

The Vanishing Men

By RICHARD WASHBURN CHILD

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SYNOPSIS

Out of uniform, at the end of the World War, with the rank of major, Peter DeWolfe, young American of wealth and family, is urged by an English woman in arms, Evelyn Bonham, to visit the Bonham home and meet the Englishman's mother and sister, and, incidentally, Brena Selcoss, young woman about whom there is an air of mystery. Muriel Bonham, Evelyn's sister, becomes infatuated with Peter, but he is interested only in the mysterious Brena Selcoss of whom he has had only a glimpse. Muriel urges him to forget her, warning him that if she (Brena) should like him he is in danger of "vanishing"—like the others. Peter gets a phone message from Brena to meet her.

CHAPTER III—Continued

He found her sitting at a table beside a window overlooking Bond street, where the fog was like a gray stain and passersby hurrying home were like solids stirred up to the surface from the bottom of some kettle. She greeted him with a quiet smile and pointed to the empty chair.

Peter, conscious of his shrewdness, said exactly what she had said—nothing. He sat down across from her, and for the benefit of the waitress whom he could see out of the corner of his eye as a black dress and white apron, he pointed to Brena's steaming chocolate and nodded. He did not take his gaze from his companion's large dark eyes which had in them the same look he had seen once before and which had made him think of eyes which knew no death but had been looking out upon the world for centuries.

ance of the future. Peter felt a glowing sense of understanding and of companionship.

Suddenly, with a quick tensing that startled Peter, she looked swiftly about from face to face of the persons, men and women, who sat at the other tables. He saw in her eyes at that moment the look which Bonham had described so vividly—that expression of fear of some unknown peril.

"You have been in the country a long time," he said as promptly as he could. "You do not like London, evidently."

"I do not know anyone in London now," she said. "I have an apartment here—one which I had when I first came to England."

"Come to England?" He inquired when, without using the words.

"Yes, three years ago. I think it must have been three centuries."

"I do not know how much I loved to see human beings—just see them sitting here and there, walking in the street, jostling each other, so various, so like—" "Unsolved riddles."

She looked into his face long and as if conducting a search.

"I want to stay in London for a few days," she said at last, shaking her gloves as if to express the thrill it would give her.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Except my eyes almost imperceptibly as she answered. "But countless dozens of persons claim your time here. It is, to use your expression, known that you are in London."

"No, no, no," protested DeWolfe, impulsively. "Not a soul."

She drew on her gloves.

"I think I will stay in London," she said, and Peter thought he heard her murmur under her breath, "God forgive me."

CHAPTER IV

He was reckoned a shrewd player of life. Men who knew Peter DeWolfe best say that if he left his traveling bag on the sidewalk on Fifth avenue while he did some shopping within some store, it was only because he had estimated carefully the psychology of any thief and concluded that one could depend upon human nature to believe that luggage sitting alone on the pavement was placed there as a trap. Peter always found his bag where he had left it.

"This is said because, unless some complex reasoning and calculation of the same kind can be applied to his conduct, it is necessary to say he went blind into love of woman."

"A few—a very few—men—and fewer women," Peter said once in a letter, "know just how near the top of the world can be reached by the adventure of free days together where there are no hours, and time springs in magic jumps from noon to next daylight perhaps, and the world is a playground and a city is your toy and mankind is the ultimate friend of both of you. Unfortunately," he added, "the men who have the quality of greatness to see that such a companionship over a span of hours is a greater accomplishment than a life in a law office or the presidency of some blooming bank or factory. Those who ever find the girl are fewer. And those who can give some essential quality of a gentleman and a whole man needed to walk that delicious tighrope up above the moon, without taking a vulgar step into space with a nasty crash on landing, are fewest of all."

He may have been demonstrating these words. But apparently he had abandoned his inquiry into the mystery of past and future. He had abandoned suspicion of her or curiosity about her life, though ever and again he found her name around with the unexplained fear in her dark eyes, as if she planned to meet the eyes of recognition or find some fiend walking softly along behind. Outwardly he had given over all but one inquiry, and that was the exploration of the heart and mind and soul of Brena Selcoss.

Just when he had shaved his first purpose, awakened by Bonham's challenge, and when he wiped from his mind the memory of his one moment of dread of this girl, which, of course, might be traceable to Muriel's extraordinary and tragic warning, Peter himself could not have told. It might have been at the moment when, after their first evening of strolling aimlessly through the mystery of the symbolic fog with their selves reaching toward one another, they had perched like two ravens on a superstitious, contented and untrusting blurred lights of one moment, or after another move like luminous fish in cloudy water.

"What time is it?" Peter had asked, listening in vain for the great bell of St. Paul's.

Brena Selcoss, sitting on her own coat, drew back the loose sleeve of her white silk waist from her rounded cream-colored wrist and, after a glance at her watch, had said, "It is after two. I am hungry and I am cold."

Peter had said quickly, "Perhaps it

is my fault. But you wouldn't go to the theater or the cafes. How could I deal with any one who stubbornly insists upon exploring alleys and arcades and the banking district and Hyde park until an old campaigner's legs are almost worn out?"

"You couldn't."

"I shall find a place now and I shall like to see you eat," he had said, jumping up. "There are some persons, after all, who give us delight when they eat. Do you ever see an old French peasant woman who was really fond of animals feeding them? Why, her brown wrinkled face has a smile like a lighthouse! And I can imagine wearing that smile when one's own children are over their bowls of gruel. Yes, I shall like to see you eat. I am sure. I would like it still better if I had planted and harvested or caught everything which was put before you. But that cannot very well be, because I'm not a farmer or a trapper or Isaac Walton—only a New York idler. Besides, Trafalgar square has no soil for turnips, no brook trout, no pheasants."

"She had looked up with a wistful smile. "Who is pleased when you eat?"

"Nobody," he said. "You see I am an orphan. There is an old waiter at the club. I forgot him. He rubs his hands when I am hungry, but for all I know it is because the palms itch. He waited on my father—the banker—and he looks like a shaven Memphis-tophees. That's all I can remember."

"You may come with me, then, to my chambers," she had said. "We can stop on the way—goodness knows where—but somewhere and get eggs and butter and cheese and milk. We'll go there."

"Can you cook?" he had exclaimed.

"Oh, no. Not at all. Does that make any difference?"

"Why should it?" Peter had inquired with sincerity. He had come to the point of departure from his first ideas of his destined relationship with Brena Selcoss.

In the days which had flowed on, Peter's coming and going at the new hotel to which he had moved so that no one might attach themselves to him, attracted the attention of the doorman with the worn livery, brass buttons and chronic apoplexy. "A very peculiar young 'un," he had said to the porter. "A very odd 'airpin! 'E's in an 'out at hall hours. I think 'e's gaming."

Perhaps he was. That might have been how he began. But the delight of a concentrated nothing-to-do settled over the two and Peter's steamer at last left the dock at Liverpool with American soldiers blaspheming between decks like a swarm of hornets returning to their hive and a purser scratching his head over the name of one DeWolfe, who was printed on the passenger list but did not claim his telegram. Peter had lost himself and the runaway child, he was glad of it. There was only this difference—for Peter no one but his lawyers would make a search.

If one desires to know how far the breaking down of conventionalities had gone, it is only necessary to point out that upon one occasion where a laughing Sunday crowd had gathered about a hectic man preaching revolution from a stepladder in Hyde park, Peter had sat down with the girl to listen. The sunlight was comfortable, the voice of the orator waves upon a long warm beach, and Peter, dropping back with his head on the grass, watched a silver airplane up from Hendon wheel about like a gray beetle who couldn't decide where to light, until he fell asleep.

When he awoke he was generating apologies. He intended to say that Brena and he, like fairy folk, had acquired the magic exemption from sleep but that, of course, occasionally—

None of his embarrassment was negotiable; she too, was asleep; her hair, with its red-brown variations of autumn leaves, was alive with the sheen of the sunlight, her arm was under her forehead. The orator had spun his web to the end and all the crowd had buzzed away like escaping flies; but a little stray dog, bent upon feeding, had come out of a plant that the Mount Everest expedition of 1924 observed was the blue vetch, at 18,000 feet, but animals live at as great a height as 22,000 feet. "A minute and inconspicuous black spider," says a member of the expedition of 1924 observed was the blue vetch, at 18,000 feet, but animals live at as great a height as 22,000 feet. "A minute and inconspicuous black spider," says a member of the expedition of 1924 observed was the blue vetch, at 18,000 feet, but animals live at as great a height as 22,000 feet.

When doctors can make every man live to be eighty, that will be work enough to keep them all busy.

They washed, respectable faces. They strolled through the National gallery where they found a room of portraits of men of the time of Pitt, all of whom, as if by a manner of the time, had their hands thrust palm down into their buttoned coats; they called it the Stomach-ache gallery. They sat on strange doorsteps while Peter wrote verses to the unknown inmates behind the barrier. They invited a match woman to dine with them and were well repaid by hearing from her lips a discourse upon the conceit of each ego which always flatters itself into belief that it is in a crisis. They said goodnight at all hours, they ate when hungry, and were as skillfully silent when the mood came as they were spontaneously chattering when their minds danced together.

Peter might have guessed, but he could not have known to what crisis this would lead.

"We have not forgotten how to play," he said to her.

A look of pain had come into her face, and into her eyes the old look of fear.

"I don't like it when you look like that," he had said.

"How?"

"Afraid."

"I'm afraid of nothing, Peter—nothing which makes ordinary fear in ordinary hearts, Peter. You will see some time that I am not afraid."

She had laughed at his perplexed expression, but without joy.

"Don't you bother about me," she told him. "You've promised that you wouldn't, you know."

He nodded. "I've kept my word."

"Perhaps—"

"What?"

"Perhaps I'd better go back tomorrow—back to Beconshire."

It was the first word suggesting the end of their holiday. Both knew that this word must finally be spoken, but Peter had not expected to see quite the quick pallor which came into Brena's face as she forced out the sentence.

"We agreed, Peter, didn't we? And the time has come, I think."

DeWolfe felt as if who had been touched suddenly and unexpectedly upon the elbow by the dank, lony fingers of a corpse.

"There is one evil passion which I think does more harm than all the others," he said, clasping his strong hands over the knee. "It's fear. It ought to be made a crime."

"You know nothing of fear," she replied quietly. "You have not lived with fear day in and day out—year after year."

"No, I have not lived with fear at all," he went on, looking straight into her eyes. "I have not lived with it because it is a parasite. I have been wounded, but I learned that five-eighths of the pain was fear. I have been apprehensive of some terrible calamity and the fear was the major part of the calamity. There are men in the world in myriads who fear the other way. They are afraid of money. Fear is worse than poverty, Brena. For God's sake, let's not fear!"

"I did not say that I had fear," she said. "I only said I had lived with fear."

"The world is a fool about fear," Peter drove on. "It makes cowards, but it is the mother—"

"Of what?"

"Of murderers," he said.

Brena was silent.

To Peter, as the day came to an end, it became more and more plain that she had indeed decided to go from London. She spoke of it as if it were a slight fever, some kind of danger. Once she said, "You are much too nice to take any risks, Peter." He had asked her about these risks, but she said, "Among other risks, that of wasting your energies on something which leads nowhere." When they had dined at a little restaurant in Jersey, she said, "Come home with me. No one sees us go in and out. It is like a nest hidden in an old stump. We can talk and then—"

"What?"

"Good-by. Good-night. Good-by."

All the way up Regent street she spoke of it as if it were a slight fever, some kind of danger. Once she said, "You are much too nice to take any risks, Peter." He had asked her about these risks, but she said, "Among other risks, that of wasting your energies on something which leads nowhere." When they had dined at a little restaurant in Jersey, she said, "Come home with me. No one sees us go in and out. It is like a nest hidden in an old stump. We can talk and then—"

He walked toward her slowly, but without hesitation. In his face there was a square look—the look of a dead will that had come into its own at last. "Brena, I'm going to break my promise."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Animal Life on Everest
Effort to Earn
Persistence of Life
Tears Shall Come No More

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL Sunday School Lesson

Lesson for April 19
LIFE IN THE EARLY CHURCH

LESSON TEXT—Acts 4:31-5:11
GOLDEN TEXT—The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul.—Acts 4:32

1. Characteristics of the Primitive Church (vv. 31-35).

These early Christians for every want and every need betook themselves to God in prayer. They had faith that caused them to go to the Lord believing that their needs would be supplied.

2. It Was a Spirit-filled Church (v. 31).

When they prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

3. It Was a Church Which Had Great Boldness in Preaching the Word of God (v. 31).

The ministers of a Spirit-filled church will not offer any apology for the Bible, but will expend all their energy in fearlessly preaching it.

4. It Was a United Church (v. 32).

They were all of one heart and one soul. This shows that they had a unity of feeling and purpose.

5. It Was a Charitable and Generous Church (v. 32).

They held nothing back from those who had need. As needs arose, supplies were given from a common fund.

6. Its Ministers Had a Powerful Testimony (v. 33).

This shows that there must be a personal experience before there can be a powerful testimony.

7. It Was a Church Whose Membership Exhibited Unblemished Character (v. 33).

Great grace was upon them all.

8. Barnabas' Generous Act (vv. 36-37).

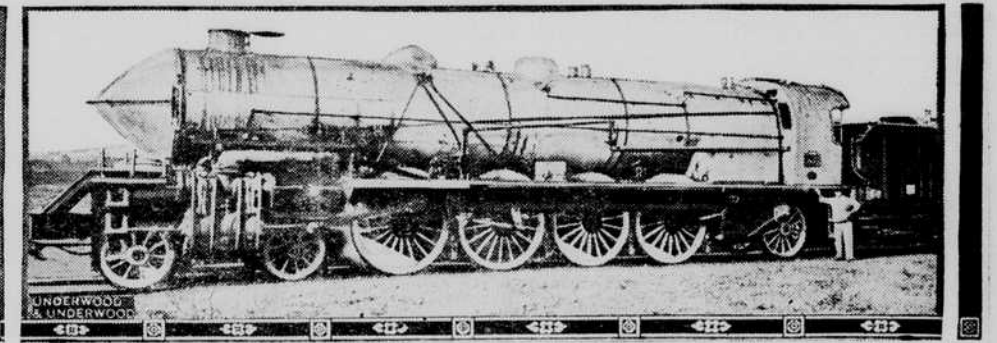
He sold a piece of land and turned over all the proceeds thereof to be used for the help of those in need. It should be borne in mind, however, that it is not said that Barnabas sold all the land he had.

Crack Rifle Team Composed of Coeds



Photograph of the University of Wisconsin coed rifle team. The girls are all crack shots and are trained by regular army officers.

Like Mammoth Projectile on Eight Huge Drive Wheels



The most powerful locomotive now in use on the Paris, Lyons & Mediterranean railroad, just built in France, to haul heavy express trains. The monster weighs 118 tons and is more than fifty feet long.

WARNS OF NEW QUAKE

Prof. Kirtley F. Mather of the department of geology, Harvard university, who says that another earthquake, comparable to the recent one in intensity, is due in a few months in North America, though there is no real danger to be looked for.

WILLING TO LOSE DAN

June Castleton of Boston, Mass., wife of Dan Castleton, heir to millions, who has agreed that their "perfect marriage" is not so perfect, and they are to have a "nice friendly divorce." June is a former Folies girl.

Alarm Clock Hint
When Wild Geese Molt
Federal Capitol Building

Peoria Woman Now a Duchess

Margaret Clarke, daughter of the late Charles Corning Clarke of Peoria, Ill., former mayor of that city, has just become the bride of Filippo Carraciolo, duke of Melito. The wedding took place in Florence and the young couple are spending the honeymoon on the shores of the Mediterranean.

Holstein Sets New Butter Record

Illinois Homestead Piche Bonheur, pure-bred Holstein, bred and developed by the college of agriculture, University of Illinois, has set a new Illinois record in milk and butter-fat production for junior two-year-olds of all breeds, by producing 29,599.4 pounds of milk and 712.32 pounds of fat in a year. This is equivalent to 809.29 pounds of butter.

Brief Information
The total area of Finland is 34,868,003 acres.
Chop suey was only recently introduced in China.
Lobsters walk on tip-toe when traveling in the ocean.
Japan is the world's third largest machinery market.
Argentina is importing great quantities of eggs in the shell from the United States.

Jolly contains more sugar than the solution from which it is made.
The present territory of Sweden is about half the size of California.
Iceland was freed from Danish rule in 1874.
A scarab beetle 15,000,000 years old has been found in north China.
Antares has the greatest diameter of any star ever measured, dwarfing Mars to a mere speck.
At Thomaston, N. C., a bag of money which had dropped from a mull sack lay alongside the tracks within a few feet of the main street for four days before anyone noticed it. The bag contained \$13,000 in gold and \$5,000 in currency.
On a bet that he could not add five pounds to his weight over night, Earl Dudley, of Winthrop, Maine, weighing 103 pounds at 6 o'clock at night, consumed a breakfast of five sandwiches, six slices of cake, four quarts of milk and a quart of coffee, after which he tipped the scales at 172 1/2 pounds.