



The Siege of the Seven Suitors

By MEREDITH NICHOLSON

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CHAPTER XX. Seven Gold Reeds.

I WATCHED her hands as they deftly cut and fashioned some dry reeds. The air grew warm as the sun climbed to the zenith and Hezekiah flung aside her coat. The breeze caught the ends of her tie and snapped them behind her. She was wholly absorbed in her task, and no boy could have managed a pocket knife better. The first reed she made a trifle longer than her hand. The succeeding ones she trimmed to graduated lessening lengths, till seven in all had been cut, and then she notched them.

"Seven," she murmured, laying them neatly in order on her knee. "I remember the right number by a poem I read the other day in an old magazine."

She reached down and plucked several long leaves of tough grass with which she began to bind the reeds together, repeating:

"Seven gold reeds grew tall and slim
Close by the river's beaded brim.
Syrinx, the naiad, flitted past;
Pan, the goat hoofed, followed fast.

"It will be easier," said Hezekiah, "if you hold the pipes while I tie them." I found this propinquity wholly agreeable. It was pleasant to sit on a log beside Hezekiah. It seemed no far cry to the storied Mediterranean and Pan and dryads and naiads, as Hezekiah bound her reeds to the music of couplets. There was no self-consciousness in her recitation. She seemed to be telling of something that she had seen herself an hour ago.

"He spread his arms to clasp her there
Just as she vanished into air
And to his bosom, warm and rough,
Drew the gold reeds close enough.

"I don't remember the rest," she broke off. "But there! That's a pipe fit for any shepherd."

She put it to her lips and blew. I shall not pretend that the result was melodious. She whistled much better without the reeds, but the sight of her, sitting on the fallen tree beside the lake, beating time with her foot, her head thrown back, her eyes half closed in a mockery of rapture at the shrill, wheezy uncertainties and ineptitudes she evoked, thrilled me with new and wonderful longings. A heart, a spirit like hers would never grow old. She was next of kin to all the elusive, fugitive company of the elf world. And on such a pipe as she had strung together beside that pond to this day Sicilian shepherd boys whistle themselves into tune with Theocritus!

"Take it," she said. "I can't tell you more than I have, and yet it is all there, Chimneys. Read the riddle of the reeds if you can."

I took the pipe and turned it over carefully in my hands, but I fear my thoughts were rather of the hands that had fashioned it, the fingers that had danced nimbly upon the stops.

"There are seven reeds—seven," she affirmed. She amused herself by skipping pebbles over the surface of the water while I pondered, and I deliberated long, for one did not like to blunder before Hezekiah. Then I jumped up and called to her.

"One, two, three, four, five, six—seven! Not until the seventh man offers himself shall Cecilia have a husband. Is that the answer?"

For a moment Hezekiah watched the widening ripples made by the casting of her last pebble. Then she came back and resumed her seat.

"You have done well, Chimney Man, and now I'll not make you guess any more, though I found it all out for myself. When Aunt Octavia gave that memorandum book to Cecilia I knew it must have something to do with the seventh man. You know I love all Aunt Octavia's nonsense because it's the kind of foolishness I like myself, and the idea of a pretty little notebook to write down proposals in was precisely the sort of thing that would have occurred to my aunt. And it was in the bargain, too, that she herself should not in any way interfere or try to influence the course of events. It should be the seventh suitor, willy nilly. And I suspect she's been a little scared too."

"She has indeed! She was almost ready to throw the whole scheme over last night. Your naughtiness had got on her nerves."

"You missed the target that time. Aunt Octavia loves my naughtiness

and I think she has really been attracted to Sir Pumpkin Wiggins would catch me. Now, I didn't roam my aunt's house just for fun. I was doing my best to keep Cecilia from getting into some scrape about that seventh suitor plan. I found out by chance how to get into Hopefield and about the hidden stairway and the old rooms tucked away there. Papa really discovered that. A carpenter in Katonah who worked on the house helped to build papa's bungalow, and he told us how that rule came to be there. That dyspepsia cure man, who also immortalized himself by inventing the ribless umbrella, was very superstitious. He believed that if he built an entirely new house he would die. So he had his architect build around and retain those two rooms and that stairway of a house that had been on the ground almost since the Revolution. Mr. Pepperton, the architect, humored him, but hid the remains of the relic as far out of sight as possible.

"Trust Pep for that! And he did it neatly!"

"Yes; but it didn't save the umbrella man. He died anyhow—or maybe his ples killed him. Papa was so curious



"I wish, Hezekiah, that you would stay caught!"

about it that he took me with him one night just before Aunt Octavia moved here, and he and I found the room and the stair and the secret spring by which, if you know just where to poke the wall in the fourth floor hall you can disappear as mysteriously as you please.

"But how on earth did you darker the halls so easily? You nearly gave me heart disease doing that!"

"Oh, that was a mere matter of a young lady in haste! When I found how easily I could pass you on the stair it became a fascinating game, and it was no end of fun to see just how long it would take you to catch me."

"I wish, Hezekiah, that you would stay caught!"

"Be very, very careful, sir! We're talking business now. There's another ordeal for you before you dare become sentimental."

"Then hasten. Let us be after it."

"Things are in a serious predicament, I can tell you. I was frightened when I looked into that notebook. I didn't like to do that, but I had to assist Providence a little. Five men have already got their quietus."

"Then why don't they clear out and stop their nonsense?"

"Oh, it's their pride, I suppose, and every man probably thinks that when Cecilia has seen a little more of him in particular, in contrast with the others, he will win her favor. They're afraid of one another, those men. That's the reason they've been herding together so close since the first day you came. Mr. Wiggins was taking it for granted that he was the whole thing—just like the man!—and those others forced him to join in some arrangement by which they were to hang together. These calls in a bunch came from that, as though any one of them wouldn't take advantage of the others if he saw a chance! Some of 'em I got from Wiggy himself, the rest I just guessed."

"But you may not know that they sent a delegation after me into town to warn me off the grass."

"That was Mr. Dick. He never saw me when Cecilia was around, and he was terribly snippy sometimes and supercilious, but I'm going to get even

with him. I've about underlined him for number six," she concluded with the manner of a queen who, about to give her chief executioner his orders for the day, glances calmly over the list of victims.

"That's a good idea. Dick is insufferable. I hope you haven't counted wrong."

"As we were saying, about the notebook," she resumed, "the fifth man has already been respectfully declined. The dates of the proposals are written in the notebook, so I learned from the book that Mr. Ormsby, Mr. Arbuthnot and Mr. Gorse had proposed on the steamer. Professor Hume, you know, tried his luck at Hopefield, and Lord Arrowood must have stopped Cecilia as she was riding to the station on my bicycle yesterday morning. His goose is cooked."

"He stopped to tell papa goodbye and spoke very highly of you. Papa and you are the only gentlemen he met in America. But now we come to Mr. Wiggins."

"We do; and why in the name of all that is beautiful and good hasn't he tried his luck?"

"Because, knowing Cecilia's admiration for him," replied Hezekiah demurely, "I have kept him so diverted that he hasn't been able to bring himself to the scratch."

"You didn't want him to blunder in as the first, fourth or sixth man?"

Hezekiah gravely nodded her pretty head.

"And while you were engaged in this sisterly labor, Cecilia has been afraid that you were seriously interested in him!"

"That is like Cecilia. She's fine, and wouldn't cause me trouble for anything," and there was no doubt of Hezekiah's sincerity.

"But now that I see the light and understand all this, how can we make sure that Wiggy will be on the spot at the right moment? While we sit here he may be the sixth man! I might take care of Wiggy by asking Cecilia to marry me, being careful to have him appear Johnny on the spot when I had been duly declined."

"Um! I shouldn't take any chances if I were you," she replied, feigning to look at an imaginary bird in a tree top, "for if you had counted wrong and were really the seventh man she would have to accept you!"

"Hezekiah!"

"Oh, I really didn't mean what you thought I meant. We don't need to discuss it any more. That's the ordeal I've arranged for you," she answered, and set her lips sternly.

"But, my dear Hezekiah, by what means can this be effected? I don't dare tell him the combination he's playing against or sit on him until his hour strikes."

"Certainly not; you mustn't tell him or anybody else. You know the plan; but you're not supposed to, and nobody must know I've meddled. Meanwhile Cecilia must expose herself to proposals at all times. Aunt Octavia's heart would be broken if she thought Providence had been tampered with. She likes Wiggy well enough, except that his ancestors were all Tories, and he can't be a Son of the Revolution."

She rose and pointed to her coat.

"Drop it into the boat for me, Chimneys. We meet in funny places, don't we? Papa expects me for luncheon, and I must row back and get my bicycle. You? No, you can't go along; you've got a lot of thinking to do, and you'd better be doing it."

A few minutes later, as I swung along the highway toward the Prescott Arms, I saw Cecilia Hollister riding toward me at a lively gallop. She crossed the bridge without checking her horse, and then, with a hurried glance over her shoulder, she pointed with her crop to a byway.

I hurried after her and found her waiting for me in a quiet lane. She had dismounted and seemed greatly disturbed as I addressed her.

"I hadn't expected to meet you. I thought you rode off with your aunt toward Mount Kisco."

"We did, but on our way home Aunt Octavia stopped to call on a friend, and as I didn't feel in a mood for visits this morning, I rode on alone. I was walking my horse in the road beyond Bedford, just after I left Aunt Octavia, when who should ride up beside me but Mr. Wiggins. He had evidently been following me."

She expected me to express surprise, and with the information that Hezekiah had just imparted fresh in my mind I dare say she was not disappointed in the effect of her words. I was thinking rapidly and fearfully. "If my friend had sought her in the highway and offered himself in some fresh accession of ardor he might even now be a rejected and hopeless man, but I was unwilling to believe that this had happened."

"Won't you tell me what happened in the road when Hartley rode up beside you?"

"Oh, nothing happened; really, nothing! Nothing could have happened for the excellent reason that I ran away from him. It wasn't that he did or said, it was the fear of what he might say."

"If it had been Mr. Dick who had joined you in exactly the same way in the highway, you would not have minded in the least, Miss Hollister. Isn't that the truth?"

(To Be Continued.)

Lame back is usually caused by rheumatism of the muscles of the back, for which you will find nothing better than Chamberlain's Liniment. For sale by F. G. Fricke & Co.

FOREST ROSE—The best flour on the market. Give it a trial.

IN PLATTSMOUTH FORTY YEARS AGO

Items of Interest to Old and New Residents of City Which Were New Forty Years Ago.

The bridge back of Dr. Schildknecht's office has got the chronic lifts since the circus man went for it, and needs medical attendance.

Wm. Stadelmann, esq., returned from Franklin, on the Republican, Monday, looking as fresh and new as if he had just been ground over and come out another man.

The C., B. & Q. have taken charge of the boat "Vice President," and will transfer cars for \$5.00 each, instead of the former price, \$10. Quite a necessary reduction and one that will be very much appreciated.

Died—In this city at 3 o'clock a. m., Saturday, July 12, 1873, Mrs. Lucinda Billings, wife of S. S. Billings, aged 48 years, 9 months and 5 days.

The funeral services took place at the family residence at 2 o'clock p. m. on Sunday, July 13, 1873.

We learn that the fire department of this place has determined to organize a hook and ladder company. All persons desirous of joining this company can hand in their names to either of the following persons: John A. MacMurphy, president; Frank Stadler, second assistant; William Neville, or James Grace. Next Wednesday there will be a meeting at the engine house. Turn out, boys.

A man by the name of Harper claims to own several lots and things around Plattsburgh, among the rest the lot Henry Boeck's furniture store stands on, and last week he warned Henry off the premises. Boeck got his Dutch up and told Harper he was playing on the wrong string, and he might go to a warmer climate than 102 degrees in the shade, and so the matter rests, until the judge shall harp'em all into court, we expect.

Hesser's picnic passed off with great eclat. Just as everybody was dry and dusty and willing for a little moisture a heavenly shower descended and cooled and watered everyone so that all went home delighted. One man to whom we addressed the inquiry, "What kind of a time did you have at the picnic?" replied, "Nice time, moist and pleasant, very moist and pleasant," which his name was Billy Hobbs, and another told us that Prof. d'Allemand could not possibly have made a dry speech, because of the shower. Ourselves and wife, the dog and Butterfy's two black horses, started to come, but got scared at the big clouds and turned back. Give us another chance, Hesser.

A workman in the machine shops named Patrick Egan, dropped down dead from heart disease on Saturday evening last. He had gone home from his work and was milking the cow when he tumbled off the stool dead. His funeral on Monday was largely attended.

Frank White, sr., left for Crete on Tuesday, where he has the contract of moving some buildings. He will be absent several weeks.

Mr. Stadelmann's bakery building on the corner of Main and Sixth street is nearing completion, and when finished Mr. S. will be possessor of one of the best finished buildings in town.

We call attention to the new law firm of Smith & Windham, just opened in this town. Their card will be found in next week's paper. Mr. Smith has been long and favorably known to our people as a partner of Mr. Marquett. Mr. Windham is a graduate of the Michigan University Law School, and a young man of much promise.

We had quite an alarm of fire on Tuesday evening. The chandler in Solomon & Nathan's store broke down, and the oil flying out for a few moments it looked as if we should have quite a decent conflagration. A large crowd gathered at once, and we are happy and proud to state that the Babcock and all the boys

were on hand instant. Before they were needed, however, a few blankets had smothered the incipient blaze.

Union Fire Company met in Firemen's hall last evening for the purpose of electing officers for the ensuing year. A gayer, better natured or jollier set of fellows never came together. With their red shirts and new hats cocked a la mode on their true firemen's head, they looked the image of the lads that do and dare.

The preliminary business of the meeting over, the ballot for officers took place, resulting as follows:

Chief Engineer—J. W. Johnson.

Assistant Engineer—Henry Curtis.

President—John A. McMurphy.

Secretary—A. d'Allemand.

Treasurer—H. Newman.

Officers of the engine company: Foreman—Frank Stadler.

First Assistant Foreman—Wm. Neville.

Second Assistant Foreman—F. J. Metteer.

Officers of the hook and ladder company: Foreman—P. D. Bates.

First Assistant Foreman—King.

Second Assistant Foreman—A. Despaine.

A finance committee for both companies was then appointed, consisting of Dr. Livingston, Fred Stadelmann and Henry Beck for the engine company, and W. Shryock, King and Stincomb for the hook and ladder company.

Our fire department is now fully organized, and they are a fine body of men that the city may be proud to acknowledge.

One of the B. & M. R. R. boats dropped her apron in the river last week, and two cars tumbled out of her lap into the river.

George Fickler will move up in the building next the court houses, formerly occupied by Morrison & Shannon. We bespeak a good trade for George in his new quarters.

Mr. Samuel Thomas will ship fourteen head of pure blood cattle to the state fair next week for exhibition. They are fine animals and no doubt will draw a prize of some magnitude.

The bridge on Vine street between Sixth and Seventh is being taken up and a substantial one put in its stead. Robinson's clown said he was afraid to risk the elephant on the old one, but we imagine this one will be sufficient to support him if he gets around in this section of the country again.

Gen. King, in command at Omaha Barracks, has been visiting our town as a guest of Chaplain Wright. On Tuesday he was taken out to Duke's addition by Captain Bennett and purchased sixteen lots.

These lots are sold on such reasonable terms that no person need be without a home, and as an investment they even attract the attention of strangers.

A new company has been formed in Plattsburgh for the purpose of buying and dealing in grain and other produce. They propose to erect a warehouse on the siding, south of Cutler & White's

present building, and to transact business on a large and wholesome basis, paying fair rates for all grain, and doing business on the square, generally.

The officers of the company are: E. G. Dovey, president; E. T. Duke, treasurer. Directors, E. G. Dovey, J. W. Buttery, D. Schnasse, F. R. Guthman and E. T. Duke.

Their warehouse is under way, and the company expects to be ready for business by the 10th or 15th of the present month.

CONDITIONS HAVE GREATLY IMPROVED IN UNION

Last week The Ledger reluctantly referred to the need of some reforms in this village, particularly as to conduct and language on the streets, and while we do not pose as dictator, hero or reformer, we are greatly pleased to note that there has been some improvement along the lines we suggested. We are also pleased to observe that nobody appeared to take our remarks as a personal rebuke, and it does seem that we dropped some few words that placed the matter in proper light. We sincerely hope that it may never again be necessary for us to criticize the conduct of anyone and that peace and harmony may reign supreme.

The practice of using profane and obscene language anywhere is not just the proper thing, but perhaps often results from sudden anger or impulse, but it was profane and vulgar language on the streets in the hearing of ladies and children that we protested against, and it is gratifying to notice the improvement, and hope it will be permanent, and praise is due those who have given the matter serious thought and acted accordingly.—Union Ledger.

For the Weak and Nervous.

Tired-out, weak, nervous men and women would feel ambitious, energetic, full of life and always have a good appetite, if they would do the sensible thing for health—take Electric Bitters. Nothing better for the stomach, liver or kidneys. Thousands say they owe their lives to this wonderful home remedy. Mrs. O. Rhinevaux, of Vestal Center, N. Y., says: "I regard Electric Bitters as one of the greatest of gifts. I can never forget what it has done for me." Get a bottle yourself and see what a difference it will make in your health. Only 50c and \$1.00 25c. Recommended by F. G. Fricke & Co.

Some Fine Signs.

The firm of C. E. Wescott's Sons, who are the agents in Plattsburgh for the Mansing underwear, have secured 150 feet on the inside of the base ball fence and have placed a sign for this excellent make of underwear there. The sign can be seen well from the Burlington depot, and all trains, as well as on the ball grounds, and it certainly is a sign to be proud of. The letters on the sign are some seven feet wide.

Don't forget the Katholoky Sokol dance on Thursday night, May 29—the night before Decoration day.

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IN

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