

The Main Chance

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CHAPTER XVIII.

The affairs of the Traction Company proved to be in a wretched tangle. Saxton employed an expert accountant to open a set of books for the company, while he gave his immediate attention to the physical condition of the property. The company's service was a byword and a hissing in the town, and he did what he could to better it, working long hours, but enjoying the labor. It had been a sudden impulse on Fenton's part to have Saxton made receiver. In Saxton's first days at Clarkson he had taken legal advice of Fenton in matters which had already been placed in the lawyer's hands by the bank; but most of these had long been closed, and Saxton had latterly gone to Haridan for such legal assistance as he needed from time to time. Fenton had firmly intended asking Whenton's appointment; this seemed to him perfectly natural and proper in view of Whenton's position in the bank and his relations with Porter, which were much less confidential than even Fenton imagined.

Fenton had been disturbed to find Margrave and Whenton together in the directors' room the night before the annual meeting of the Traction stockholders. He could imagine no business that would bring them together; and the hour and the place were not propitious for forming new alliances for the bank. Whenton had appeared agitated as he passed out the packet of bonds and stocks; and Margrave's efforts at gaiety had only increased Fenton's suspicions. From every point of view it was unfortunate that Porter should have fallen ill just at this time; but it was, on the whole, just as well to take warning from circumstances that were even slightly suspicious, and he had decided that Whenton should not have the receivership. He had not considered Saxton in this connection until the hour of the Traction meeting; and he had inwardly debated it until the moment of his decision at the street corner.

He had expected to supervise Saxton's acts, but the receiver had taken hold of the company's affairs with a zeal and an intelligence which surprised him. Saxton wasn't so slow as he looked, he said to the federal judge, who had accepted Saxton wholly on Fenton's recommendation. Within a fortnight Saxton had improved the service of the company to the public so markedly that the newspapers praised him. He reduced the office force to a working basis and installed a cashier who was warranted not to steal. It appeared that the motormen and conductors held their positions by paying tribute to certain minor officers, and Saxton applied heroic treatment to these abuses without ado.

The motormen and conductors grew used to the big blond in the long gray ulster who was forever swinging himself aboard the cars and asking them questions. They affectionately called him "Whiskers," for no obvious reason, and the report that Saxton had, in one of the power-houses, filled his pipe with sweepings of tobacco factories known in the trade as "Trolleyman's Special," had further endeared him to those men whose pay checks bore his name as receiver. In snowstorms the Traction Company had usually given up with only a tame struggle, but Saxton devised a new snow-plow, which he hitched to a trolley and drove with his own hand over the Traction Company's tracks.

John was cleaning out the desk of the late secretary of the company one evening while Haridan read a newspaper and waited for him. Worry was often lonely these days. Saxton was too much engrossed to find time for frivolity, and Mr. Porter's illness cut sharply in on Worry's visits to the Hill. He was resting while he waited for the Transcontinental to exhaust its usual tactics of delay and come to trial. On Fenton's suggestion Saxton had intrusted to Haridan some matters pertaining to the receivership, and these served to carry Worry over an interval of idleness and restlessness.

"You may hang me!" said Saxton, suddenly. He had that day unexpectedly come upon the long-lost stock records of the company and was now examining them. Thrust into one of the books were two canceled certificates.

"It's certainly queer," he said, as Worry went over to his desk. He spread out one of the certificates which Margrave had taken from Whenton the night before the annual meeting. "That's certainly Whenton's endorsement all right enough."

Haridan took off his glasses and brought his near-sighted gaze to bear critically upon the paper.

"There's no doubt about it."

"And look at this, too." Saxton handed him Evelyn Porter's certificate. Haridan examined it and Evelyn's signature on the back with greater care. He carried the paper nearer to the light, and scanned it again while Saxton watched him and smoked his pipe.

"You notice that Whenton witnessed the signature?"

Haridan nodded. Saxton, who knew his friend's moods thoroughly, saw that he was troubled.

"I can find no plausible explanation of that," said Saxton. "Anybody may be called on to witness a signature; but I can't explain this. He opened the stock record and followed the history of the two certificates from one page to another. It was clear enough that the certificates held by Evelyn Porter and James Whenton had been merged into one, which had been made out in the name of Timothy Margrave, and dated the day before the annual meeting.

"It doesn't make much difference at present," said Saxton. "When Mr. Porter comes down town he will undoubtedly go over this whole business and he can easily explain these matters."

"It makes a lot of difference," said Worry, gloomily.

"We'd better not say anything about this just now—not even to Fenton," Saxton suggested. "I'll take these things over to my other office for safe keeping. Some one may want them badly enough to look for them."

Haridan sat down with his newspaper and pretended to be reading until Saxton was ready to go.

CHAPTER XIX.

The iron thrall of winter was broken at last. Great winds still blew in the valley, but their keen edge was dulled. Robins and bluejays, coming before the daffodils dared, looked down from bare boughs upon the receding line of snow on the Porter hillside. The yellow river had shaken itself free of ice, and its swollen flood rolled seaward. Porter watched it from his windows; and early in March he was allowed to take short walks in the grounds. He was much weakened by his illness, and though he pleaded daily to be allowed to go to the bank, he submitted to Evelyn's refusal with a tameness that was new in him. Fenton came several times for short interviews; Thompson called as an old friend as well as a business associate. Whenton was often at the house, and Porter preferred his account of bank matters to Thompson's. Whenton carried the figures in his head, and answered questions offhand, while Thompson was helpless without the statements which he was always having the clerks make for him. Porter fretted and fumed over Traction matters, though Fenton did his best to reassure him.

He did not understand why Saxton should have been made receiver; if Fenton was able to dictate the appointment, why did he ignore Whenton, who could have been spared from the bank easily enough when Thompson returned. Fenton did not tell him the true reason—but he urged the fact that Saxton represented certain shares which were entitled to consideration, and he made much of the danger of Thompson's breaking down at any moment and having to leave. Porter dreaded litigation, and wanted to know how soon the receivership could be terminated and the company reorganized. The only comfort he derived from the situation was the victory which had been gained over Margrave, who had repeatedly sent messages to the house asking for an interview with Porter at the earliest moment possible. The banker's humor had not been injured by the fever, and he told Evelyn and the doctor that he'd almost be willing to stay in bed a while longer merely to annoy Tim Madgrave.

"If I'd known I was going to be sick, I guess I wouldn't have tackled it," he said to Fenton one day, holding up his thin hand to the fire. The doctors had found his heart weak and had cut off his tobacco, which he missed sorely. "I might unload as soon as we can rebound and reorganize."

"That's for you to say," answered the lawyer. "Margrave wanted it, and no doubt he would be glad to take it off your hands if you care to deal with him."

"If I was sure I had a dead horse, I guess I'd as lief let Tim carry him as any man in town; but I don't believe this animal is dead."

"Not much," said the lawyer, reassuringly. "Saxton says he's making money every day, now that nobody is stealing the revenues. He's painting the open cars and expects to do much better through the summer."

"I guess Saxton doesn't know much about the business," said Porter.

"He knows more than he did. He's all right, that fellow—slow but sure. He's been a surprise to everybody. He's solid with the men, too, they tell me. I guess there won't be any strikes while he's in charge."

"You'd better get a good man to keep the accounts," Porter suggested. "Whenton's pretty keen on such things."

"Oh, that's all fixed. Saxton brought a man out from an Eastern audit company to run that for him, and he deposits with the bank."

"All right," said Porter, weakly. Saxton came and talked to him of the receivership several times, and Porter quizzed him about it in his characteristic vein. Saxton was very patient under his cross-examination, and reassured the banker by his manner and his facts. Porter had lost his jaunty way, and after the first interview he contented himself with asking how the receipts were running and how they compared with those of the year previous. Saxton suggested several times to Fenton that he would relinquish the receivership, now that Porter was able to nominate some one to his own liking. The lawyer would not have it so. He believed in Saxton and he felt sure that when Porter could get about and see what the receiver had accomplished he would be satisfied. It would be foolish to make a change until Porter had fully recovered and was able to take hold of Traction matters in earnest.

Saxton had suddenly become a person of importance in the community. The public continued to be mystified by the legal stroke which had placed William Porter virtually in possession of the property; and it naturally took a deep interest in the court's agent who was managing it so successfully. Worry Haridan was delighted to find Saxton praised, and he dealt ironically with those who

expressed surprise at Saxton's capacity. He was glad to be associated with John, and when he could find an excuse, he liked to visit the power house with him, and to identify himself in any way possible with his friend's work. During the extreme cold he paid from his own pocket for the hot coffee which was handed up to the motormen along all the lines, and gave it out to the newspapers that the receiver was doing it. John warned him, that this would appear reckless and injure him with the judge of the court to whom he was responsible.

Though Porter was not strong enough to resume his business burdens, he was the better able in his abundant leisure to quibble over domestic and social matters with an invalid's unreason. He was troubled because Evelyn would not go out; she had missed practically all the social gaiety of the winter by reason of his illness, and he wished her to feel free to leave him when she liked. In his careful reading of the newspapers he noted the items classified under "The Giddy Throne" and "Social Clarkson," and it pained him to miss Evelyn's name in the list of those who "poured," or "assisted," or "were charming" in some particular raiment.

The doctor advised a change for Porter, the purpose of which was to make it impossible for him to return to his work before his complete recovery. Evelyn and the doctor chose Asheville before they mentioned it to him, and the plan, of course, included his son Grant. Mrs. Whipple still supervised the Porter household at long range, and the general frequently called alone to help the banker over the hard places in his convalescence.

A day had been fixed for their departure, and Mrs. Whipple was reviewing and approving their plans in the library, as Evelyn and her father and Grant discussed them.

"We shall probably not see you at home much in the future," Mrs. Whipple said to Mr. Porter, who lay in invalid ease on a lounge, with a Roman comforter over his knees. "You'll be sure to become the worst of gad-about—Europe, the far East, and all that."

"I guess not," he said, emphatically. "I never expect to have any time for loafing."

"Well, you're going now, anyhow. Don't let this girl get into mischief while you're away. An invalid father—only a young brother to care for her and keep the suitors away! Be sure and bring her back without a trail of encumbrances. Grant," she said, turning to the boy, "you must protect Evelyn from those Eastern men."

"I'll do my best," the lad answered. "Evelyn doesn't like dudes, and Worry says all the real men live out West."

"I guess that's right," said Mr. Porter. She rose, gathering her wrap about her. Grant rose as she did. His manners were very nice, and he walked into the hall and took up his hat to go down to the car with Mrs. Whipple. It was dusk, and a man was going through the grounds lighting the lamps. Mrs. Whipple talked with her usual vivacity of the New Hampshire school which the boy had attended, and of the trip he was about to make with his father and sister. They stood at the curb in front of the Porter garage, waiting for her car. A buggy stopped near them and a man alighted and stood talking to a companion who remained seated.

"Is this the way to Mr. Porter's stable?" one of the men called to them.

"Yes," Grant answered, as he stepped into the street to signal the car. The man who had alighted got back into the buggy as if to drive into the grounds. The street light overhead hissed and then burned brightly above them. Mrs. Whipple turned and saw one of the men plainly. The car came to a stop; Grant helped her aboard, and waved his hand to her as she gained the platform.

At 9 o'clock a general alarm was sent out in Clarkson that Grant Porter had disappeared.

(To be continued.)

What's in a Name?

An old German, wearing a faded blue coat and a campaign hat, limped into the office of a palatial dog and horse hospital, bequeathed by a humane millionaire to the town of X.

"I wish to be admitted to dis-hospital," he announced to the superintendent. "I've got heart trouble. I'm a G. A. R. man, and I can prove it."

"But you can't enter this institution, my good man."

"Sure I can. I fight at Gettysburg. I haf got a veak heart efer sence. I can prove it."

"Yes, but you can't enter this hospital; it's a—"

"Can't huh? Why not? I vas a solcher. I can prove it."

"But this is a veterinary hospital."

"I know dot. Ain'd I choose tellin' you dot I'm a veteran?"—Lippincott's.

He Was Real Mean.

Miss Golding—Here's your ring. I have decided that I can never be your wife, so the engagement is off and I shall expect you to return everything you may have in your possession that belongs to me.

Mr. Hamlin—All I have is a lock of your hair and a photo. I don't suppose you care anything for the photo; but the lock of hair you will no doubt want to preserve as a souvenir.

Miss Golding—As a souvenir of what?

Mr. Hamlin—Of the time when you were a brunette.

An Expensive Loss.

Father—My son loses so much time at school.

Friend—He does?

Father—Yes, I've just sent him his fourth watch this term.—Tonkers Statesman.



New Top for Milk Jars.

Two purposes are served by the combined cover and handle for milk jars designed by a Massachusetts man as the name of the device indicates. The cover is a circular piece of flat metal with clasps extending downward so as to engage the upper end of the neck of the jar or bottle. The handle, which is connected with the cover, has its lower ends extending downward so as to form lock-buttons, which keep the top from sliding off the jar laterally. The device can be adjusted in a twinkling but it will not come off unless the handle is turned at right angles with the jar. When a bottle of milk is being carried by this means it can be swung around with no fear of the top coming off if anybody wants to swing it around.

To Can Asparagus.

Select heads of asparagus as perfect as possible in every way. Wilting vegetables will not can nicely. In fact, the difficulties of canning vegetables like asparagus are so great it scarcely pays for the trouble. Trim and prepare the asparagus. Place it uncooked in the cans, filling as evenly as possible. Steam constantly for four hours. Fill the cans with boiling water. Screw on the covers as tightly as possible and stand away to cool, being very careful not to put them in a draft of air. When cold, tighten the covers and keep where it is dark and cool.

Apple Toss.

Peel some fine cooking apples and simmer them very gently till tender in a little water with a strip of lemon peel, a couple of cloves and a little sugar. Remove them and set them aside to cool. Cut some small rounds of sponge cake and moisten them with a few drops of wine. Arrange in a dish and place an apple on each; sprinkle chopped pistachio nut on the cake around the apples, each of which must be covered with a little liquid red jelly of the consistency requisite for coating the fruit. Set in a cold place until wanted, place a spoonful of whipped cream on each apple and serve.

Salmon Sandwiches.

If a housekeeper has grown tired of the conventional sandwich she should try those made of salmon. They are most palatable. The salmon is flaked and moistened with mayonnaise and then put as a filling between two extra-thin slices of brown bread with the crust cut off. Sweet sandwiches are also in fashion for luncheons and after-theater parties. The newest ones, served by a clever housewife, have a filling of candied cherries, chopped fine and moistened with orange juice.

Preserved Cherries.

Stone the cherries, preserving every ounce of juice. Weigh the fruit, allowing pound for pound of sugar. Put a layer of fruit to one of sugar until all is used up; pour over the juice and boil gently until the sirup begins to thicken. Use sour cherries.

Horseradish Sauce.

Grate two tablespoonfuls horseradish; stir it into one cup of thick cream, add one teaspoonful sugar and two tablespoonfuls of best vinegar. Stir well together; serve cold.

Short Suggestions.

Tarragon vinegar is an essential touch to a sharp salad dressing.

The best fluid to use in washing muslin dresses of delicate color is rice water.

Silver may be cleaned and brightened by letting it stand half an hour in sour milk.

One housekeeper advises the use of half a lemon for removing match marks from paint.

To clean steel use emery powder and oil mixed into a paste. Polish with a clean duster.

If your paint has been marred by careless scratching of matches, try rubbing it with the finest sandpaper.

Glass tumblers, when being filled with hot water, should be stood on a tray or table. They are thus far less likely to crack than if held in the hand.

Celery that has grown for three days is tough. It must be about two days old, or even one day's growth should be cut for use. If woody, pare it the same as rhubarb.

Do not pour scalding water into vessels which have held milk. It cooks the milk on the sides of the vessel, making it more difficult to clean. Rinse first with cold water.

SOMETHING FOR EVERYBODY

Five books of fiction are published daily in this country.

The Salvation Army preaches the gospel in thirty-one different languages.

An investigation of the boy workers of London shows that the newsboys are the healthiest and the bakers least so.

New York State has 15,000 uniformed and equipped citizen soldiers, yet Governor Hughes manages to get along with a staff of eighteen officers.

About 2,000,000 of the natives of Siam are kept busy cultivating rice. Several varieties are cultivated, some requiring only two months, while the others require up to six months to ripen.

M. Marcel Prevost has been elected to the Academie Francaise in succession to Victorien Sardou. There were four ballots, at each of which M. Prevost secured the largest number of votes.

Oil has been struck 150 miles south of Suez, on the Red Sea coast, the gusher giving increasing quantities daily, and indicating large reserves. The possibility of a cheap supply of fuel is a discovery of the greatest importance to Egypt.

An electric heater for thawing explosives is used at the Roosevelt drainage tunnel in Cripple Creek. It is in successful operation. The cost of this method of heating is about 10 cents for twenty-four hours, and is said to be far more economical than coal.

That valuable energy which should be conserved for thinking and doing is used by vegetarians in digestion. In the meat eater the steer does the drudgery of vegetable digestion for the man, while a vegetarian makes of himself and his faculties a kind of animal.—New York Press.

On its through trains one of the eastern railroads has installed a sanitary system of supplying water to passengers. In every car a slot machine is installed, which supplies paraffin drinking cups for 1 cent each. The passenger uses this paraffin vessel and throws it away after use.

Nathaniel Osborne, who used to blow the organ in the Brick church in Fairhaven, Conn., was once asked how much salary he received. "Twelve hundred dollars," he replied. "Twelve hundred dollars!" exclaimed the questioner in surprise. "Yes," replied Nat, "but that's for one hundred years."

It has been decided to remove the notice on the pier at Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, which runs as follows: "Any person going on the pier without first producing his railway ticket or paying the authorized toll or insulting or annoying the pier master or any other official is liable to a fine of £5."—London Evening Standard.

California is to try acclimating the Korean wild fig. The fig, growing on a hardy vine, on trees, trellises and hedge rows to a height of thirty feet, bears a delicious fruit. Some of the seed has been sent to the department of agriculture, California State university. The fig grows wild in Korea and has proved of great value there.

The sofa on which Dickens died at Gadshill has just been presented to the Dickens museum at Portsmouth. He was at work on "Edwin Drood" on the evening before his death, when he came in fatigued and after a few words to his sister-in-law, Miss Hogarth, fell to the floor, never to speak again. The couch is of rosewood and covered with green plush.

The old gentleman was not accustomed to having the new railway in his town; upon seeing a train approaching he whipped up his horse and tried to cross the track in front of it. He and his horse came out safely, but the wagon was badly broken. When he found that he was not injured he called to the engineer: "Why, I thought you saw me coming."

Bishop Samuel Fallows of the Reformed Episcopal church, preaching in St. Paul's church, Chicago, recently, on "The Race for Life," took occasion to warn his congregation against automobile speeding. "Let your moderation be known to all men" should be inscribed on every car," said the bishop. "The commercial, military and other uses of the automobile are endless. We therefore hail its advent with joy not untempered, however, with a wholesome fear."

A decision of the court of appeals of New York, in a case which grew out of a dispute over the right to a car seat, holds that placing a piece of baggage in a seat does not preempt the space. The court rules that passenger cars are to carry persons, not baggage, and that filling a seat with luggage confers no title to the seat on the owner of the grip. In other words, if a traveler wishes to make sure of sitting in an ordinary day coach he or she must take a seat and hang on to it.