as low as 12 cents. Why—why will its makers be content to follow methods that spell positive loss? Who can and will answer this question?—The Ruralist.

## To Guard Against Cut-Worms.

Tar paper placed around cabbage and tomato plants will keep off cut-worms. Insert the paper in the ground, making a circle about 4 inches in diameter and 3 inches deep.

## Handling Milk.

It must not be forgotten that cleanliness and coldness are the two great principles in handling milk.