

The Main Chance

BY
Meredith Nicholson

COPYRIGHT 1903
THE BOBBE-MERRELL COMPANY

CHAPTER XX.

Wheaton sat in his room the next evening, clutching a copy of a Gazette extra in which a few sentences under long headlines gave the latest rumor about the mysterious disappearance of Grant Porter. Within a fortnight he had received several warnings from his brother marking his itinerary eastward. Snyder was evidently moving with a fixed purpose; and, as Wheaton had received brief notes from him couched in phrases of amiable irony, postmarked Denver, and then, within a few days, Kansas City, he surmised that his brother was traveling on fast trains and therefore with money in his purse.

He had that morning received a postal card, signed "W. W.," which bore a few fainting sentences in a handwriting which Wheaton readily recognized. He did not for an instant question that William Wheaton, alias Snyder, had abducted Grant Porter, nor did he belittle the situation thus created as it affected him. He faced it coldly, as was his way. He ought not to have refused Snyder's appeal, he confessed to himself; the debt he owed his brother for bearing the whole burden of their common youthful crime had never been discharged. The bribes and subterfuges which Wheaton had employed to keep him away from Clarkson had never been prompted by brotherly gratitude or generosity, but always by his fear of having so odious a connection made public. He was face to face with the crucial moment where concealment involved complicity in a crime. His duty lay clear before him—his duty to his friends, the Porters—to the woman whom he knew he loved. Was he equal to it? If Snyder were caught he would be sure to take revenge on him; and Wheaton knew that no matter how guiltless he might show himself in the eyes of the world, his career would be at an end; he could not live in Clarkson; Evelyn Porter would never see him again.

The Gazette stated that a district telegraph messenger had left at Mr. Porter's door a note which named the terms on which Grant could be ransomed. The amount was large—more money than James Wheaton possessed; it was not a great deal for William Porter to pay. It had already occurred to Wheaton that he might pay the ransom himself and carry the boy home, thus establishing forever a claim upon the Porters. He quickly dismissed this; the risks of exposure were too great. He turned all these matters over in his mind. Clearly the best thing to do was to let the climax come. His brother was a criminal with a record, who would not find it easy to drag him into the mire. His own career and position in Clarkson were unassailable. Very likely the boy would be found quickly and the incident would close with Snyder's sentence to a long imprisonment. He would face it out no matter what happened; and the more he thought of it the likelier it seemed that Snyder had overleaped himself and would soon be where he could no longer be a menace.

He went down to dinner late, in the clothes that he had worn at the bank all day and thus brought upon himself the banter of Caldwell, the Transcontinental agent, who sang out as he entered the dining-room door:

"What's the matter, Wheaton? Sold or pawned your other clothes? Come on now and give us the real truth about the kidnapping," said Caldwell with cheerful interest. "You'll better watch the bank or the same gang may carry it off next." "I guess the bank's safe enough," Wheaton answered. "And I don't know anything except what I read in the papers." He hoped the others would not think him indifferent; but they were busy discussing various rumors and theories as to the route taken by the kidnapers and the amount of ransom. He threw in his own comment and speculations from time to time.

"Haridan's out chasing them," said Caldwell. "I passed him and Saxton driving like mad out Merriam street at noon." The mention of Haridan and Saxton did not comfort Wheaton. He reflected that they had undoubtedly been to the Porter house since the alarm had been sounded, and he wondered whether his own remissness in this regard had been remarked at the Hill. His fingers were cold as he stirred his coffee; and when he had finished he hurriedly left the room.

He felt easier when he got out into the cool night air. His day at the bank had been one long horror; but the clang of the cars, the lights in the streets, gave him contact with life again. He must hasten to offer his services to the Porters, though he knew that every means of assistance had been employed, and that there was nothing to do but to make inquiries. He grew uneasy as he came near the house, and he climbed the slope of the hill like one who bears a burden. He had traversed this walk many times in the past year, in the varying moods of a lover, who one day walks the heights and in the next plunges into the depths; and

latterly, since his affair with Margrave, he had known moods of console too, and these returned upon him with forebodings now. If Porter had not been ill, there would never have been that interview with Margrave at the bank; and Grant would not have been at home to be kidnaped. It seemed to him that the troubles of other people rather than his own errors were bearing down the balance against his happiness.

Evelyn came into the parlor with eyes red from weeping. "Oh, have you no news?" she cried to him. He had kept on his overcoat and held his hat in his hand. Her grief stung him; a great wave of tenderness swept over him, but it was followed by a wave of terror. Evelyn wept as she tried to tell her story.

"It is dreadful, horrible!" he forced himself to say. "But certainly no harm can come to the boy. No doubt in a few hours—"

"But he isn't strong and father is still weak—"

She threw herself in a chair and her tears broke forth afresh. Wheaton stood impotently watching her anguish. It is a new and strange sensation which a man experiences, when for the first time he sees tears in the eyes of the woman he loves. Evelyn sprang up suddenly.

"Have you seen Warry?" she asked—

"has he come back yet?" "Nothing had been heard from them when I came up town." He still stood, watching her pityingly. "I hope you understand how sorry I am—how dreadful I feel about it." He walked over to her and she thought he meant to go. She had not heard what he said, but she thought he had been offering help.

"Oh, thank you! Everything is being done, I know. They will find him tonight, won't they? They surely must," she pleaded. Her father called her in his weakened voice to know who was there and she hurried away to him.

Wheaton's eyes followed her as she went weeping from the room, and he watched her, feeling that he might never see her again. He felt the poignancy of this hour's history—of his having brought upon this house a hideous wrong. The French clock on the mantel struck seven and then tinkled the three quarters lingeringly. There were roses in a vase on the mantel; he had sent them to her the day before. He stood as one dazed for a minute after she had vanished. He could hear Porter back in the house somewhere, and Evelyn's voice reassuring him. The musical stroke of the bell, the scent of the roses, the familiar surroundings of the room, wrought upon him like a pain. He stared stupidly about, as if amid a ruin that he had brought upon the place; and then he went out of the house and down the slope into the street, like a man in a dream.

While Wheaton swayed between fear and hope, the community was athrill with excitement. Rewards for the boy's return were telegraphed in every direction. The only clue was the slight testimony of Mrs. Whipple. She had told and re-told her story to detectives and reporters. There was only too little to tell—Grant had walked with her to the car. She had seen only one of the men that had driven up to the curb—the one that had inquired about the entrance to Mr. Porter's grounds. She remembered that he had moved his head curiously to one side as he spoke, and there was something unusual about his eyes which she could not describe. Perhaps he had only one eye; she did not know.

Haridan and Saxton, acting independently of the authorities in the confusion and excitement, followed a slight clue that led them far countryward. They lost the trail completely at a village fifteen miles away, and after alarming the country drove back to town. Meanwhile another message had been sent to the father of the boy stating that the ransom money could be taken by a single messenger to a certain spot in the country, at midnight, and that within forty-eight hours thereafter the boy would be returned. He was safe from pursuit, the note stated, and an ominous hint was dropped that it would be wise to abandon the idea of procuring the captive's return unharmed without paying the sum asked. Mr. Porter told the detectives that he would pay the money; but the proposed meeting was set for the third night after the abduction; the captors were in no hurry, they wrote. The crime was clearly the work of daring men, and had been carefully planned with a view to quickening the anxiety of the family of the stolen boy. And so twenty-four hours passed.

"This is a queer game," said Haridan, on the second evening, as he and John discussed the subject again in John's room at the club. "I don't just make it out. If the money was all these fellows wanted, they could make a quick touch of it. Mr. Porter's crazy to pay any sum. But they seem to want to prolong the agony."

"That looks queer," said Saxton. "There may be something back of it; but Porter hasn't any enemies who would try this kind of thing. There are business men here who would like to do him up in a trade, but this is a little out of the usual channels." Saxton got up and walked the floor.

"Look here, Warry, did you ever know a one-eyed man? It has just occurred to me that I have seen such a man since I came to this part of the country; but the circumstances were peculiar. This thing is queerer than ever as I think of it."

"Well?" "It was back at the Poindexter place when I first went there. A fellow named Snyder was in charge. He had made a rats' nest of the house, and resented the idea of doing any work. He seemed to think he was there to stay. Wheaton had given him the job before I came. I remember that I asked Wheaton if it made any difference to him what I did with the fellow. He didn't seem to care and I bounced him. That was two years ago and I haven't heard of him since."

"Where's at the Poindexter place now?"

"Nobody; I haven't been there myself for a year or more."

"Is it likely that fellow is at the bottom of this, and that he has made a break for the ranch house? That must be a good lonesome place out there."

"Well, it won't take long to find out. The thing to do is to go ourselves without saying a word to any one. Let's make a still hunt of it. The detectives are busy on what may be real clues and this is only a guess."

"I can't imagine that fellow Snyder doing anything so dashing as carrying off a millionaire's son. He didn't look to me as if he had the nerve."

"It's only a chance, but it's worth trying."

In the lower hall they met Wheaton, who was pacing up and down. He was afraid of John Saxton; Saxton, he felt, probably knew the part he had played in the street railway matter. It seemed to him that Saxton must have told others; probably Saxton had Evelyn's certificate put away for use when William Porter should be restored to health. This went through his mind as John and Warry stood talking to him.

"Wheaton," said Saxton, "do you remember that fellow Snyder who was in charge of the Poindexter place when I came here?"

"What—oh yes!" His hand rose quickly to his carefully tied four-in-hand and he fingered it nervously.

"You may not remember it, but he had only one eye."

"Yes, that's so," said Wheaton, as if recalling the fact with difficulty.

"And Mrs. Whipple says there was something wrong about one of the eyes of the man who accosted her and Grant at Mr. Porter's gate. What became of that fellow after he left the ranch—have you any idea?" Haridan had walked away to talk to a group of men in the reading room, leaving Saxton and Wheaton alone.

"He went West the last I knew of him," Wheaton answered, steadily.

"It has struck me that he might be in this thing. It's only a guess, but Haridan and I thought we'd run out to the Poindexter ranch and see if it could possibly be the rendezvous of the kidnapers. It's probably a fool's errand, but it won't take long, and we'll do it unofficially without saying anything to the authorities." His mind was on the plan and he looked at his watch and called to Haridan to come.

"I believe I'll go along," said Wheaton, suddenly. "We can be back by noon tomorrow," he added, conscientiously, remembering his duties at the bank.

"All right," said Warry. "We're taking bags along in case of emergencies." A boy came down carrying Saxton's suitcase. Wheaton and Haridan hurried out together to The Bachelors' to get their own things. It was a relief to Wheaton to have something to do; it was hardly possible that Snyder had fled to the ranch house; but in any event he was glad to get away from Clarkson for a few hours (To be continued.)

THE DRINKING HABIT.

We are Exceeding the Liquid Requirements of the Organism.

It would be idle to deny that the drinking habit has reached almost the proportions of a pastime among us. We no longer drink only when we are thirsty. We drink when surrounded by our fellows to promote good fellowship just as we drink when alone to escape from boredom; we drink when we are merry and we drink when we are depressed. In short, we drink much and often.

Each has his favorite tipple. Tea, that mild distillation of the Orient, is the beverage of gossip and literature, suggesting placid rumination and a quiet setting. Soda, ginger beer and the thousand and one concoctions of the corner soda fountain tempt the abstemious, above all in hot weather. Wines and more ardent spirits administer a fillip to the nerves of those who are addicted to the use of alcoholic stimulants. Each after his fashion indulges in some kind of excess.

The secret of this indulgence in liquid refreshment of various sorts is to be found largely in the fact that each season sees a multiplication of the beverages that are agreeable to the taste. We drink not because we are thirsty, but because the flavor is pleasing to the palate, and in doing this some physicians contend we are exceeding the liquid requirements of the organism. In considering this matter editorially the Lancet remarks:

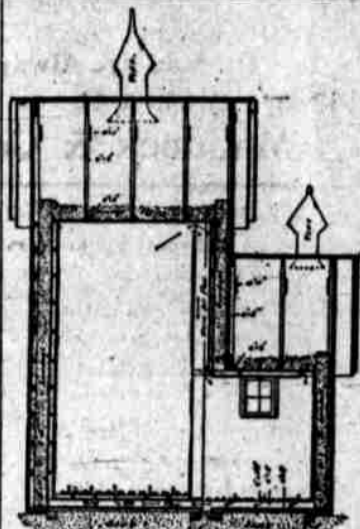
"The thirsty person who cannot satisfy his thirst unless the beverage contains what is in reality a drug has really acquired an unhealthy habit, or, to put it plainly, a disease. Yet what else is the alcohol of the various alcoholic beverages, the caffeine of tea and coffee, the glucoside or quinine of bitter, or even the ginger of ginger beer or of ginger ale, the aromatic oil of the liqueur, the carbonic acid gas in soda water, the citric acid of the lemon and so on but a drug? All these clearly convey something into the organism over and above water itself; they cannot quench thirst in the sense that water does."

The medical journal goes on to ascribe the great growth of this habit of drinking liquids other than water to the fear that water may contain disease entities. It ends with a warning that persistence in the habit frequently manifests its ill effects in a disturbance of function which may result in harm to the entire organism.

In Persia it is considered efficacious to Jaugh.

REFRIGERATOR AND GARDEN

Meat Refrigerator.
The accompanying illustration shows the plan of refrigerator with meat chamber attached, the accompanying illustration is given. Provision must



REFRIGERATOR WITH MEAT CHAMBER.

be made for the circulation of air so that it will not become stagnant at any point and by coming in frequent touch with the ice will be kept cool. The relative sizes and positions of the ice chamber and refrigerator are shown and these can be made larger or smaller in proportion to meet the requirements.

Keeping the Wheat Pure.

One of the most important factors in growing improved wheat for seed is to keep the wheat pure. Many farmers are careless on this point, often planting new seed on old wheat

woodchucks, but after several mornings of patient waiting, capture by trap proved unsuccessful. But, having heard that they were very fond of salt, he mixed a liberal quantity of paris green in about a quart of salt and placed a handful near each burrow. He was not troubled again that season, and this has been his remedy ever since.

The Cowpea as a Fertilizer.

The cow pea is a large beanlike plant that produces a large amount of forage. It is valuable as a green food or for plowing under for green manure. It has been used successfully for improving wornout soils, especially those that are light and sandy in texture. Its greatest advantage for this purpose is its ability to gather nitrogen from the air and mineral elements from subsoil. When the crop is plowed under, these are left near the surface, where they will be available to shallow-rooted crops and those which cannot get nitrogen from the air. It has been little used for hay in the North, because it cannot be readily dried in this climate. It makes a good green feed for milch cows between August 15 and September 15, or it may be preserved in the silo by mixing with corn fodder. For green manuring, the seed should be sown broadcast in late June or early July, at the rate of one and a half bushels per acre. It is especially valuable for growing in young orchards. When wanted for fodder it should be sown in early June, in drills 2½ feet apart, at the rate of one bushel seed per acre.

Fly Repeller.

The Kansas Agricultural College has experimented with the various chemical formulas to repel flies from live stock and recommends the following as fairly satisfactory: Resin, 1½ pounds; laundry soap, two cakes; fish oil, one-half pint; enough water to make three gallons. Dissolve resin in a solution of soap and water by heating, add the fish oil and the rest of the water. Apply with a brush. If to be used as a spray, add one-half pint of kerosene. This mixture will coat 7 to 8 cents a gallon and one-half pint is considered enough for one application for a cow. At first it will be necessary to use two or three appli-

FORMS OF HOOF.



The form of a horse's foot determines the peculiarities of the shoe that is best adapted to it. Viewing the foot from the side the regular position is that shown in figure 4, in which the weight will be borne to best advantage. Looking from the front the regular form is that shown in figure 1, the wide toe being indicated by figure 2, and the narrow toe by figure 3. With the regular or normal shape the weight falls near the center of the hoof, and is evenly distributed over the whole bottom of the hoof. The toe points straight forward and when the horse is moving forward in a straight line the hoofs are picked up and carried forward in a line parallel to the middle line of the body. A pair of hoofs of the form shown in figure 2 allows the weight to fall largely into the inner half of the hoof. In motion the hoof is moved in a circle. Horses that are "toe-wide" are likely to interfere when

in motion. In the third form (figure 3) the weight of the body is directed on the outer half of the hoof. The irregularity of form causes a paddling motion and frequently interfering.



Fig. 4.—Regular Form Is Shown in B.

ground, thus allowing it to become mixed with volunteer wheat the first year. This mixing of varieties causes wheat to deteriorate in yield and quality. When wheat is grown for seed it should be on clean land, which is free from volunteer wheat and from other volunteer grain, rye being especially objectionable. Care must be taken in harvesting and threshing the seed wheat to keep it from becoming mixed with other varieties of wheat. Again, in order to maintain the quality and yield of wheat it is necessary to maintain the fertility of the soil and to give the land good culture—Farmers' Mail and Breeds.

To Destroy Woodchucks.

A Pennsylvania farmer gives this experience with woodchucks (ground hogs): He had set several hundred early cabbages and in going through his patch early one morning he found several plants missing. He found the woodchucks' holes—near his cabbage field, several holes—near his cabbage field. He armed himself with several steel traps and used all his cunning in setting them in the burrows of the

Harvesting Horse-Radish.

Horse-radish may be harvested in the fall, before the ground freezes, or in the spring, before rank top growth begins. Run plow deeply along side of row to remove earth, lift out and trim main root; thoroughly wash and brush and rinse in clean water. Peel off outer skin and grade.