



The Siege of the Seven Suitors

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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wood, but the smoke rose in the flue in a perfectly mannerly fashion, and on thrusting in my hand I felt a good draft of air. I instinctively knelt on the hearth and peered up, but saw nothing unworkmanlike—Pepperton was not a fellow to leave obvious mistakes behind him. But possibly that was not one of the recalcitrant fireplaces I had been called to inspect, and I rose and was continuing my en-



She Advanced at Once and Spoke My Name.

joyment of the beautiful room when I became conscious, by rather curious and mixed processes not wholly of the eye, that a young woman had drawn back the light portieres—they were dark brown, with borders of burnt orange—and stood gravely gazing at me. She held the curtains apart—they made, indeed, a kind of frame for her, but as our eyes met she advanced at once and spoke my name.

"You are Mr. Ames. My aunt expected you. I regret to say that she is not in the house just now, but she will doubtless return for tea. I am her niece. Won't you sit down?"

As she found a seat for herself, I made bold to survey her with some particularity. She carried her line height with beautiful dignity. She was a creature of grace, and it was a grace of strength, the suppleness and ease that mark our later outdoor American woman. She could do her miles over those hills—I was sure of that. Her fine olive face, crowned with dark hair, verified the impression I had gathered from Jewett, that she was a woman of cultivation. She had read the poets; Dante and Petrarch spoke from her eyes. Cecilia was no bad name for her; she suggested heavenly harmonies! And as for Jewett's story of Wiggins' infatuation, I was content.

She was talking meanwhile of the day and its buoyant air and of the tapestries hung in the woodlands in a voice deep with rare intimations of viol chords.

"It's very quiet here. It doesn't seem possible that we are so near the city. My aunt chose the place with care, and she made no mistake about it. Yes, the house was built by Mr. Pepperton, but not for us. My aunt bought it of the estate of the gentleman who built it. This will be the first winter here."

Miss Hollister herself appeared. She greeted me without surprise and much as she might have spoken to any guest in her house. I had sometimes been treated as though I were the agent of a decorator's shop, or a delinquent plumber, by the people whom I served, but Miss Hollister and her niece established me upon a plane that was wholly social. I was made to feel that it was the most natural thing in the world for me to be there, having tea, with no business ahead of me but to be agreeable. The fact that I had come to correct the distemper of their flues was utterly negligible. I remembered with satisfaction that I had journeyed from town in a new business suit that made the best of my attenuated figure, and I will not deny that I felt at ease. Miss Hollister talked briskly as she made tea. "It is not necessary for you to take tea if you don't care for it, Mr. Ames," she said, as I rose and handed the first cup to Cecilia. "If you will touch the bell at your elbow you may have liquids of quite another sort."

lister. Tea will suffice for the moment. It is fitting that I should take it here, it having been a weakness for tea as well as curiosity and chance that threw me in your way at the Asolando."

"That absurd—that preposterous hole in the wall!" She put down her cup and faced me continuing: "Mr. Ames, I will not deny that if it had not been for General Glendorn's cordial indorsement of you, and the further fact that I had met your late father, I should not have invited you to my house on the occasion to which you refer. My contempt for the Asolando and the things it stands for is beyond such language as a lady may use before the young. I fall back upon the privilege of my age to beg that you will hereafter give the Asolando a wide berth."

I laughed at her earnestness, but on turning toward Miss Cecilia I saw that she was placidly stirring her cup. It might be that one was not expected to manifest amusement in Miss Hollister's utterances, and I was anxious to adjust myself to the proper key in my intercourse, no matter how brief it might be, with this remarkable old lady.

In my embarrassment I rose and offered the bread and butter to Cecilia, who declined it. The austerity of her rejection rather unnerved me.

"I assure you, Miss Hollister, that I have no wish to become a habitue of the place," I said. "And yet you will pardon me if I repeat that, but for it, I should not now be enjoying the hospitality of Hopefield Manor."

She lifted her head from her cup and bowed, but I was immediately interested in the fact that her niece was speaking.

"I think Aunt Octavia is hard on the Asolando," she was saying. "Aunt Octavia is interested in the revival of romance, and romance without poetry seems to me wholly impossible."

"The age is decadent, and I know no better way of restoring the race to its ancient vim and energy than by sending men back to the camp and field or to sail the high seas in new armadas. The men of this age have become a lot of sordid shopkeepers, and to my moral sense the looting of cities is far more honorable than the creation of trusts and the manipulation of prices, though I cannot deny that but for my late father's zeal in destroying his competitors in the baby buggy business we might not now be enjoying the delicate fragrance of caravau tea."

"I assure you, Mr. Ames," said Cecilia, "that the Asolando is a very harmless place, and that as a matter of fact its aims are wholly consonant with those of Aunt Octavia. I myself served there for a time, and those were among the most delightful days of my life. There are times when I miss the Asolando."

"Mr. Ames," began Miss Octavia presently in her crisp, direct fashion, which had the effect of leading me in my anxiety to appear ready with answers to take a flattering view of my own courage and resourcefulness. "Mr. Ames, are you equal to the feat of swimming a moat under a shattering fire from the castle?"

"I have every reason to think I am, Miss Hollister," I replied modestly. "And if a white hand waved to you from the grilled window of the lonely tower, would you ride on indifferently or pause and thunder at the gate?"

things put out, so that, there being more than an hour to pass before I need dress for dinner, I went below and explored the garden and wandered off along a winding path that stole with charming furtiveness toward a venerable orchard of gnarled apple trees. From the height thus gained I looked down upon the house, and caught a glimpse beyond it of one of the chain of lakes, on which the western sun glinted goldenly. Thus seeing the house from a new angle I was impressed as I had not been at first by its size. It was a huge establishment, and I thought with envy of Pepperton, to whom such ample commissions were not rare. Pepperton, I recalled a little bitterly, had arrived, whereas I, who had enjoyed exactly his own training for the architect's profession, had failed at it and been obliged to turn my hand to the doctoring of chimneys. But as I reflected upon the odd circumstances of my being there my spirits rose. Miss Hollister was beyond question a singular person, but her whims were amusing. I felt that she was less cryptic than her niece, and the thought of Cecilia drove me back upon Jewett's story of Wiggins' interest in that quarter. I resolved to write to Wiggins when I got back to town the next day and abuse him roundly for running off without so much as a goodbye. That, most emphatically, was not like dear old Wiggins.

ANNUAL PARISH MEETINGS AT ST. LUKE'S CHURCH

From Tuesday's Daily. The annual parish meeting of St. Luke's parish was held at the church last evening after a shortened form of even song. The rector, Rev. Allan G. Wilson, presided at the meeting and George H. Falter acted as secretary. Reports were received from the various Guilds and organizations and the parish treasurer, all showing the parish is in excellent financial condition. Walter J. White was elected senior warden and George Dodge junior warden; Carl G. Fricke, treasurer, and C. W. Baylor, secretary. Col. J. H. Thrasher was elected as vestryman for the ensuing church year.

Thinks Advertising Pays. From Tuesday's Daily. Mrs. W. J. Carstens, who has been advertising her residence property, located in the south portion of the city, through the columns of the Evening Journal, has just disposed of the place to Anton Votisek, who will remove there with his family and make their future home. Mrs. Carstens is greatly pleased with the prompt results of the advertising and is a firm convert to the theory that to sell anything you must let the people know about it.

CASS COUNTY ITEMS, PERU, NEB.

William Roeltger of Elmwood went to Verdon to fill the assistant and principal's place for two weeks.

Mrs. A. E. Gass of Plattsmouth was in Peru several days last week visiting her daughter, Lucile. Noel Tyson has accepted a splendid position at Stanton for next year.

The senior class regrets very much the losing of Miss Lucile Gass during the last quarter of school. However, they are delighted to hear that she will be back for summer school.

The Whittmore art studio of Omaha gave an excellent art exhibit here last Thursday, Friday and Saturday. An excellent program was given during each session.

Mary Jameson has accepted a position in the intermediate department at Rising City for next year.

The Athenian and Ciceronian Debating societies held a joint meeting last Saturday evening at Philomathen hall and were entertained with a vocal selection by Rachel Livingston.

any of the Cass county students are looking forward to their spring vacation, which begins March 26.

Suit to Quiet Title. Yesterday afternoon a suit to quiet title to some lots in the village of Avoca was filed in the office of the district clerk. The title of the case is Jacob H. Conrad vs. E. G. Gray, et al. J. E. Douglass of this city appears as attorney for the plaintiff.

For Sale. A pair of horses—a mare coming 6 in May, and a horse coming 6 in May. Inquire of Henry Eikenbary. 3-13-41-wkly

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3-19-10-l-d&w

HEROLD WILLIAMS ELECTRICIAN AT BURLINGTON SHOPS

Harold Williams, who for the past year has been employed at the Missouri Pacific shops in Falls City as an electrician, has returned to this city and is now employed in the Burlington shops as an electrician, taking the position made vacant by the resignation of Charles Leighty, who has removed to Omaha, where he will take charge of a motion picture theater. Mr. Williams is a young man of much ability and should make a good man for the Burlington in the position he has been selected for, as he possesses a natural talent for electrical work.

DEATH OF THE MOTHER OF MRS. JOHN GORDER

Yesterday morning Mrs. W. H. Peters, one of the old residents of this part of the state, died at her home near Springfield, Neb., from the effects of a stroke of apoplexy, after only a few hours' illness. Mrs. Peters came to Nebraska in 1859 and has resided near Springfield since that time. She was the mother of Mrs. John Gorder, residing west of this city, who was at her mother's bedside when the end came yesterday. She leaves surviving her husband and four children—Mrs. John Gorder of Plattsmouth, Dr. A. J. Peters of Springfield, Joseph W. Peters of Florence, and Miss Martha Peters of South Omaha. The funeral was held at the late home today and interment made in the cemetery near there.

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