

THE CHOICE

(Continued from page 7.)

"I thought you were in Manila," he said.

"That was four years ago. Just about the time you left off writing. I didn't stay there long."

"I was expecting you back every day," said Mac, looking out of the window. "There was no reason why you should stay out here."

Beverley laughed.

"Perhaps not. But neither was there any reason why I should come home."

There was silence for awhile.

Then the question that had been slowly working in Mac's mind formulated itself: it was one on which all his thoughts revolved.

"But—why did you give up your practice, Phil?"

Beverley looked at him curiously, and a flippancy came to his manner, a flippancy that seemed designed to hide his feelings.

"This trade suits me better," he said. "Besides—the story followed me. In the East, you see, there is so little to talk about."

He saw Mac wince, and that wince revealed him more than anything else. It was the involuntary expression of a man who had come to evade things and shrink from looking reality in the eyes. At the back of Beverley's mind was the thought that Mac had turned out a weakling.

When the band had stopped playing he said roughly:

"You'll have to take a practice here, Mac. Nina seems half in love with the East already."

Mac coughed, and his eyes narrowed as he looked at his companion again.

"I don't see the connection," he said carelessly.

In the morning when the burning sunlight shimmered on the roofs and the strip of water a rickshaw pattered down the street, and turned the corner of the narrow alley. There was a steep incline towards the shore-front, but Beverley's shop was at the top of the slope. He was dusting some vases when Nina entered, but the rustle of her skirts made him turn round. There was a fresh and wholesome grace about her always, and now a slight hesitancy had entered her manner, the heightened colour of her cheeks showing up against the blue motor veil that trailed behind her.

"I just thought I'd look in," she said, as if feeling her way.

"H'm," said Beverley. "You surely haven't seen all the sights already."

"There'll be plenty of time to see them all."

"Well, yes. I suppose so. I understood the boat was going on in four or five days though."

HE went on dusting the blue vase, his face hard and expressionless as if carved out of steel.

"We haven't decided whether we're going to break our journey here or not," she said.

"It's hardly worth while," he said brusquely. "The place can be exhausted in four or five days. . . This is rather a fine bit of work. The moderns have lost this particular shade of blue and all their experiments can't get it back again."

"I am very ignorant of china," she said.

"I don't know much about anything else," he replied.

She looked at him keenly, and then took up the vase in her hands.

"Do you wish to pretend that you have only begun to live since you came out here?"

"That is the only part of my life I want to remember particularly. The rest—well it's over and done with."

"I am glad you find this so satisfying," she said slowly.

He looked at her as if trying to fathom what lay behind her flushed face and nervous movements.

"Did you merely come here to rake up the past, Nina?" he said dryly. "I shouldn't have thought there was anything in it very pleasant for either of us. As for me I haven't got a memory

worth playing with for an hour."

She saw that somehow they had come to a deadlock. Driving back along the shore-front she leant back in her rickshaw and tried to think. Was it merely coquetry that had prompted her to seek him out that morning, and had he divined aright? The restless crowd surged by her in jumbled disorder, fusing and intermingling with her own thoughts, till her mind grew tired.

At lunch the next day on the balcony her father said suddenly:

"I saw that Beverley this morning. He used to be a partner of yours, didn't he, Mac?"

MAC seemed a little embarrassed and took a second helping himself of fruit-salad.

"Yes. We went through our course together and shared a practice for about a year."

There was a little silence, and Nina looked out to where the liner was lying at anchor with the lighters still busy about her. Her father went on eating, his short-sighted eyes fixed on his plate.

"Funny how quickly a man goes down hill as soon as he takes the first step. He looked broken and worried when I saw him, and tried to dodge me. I suppose he recognises that he's a failure."

"You're mistaken, I think, dad," said Nina dryly. "I fancy he's been more successful than most."

"Oh, well, it depends upon what you call success. Most men go to pieces when they've bungled things as he did, and it's only a question of time. I don't suppose he's ever likely to forget what stranded him here."

Mac pushed his chair back, and his face flushed.

"It was merely a mistake," he said warmly, "you exaggerate its importance, I think. Any doctor is liable to do the same thing in moments of stress, and besides the child didn't really die of that: it would have died anyhow. The thing was taken too seriously at the time."

Brayne dabbed his moustache with his serviette.

"Well, well, Mac, I don't blame you for defending Beverley, for you were his friend. It's the business of a doctor to avoid mistakes, though if they occur he has to pay the penalty. If you'd done the same you'd be a good deal harder on yourself than you are on him."

"I don't know that I would. There are worse crimes under heaven than for a young doctor to put ten grains of chloral instead of one in a mixture."

He rose, pale-faced and tight-lipped, fumbling a little nervously with his chair. Nina had never heard him defend Beverley before.

That afternoon Mac came up to her on the balcony when the sun was dropping low.

"You're coming for a drive with me, Nina?" he said.

"No," she replied, "not this afternoon."

"We may not have many more chances."

Nina saw nothing further of Beverley till one night when her rickshaw was pattering along the shore-front in the dusk. The hour held a nameless charm, and there was the unsteady dance of stars on the water, and the tinkle of cottage-pianos on the heights above. He had come up behind her, and their coolies trotted along together instinctively; but there was no reality in their first few words. Then he leant over, and his voice was rasping and uneven.

"Why do you stay here so long?" She crushed some papers in her hands.

"I don't know. Why did I come here at all?"

"Don't ask me to fathom a woman's reasons," he said roughly. "The point is that this place won't help to recruit your father's health."



Portable Heat

IT is comforting to know that you can have just the amount of heat you want—when you want it—where you want it—without suffering the expense of heating the whole house in order to warm one room.

The Perfection Smokeless Oil Heater is a chill chaser. Easily carried anywhere in the house, and warms a room in a few minutes.

Dealers everywhere. If YOUR dealer cannot supply you, write us direct.

Royalite Oil gives best results

THE IMPERIAL OIL COMPANY, Limited.

Branches in All Cities

PERFECTION SMOKELESS OIL HEATERS

National Trust Company Limited

DIVIDEND NOTICE.

Notice is hereby given that a dividend for the three months ending September 30th, at the rate of

TEN PER CENT. PER ANNUM

has been declared upon the Capital Stock of the Company and that same will be payable on and after October 1st next.

The Transfer Books will be closed from the 20th to the 30th September, both days inclusive.

By order of the Board

W. E. RUNDLE, General Manager.

Toronto, September 1st, 1915.

FORD OWNERS

will be interested to know that they can insure their automobiles against fire (including explosion and self-ignition) at lower rates than the owners of any other make of cars.

RATES AND CONDITIONS.

1915 Ford Touring Car, \$500.....	\$6.00 for one year.
1914 " " " 400.....	5.50 " " "
1913 " " " 250.....	3.75 " " "

Cars over three years old that have been kept in specially good repair will be insured for amounts and at rates made to fit individual cases.

The cars will be insured while in any building or whilst on the road.

THE LONDON MUTUAL FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY

Assets\$863,554.52
Surplus to Policyholders\$433,061.40

Head Office:
31 Scott St., Toronto.

F. D. WILLIAMS,
Managing-Director

OUR ADVERTISING POLICY

We will not, knowingly or intentionally, insert advertisements from other than perfectly reliable firms or business men. If subscribers find any of them to be otherwise, we will esteem it a favour if they will so advise us, giving full particulars.

Advertising Manager, Canadian Courier