



HEZEKIAH

The Siege of the Seven Suitors

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON

Copyright, 1910, by Meredith Nicholson

PROLOGUE.

Did you ever read a story in which humor of the finest and most delicious sort played the leading part? Did you ever tackle a tale which made you gasp by the originality of its ideas? Did you ever meet some utterly impossible persons who never lived and never could have lived and whom you might meet any day of your life? They're here, right here in this story. They have the most impossible adventures and get into the most impossible situations, just as you or I might any day if the stage were set just right for us. Furthermore, they are very entertaining people, and they hold the interest from first word to finish.

CHAPTER I.

My Friend Wiggins Is Introduced.

I DINED with Hartley Wiggins at the Hare and Tortoise on an evening in October not very long ago. It may be well to explain that the Hare and Tortoise is the smallest and most select of clubs, whose windows afford a pleasant view of Gramercy park. The club is comparatively young, and it is our joke that we are so far all tortoises, creeping through our several professions without aid from any hare. I hasten to explain that I am a chimney doctor. Wiggins is a lawyer; at least I have seen his name in a list of graduates of the Harvard Law school, and he has an office downtown, where I have occasionally found him sedately playing solitaire while he waited for some one to take him out to luncheon. He spends his summers on a South Dakota ranch, from which he derives a considerable income. Wiggins is an athlete, and his summers in the west and persistent training during the winter keep him in fine condition. As I faced him tonight in our favorite corner of the Hare and Tortoise dining room the physical man was fit enough, but I saw at once that he was glum and dispirited. He had through many years honored me with his confidence, and I felt that tonight after we got well started I should hear what was on his mind. I hoped to cheer him with the story of a visit I had by chance paid that afternoon to the Asolando tea room, for, though Wiggins is a most practical person, I imagined that he would be diverted by my description of a place which, I felt sure, nothing could tempt him to visit. I shall never forget the look he gave me when I remarked at about his third spoonful of soup: "By the way, I dropped into an odd place this afternoon—Burne-Jones bus, Bossett macaroons and all that sort of thing. They call it the Asolando." I was ambling on, expecting to sharpen his curiosity gradually as I recited the joys of the tea room, but at Asolando his spoon dropped, and he stared at me blankly. It should be known that Wiggins is not a man whose composure is lightly shaken. "The Asolando," I repeated, to break the spell of his blank stare. "Know the place?" He recovered in a moment, but he surveyed me quizzically before replying. "Of course I have heard of the Asolando, but I thought you didn't go in for that sort of thing. It's a trifle girlish, you know." "That's hardly against it! I found the girlishness altogether attractive." "You always were tolerably susceptible, but broiled butterflies and moth wings' soufle seem to me rather pale food for a man in your vigorous health." "They must have discriminated in your favor. I saw no such things, though to be sure I was afraid to quibble over the waitress' suggestions. May I ask when you were there?" "Oh, I dropped in quite accidentally one day last spring. I saw the sign and remembered that somebody had spoken of the place, and I was tired, and it was a long way to the club, and—

was withholding something, and I resolved to get to the bottom of it. "I don't think the Asolando is a place that would attract either of us, and yet the rinds are good as such stuff goes, and the gentle handmaidens are restful to the eye—Pippa, Francesca, Gloria and the rest of 'em." Wiggins pried open his artichoke with the care of a botanist. He had regained his composure, but I saw that the subject interested him. "You were there this afternoon?" he inquired. "Yes, my first and only appearance." "And this is Monday?" "The calendar has said it." "So you settled your bill with Pippa? I believe this was her day. She makes the change on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Her eyelashes are a trifle too long for the world's peace." "I dare say. I haven't your charming knack, Ames, of picking up acquaintances, so you mustn't expect me to form lifelong friendships with young women at cash desks. I suppose it didn't occur to you that those young women who tend till and serve the tables in there are persons of education and taste. The Asolando is not a common hashery. There's not a girl in that place who hasn't a social position as good as yours or mine. The Asolando's a kind of fad, you know. Ames; it's not a tavern within the meaning of the inkeepers' act, where common swine are fed for profit. The servants serve for love of the cause; it's a sort of cult." Wiggins excused himself shortly, and I had a glimpse of him later, in the writing room, engaged upon letters, a fact in itself disquieting, for Wiggins never wrote letters, and it was he who had favored making the Hare and Tortoise writing room into a den for pipe smokers. The epistolary habit, he maintained, was one that should be discouraged. I was moodily turning over the evening newspaper when Jewett turned up. Jewett always knows everything. He dropped the ball into the green of my immediate interest with a neat approach shot. "Too bad about old Wiggy," he remarked with his prebending sigh. "What's the matter with Wiggins?" I demanded. "Ah! He hasn't told you? Thought he told you everything." This was meant for a stinger, and I felt the bite of it. "You do me too much honor. Wiggins is not a man to throw around his confidences." "And I rather fancy that his love affairs in particular are locked in his bosom." Jewett was a master of the art of suggestion. He took an unnecessarily long time to light a cigar so that his words might sink deep into my consciousness. "Saw her once last spring. Got a sight draft from the Bank of Eros. Followed her across the multitudinous sea. Bang!" "But Wiggy hasn't been abroad. Wiggy was on his Dakota ranch all summer. He's all tanned from the sun, just as he is every fall," I persisted. "Wrote you from out there, did he? Sent you picture postals showing him herding his cattle or whatever the beasts are? Kept in touch with you all the time, did he? I tell you his fine color is due to Switzerland, not Dakota." "Wiggins isn't a letter writer nor the sort of person who wants to paper your house with picture postals. His not writing doesn't mean that he wasn't on his ranch," I replied, annoyed by Jewett's manner. "Never dropped you before, though. I wager," he chirped. "I tell you he saw Miss Cecilia Hollister at the Asolando teas, just a glimpse, but almost immediately he went abroad in pursuit of her. The chevalier—that's her Aunt Octavia—was along and another niece. My sister saw the bunch of them in Geneva, where the chevalier was breaking records. A whole troop of suitors followed them everywhere. My sister knows the girl—Cecilia—and she's known Wiggy all her life. She's just home and told me about it last night. She thinks the chevalier has some absurd scheme for marrying off the girl. It's all very queer, our Wiggy being mixed up in it." "Don't be absurd, Jewett. There's nothing unusual in a man being in love. That's one fashion that doesn't change much. I venture to say that Wiggins will prove a formidable suitor. Wiggins is a gentleman, and the girl would be lucky to get him." "Quite right, my dear Ames; but, alas, there are others. The competition is encouraged by the aunt, the veteran chevalier. My sister says the chevalier seems to favor the suit of a

Nebraska philosopher who rejoices in the melodious name of Dick." Jewett was playing me for all his story was worth and enjoying himself immensely. "For heaven's sake, go on!" "Nice girl, this Cecilia. You know the Hollisters—oodles of money in the family. The chevalier's father scored big in baby buggies—responsible for the modern sleep inducing perambulators; sold out to a trust. The father of Wiggins' inamorata had started in to be a marine painter. A founder of this club, come to think of it, but dropped out long ago. You have heard of him—Bassford Hollister. Funny thing his having to give up art. Great gifts for the marine, but never could overcome tendency to seasickness. Honest! Every time he painted a wave it upset him horribly. The doctors couldn't help him. Next tried his hand at the big gulches downtown. There was a chance there to hit off the metropolitan skyline and become immortal by doing it first, but a new trouble developed. Doing the high buildings made him dizzy! Honest! He was good, too, and would have made a place, but he had to cut it out. He was so torn up over his two failures that he blew in his share of the perambulator money in riotous living. Lost his wife into the bargain and has settled down to a peaceful life up in Westchester county in one of these cute little bungalows the real estate operators build for you if you pay a dollar down for a picture of an acre lot." "And the daughter?" "Well, Bassford Hollister has two daughters. It's the older one that has stolen Wiggins' heart away. She's Cecilia, you know. Very literary and that sort of thing, and pushed tea and cookies at the Asolando when that idiosyncrasy was opened. Wiggins saw her there last spring. Miss Hollister, the aunt, whom I'm fond of calling the chevalier, picked up her nieces about that time and hauled them off to Europe, and Wiggins scampered after them. I don't know what they did to Wiggy, but you see how he acts. I rather imagine that the chevalier didn't smile on his suit. She's a holy terror, that woman, with an international reputation for doing weird and most unaccountable things. She draws a sort of royalty on all the baby buggies in creation. It amounts to a birth tax, in contravention of the free guarantees of the constitution. The people will rise against it some day." "She's plausible enough, but she's the past mistress of ulterior motive. She got Fortner, the mural painter, up to a place she used to have at Newport a few years ago, ostensibly to do a frieze or something, and she made him teach her to fire a gun. You know Fortner, with his artistic ideals! And he didn't know any more about guns than a flea. It was droll, decidedly droll. But she kept him there a month—wouldn't let him off the reservation; but she paid him his fee just the same, though he never painted a stroke. When he got back to town he was a wreck. It was just like being in jail. I warn you to let her alone. If you should undertake to fix her thues—she's likely to put you to work digging potatoes. She's no end of a case." "Well, Wiggins is a good fellow, one of the very best," I remarked, as I absorbed these revelations, "and it isn't the girl's fault he wants to marry." "There's no telling where this affair may lead Wiggins. There's something queer in the wind, an' right. The chevalier has brother Bassford where he can't whimper. I rather fancy he feels from her hand. His girls haven't any prospects except through the chevalier. Nice girls, so I'm told. Miss Cecilia Hollister is living with her aunt." "And the other sister—where does she come in?" "Not important, I fancy. Rumor is silent touching her. In fact I've never heard anything of her. But this Cecilia is no end handsome and proud. Poor old Wiggy!" "I was already ashamed of myself for having encouraged Jewett to discuss Wiggins' affairs, and was about to leave him, when he snorted in a disagreeable way he had at some joke that had occurred to him. "I knew there was something," he said, "about Miss Cecilia's younger sister, and I've just recalled it. The girl has a most extraordinary name, quite the most remarkable you ever heard. Hezekiah! Bang! That's the little sister's name. Bassford Hollister had been saving that name for a son, who never appeared, to do honor to old Hezekiah, the perambulator chap. So they named the girl for her grand dad." I left him and learned at the office that Wiggins had, within half an hour, left the club hurriedly in a cab, taking a trunk with him. He had mentioned no mail address to the clerk, and this was very unlike Wiggins. (To Be Continued.)

In County Court.

From Wednesday's Daily. Petition for the probate of the will of the late Mrs. Rhoda Rose was filed in the office of County Judge Allen J. Beeson today. The deceased was a resident of near Weeping Water and was the owner of a very fine farm in that locality, where the Rose family resided for many years. P. J. Rose, a son, was here today looking after the matter. There are a few boxes of stationery on our bargain counter. You will have to hurry if you want some while the price is so low.

A MODERN AND UP-TO-DATE DELICATESSEN IN THIS CITY

From Wednesday's Daily. Plattsmouth is to have a new delicatessen shop, as Fred Wagner, who takes charge of the New York bakery on April 1, expects to install a modern and strictly up-to-date establishment of this kind, where all the tempting and appetizing dishes that are to be prepared in any of the delicatessen shops of the large cities can be had by his customers. He will install a fine lunch room in the bakery, where anyone desiring something dainty and appetizing for their lunch can drop in and be served in a very few minutes. The new establishment will have salads, cold roast meats and sandwiches of all kind ready to serve to those who may call and it will make an ideal place for the busy man or shoppers to drop in for lunch, and under the direction of Mr. Wagner the public can be assured of courteous treatment and the best that the market affords in the way of delicacies. The room occupied by the bakery is to receive a thorough overhauling and be repapered and painted preparatory to the installing of new fixtures of the most up-to-date style, and the lunch room will be fixed up in a manner that will fully harmonize with the dainties served there. This is the kind of a store that has been needed here for a long time and it is to be hoped that Mr. Wagner will meet with the patronage his enterprise so well deserves.

In the District Court.

From Wednesday's Daily. In the office of the district clerk an answer and cross-petition has been filed in the case of William A. Cleghorn vs. Charles T. Tosler, Clara Chaplin, Sarah Chaffin, et al. The answer and cross petition comes from Akron, Colorado, where the defendants, Clara Chaplin and Sarah Chaffin, reside, and ask that the plaintiff be required to set forth proof of the ownership of the land in question and that the defendants be granted just and equitable relief.

A little ad in the Journal will serve the purpose.

From Near Union.

F. A. Finkle and W. L. Taylor, two of those jolly, whole-souled fellows from Liberty precinct, were in the city today looking after business matters with county seat friends, making a pleasure call on a few of them, and the Journal was included. They report everything in old Liberty fully up to the standard of excellence and everybody looking for a busy year during 1913.

THE MOST POWERFUL STORY EVER STAGED

"The Price She Paid" at the Parmele Theater Monday Night, March 24.

"The Price She Paid" is the title of one of the most gripping comedy dramas that has been seen this season. Of all the offerings that have been presented none has been received with more praise than this latest effort of Lem B. Parker. In addition to the fact that the story deals with the marriage game in a new way and points a big moral where an attempt to get money dishonestly is concerned, the management has been particularly successful in securing the services of Miss Irene Daniels, perhaps the most capable actress of emotional roles in the country today. Her wonderfully sympathetic voice has been pronounced even more effective in depicting difficult passages than that of Helen Ware. "The Price She Paid" will be seen at the Parmele theater on Monday night, March 24.

Case Is Dismissed.

The case against Walter Brittain and Mrs. Bertha Stricklin, which was set for hearing yesterday before Justice Archer, was dismissed, as there was not sufficient evidence to show that they had been living together in violation of law, and the justice released them.

Buy your fancy stationery at the Journal office.

Off for the Bryan Banquet.

From Wednesday's Daily. This evening being the birthday of William Jennings Bryan, the Lincoln Bryan club gives a magnificent banquet in honor of the fifty-third birthday of the great commoner, who has come from Washington to be present at the event, and admirers from all over the state will gather there to greet the new secretary of state. There were quite a number from this city passengers for the capital city this morning to take in the event. Among those in the party were: W. K. Fox, D. C. Morgan and wife, George Snyder, D. O. Dwyer, Fred Morgan and wife and W. D. Wheeler.

Buys Several Pieces of Property.

From Wednesday's Daily. William Orr of Clarinda, Iowa, was here yesterday visiting with J. F. Clugy and family and attending the McMakon sale, which was held yesterday afternoon. Mr. Orr purchased several pieces of property in this city as an investment.

Smoke Up!

Save time, trouble and get better results by using

Wright's Condensed Smoke 75c

per bottle—enough for a barrel of meat

F. G. Fricke & Co.

The Rexall Store 186- PHONES-186

Seeds that Grow!

Alfalfa, Red Clover, White Clover, Alsit Clover, Timothy, Blue Grass, Kentucky Blue, English Blue, Bromus Inermis, Red Top.

ONION SETS—White, Red, Yellow Globe. PEAS—American Wonder, Blis Elerbering, Tom Thumb, White Marofat. BEANS—All Kinds.

We carry a complete line of all kinds of Garden Seeds, Field Seeds and Flower Seeds.

- G. P. EASTWOOD -

(Successor to John Bauer)