

# The Siege of the Seven Suitors

By  
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

## CHAPTER XXII.

### Under the Old Flooring.

**A** STABLE BOY held Miss Octavia's horse at the inn door. Her face, her figure, her voice expressed outraged dignity as she tested the saddle girth.

"You need never tell me what had happened to provoke your wrath, for that is none of my affair, but I wish to say that your conduct and bearing won my highest approval. They had undoubtedly hidden the jack of clubs to avoid the drubbing you would have administered to the unfortunate man who would have drawn that card if it had been in the pack."

"I was not in the slightest danger at any time, Miss Hollister," I protested. "By one of those tricks of fate to which you and I are becoming so accustomed the card had fallen to the floor unnoticed. If you had not arrived so opportunely the lost jack would have been discovered, the cards reshuffled, and very likely Mr. Ormsby would have been dusting the inn floor with me at this very minute."

"I refuse to believe any such thing," declared Miss Octavia, who had mounted and continued speaking from the saddle. "Your perfect confidence was admirable, and I shudder to think of the terrible punishment you would have given them."

If Miss Octavia wished to view my performances in this flattering light it seemed unnecessary to object.

"It was only a pleasant incident of the day's work, Miss Hollister. I'm going to engage a squire and take to the open road as soon as all this is over."

"As soon as all what is over?" she demanded, eyeing me keenly.

"Oh, the work I've undertaken to do here. I flatter myself that I have made some progress, but within twenty-four hours I dare say that we shall have seen the end."

"Your words are not wholly luminous, Arnold."

"It is much better that it should be so. You have trusted me so far, and I have no intention of failing you now. If I say that the crisis is near at hand in a certain matter that interests you greatly, you will understand that I am not striking ignorantly in the dark."

"If you know what I suspect you know, Arnold Ames, you are even shrewder than I thought you, and you had already taken a high place in my regard."

"Will you tell me just how you came to visit the inn at this particular hour?"

"Nothing could be simpler. I had luncheon at the house of a friend on whom I called. Cecilia had left me to continue her ride alone, and on my way home I thought I would ride by the Prescott Arms to see how the guests were faring. You see—she paused and gave a twitch to her hat to prolong my suspense—"you see, I own the Prescott Arms!"

With this she rode away, and not caring to risk a further meeting with the angry suitors from whom Miss Octavia had rescued me by so narrow a margin, I set off across the field toward Hopefield. From the stile I saw Miss Octavia in the highway half a mile distant, sending her horse along at a spirited canter. I reached the house without further adventures, was served with a cold luncheon in my room, and by the time I had changed my clothes Miss Octavia sent me word that Pepperton had arrived.

Miss Octavia and the architect were conversing earnestly when I reached the library, and from the abruptness with which they ceased on my entrance I imagined that I had been the subject of their talk. Pepperton is not only one of the finest architects America has produced, but one of the jolliest of fellows. He grasped my hand cordially and pointed to the fireplace.

"So you've at last found one of my jobs to overhaul, have you? You mustn't let this get out on me, old man; it would shatter my reputation!"

"Please observe that the flue is drawing splendidly now," I answered. "A ghost had been strolling up and down the chimney, but now that I have found his lair he will not trouble Miss Hollister's fireplaces again."

"I have waited for your arrival, Mr. Pepperton, that we might have the benefit of your knowledge of the house in following the trail of this ghost which Arnold has discovered. But we must give Arnold credit for effecting the discovery alone and unaided. I destroyed the plans I obtained from your office so that Arnold might be fully tested as to his capacity for managing the most difficult situations."

When Miss Octavia first referred to me as Arnold, Pepperton raised his brows a trifle; the second time he glanced at me laughingly. He seemed greatly amused by Miss Octavia's seriousness, but her amiable attitude toward me clearly puzzled him.

"It takes a good man to uncover a thing I try to hide. I said nothing to you, Miss Hollister, about the retention

within the walls of this house of parts of an old one that formerly occupied the site for the reason that I thought you might refuse to buy the estate. The gentleman for whom I built Hopefield was superstitious, as many men of advanced years are, as to the building of a new house, and as the site he chose is one of the finest in the country he compelled me to construct this house—which is the most satisfactory I have built—in such manner that enough of the old should be kept intact to soothe his superstitious soul with the idea that he had merely altered an old house, not built a new one. As it is the architect's business to yield to such caprices, I obeyed him strictly. So there are two rooms of an old farmhouse hidden under the east wing, and it amused me once I had got into it to preserve part of the old stairway and connect the retained chambers with the upper hall of this house. I had to patch the original stair, which was only one flight, with discarded lumber from the old house, but I flatter myself that I managed it neatly. I even saved the old nails to avert the wrath of the evil spirits. When the umbrella and dyspepsia cure man died—for he did die, as you know—I believed the secret had died with him, as he was very sensitive about his superstitions. Most of the laborers on that part of the job were brought from a long distance, and I supposed they never really knew just what we were doing. I might have known, though, that if a fellow as clever as Ames got to pecking at the house the trick would be discovered. But the chimney, old man—what on earth was the matter with it?"

"It will never happen again, and I promised the ghost never to tell how it was done."

"You were quite right in doing that, Arnold, a ghost's secrets should be sacred; but let us now proceed to the hidden chambers," said Miss Hollister, rising without further ado.

She summoned Cecilia, to whom we explained matters briefly, and at Pepperton's suggestion the four of us went directly to the fourth floor, so that Miss Octavia might see the whole contrivance in the most effective manner possible.

My awkward pen falters in the attempt to convey any idea of Miss Octavia's delight in Pepperton's revelation. She kept repeating her admiration of his genius, and her praise of my cleverness, which, to protect Hezekiah, I was forced to accept meekly. When in broad daylight Pepperton found and pressed the spring in the upper hall, and the hidden door opened with a slowness that indicated a realization of its own dramatic value, Miss Octavia cried out gleefully, like a child that witnesses the manipulation of a new and wonderful toy.

"Beyond any question," she kept asserting, "beneath the chambers of the old house down there we shall find the bones of that British soldier who perished here, or it is even possible that a chest of hidden treasure is concealed beneath the floor."

We were lighting candles preparatory to stepping down into the dark stairway, and Pepperton was plainly hard put to keep from laughing.

Miss Octavia followed Pepperton slowly, pausing frequently to hold her candle close to the stair walls, whose rough surfaces confirmed all that Pepperton had said of the preservation of the old timbers. I had brought a handful of candles, and when we had reached the dark rooms beneath I lighted these and set them up in the black corners of the old rooms. It was, Miss Octavia remarked, no even the wall paper had been disturbed. The exit into the coal cellar and concealed openings left for ventilation which had escaped me before, were now pointed out by the architect, who kept laughing at the huge joke of it all.

Miss Octavia searched thoroughly for any signs of a trapdoor beneath which the bones of the British soldier might repose.

If I had foreseen her persistence in clinging to the tradition of the ill-fated Briton I should have taken the trouble to hide a few bones under the flooring. Miss Octavia had brought a stick from the coal room and was thumping the floor with it even while Pepperton tried to discourage her further investigations. We were all ranged about her with our candles, and these, with the others I had thrust into the corners, lighted the room well.

"I'm afraid you've seen the whole of it, Miss Hollister," said Pepperton. "The old house was built after the Revolution, I judge, but your British soldier was probably left hanging to a tree and never buried at all."

Miss Octavia had been over the floors of the two rooms twice and was about to desist. She made her last stand in the corner of the smaller room, and as we all stood holding our lights we were conscious that the dull, monotonous thump suddenly changed its tone.

"Do you hear that, gentlemen?" She subdued her gratification in the rebuking glance she gave us. Calm and unhurried, she rested a moment on her stick, with the candle's soft glow about her, a smile ineffably sweet on her face.

"The timbers may have rotted away underneath. We didn't raise these floors," said Pepperton, but we both dropped to our knees and brought all the candle light to bear upon the flooring. Dust and mortar, shaken loose in the destruction of the house, filled the cracks. Pepperton, deeply absorbed, continued to sound the corner with his knuckles.

"It really looks as though these boards had been cut for some purpose," he said, whipping out his knife.

I ran to the kindling room and found a hatchet, and when I returned he had dug the dirt out of the edges of the floor planks. Silence held us all as I

set to prying up the boards.

"I beg of you to exercise the greatest care, gentlemen. If bones are interested here we must do them no sacrifice," warned Miss Octavia.

By this time we all, I think, began to believe that the flooring might really have been cut in this corner of the old room to permit the hiding of something. The old planks clung stubbornly to their joists, but after I had loosened one the others came up quickly, and the smell of dry earth filled the room. Pepperton had, at Miss Octavia's direction, brought a chisel and crowbar from the toolroom in the cellar, and he stood ready with these when I tore up the last board, disclosing an oblong space about five feet long and slightly over three feet wide.

We were all excited now. The edge of the bar struck repeatedly against something that resisted sharply. It might have been a root, but when Pepperton shifted the point of attack the same booming sound answered to the prodding. Pepperton now thought it might be only an empty cask or a box of no interest whatever, but Miss Octavia, hovering close with a candle, encouraged us to go on.

We worked on silently, Pepperton loosening the soil with the bar while I shoveled it out. In half an hour we had revealed a long, flat wooden surface, which to our anxious imaginations was the lid of some sort of box.

It must have been nearly 6 o'clock when we dragged out into that candle lighted chamber a stout, well-fashioned box. The earth clung to its sides jealously, and it was bound with strips of brass that shone brightly where the scraping of our tools had burnished it. We pried off the heavy lock with a good deal of difficulty, and when it was free Miss Octavia asserted her right to the treasure trove with much calmness.

"I should never forgive myself if I allowed this opportunity to pass. You must permit me to have the first look."

(To Be Continued.)

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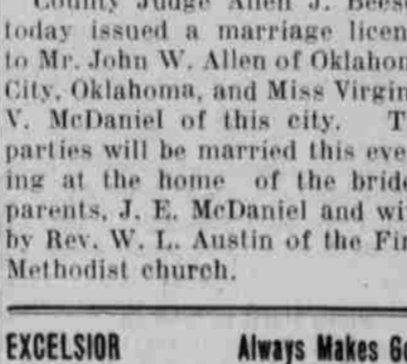
### Barn Burns.

Mrs. William Morley is in receipt of a letter from Mr. David O'Brien, at Osmond, Neb., in which he states that last night fire destroyed his large barn on his farm, destroying considerable grain and sixteen head of horses. Mr. O'Brien has a large number of friends in this vicinity who will be sorry to learn of his misfortune.

### Best Medicine for Colds.

When a druggist recommends a remedy for colds, throat and lung troubles, you can feel sure that he knows what he is talking about. C. Lower, Druggist, of Marion, Ohio, writes of Dr. King's New Discovery: "I know Dr. King's New Discovery is the best throat and lung medicine I sell. It cured my wife of a severe bronchial cold after all other remedies failed." It will do the same for you if you are suffering with a cold or any bronchial, throat or lung cough. Keep a bottle on hand all the time for everyone in the family to use. It is a home doctor. Price 50c and \$1.00. Guaranteed by F. G. Fricke & Co.

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## JUDGE FLANNIGAN.

He Is Presiding at the Trial of Roosevelt Suit Against Editor Newett.



## ROOSEVELT FAILED TO ASK RETRACTION

Judge Flannigan to Rule on Important Point.

Marquette, Mich., May 31.—Lawyers engaged in the suit of Theodore Roosevelt against George A. Newett, charging libel, are looking forward with great interest to a prospective ruling by Judge Flannigan construing section 10,425 of the Michigan compiled laws, bearing on libel. The law was designed to protect newspapers from the consequences of honest mistakes and provided that demand for retraction of a libelous article should be made by the offended party.

Colonel Roosevelt made no such demand, it is admitted, and on this point the legal experts are looking for interesting developments. The matter will come up when counsel for Mr. Newett attempts to show that the editor made his charge of drunkenness in good faith and without malice, believing it to be true.

Judge Flannigan will have to rule, assuming that the article was printed maliciously but in the absence of demand for retraction, whether the alleged bad faith of Mr. Newett may be taken into account in estimating damages.

## SAVES 2 BY TREADING WATER

After Hour's Exertions Help Enables Husband to Rescue Family.

St. Paul, May 31.—Taking his wife and ten-year-old daughter in his arms and treading water for nearly an hour while they were swept along by the Mississippi river current, Thomas Buchanan saved both their lives and his own.

A leaky motorboat sank suddenly from beneath the Buchanans while they were in midstream.

## Lowers Record at Conference Meet.

St. Louis, May 31.—One Missouri valley conference record was broken and another equalled at the preliminary annual events of the conference track and field meet. East of Purdue ran the 440-yard run in 0:49 4-5, one-fifth of a second better than the previous record, held by Guy Reed of Nebraska. Nicholson, Missouri hurdler negotiated the 120-yard high hurdles in 0:15 1-5, equalling the former record, held by himself.

## Phoenix Stays Wet.

Phoenix, Ariz., May 31.—The women vote had no effect on the liquor election in this city, and in consequence Phoenix remains an oasis for the thirsty. Phoenix went wet by a majority of 352. Mesa and Temple both voted dry. It was the first time the women had an opportunity to air the franchise granted to them recently.

## Father Shoots Daughter by Accident.

Tekamah, Neb., May 31.—Will Metzler accidentally shot his thirteen-year-old daughter while engaged in hunting on his farm near here. The girl was following him through a wire fence when the trigger of the gun the father was carrying caught in the wires.

## BASEBALL SCORES

**National League.**  
Brooklyn, 2-6; Boston, 1-7.  
Philadelphia, 6-1; New York, 8-5.  
Cincinnati, 4-5; St. Louis, 6-3.  
Chicago, 1; Pittsburgh, 2.

**American League.**  
St. Louis, 4; Cleveland, 5.  
New York, 2-4; Philadelphia, 3-7.  
Boston, 3-1; Washington, 4-0.  
Detroit, 1-3; Chicago, 9-2.

**Western League.**  
Lincoln, 2-7; Denver, 8-8.  
Wichita, 2-5; St. Joseph, 4-14.  
Topeka, 2-4; Des Moines, 4-9.  
Omaha, 5-3; Sioux City, 3-1.

The Weather.  
Showers and cooler.

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# D. B. EBERSOLE,

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## IN PLATTSMOUTH FORTY YEARS AGO

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

The B. & M. R. R. company are extending their line down to the rock point, near Mickelwait's vineyard. We presume this is preparatory to putting in an ice bridge this winter. Three hundred men are at work, and they expect to finish it in a week.

Sam Barker, esq., has 1,500 head of Texas cattle at his ranch near Eight Miles Grove. He expects to winter the greater portion of this herd there. It will take some corn, but that's the way to dispose of it and Mr. Barker and his associates are public benefactors in this line.

Wiley Black and Ed Ruffner shot at and knocked down 12 geese out of 15 the other day at one shot apiece. The other three were wounded, but got away. If that is not good shooting somebody beat it, and send us word, and if one of these geese was not good eating, we've lost our taste.

It is currently reported that Edward A. Kirkpatrick was married on the evening of the 17th. It may be that was what made him look so happy out at Weeping Water Saturday. In fact, we did hear that Ed says they can't vote him out of a wife, even if they do now and then out of an office. Come and see us, Edward, and tell us how you feel as a benedict.

Julius Pepperburg, an old and well known resident of Plattsmouth, has returned, and will open a branch house of the celebrated firm of L. Brom & Co.,

Cigar Manufacturers, Chicago, in this place, opposite the Herald office on Main street. This firm have every facility for conducting a large business, and they expect to open up a big trade in Nebraska and western Iowa.

Some soiled doves (crows) of the colored persuasion, got in trouble on Wednesday and all parties were hauled up before Justice Haines. We are credibly informed that court, witnesses and congregation had a high old time; but Judge Haines threatened us with an injunction if we told, and besides we have no types that will make some of the things they said there.

Deacon Pogram (W. Mickelwait) left town early Tuesday morning for the Farmers' convention at Weeping Water. The deacon had his old hat on, the same old grey coat, two coal smuts on his high cheek, and his off trouser leg in his boot; the bottom of the other was covered with fresh soil from his turnip patch. An old umbrella was grasped lovingly in his left dexter, and the twining tendrils of some last year's grape vines hung around his right meat slinger.

Joseph Connor is now opening three separate grain establishments besides the one at Plattsmouth. James Allison, the son of an old resident of Three Groves, Cass county, who is well known throughout the county, operates the one at Ashland and makes it a success. John Livingston, the son-in-law of J. Adams, two miles south of Plattsmouth, and who is an old resident of Louisville precinct, runs that station. The one at Greenwood is operated by an enterprising farmer, W. L. Grey, who is making a success of it. They are all Patrons of Husbandry and have the interest of the farmer at heart. It is a co-operative association conducted under the management of Joseph A. Connor, and between them they ship a large portion of the grain of Cass county.

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