HEZEKIAH

The Siege of the Seven Suitors

By

MEREDITH NICHOLSON

I was grateful that Wiggins' voice sank so low in his reply that I did not hear it, but I knew that he was pleading hard. Then a motor flashed by, and when the whir of its passing had ceased the voices were inaudible. But a moment later I heard a light, quick step beyond the wall, and Cecilia passed hurriedly, her face turned toward the house. The cape was drawn tightly about her shoulders, and she walked with her head bowed.

I breathed a sigh of relief, and when I felt safe from detection, climbed the slope.

Pausing on the crest to survey the landscape, I saw a man, wearing a derby hat and a light topcoat, leaning against a fence that inclosed a pasture. As I glanced in his direction he moved away hastily toward the road below. The feeling of being watched is not agreeable, and I could not account for him. As he passed out of sight still another man appeared, emerging from a strip of woodland farther on. Even through the evening haze I should have said that he was a gentleman. The two men apparently bore no relation to each other, though they were walking in the same direction, bound, I judged, for the highway below. I had an uncomfortable feeling that they had both been observing me, though for what purpose I could not imagine. Then once more, just as I was about to enter the Italian garden from a fallow field that hung slightly above it, a third man appeared as mysteriously as though he had sprung from the ground, and ran at a sharp dog trot along the fence, headed, like the others, for the road. In the third instance the stranger undoubtedly took pains to hide his face, but he, too, was well dressed and wore a topcoat and a fedora hat of current style.

I did not know why these gentlemen were ranging the neighborhood or what object they had in view, but their several appearances had interested me, and I went on into the house well satisfied that events of an unusual character were likely to mark my visit to the home of Miss Octavia Hollister.

Cecilia sat reading alone when I entered the library shortly before the dinner hour. She put down her book and we fell into fitful talk.

"I took a walk after tea. I always feel that sunsets are best seen from the fields. You can't quite do them justice from windows," she began.

She seemed preoccupied. Wiggins was in her recollection of the glowing landscape—I was confident of this, and poor Wiggins was even now wandering these hills, no doubt, brooding upon his troubles under clear October stars.

Dinner was announced the moment Miss Hollister entered, and I walked out between them. Miss Octavia Hollister was a surprising person, but in nothing was she so delightfully wayward as in the gowns she wore. My ignorance of such matters is immeasurable, but I fancy that she designed her own raiment and had her ideas were thereupon carried out by a tailor of skill. At the Asolando, and when we had met at tea in her own house, she had worn the severest of tailored gowns, with short skirt and a coat into whose pockets she was fond of thrusting her hands. Tonight the material was lavender silk trimmed in white, but the skirt had not lengthened, and over a white silk waist she wore a kind of cutaway cut that matched the skirt. An aigret in her lovely white hair contributed a piquant note to the whole impression. As we passed down the hall she talked with great animation of The Hague tribunal, just then holding a prominent place in the newspapers for some reason that has escaped me.

"The whole thing is absurd, perfectly absurd. I know of nothing that would contribute more to human enjoyment than a real war between Germany and England. The Hague idea is pure sentimentalism—if sentimentalism can ever be said to be pure. I will go further and say that I consider it positively immoral."

She had ordered dinner in the gun room, but I thought this merely a turn of her humor, and I was taken aback when she led the way into a low, heavily raftered room, where electric sconces of an odd type were thrust at irregular intervals along the walls, which were otherwise hung with arms of many sorts in orderly combinations. They were not the litter of antique shops, I saw in a hasty glance, but rifles and guns of the latest patterns, and beside the sideboard stood a gun rack and a cabinet which I assumed contained still other and perhaps deadlier weapons.

But for the presence of Miss Cecilia, who was essentially typical of our twentieth century American woman, I think I might readily have yielded to the illusion that I was the guest of some eccentric chatelaine who had invited me to dine with her in a bastion of her fortress before ordering me to some chamber of horrors for execution.

No reference was made to the character of the room. I felt, in fact, that Cecilia rather pleaded with her eyes that I should make no reference to it. And Miss Hollister remarked quite casually as though in comment upon my thoughts:

"Consistency has buried its thousands and habit its tens of thousands. We should live, Mr. Ames, for the changes and chances of this troubled life. Between an opera box and a villa at Newport many of my best friends have perished."

Then with startling abruptness she put down her fork and, bending her wonderfully direct gaze upon me, asked a question that caused me to strangle on a bit of asparagus.

"I imagine, Mr. Ames, that you are a member of some of the better clubs in town. If by any chance you belong to the Hare and Tortoise—the name of which has always pleased me—do you by any chance happen to enjoy the acquaintance of Hartley Wiggins?"

Cecilia lifted her head. I saw that she had been as startled as I. It crossed my mind that a denial of any acquaintance with Wiggins might best serve him in the circumstances. But I am not, I hope, without a sense of shame, and I responded promptly:

"Yes, I know him well. We are old friends. I always see a good deal of him during the winter. His summers are spent usually on his ranch in the west. We dined together two days ago at the Hare and Tortoise, just before he left for the west."

"You will pardon me if I say that it is wholly to his credit that he has forsworn the professions and identified himself with the honorable calling of the husbandman."

"We met Mr. Wiggins while traveling abroad last summer," interposed Cecilia, meeting my eyes quite frankly.

"Met him! Did you say met him, Cecilia? On the contrary, we found him waiting for us at the dock the morning we sailed," corrected Miss Hollister, "and we never lost him a day in three months of rapid travel. I had never met him before, but I cannot deny that he made himself exceedingly agreeable. If, as I suspected, he had deliberately planned to travel on the same steamer with my two nieces, I have only praise for his conduct, for in these days, Mr. Ames, it warms my heart to find young men showing something of the old chivalric ardor in their affairs of the heart."

"I'm sure Mr. Wiggins made himself very agreeable," remarked Cecilia colorlessly.

"For myself," retorted Miss Hollister, "I should speak even more strongly. He repeatedly served us with tact and delicacy. I had formed so high an opinion of Mr. Wiggins that I learned with sincerest regret that his ancestors were Tories and took no part in the struggle for American independence. There are times when I seriously question the wisdom of the colonists in breaking with the mother country, but certainly no man of character in that day could have hesitated as to his proper course."

Then, as though by intention, Miss Hollister dropped upon the smooth current of our talk a sentence that drove the color from Cecilia's face.

"Hezekiah and Mr. Wiggins were the best of friends," was Miss Hollister's remark.

Cecilia's eyes were on her plate, but her aunt went on in her blithest fashion:

"You may not know that Hezekiah is another niece, Cecilia's sister. She was named, at my suggestion, for my father, there being no son in the family, and I trust that so unusual a name in a young girl does not strike you as indefensible."

"On the contrary, it seems to me wholly refreshing and delightful. As I recall the Sunday school of my youth, Hezekiah was a monarch of great authority, whose animosity toward Sennacherib was justified in the fullest degree. The very name bristles with spears and is musical with the trumpets of Israel. Nothing would make me happier than to meet the young lady who bears this illustrious name."

"As to the your knowledge of ancient history, Mr. Ames," began Miss Hollister as she helped herself to the cheese—sweets, I noted, were not included in the very ample meal I had enjoyed—"it is clear that you were well taught in your youth. I am not surprised, however, for I should have expected nothing less of a son of the late General Ames of Hartford. As to meeting my niece Hezekiah, I fear that that is at present impossible. While Cecilia remains with me Hezekiah's duty is to her father, and I must say in all kindness that Hezekiah's ways, like those of Providence and the custom house, are beyond my feeble understanding. In a word, Mr. Ames, Hezekiah is different."

"Hezekiah," added Cecilia, with feeling, "is a dear."

"Please don't bring sentimentalism to the table!" cried Miss Hollister. "Mr. Wiggins once informed me in a moment of forgetfulness—it was at Fontainebleau, I remember, when Hezekiah persisted in reminding a one armed French colonel who was hanging about that we named cities in America for Bismarck—it was there at the inn that Mr. Wiggins confided to me his belief that Hezekiah bears a strong resemblance to the common or domestic peach. As a single peach at that place was charged in the bill at 10 francs, the remark was ill timed, to say the least. But Mr. Wiggins was so contrite when I rebuked him that I allowed him to pay for our luncheon—no small matter, indeed, for Hezekiah's appetite is nothing if not robust."

Miss Hollister gave so many turns to the conversation that I could reach no conclusion as to her feeling toward Wiggins or Hezekiah Hollister, and, as for Cecilia, I was unable to determine whether she was a prisoner at Hopefield Manor or the willing and devoted companion of her aunt.

In this bewildered state of mind, while we lingered over our coffee, the servant appeared with a card for each of the ladies. I saw Cecilia start as she read the name.

"Mr. Wiggins! How remarkable that he should have appeared just as we were speaking of him!" said Miss Hollister. "Be sure the gentleman is comfortable in the library, James. We shall be in at once. Mr. Ames, you will, of course, be delighted to meet your friend here, and you will assist us in dispensing our meager hospitality."

(To Be Continued.)

CHAPTER IV.

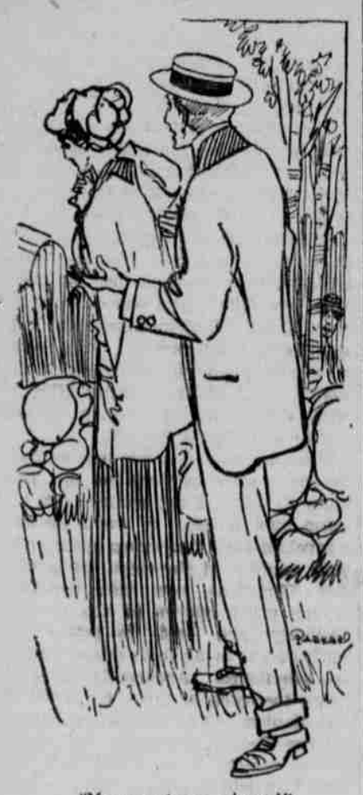
I Fall Into a Brier Patch.

I HAD been sitting on a stone wall watching the shadows lengthen. I rose now and followed the wall toward a highway along which wagons and an occasional motorcar had passed during my reverie. The sloping pasture was rough and frequently sent me along at a trot. The wall that marked the boundary at the roadside was hidden by a tangle of raspberry bushes, and my foot, turning on a stone concealed in the wild grasses, I fell clumsily and rolled a dozen yards into a tangle of the berry bushes. As I picked myself up I heard voices in the road, but should have thought nothing of it had I not seen through a break in the vines and almost within reach of my hand Cecilia Hollister talking earnestly to some one not yet disclosed. She was hatless, but had flung a golf cape over her shoulders. The scarlet lining of the hood turned up about her neck made an effective setting for her noble head.

"Oh, I can't tell you! I can't help you! I mustn't even appear to give you any advantage. I went into it with my eyes open, and I'm in honor bound not to tell you anything. You have said nothing—nothing, remember that. There is absolutely nothing between us."

"But I must say everything. I refuse to be blinded by these absurd restrictions, whatever they are. It's not fair. It's inviting me into a game where the cards are not all on the table. I've come to make an end of it!"

My hands had suffered by contact with the briars, and I had been ministering to them with my handkerchief, but I fell back upon the slope in my astonishment at this colloquy. Cecilia Hollister I had seen plainly enough, though the man's back had been toward me, but anywhere on earth I should have known Wiggins' voice. I protest that it is not my way to become an eavesdropper voluntarily, but to disclose myself now was impossible. If it had not been Wiggins—but Wiggins would never have understood or forgiven, nor could I have explained plausibly to Cecilia Hollister that I had not followed her from the house to spy upon her. I should have made the noise of an invading army if I had attempted to effect an exit by creeping out through the windrow of crisp leaves in which I lay, and to turn back and ascend the slope the way I had come would have been to advertise my presence to the figures in the road.



"You must go—please!"

There seemed nothing for me but to keep still and hope that this discussion between Cecilia Hollister and Hartley Wiggins would not be continued within earshot. To my relief they moved a trifle farther on, but I still heard their voices.

"I cannot listen to you. Now that I'm committed I cannot honorably countenance you at all, and I can explain nothing. I came here to meet you only to tell you this. You must go—please! And do not attempt to see me in this way again."

THE LATEST BEST SELLER.

"BAFFLING, absorbing, astounding, inspiring."
"Deliciously piquant," "original," "grand,"
"Humor unflagging," "invention untiring,"
"With Dickens and Thackeray fitted to stand;"
"Breathless," "exciting," "sensational," "ripping,"
"Highly dramatic," "a masterpiece," "great,"
"Poignant," "authentic," "convincing and gripping"—
So the reviews and advertisements state.
"Masterful," "marvelous," "massive," "amazing,"
"Witty and wise," "every promise fulfills,"
"Dazzling," "dumfounding," "daring and dazing,"
"Packed full of action," "abounding in thrills,"
"Charmingly whimsical," "striking," "compelling,"
"Technic enormous," "it marks an advance,"
"All other writers of fiction excelling,"
"Wealth of ideas," "a brilliant romance."

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Thus the reviewers in rapturous chorus;
Thus the book booster composing his brays.
Ripped are whole pages from Roget's Thesaurus,
Piled upon Ossa a Pelion of praise.
Greatest of novels, beyond contradiction.
Here is a triumph that none may deny
This is the ultimate whisper in fiction,
Surely you'll read it. No? Neither shall I.

—Minneapolis Journal.

The Unexpected Happened.

Mrs. Mulligatawny needed a change of air. The doctor was emphatic on this point. Her husband, however, being unable to go with her, she went alone, retiring as usual to her favorite holiday haunt.

On the morning after her arrival she suddenly discovered that she had come away without her watch. Thinking, therefore, that she must have dropped it on the thick carpet of the dining room, she forthwith wired to the maid at home:

Let me know if you find anything on carpet in dining room.

In due course she received a letter in reply:

Dear Madam—I was to let you know if I found anything on the dining room carpet. This is what I found this morning—three champagne corks, eighteen cigar ends, five cigarette ends, thirty-six burnt matches and—

But Mrs. Mulligatawny did not read further. And when her husband returned home from the office that evening he found his faithful spouse awaiting him.—Answers.

Human Nature.

When a man does something he should not have done and isn't afraid of his wife he doesn't think much of her.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Time For Drastic Measures.

An old woman was waiting nervously for a train on the Katy. We will call it No. 2. The agent came out and chalked up, "No. 2 is twenty minutes late."

The old woman sniffed.

Presently he returned and chalked up, "No. 2 is forty minutes late."

The old woman groaned.

But when he reappeared and wrote, "No. 2 is sixty minutes late," she could stand it no longer.

"For the land's sake," she said, "will somebody please take that piece of chalk away from that man or we never will get away from this place?"—Baltimore News.

Scanty.

First Critic—How were the chorus costumes?

Second Critic—Oh, nothing to speak of!—Chicago News.

KING GEORGE HAD STIRRING REIGN

From Masthead to Throne When Only Eighteen.

NEW RULER IS POPULAR.

Constantine, After Being Forced to Leave Athens In 1909 by Military League, Returned and Led Army to Victory In Last Balkan War—Would Be Hellenic Emperor.

Saloniki.—King George of Greece, who was assassinated here by a degenerate named Schinas, was literally taken from the masthead of a Danish cruiser and elevated to the proud position of king of the Hellenes.

That was in 1863. The years that followed were crowded with more of incident and adventure than fall to the lot of most modern monarchs.

George's family name is Holstein-Glucksburg. He was the second son of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glucksburg, who afterward became king of Denmark. The young prince was named Christian William Ferdinand Adolphus George and as such entered the naval service of Denmark. He had made two cruises and was about to start on a third when a revolution broke out in Greece.

Within three days King Otto of Greece, a Bavarian, had lost the throne he had occupied for thirty years. It became necessary for the European powers to find a substitute.

It looked as if the throne might go begging when the powers offered it to Prince William, still a boy in his teens, of whose existence, perhaps, not one in a thousand of his future subjects was aware.

It was necessary for the Greek national assembly to go through the formality of electing the nominee of the powers. This was done at Athens on March 18, 1863.

CONSTANTINE, THE NEW KING OF GREECE.

The early years of the reign of this alien monarch were peaceful. In 1867 he married Olga Constantinowa, eldest daughter of the Grand Duke Constantine, brother of Czar Alexander of Russia, thereby strengthening the position of Greece and enhancing his own popularity.

Quarrels of political factions and official corruption soon involved the nation in difficulties, for which the king was held responsible. War with Turkey was clamored for in 1876 and again ten years later, and it was only the firm attitude of the king and the backing of the powers which prevented Greece rushing into a conflict for which she was not prepared.

When war finally came in 1897 it was demonstrated that the king had acted wisely. The conflict soon ended in disaster to the Grecian arms, and Turkish reprisals would have been heavy had not the powers enforced terms of peace that favored the vanquished rather than the victors.

Before the war King George had been perhaps the most hated man in Greece. An attempt had been made to assassinate him while he was driving with his daughter.

The successes of the present war had restored the popularity of the king and all his family. He and the crown prince had brought the Greek army to a state of great efficiency. The capture of Janina with its garrison of 32,000 men was the climax of a brilliant campaign.

The king left seven children, five sons and two daughters. They are Constantine, Duke of Sparta, who now succeeds to the throne; Alexandra, who was married to Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovitch of Russia; George, Nicholas, Marie, Andrew and Christopher.

Constantine, the new king, was born in Athens and received his early education from foreign tutors, who taught him to speak German, English, Latin, French and Danish. At the age of eighteen he was graduated from the military academy, with the rank of sublieutenant in the army.

Until the war with Turkey in 1897 he had had little military experience aside from participating in the annual military maneuvers of the German army, but he was considered a thoughtful, cautious leader and enjoyed the implicit confidence of his troops.

When the crown prince in 1896 saw his country drifting into war with Turkey he warned the war department at Athens that the army was utterly unprepared for a campaign. The infantry was armed with condemned French rifles, which had cost $2 each; the cartridges were fifteen years old, there was no cavalry, the artillery was obsolete and its officers few, and there had been insufficient drill. Nevertheless the country decided upon war. The result was disastrous—a humiliating defeat for Greece. Immediately the popular tide turned against its rulers, whom it denounced as foreigners who could have little in common with the Greeks. The king and queen were hooted in the streets, and the officers turned their backs upon the crown prince.

A similar spirit was roused against the royal house when in 1909 King George tried to oppose the popular clamor for the annexation of Crete, knowing that Turkey was eagerly awaiting such an excuse to bring a second crushing defeat upon Greece. This time the clamor almost became a revolt, and the king was obliged to yield to the demand of the Military league, both for the reorganization of the army and for the dismissal of the crown prince as generalissimo and of his brothers from active commands in the army and navy.

The crown prince left Athens. But two weeks after he had issued orders for the removal of his belongings from Athens to St. Petersburg, where he was to accept a command in the army of the czar, the tide turned again, and he was notified by his father to come back. Three months later Constantine returned to Greece on the invitation of the national assembly and the municipality of Athens, where he was received with great acclaim.

He was restored to his former dignities, and after having undergone a severe trial was raised to the command of the army, with added prestige and influence. At the outbreak of the present war in the Balkans he led the advancing Greek forces and captured the city of Saloniki from the Turks. With a force of 10,000 Greeks he caused 25,000 Turks to lay down their arms. His popularity from that time has been tremendous throughout Greece.

It is said that Constantine aims to restore the former grandeur of the ancient Hellenic empire and that he is a believer in the old national prophecy that under the reign of a Constantine and a Sophia the eastern empire shall be called into life again and the cross restored on St. Sophia in place of the crescent.

The crown prince's wife is Princess Sophia, a sister of the German emperor. Their marriage on Oct. 27, 1889, was a most spectacular event and was attended by the kaiser and members of the royal families of every court in Europe. Soon afterward Princess Sophia renounced her Lutheran religion and took that of her husband, thereby deeply offending her brother, the German emperor.

Prince Constantine, like his father and his brother, Prince George, is of herculean stature, more than six feet tall and magnificently proportioned. He has three children, Alexander, George and Helen.

IN PRISON 41 YEARS; TO START NEW LIFE

Abe Buzzard, Outlaw-Evangelist, Free at Sixty-one.

Philadelphia.—Forty-one of his sixty-one years having been spent behind prison bars, Abe Buzzard, the notorious outlaw-evangelist, has been released from the Eastern penitentiary.

Speaking of his Jekyll and Hyde career, Buzzard says:

"The world owed me a good living, and I collected the debt the best that I knew how. I was not used right the first time I was arrested, and had I not been blamed for crimes I never committed I would never have resorted to the life that I have led.

"I am converted now and realize that it does not pay to think that you are going to get away with the kind of stuff that I used to pull. I'm going to shake the dust of Pennsylvania from my feet and go to the Pacific coast. I've learned to be a cobbler, and I'm going into the shoe business where no one will know me and where I will have a chance to start life over again."

Buzzard began stealing at the age of fifteen, when he and three brothers organized a gang to raid farms in the Welch mountains. When twenty he began serving a ten year term in Lancaster county. He broke out of jail and was recaptured several months later.

After serving several other sentences he was released from Cherry Hill in 1901. Then it was he professed reformation and began preaching. He did his evangelistic work during the day and stole poultry at night. In the course of a few months he stole 1,800 chickens and 7,500 turkeys from the farmers in and about Reading and Lancaster.

Close Season For Frogs.

Madison, Wis.—A plan to forbid the eating of frogs in Wisconsin for ten years, to prevent their being killed or captured, has been introduced by Assemblyman Newton Spoor of Green Lake county, who says that last year's plague of mosquitoes in Wisconsin is largely due to the manner in which the frogs have been killed off.