



HEZEKIAH

CHAPTER XII.
I Play Truant.

AS I sat at the table absorbed in my plans for the day my nerves received a sudden shock. I had heard no one enter, yet a voice at my shoulder murmured casually:

Haast thou seen ghosts? Haast thou at midnight heard—

It was the voice of Hezekiah, I knew before I faced her. She wore a blue sailor waist, with a broad red ribbon tied under the collar, and a blue tam-o'-shanter capped her head. She bore a tray that contained my omelet, a plate of toast and other sundries incidental to a substantial breakfast, which she distributed deftly upon the table.

"How did you get here?" I blurted, my nerves still out of control.

"The kitchen door, sir. I had ridden into the garden, and, seeing Aunt Octavia heading for the stables and Cecilia at the kitchen window, I pedaled boldly in. Cecilia wanted to borrow my bicycle, and, being a good little sister, I gave it to her. She also said that you required food, so I told her to go and I would carry you your breakfast. I shall skip myself in a minute. You may draw your own coffee. Mind the machine. It tips if you are not careful."

She went to the window and peered out toward the stables.

"May I ask, daughter of kings, where your sister has gone so suddenly?"

"Certainly! She's off for town to chase a cook and a few other people to run this hotel. I heard at the post-office that the whole camp had deserted, so I ran over to see what was doing. And just for that I've got to walk home."

"But your aunt said that Providence would take care of the servant question. She expected a whole corps of ideal servants to come straying in during the day."

"Cecilia hasn't Aunt Octavia's confidence in Providence, so she's taking a shot at the employment agencies. She has left a note on the kitchen table to inform Aunt Octavia that she had forgotten an engagement with the dentist and has gone to catch the 10:18."

"That, Hezekiah, is a lie. It isn't quite square to deceive your aunt that way," I remarked soberly.

Hezekiah laughed.

"You absurdity! Don't you know Aunt Octavia yet? She will be perfectly overjoyed when she comes back and finds that note from Cecilia. She likes disappearances, mysteries and all that kind of thing. But it is barely possible that you will have to wash the dishes. I can't, you see, for I'm not supposed to come on the reservation at all—not until Cecilia has found a husband. Isn't it perfectly delicious?"

"All of that, daughter of kings! I think that as soon as I can regain confidence in my own sanity I shall like it myself. But"—and I watched her narrowly—"you see, Hezekiah, there is really a ghost, you know."

Her divine laugh bubbled mellowly. She had walked guardedly to the window and turned swiftly with a mockery of fear in her face.

"Aunt Octavia approaches, and I must be off. But that ghost, Mr. Chimney Man—when you find him please let me know. There are a lot of things I want to ask some reliable ghost about the hereafter."

With this she fled, and I heard the front door close smartly after her. An instant later Miss Octavia appeared and asked solicitously how I liked my omelet.

"The coachman has been telling me a capital ghost story. He believes them to be beneficent and declares that he will under no circumstances leave my employment."

She sat down and folded her arms upon the table. For the first time I believed that she was serious. There was, in fact, a troubled look on her sweet, whimsical face. It occurred to me that the loss of her servants was not really the slight matter she had previously made of it.

"Mr. Ames, will you pardon me for asking you a question of the most intimate character? It is only after much hesitation that I do so."

I bowed encouragingly, my curiosity fully aroused.

"You may ask me anything in the world, Miss Hollister."

"Then I wish you would tell me

The Siege of the Seven Suitors

By
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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I recalled the silver bound book perfectly, but had attached no importance to it, but if Cecilia's fortunes were so intimately related to it as Miss Hollister's manner implied, I felt that I must be careful of my answer. I was trying to recall the precise moment at which I had entered the library the preceding evening after Hume's departure, and while I was intent upon this my silence must have been prolonged. I felt obliged to make an answer of some sort, and yet I did not relish the thought of conveying information that might distress and embarrass a noble girl like Cecilia Hollister. Something in my face must have conveyed a hint of this inner conflict to Miss Hollister, for she rose suddenly, holding up her hand as though to silence me. She seemed deeply moved and cried in agitation:

"Do not answer me! The question was quite unfair—quite unfair—and yet I assure you that at the moment I made the inquiry I felt justified."

She retreated toward the door as I rose, and then, with her composure fully restored, she courtesied gracefully.

"Luncheon here will be a buffet affair today, as I shall be engaged with matters of pastry. I'm sure, however,



"Can I give you a lift?"

that you will find employment until dinner time, when my house will be fully in order again."

I intended that this should be a busy day, so without making explanations I went to the stable, told the coachman I wished to be driven to the station and was soon whizzing over the hills toward Katonah.

I wondered how Wiggins and the other gentlemen at the Prescott Arms were faring. My question was partially answered a second later as we passed the road that forked off to the inn. On a stone by the roadside sat Lord Arrowood, desolately guarding a kit bag and a suit case. He was dressed in a shabby Norfolk jacket and knickerbockers and sucked a pipe.

I bade the driver pause and greeted the problem man affably.

"Can I give you a lift? You seem to be bound for the station, and I'm taking a train myself."

"No, thanks," he replied sharply. "They're a lot of bounders—bounders, I say!"

"Ah! Of whom do you speak, Lord Arrowood?" I asked, glancing at my watch.

"Those scoundrels at the Inn. They have thrown me out—thrown me out—me!"

"Hard lines, for a fact, but if you are interested in trains"—

"I refuse to leave the county!" he shouted. "If they think they're going to get rid of me they're mistaken. Bounders, I say, bounders!"

He uttered this opprobrious term with great bitterness and crossed his legs, as though to emphasize his permanence upon the bowlder. Patience on a monument is not more eternally planted. He seemed in no mood for conversation, so I sped on, with no time to lose.

I gained the step of the chair car attached to the 10:18 with some loss of dignity, the porter yanking me aboard under the conductor's scornful eye. The Katonah passengers were still in the aisle, and as I surveyed them I saw Cecilia take a seat in the middle of the car. She was just unfolding a newspaper when I moved to a seat behind her and bade her good morning. The look she gave me in turning

round had in it something of Hezekiah's quizzical humor. This interested me, because I had not previously seen any but the most superficial resemblance between the sisters. Her cheeks were aglow from her sprint on the wheel.

"We are both truant. You must have breakfasted in a hurry to have caught this train."

"Not all. I enjoyed a brief conversation with your sister, and after she had gone your aunt came back and lingered for a moment."

"She told you, I suppose, that Providence would look after the servant question. I'm going to assist Providence a little."

"You become the vicarious of Providence? I admire your spirit."

"It's mere self preservation. Aunt Octavia would have me chained to the kitchen if I didn't do something about it."

She had permitted me to settle with the conductor, and when I had completed this transaction I found that she had drawn from her purse the little silver booklet about which Miss Octavia had inquired so anxiously. She raised her eyes with the faraway look in them.

"Can you tell me how to spell Arrowood—is it one or two w's?"

"One I think the noble lord uses."

She seemed to write the name, and I saw her counting on her fingers, touching them lightly on the open page of the book.

Then she dropped it into her purse, which she thrust back carefully into her pocket. She sighed and was silent. I gave her in detail the story of the ghost, and my recital seemed to amuse her greatly.

"You thought it was Aunt Octavia herself at first, then you thought I was the spook, and now you are not fully persuaded that it is not my father. I will take you into my confidence this far—that I don't know how father got into the house last night. He wrote a note asking me to meet him on the roof and bring the foils. That was not unlike him, as he is the dearest father in the world, and his whims are just as jolly in their way as Aunt Octavia's. I was sure that Aunt Octavia had retired for the night, so I changed my dress and carried the foils up through the trunk room. I had hardly reached there before my father appeared. The whole situation—my being there and all that—has distressed father."

"You think," she asked, "that those lights couldn't have winked out twice by themselves while you were on the stairway?"

"I am positive of it. And somebody—a being of some sort—passed me on the stairway. It might imaginably have been you."

"But I tell you positively it was not." "Then it might have been your father. A man who can enter a house at will might easily play any manner of other tricks. His disappearance after I had gone down into the house with him was just as mysterious as the ghost."

"It was natural for father not to want you to know how he got in. The motive for that would be the fact that he is not supposed to see me or communicate with me in any way."

"It must have occurred to you that there is one member of the Hollister family we haven't mentioned in this connection."

"If you mean Hezekiah—"

"None other!"

"If Hezekiah or my father should be caught in the house while I am there just now we should all pay dearly for it. Believe me, this is true. Some day you may know the whys and wherefores; at present no one may know. But why should Hezekiah wish to prowl about there at night—to assume for a moment that she is doing it?"

Her manner was wholly earnest. It was plain that she had entered into some sort of compact with her aunt, and no doubt the arrangement was in the characteristic whimsical vein of which I had enjoyed personal experience. I did not wish to press Cecilia for explanations she might not be free to make, but I ventured a suggestion or two.

"Hezekiah may be entering the house and playing ghost for amusement, merely in a spirit of childish rebellion against the interdiction that forbids her the house. That is quite plausible, Hezekiah being the spirited young person we know her to be. And it may amuse her, too, to plug the chimneys at a time when her sister is enjoying the visits of suitors. Without quite realizing that such was her animus, she may be the least—the very least bit jealous!"

Cecilia flushed, and her eyes flashed indignantly. She bent toward me eagerly.

"Please do not say such a thing! You must not even think it!"

"She may be a little forlorn, alone in your father's house over the hills at times when you are surrounded by admirers, and it is my assumption from what I have learned in one way and another of your flight abroad last summer that some of these gentlemen now established at the Prescott Arms are known to her."

"Oh, all of them, certainly."

"And Hartley Wiggins among the rest?"

"That, Mr. Ames, is most unkind," she declared earnestly. "She has told me that she was not in the least interested in Mr. Wiggins."

"And she told me the same thing, but I do not feel sure of it. But what if she is? You are not really interested in him yourself?"

She did not vouchsafe any reply to my statement, but changed the subject abruptly. My description of the ghost had taken considerable time, and we were now at the end of our journey.

"I count on finishing my errand and taking the 2:07," she remarked.

"That's a short time to allow your-

self. I've heard that it's a dreary business chasing the employment agencies."

"Not if you know where not to go. If you'll get me a machine of some sort I'll be off at once."

"I fear I shan't conclude my own business so soon, but if you will honor me at luncheon—"

"Sorry, Mr. Ames, but it's out of the question. I hope to see you at dinner tonight. And please!"

"Yes, Miss Hollister!"

"Please remember that you are Aunt Octavia's guest and don't annoy her by failing to appear at dinner. You know you haven't fixed that chimney yet."

Her smile left me well in the air. I stood staring after the very commonplace cab as it rolled away with her, my mind whirling chaos of emotion. The crowd jostled me impatiently, for other people, not breathing celestial ether from an hour of Cecilia Hollister's society, were bent upon the day's business.

(To Be Continued.)

CASS COUNTY ITEMS, PERU, NEB.

Florence Wilkinson has accepted a splendid position at Scotts Bluffs for next year.

We regret very much the fact that Miss Pearl Belts will not be here with us in summer school.

Mr. Moore, superintendent of the Osceola schools, gave a splendid talk in chapel Wednesday morning.

William Roetger has taken charge of the tennis courts and he certainly keeps them in fine condition.

Tennis is in full swing now. The club has seventy-three members, who have paid their dues, and several others have promised to join.

The Peru base ball team are on a trip this week. From the daily reports they have won every game thus far. They play Shenandoah here Saturday.

From all reports Villa Gapen is doing excellent work in the domestic science department. We are proud to know that she is a Cass county girl.

CHARLES AND ROSS COLLINS ARRESTED ON CHARGES FROM BELLEVUE

From Friday's Daily.

This morning Chief of Police Ben Rainey took Charles and Ross Collins into custody, on information from Bellevue, where they were wanted by the authorities, and Marshal William Treat of that village came down on No. 4 this morning, accompanied by Ed Hite, to take the prisoners back to Bellevue, where they will be arraigned, charged with creating a disturbance at one of the stores there, as well as making indecent and insulting remarks to women who passed by. There are a number of charges that will probably be preferred against them, so that they will have some time in getting clear.

The chief also gathered in John Doe, a traveling gentleman, who blew into town yesterday on one of the freight trains and secured a position at helping unload a carload of beer, but the contact with the beer was too much for him, and last evening he accumulated a large load of "joy water" and the chief removed him to the prison, where he will languish until time to receive his reward at the hands of Judge Archer.

DECISION IN FAVOR OF THE DEFENDANT, JOHN A. LONG

From Friday's Daily.

Yesterday the case of C. A. Peterson vs. John A. Long, which was continued from Tuesday, came up for hearing in the court of Justice of the Peace M. Archer, and after the jury, composed of J. H. Thrasher, John Hatt, William Hassler and William Weber, had heard the evidence offered by both sides, they brought in a verdict for the defendant. The case was for the release of a residence owned by the plaintiff and occupied by Long, who refused to move until the time for which he had the house rented had expired.

"My little son had a very severe cold. I was recommended to try Chamberlain's Cough Remedy, and before a small bottle was finished he was as well as ever," writes Mrs. H. Silks, 29 Dowling Street, Sydney, Australia. This remedy is for sale by F. G. Fricke & Co.

Local News

From Thursday's Daily.

W. A. Fight of Mynard was in the city last evening for a few hours looking after some matters of business.

Joseph Zimmerer of Avoca was in the county seat yesterday for a short time looking after matters in the county court.

Miss Laura Meisinger was a passenger this morning on No. 15 for Omaha, where she will visit for the day with friends.

T. E. Parmele of Louisville was in the city over night and was a passenger this morning for Omaha on the early Burlington train.

Will Seybold of Murray came up last evening to attend the meeting of the Masonic lodge, returning to his home on the late train.

Mrs. Sarah Mason of Redfield, S. D., is in the city, having been called here to look after the estate of her mother, Mrs. Delilah Schwab.

A. W. Meisinger of Mynard came up this morning from his home and spent a few hours here looking after some matters of business.

George A. Kaffenberger came in this afternoon from his home, west of the city, and attended to some trading with the different merchants.

Dr. Charles Kennedy of Omaha, who has been making a short visit here with his mother, Mrs. E. W. Kennedy, returned to his home in Omaha this afternoon.

C. F. Harris came up this morning from his home near Union to visit for a few hours with his friends, as well as attend to some business affairs.

Jesse Hiner departed this morning on the early Burlington train for Walthill, Nebraska, where he will visit his son for a short time.

Mrs. George Shoemann and Mrs. Bert Crisman were passengers this morning for Cedar Creek, where they will make a short visit with relatives and friends.

John A. Gauer, one of the genial farmers of Eight Mile Grove precinct, was in the city today for a few hours looking after business matters at the court house.

Mrs. Hester McDaniel of Sidney, Iowa, who has been visiting for a few days at the William and J. E. Tuoy homes, returned to her home this afternoon on No. 2.

Mrs. J. W. Edwards and little son of Glenwood, who have been here visiting at the home of Mrs. Edwards' parents, Dan Rice and wife, returned to their home this afternoon.

Charles Chriswiler of Nehawka came up this morning and was a passenger on the early Burlington train for Omaha, where he looked after some business matters on the stock market.

Isaac King and wife of Superior, Neb., came in last evening on No. 2 and will visit for a short time with relatives. Mrs. King has been quite sick, but is feeling slightly improved.

John Gauer of the vicinity of Cedar Creek was attending to business matters in this city today and called at this office for the purpose of having his subscription extended for another year.

Mrs. Louis Schutz and son, Charles Allison Schutz, who have been here visiting at the home of Joseph Hadraba and family, departed this afternoon for their home at Bridgeport, Neb.

Walter Speck was a passenger this afternoon for Omaha to attend to business matters, prior to his return to his work at Hannibal, Missouri, where he is employed by the Katy railroad as a switchman.

Mrs. Mary Tisdale and son, Charles Henry, and daughter, Miss Mary Veil, of Slaton, Minnesota, arrived this morning on No. 4 and will make a short visit here with Mrs. M. A. Street and family. They will leave tomorrow for St. Joseph, Missouri.

O. E. Holcomb, wife and children of Grant, Iowa, who were visiting in Omaha for a few days, stopped off here yesterday and spent the day with friends, returning to their home on No. 2. Mr. Holcomb was formerly employed in the Triflety barber shop in this city.

From Friday's Daily.

R. R. Nickels of near Murray was in the city over night, being a guest at the Perkins house.

George W. Snyder drove in yesterday from his farm in the precinct to attend to some trading.

Ed Rummell drove up yesterday from his home near Mynard to attend to some trading with the merchants.

Ed Tritsch was in the city yesterday from his farm, west of this city, looking after some matters of business.

E. T. Younker of Glenwood was in the city yesterday for a few hours looking after business matters.

C. L. Herger departed this morning for Union, where he will look after the interests of his line of superior bread.

Peter Halmes was in the city this afternoon from his home attending to some business matters with the merchants.

Mrs. J. W. Chidester of La Platte came down this morning to attend to some shopping, returning home on the afternoon Burlington train.

Mrs. C. J. Sarville of Grant City, Missouri, who has been here for a few days visiting at the R. H. Patton home, departed last evening for her home.

Mrs. S. Frieden and little child, of Sioux City, who have been here visiting with R. M. Shlaes and wife for a few days, departed this afternoon for their home.

James Doig and wife of Fairbury, Neb., came in this afternoon and will visit for a short time at the home of Mrs. Doig's mother, Mrs. Peter Mumm.

A. L. Todd came in this morning from his home, west of this city, and was a passenger on the early Burlington train for Omaha, where he was called on some business matters.

Dr. J. F. Brendel of Murray came up this morning from his home and was a passenger on the early Burlington train for Omaha, where he was called on professional business.

B. E. Young, who has been visiting relatives here for some time, was a passenger this morning for Omaha, from where he will leave for Wayne county, Nebraska, for a short visit.

M. Fanger and wife and Mr. and Mrs. A. Mandel of Sioux City, Iowa, who were guests here for a few days of V. Zucker and wife, returned to their homes last evening on the Missouri Pacific.

Mrs. Percy Fields and little daughter departed this morning for O'Neill, Neb., where they will join Mr. Fields, who is now employed by the Burlington, and will make their home in that city.

Mrs. Roy Dodge, accompanied by Mrs. Elmer McManus and daughter, Dixie, of Omaha, arrived this morning and will make a short visit here with the parents of Mrs. Dodge, Mr. and Mrs. P. E. Ruffner.

Miss Dovie Barkhurst came up from Union last evening and will remain for a few days, in order that she may be near and in care of her physician. Miss Barkhurst is feeling some better, but not as well as she would like to.

Miss Della Johnson, who has been visiting at the Perry Marsh home, south of this city, for the past two weeks, departed this morning for her home. Mrs. Marsh and two children accompanied her for a short visit.

J. A. King and son, Clarence, of South Bend, were attending to some business matters in this city today, and while here were pleasant callers at this office and Mr. King had his subscription extended for another year.

MUSICAL ELEPHANT A GREAT FEATURE WITH YANKEE ROBINSON

Yankee Robinson's Musical elephants, which have been playing the big vaudeville houses during the past winter, are making a tremendous hit. The elephants are of more than ordinary size, in fact, the largest performing elephants in the country, and they go through their daily routine amazingly.

In addition to the herd which the circus carries, it has on exhibition the greatest beast that ever walked the face of the earth—Kongo, a might elephant from India—imported to this country for a tour of the circus this season. See them at Plattsburgh Monday, May 5.

Pains in the Stomach.

If you continually complain of pains in the stomach, your liver or your kidneys are out of order. Neglect may lead to dropsy, kidney trouble, diabetes or Bright's disease. Thousands recommend Electric Bitters as the very best stomach and kidney medicine made. H. T. Alston, of Raleigh, N. C., who suffered with pain in the stomach and back, writes: "My kidneys were deranged and my liver did not work right. I suffered much, but Electric Bitters was recommended and I improved from the first dose. I now feel like a new man. It will improve you, too. Only 50c and \$1.00. Recommended by F. G. Fricke & Co.