

The Main Chance

BY
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CHAPTER XXI.

The night wind of the plain blew cold in their faces as they stepped out upon the Great River platform. There was a hint of storm in the air and clouds rode swiftly overhead. The voices of the trainmen and the throb of the locomotive, resting for its long climb mountainward, broke strangely upon the silence. A great figure muffled in a long uster came down the platform toward the vestibule from which the trio had descended.

"Hello," called Raridan, cheerily. "There's only one like that! Good morning, Bishop!"

"Good morning, gentlemen," said Bishop Delafield, peering into their faces. The waiting porter took his bags from him. "Has the boy been found yet?"

"No."

"I should have gone on home to-night if I had known that. But what are you doing here?"

Raridan told him in a few words. They were following a slight cline, and were going over to the old Poindexter place, in the hope of finding Grant Porter there. Saxton was holding a colloquy with the driver of the station hack who had come in quest of passengers, and he hurried off with the man to get a buckboard.

The conductor signaled with his lantern to go ahead, and the engine answered with a doleful peal of the bell. The porter had gathered up the bishop's things and waited for him to step aboard.

"Never mind," the bishop said to him: "I won't go to-night." The train was already moving and the bishop turned to Raridan and Wheaton. "I'll wait and see what comes of this."

"Very well," said Raridan. "We won't need our bags. We can leave them with the station agent."

Wheaton stepped forward eagerly, glad to have something to do; he had not slept and was grateful for the cover of darkness which shut him out from the others.

When Wheaton went into the station, the agent eyed him curiously as he looked up from his telegraphing and nodded his promise to care for the bags. He remembered Saxton and Wheaton and supposed that they were going to Poindexter's on ranch business. Saxton drove up to the platform with the buckboard.

"All ready," he said, and the three men climbed in, the bishop and Wheaton in the back seat and Raridan by Saxton, who drove.

The road proved to be in better condition than Saxton had expected, and he kept the ponies at their work with his whip. The rumble of the wagon rose above the men's voices, and they ceased trying to talk. The bishop rode with his head bowed on his breast, asleep; he had learned the trick of taking sleep when and where he could.

Wheaton felt the numbing of his hands and feet in the cold night air and welcomed the discomfort, as a man long used to a particular sensation of pain welcomes a new one that proves a counter-irritant. He reviewed again the grounds on which he might have excused himself from taking this trip. Nothing, he argued, could be more absurd than this adventure on an errand which might much better have been left to professional detectives. But it seemed a far cry back to his desk at the bank, and to the tasks there which he really enjoyed. In a few hours the daily routine would be in progress. The familiar scenes of the opening passed before him—the clerks taking their places; the slamming of the big books upon the desks as they were brought from the vault; the jingle of coin in the cages as the tellers assorted it and made ready for the day's business. He saw himself at his desk, the executive officer of the most substantial institution in Clarkson, his signature carrying the bank's pledge, his position one of dignity and authority.

But he was on William Porter's service; he pictured himself walking into the bank from a fruitless quest, but one which would attract attention to himself. If they found the boy and released him safely, he would share the thanks and praise which would be the reward of the rescuing party. He had no idea that Snyder would be captured; and he even planned to help him escape if he could do so.

They went forward slowly. The clouds were more compactly marshaled now and the stars were fewer. Suddenly Saxton brought the ponies to a stand and pointed to a dark pile that loomed ahead of them. The Poindexter house stood forth somber in the thin starlight.

Saxton gave the reins to Raridan and jumped out. "You stay here and I'll reconnoiter a bit," he said. He walked swiftly toward the great barn which lay between him and the house. There was no sign of life in the place. He crept through the barb-wire fence into the corral. He had brought with him a key to a rear door, and he started around the house to try it and to make sure that the house was not occupied.

At the corner toward the river, glass suddenly crunched under his feet. The windows were deeply unshrouded all over

the house, and he could not determine where the glass had fallen from. The windows were all intact when he left, he was sure. He drew off his glove and tipped to the nearest pane, ran his fingers over the smooth glass, and instantly touched a broken edge. As he was feeling the frame to discover the size of the opening, the low whinny of a horse came distinctly from within.

He stood perfectly quiet, listening, and in a moment heard the stamp of a hoof on the wooden floor of the hall. He backed off toward the drive way, which swept around in front of the house, and waited, but all remained as silent and as dark as before. He ran back through the corral to the other men, who stood talking beside the blanketed ponies.

"There's something or somebody in the house," he said. He told them of the broken window and of the sounds he had heard. "Whoever's there has no business there and we may as well turn him out. You two watch the corners of the house," he continued, indicating Raridan and Wheaton; "and you, Bishop, can stand off here, if you will, and watch for signs of light in the upper windows. The big front doors are barred on the inside, and my key opens only the back door."

The door opened easily, and John stepped into the lower hall. The place was pitch dark. He remembered the position of the articles of furniture as he had left them on his last visit, and started across the hall toward the stairway, using his lantern warily. When half way, he heard the whinny of a horse which he could not see. A moment later an animal shrank away from him in the darkness and was still again. Then another horse whinnied by the window whose broken glass he had found on the outside. There were, then, two horses, from which he argued that there were at least two persons in the house. He found the doors and lifted the heavy bar that held them and drew the bolts at top and bottom. As the doors swung open slowly Raridan ran up to see if anything was wanted.

"All right," said Saxton in a low tone. "They're mighty quiet if they're here. But there's no doubt about the horses. You stay where you are and I'll explore a little."

The horses stamped fretfully as he went toward the stairway, but all was quiet above. He felt his way slowly up the stair-rail, whose heavy dust stuck to his fingers. Having gained the upper hall, he paused to take fresh bearings. His memory brought back gradually the position of the rooms. In putting out his hand he touched a picture which swung slightly on its wire and grated harshly against the rough plaster of the wall. At the same instant he heard a noise directly in front of him as of some one moving about in the chamber at the head of the stairs. The knob of a door was suddenly grasped from within. John waited, crouched down, and drew his revolver from the side pocket of his coat. The door stuck in the frame, but being violently shaken, suddenly pulled free. The person who had opened the door stepped back into the room and scratched a match.

"Wake up there," called a voice within the room.

Saxton crept softly across the hall, settling the revolver into his hand ready for use. A man could be heard mumbling.

"Hurry up, boy, it's time we were out of this."

The owner of the voice now reappeared at the door holding a lantern; he was pushing some one in front of him. The crisis had come quickly; John Saxton knew that he had found Grant Porter; and he remembered that he was there to get the boy whether he caught his adductor or not.

The man was carrying the lantern in his right hand and pushing the boy toward the staircase with his left. As he came well out of the door, Saxton sprang up and kicked the lantern from the man's hand. At the same moment he grabbed the boy by the collar, drew him back and stepped in front of him. The lantern crashed against the wall opposite and went rolling down the stairway with its light extinguished. Saxton had dropped his own lantern and the hall was in darkness.

"Stop where you are, Snyder," said Saxton, "or I'll shoot. I'm John Saxton; you may remember me." He spoke in steady, even tones.

The lantern, rolling down the stairway, startled the horses, which stamped restlessly on the floor. The wind whistled drowsily outside. He heard Snyder, as he assumed the man to be, cautiously feeling his way toward the staircase.

"You may as well stop there," Saxton said, without moving, and holding the boy to the floor with his left hand. He spoke in sharp, even tones. "It's all right, Grant," he added in the same key to the boy, who was crying with fright. "Stay where you are. The house is surrounded, Snyder," he went on. "You may as well give in."

The man said nothing. He had found the stairway. Suddenly a revolver flashed and cracked, and the man went leaping down the stairs. The ball whistled over Saxton's head, and the boy clutched him about the legs. A bit of plaster, shaken loose by the bullet, fell from the ceiling. The noise of the revolver roared through the house.

"It's all right, Grant," Saxton said again.

The retreating man slipped and fell at the landing, midway of the stairs, and as he stumbled to his feet Saxton ran back into the room from which the fellow had emerged. He threw up the window with a crash and shouted to the men in the darkness below:

"He's coming! Get out of the way and let him go! The boy's all right!"

He hurried back into the hall where he had left Grant, who crouched moaning in the dark.

"You stay here a minute, Grant. They won't get you again," he called as he ran down the steps. One of the horses be-

low was snorting with fright and making a great clatter with its hoofs. From the sound Saxton knew that the fleeing man was trying to mount, and as he plunged down the last half of the stairway the horse broke through the door with the man on his back.

"Let him go, Warry!" yelled Saxton with all his lungs.

The horse was already across the threshold at a leap, his rider bending low over the animal's neck to avoid the top of the door. Raridan ran forward, taking his bearing by sounds.

"Stop!" he shouted. "Come on, Wheaton!" Wheaton was running toward him at the top of his speed; Raridan sprang in front of the horse and grabbed at the throat-latch of its bridle. The horse, surprised, and terrified by the noise, and feeling the rider digging his heels into his sides, reared, carrying Warry off his feet.

"Let go, you fool!" screamed the rider. "Let go, I say!"

"Let him alone," cried Wheaton, now close at hand; but Raridan still held to the strap at the throat of the plunging horse.

The rider sat up straight on his horse and his revolver barked into the night twice in sharp succession, the sounds crashing against the house, and the flashes lighting up the struggling horse and rider, and Raridan, clutching at the bridle. Raridan's hold loosened at the first shot, and as the second echoed into the night, the horse leaped free, running madly down the road, past Bishop Delafield, who was coming rapidly toward the house. Wheaton and Saxton met in the driveway where Raridan had fallen. The flying horse could be heard pounding down the hard road.

"Warry, Warry!" called Saxton, on his knees by his friend. "Hold the lantern," he said to Wheaton. "He's hurt." Raridan said nothing, but lay very still, moaning.

"Who's hurt?" asked the bishop, coming up. Saxton had recovered his own lantern as he ran from the house. It was still burning and Wheaton turned up the wick. The three men bent over Raridan, who lay as he had fallen.

"We must get him inside," said Saxton. "The horse knocked him down."

The bishop bent over and put his arms under Raridan; and gathering him up as if the prone man had been a child, he carried him slowly toward the house. Wheaton started ahead with the lantern, but Saxton snatched it from him and ran through the doors into the hall, and back to the dining-room.

"Come in here," he called, and the old bishop followed, bearing Raridan carefully in his great arms. The others helped him to place his burden on the long table at which, in Poindexter's day, many light-hearted companies had gathered. They peered down upon him in the lantern light.

"It was another—another of my foolish chances," said Warry faintly and slowly, the words coming hard; but all in the room could hear. He looked from one to another. "The boy's safe and well. We got what we came for. Just once—just once—I got what I came for. It wasn't fair—in the dark that way—"

His voice failed. He lay very still for several minutes.

"I never—quite arrived—quite arrived," he went on, with his eyes on the old bishop, as if this were something that he would understand; "but you must forgive all that." He smiled in a patient, tired way.

"You have been a good man, Warry, there's nothing that can trouble you."

"I was really doing better. Wasn't I, John?" he went on, still smiling. "You had helped—you two"—he looked from his young friend to the older one, with the intentness of his near-sighted gaze.

"Tell them"—his eyes closed and his voice sank until it was almost inaudible—"tell them at the hill—Evelyn—the light of all—of all—the year."

The wind sweeping across the prairie shook the windows in the room and moaned far away in the lonely house. The bishop's great hand rested gently on the dying man's head; his voice rose in supplication—the words coming slowly, as if he remembered them from a far-off time.

"Unto God's gracious mercy and protection we commit thee," Saxton dropped to his knees, and a sob broke from him. "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee. The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee."

The old man's voice was very low, and sank to a whisper. "The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee and give thee peace, both now and evermore."

(To be continued.)

Stung Again.
Percy Pickle (egotistically)—Yes, I just love to go travelling for pleasure.

Miss Tabasco—Yes, it is a double pleasure.

Percy Pickle—Double pleasure?
Miss Tabasco—Yes, a pleasure to you and a pleasure to your acquaintances.

Height 1000.
Little Mary hated to say "vinegar" because she had been laughed at so often for her queer pronunciation of the word. So when her mother sent her to the store to buy some, she presented the jug to the clerk and said: "Smell of that and give me a quart."—Bohemian.

Where Trouble Is Found.
Wigwig—I never knew such a fellow as BJones! He is always looking for trouble.

Henpecks—Then, why doesn't he get married?—Philadelphia Record.

A Business Proposal.
"I must say he was very business-like with his proposal."

"As to how, my dear."

"Told me to consider myself engaged."—Pittsburg Post.



When Haying Is Done.

There's a smile of relief and a spirit of fun

Comes over the farmer when haying is done;

With his haylofts all swelling with sweet-scented hay

His smile is as cheery as sunshine in May.

The summer's half over, and out in the field

He sees the approach of a bountiful yield;

As tall as his hat is the golden-topped corn,

Which waves its long arms in the breeze of the morn,

As fair and as fragrant as gardens of old

Are his fields with their stubble as yellow as gold.

With his barn full of hay and his bedding stacked high,

A smile on his face and a gleam in his eye;

The cattle provided with winter rest,

While apples and pumpkins are ripening fast.

There's a smile of relief and a spirit of fun

Comes over the farmer when haying is done;

The turnips are growing, the melons are prime,

The harvest approaching, his bounteous time.

Ah! Lucky the farmer who wanders afield

And sees the approach of a beautiful yield!

—Boston Herald.

Cultivation of Corn.

At the several experiment stations corn has received more than its share of attention, and many experiments have been made in order to learn how to derive the largest yields and to grow the crop most economically.

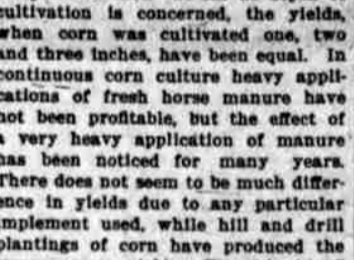
Opinions differ, however, as climate, variety and soil are factors governing every crop. The Indiana station found that the best results were obtained by planting seed in May. It has been shown that the greatest average yield of both ears and stocks have been obtained when the stalks stood about twelve or fourteen inches apart in the rows.

Thick planting, however, reduces the size of the ears, and the percentage of grain, but thick planting has, in dry seasons, produced the heaviest yield of stalks and the highest yield of ears. So far as depth of cultivation is concerned, the yields, when corn was cultivated one, two and three inches, have been equal. In continuous corn culture heavy applications of fresh horse manure have not been profitable, but the effect of a very heavy application of manure has been noticed for many years.

There does not seem to be much difference in yields due to any particular implement used, while hill and drill plantings of corn have produced the same average yields. The "checking" of corn is still the most popular and profitable mode of growing the corn at the least cost of labor. The results at one station may not correspond with those obtained elsewhere, but where the work has extended over a number of years the results should be accepted as important, if not conclusive.

A Yard Scraper.

Besides its use in the barnyard, this is handy for covering potatoes, leveling rough ground, filling ditches, etc. It should be made of 2-inch lumber, and hard wood if possible; the scraper should be 6 to 8 feet long, and 2 feet high; its life will be prolonged if



HANDY BARNYARD SCRAPER.

shod with a piece of iron or steel, as shown; moreover, it will do good work without the iron. The evenner must be at least 4 feet from scraper, to allow for load, and to keep same from under the horses feet. A very large barnyard may be cleaned in a short time, and several loads of manure saved. Simply drive the load where wanted, lift scraper up by the handles, leaving load, and repeat the operation.

Milk Contamination.

There are a hundred and one places where milk can be contaminated from the time it is drawn from the udder till it reaches the table in the form of sweet milk, cream or butter. First, a great deal of bacteria, impurities and disease germs get into the milk at the barn or lot in which the cows are kept. Second, a great many more of

these owe their existence in milk to the attendant and the place in which the milk is kept. The moment the cow shows signs of being ill, or when even a slight eruption is noticeable, a person may contract disease by partaking of her milk. Impure water is another way in which milk is contaminated. If the cow is compelled to drink out of a mud hole, filled with disease germs, she cannot help but drink a large number of those germs into her system, some of them being sure to reach her milk. Milking the cow into an open pail when the barn is filled with dust, and from which there hangs an untold number of dirty cobwebs, or milking her in an offensively smelling lot, where the filth is ankle deep, or milking a cow whose udder, flanks and legs are covered with dirt and filth—in such cases it is impossible to avoid contamination of the milk. It is believed that more disease germs are given the human family through milk than are given in any other agency; and we also believe that less attention is paid to the care of milk than to any other food consumed upon the table.

Treating Horse Corns.

Dr. A. A. Holcombe, inspector of the United States bureau of animal husbandry, says of treating horse corns: "As in all other troubles, the cause must be discovered if possible and removed. In a great majority of cases the shoeing will be at fault. For a sound foot, perfectly formed, a flat shoe with heels less thick than the toe and which rests evenly on the wall proper is the best. In flat feet it is often necessary to concave the feet as much as possible on the upper surface so that the sole may not be pressed upon. If the heels are very low the heels of the shoe may be made much thicker. If the foot is very broad and the wall light toward the heels a far shoe, resting upon the walls, may aid to prevent excessive tension upon the soft tissues when the foot receives the weight of the body. A piece of leather placed between the foot and shoe serves largely to destroy concussion, and its use is absolutely necessary on some animals to enable them to work. Among the preventive

measures may be mentioned those which serve to maintain the suppleness of the hoof. The dead horn upon the surface of the sole not only retains moisture for a long time, but protects the living horn beneath from the effects of evaporation. For this reason the sole should be pared as little as possible.

cooling cream.

Different conditions on the farm will govern arrangements for the cooling of cream. Where windmills are used, many farms have cheaply constructed milk-houses in which can be placed a tank or half barrel, through which all water is led from the windmill to the stock-watering tanks. With the cream cooled and held in these tanks the arrangement is everything required.

Where windmills and milkhouses are not used, a half barrel can be set near the pump and a cheap shade constructed. The water can be pumped by hand with small expenditure of time and labor. The cooling of the cream will heat the water. Run out the warm water and pump a fresh supply in which the cream can set over night or through the day before being added to the supply can. When another lot of warm cream is to be cooled, the operation can be repeated. A large box can be set over the barrel to protect the cream from the sun. The farmer's ingenuity may suggest some other protection equally as good.

There are a dozen or more arrangements, inexpensively and easily made, which can be devised on every farm for the proper care of cream. These remarks suggest only the principle of keeping the cream in good condition.

Pasturing Sheep.

Some writers claim that sheep ought not to be pastured on land more than one year before it is plowed and reseeded, owing to parasites, but it has been shown that sheep have been kept free from parasites by the use of tar, turpentine and salt. Bore 3-inch holes in a pine log, fill with salt and smear tar around the top, and sheep will tar their noses while eating salt. Sheep soon learn to eat tar. One sheep raiser keeps it mixed with turpentine and salt, where it is accessible at all times. About one-half pint of turpentine to one peck of salt is the proper proportion.

Scours in Calves.

A stockman claims that when calves 3 or 4 years old become sick and die with scours it is due to indigestion, apparently, and yields to treatment with peppin if taken in time. A teaspoonful twice a day given in a little warm milk after feeding will cure it, and if given when the calf is born, and continued for a few days, will prevent it. The peppin is the common kind sold in drug stores, and can be purchased by the pound.

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