

The Siege of the Seven Suitors

By
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

CHAPTER XXIV.

Hezekiah Partitions the Kingdom.

AS I came perspiring out of the telephone booth I found the suitors engaged in subdued debate by the hearth. They could hardly have heard my beatings over the telephone, but they were greatly concerned about something. Shallenberger, who was apparently the only one willing to approach me, followed me to the veranda.

"Those fellows in there don't understand this. Dick told us last night, after we had called at the house and been refused admittance, that Miss Cecilia was ill with diphtheria. I remember that it was Dick who rang the bell and gave our cards to the footman. It was quite singular, you know, our being turned away, unless something had been wrong."

I bowed gravely. They had been turned away for the very simple reason that after unearthing Adoniram Caldwell's effects in the secret rooms of her house Miss Octavia had not cared to be troubled with suitors. The haughty Nebraskan had drawn upon his imagination for the rest.

"And I understood you to say a moment ago that Miss Hollister's malady is not diphtheria, but chickenpox?" Shallenberger persisted with almost laughable trepidation. "These gentlemen, I regret to say, go so far as to doubt your word."

"That, Mr. Shallenberger, is their privilege. But it seems to me that when I merely tried to mitigate the terrible news imparted by Dick you are rank ingrates for questioning my far less doubtful story. Anything between you gentlemen and Mr. Dick is, of course, none of my affair, for whether considered as a set, group or bunch I am done with the whole lot of you. Farewell!"

I decided as I rode away that nothing was to be gained by going in search of Wiggins. Orton had purposely made his house difficult of access, and the roads in that neighborhood are many and devious. Orton had banished his guests that he might tinker with his play in peace and, knowing his temper, I was sure that Wiggins and the rest of them would keep out of his way till the pangs of hunger drove them back.

I had ridden half a mile toward Hopefield when I espied a woman riding rapidly toward me, and as she drew nearer I identified her as Hezekiah, mounted on a horse I recognized as one of the best in Miss Octavia's stables. Hezekiah rode astride, as a woman should, her bicycle skirt serving well as a habit. She rode as a boy rides who loves freedom and quickened pulses and the rush of wind across his face. She was hatless, for which the sun and I were both grateful. The big bow at the back of her head turned the dial back to sixteen.

She drew rein and fished what seemed to be salted almonds from her sweater pocket. She flipped one of these into the air and caught it in her mouth with a lazy toss of the head that showed the firm contour of her lovely throat. I had never seen her more self possessed.

"Do you care much for this horse?" she asked carelessly.

"It's a good horse. I fancy Miss Octavia thinks so herself. There are places, Hezekiah, where they hang people for horse stealing."

"Thought I might need one today, so I borrowed him through the back way to the old red barn. The coachman is an ancient chum, and Aunt Octavia would never mind even if she knew. And she will know, all right! Anyhow, my rear tire had been patched once too often, and there is a satisfaction in a horse. Where's our sensitive and impressionable Wiggy? Saw him riding over toward Kisco yesterday p. m. with chin on his chest—dreadful riding form."

"Wiggins is at Orton's—the playwright's, you know. I've telephoned him to hustle back, but he's out of our reach somewhere. I couldn't speak to him direct; had to leave a message for him."

"Just like Wiggy to die on the last lap. What did you make out of Brother Pepperton?"

"Your note scared me—thanks so much for your note—but he's all right. Engaged to another girl."

"Ah," she sighed, "it's comforting that Cecilia couldn't keep them all going all the time."

We rode along together, our horses in a walk, and I told her everything I knew of the condition of affairs, including a true account of my experiences at the Inn the day before and of the finding of the old chest belonging to Wiggins' great-grandfather—her brown eyes opened wide at this—concluding with the diphtheria stragem and Dick's menace to Cecilia's happiness.

"He's really a bright little boy. Coming home on the steamer he gave me a post graduate course in pragmatism that I've found helpful in keeping house for papa. It's too bad we have to lay a trap for Mr. Dick."

"Is it just now are we to manage that, Hezekiah?"

"Oh, that will be easy enough. He's pretty desperate, and since the compact between the suitors has gone to pieces he knows he will have to show his hand pretty soon. He thinks you are wild about Cecilia. He lays great stress on his thinking powers, and he probably argues that you are bound to pop pretty soon. It's just as well he thinks so, but we must finish this up today. I'll be a nervous wreck if we don't close the books tonight. There's our friend Dick now."

She indicated a high point in the main road, where it crossed the ridge from which she had shown me—it seemed, oh, very long ago!—the procession of suitors crossing the stile. Dick, mounted, was gazing off across the fields toward Hopefield. Man and horse were so distant as to create the illusion of an equestrian statue on a high pedestal.

"Napoleon before Waterloo," I suggested.

"He does look like Napoleon, doesn't he?" she laughed. "He's a bit fussed today. He knows that Wiggy's not at the Inn and that you are up to something, and to little Mr. Dick the architect probably looks like one of those mysterious knights you read about, who suddenly appears at the tournament all canned in an ice cream freezer, with a tin pall over his head. Mr. Pepperton's presence no doubt worries him, as I don't think they ever met. Cecilia and Mr. Pepperton are riding. I dodged them just before I struck you, walking their horses in the most lovelike fashion in a lane over yonder, but if Mr. Pepperton is really engaged it's all right, though if I were the other girl I think I'd be anxious."

"Pep's playing the game, that's all. What are you going to do now?"

She glanced at the sun. I fancied that it was with such a scanning of the heavens that her sisters a thousand years before had noted the time.

"This is my pie day. There's undoubtedly a gooseberry pie waiting for me at the bungalow. And papa will expect me for luncheon. I'd ask you to come too, only you'll have all you can do to keep Mr. Dick from persuading somebody to be the sixth man, so he can slip in as number seven. If we get through today all right, you may come for luncheon tomorrow, maybe. Papa told me he liked you. He said you were very decent that night you met him."

"My compliments to your father. I hope to be able to persuade him to extend his paternal arm to include me. Aunt Octavia must be my aunt too!"

"Really?" cried Hezekiah, with indescribable mockery, and she wheeled her horse and was gone like the wind.

Luncheon at Hopefield passed without incident, and afterward Cecilia retired to help her aunt with her correspondence, while Pepperton and I lounged about the house and smoked. I told him of my ineffectual efforts to reach Wiggins, and he volunteered to find a motor and search for him, but I pointed out the futility of this and renewed my appeal that he stay on guard at Hopefield.

At about 3 o'clock Cecilia reappeared. Her color was high and her eyes were unusually brilliant. I knew that she fully realized that the crisis was near, but she asked no questions, and her manner reassured me of her confidence. We idled on the stone terrace above the frost smitten garden.

We were hardly seated before Dick entered the garden, followed immediately by the six other suitors I had



"Napoleon before Waterloo," I suggested.

last seen at the Inn. They ranged themselves on a stone bench facing the house at the end of one of the paths. They wore sack coats and hats in a variety of styles, so that they did not present quite the bizarre effect produced by their frock coats and silk ties. They surveyed the house sadly, bowed their heads upon their sticks and seemed to have come to stay. The siege had become a practical matter.

"Why don't the gentlemen come in?" asked Cecilia, peering through the vines.

"Hush! There's a rumor that you are terribly ill. They've come merely to pay their tribute of respect by waiting in the garden. You had better go quietly into the house. The shock of seeing you in your usual health might be too much for them."

"But I can't. I must be accessible at

all times," she cried, looking helplessly from me to Pepperton, who was all at sea for an explanation. "If that impression is abroad I shall appear at once."

"Then you and Pepperton must patrol the terrace here. You are lovers for all I know. Ignore them utterly in your absorption with one another. If any one approaches you, Pepperton, ask Miss Hollister to marry you."

"Me?" gasped Pepperton.

"No. It can't be done that way," Cecilia interposed. "Mr. Pepperton has told me of his engagement. I can't be party to a fraud—a trick. I can't countenance it at all. It would ruin everything."

"Then stay right here. Pace back and forth and I'll manage the rest. I don't for the life of me know how, but I'll do it."

As Cecilia and Pepperton stepped from behind the screen of vines the men on the benches lifted their heads; then I heard murmurs of amazement and chagrin and caught a fleeting glimpse of Dick tearing through the sedge with his late companions tumbling after in fierce pursuit.

I ran to the stable and found a horse, feeling that I must be in a position to move rapidly if I saw Wiggins approaching. If Dick eluded his wrathful pursuers he would be on the lookout somewhere, awaiting his own time, and if he saw Wiggins rushing madly for the house he might yet circumvent us.

I satisfied myself that Cecilia and Pepperton were still plainly visible from the garden, and I knew that for the time she was safe. I gained the high point in the road from which Hezekiah and I had observed Dick on guard at noon and waited. Remembering the fine figure the philosopher had made against the sky, I dismounted and rested by a stone wall where I could watch with less risk of being seen from a distance.

I at once saw matters that interested me immensely. Dick had thrown off the other suitors and was rapidly crossing the fields toward Hopefield. When I caught sight of him he was just leaving the orchard where Hezekiah and I had held our memorable interview. A long stretch of rough pasture lay before him, and he settled down to a quick trot. He took several fences without lessening his gait, crossed the stile like a flash a little later and was out of sight.

As I turned to my horse I heard the swift patter of hoofs and saw a man and woman galloping furiously toward me. They were rapidly nearing the ridge, and their horses were springing over the firm white road in prodigious leaps. Wiggins had got my message. Hezekiah had met him in the road and was urging him on. As they came nearer I saw that Wiggins had taken fire at last.

"Orton said some one was killed—who—what—who?"

"I just picked him up five minutes ago. He doesn't know anything," said Hezekiah, "and you don't tell him. Remember the rules. What's doing?" she inquired coolly.

To Be Continued.

Woodman Circle Benefit.

From Saturday's Daily.

The members of the Woodman Circle last evening had charge of the Gem theater and the proceeds of the performance will go to the lodge. The ladies of this splendid order are rustlers and never let an opportunity slip by for the benefit of the lodge, and have gradually increased the membership of the lodge here until they have one of the largest in the city and also one of the most flourishing.

Ulcers and Skin Troubles.

If you are suffering with any old, running or fever sores, ulcers, boils, eczema or other skin troubles, get a box of Bucklen's Arnica Salve and you will get relief promptly. Mrs. Bruce Jones of Birmingham, Ala., suffered from an ugly ulcer for nine months and Bucklen's Arnica Salve cured her in two weeks. Will help you. Only 25c. Recommended by F. G. Fricke & Co.

Some Fine Strawberries.

Our good friend, L. H. Peterson, who resides in the southwest part of the city, was a caller Thursday at this office and left two boxes of the finest strawberries we have seen this season. Mr. Peterson has been very successful in the raising of this fruit and the samples he left here certainly speak well for his ability along this line.

Gets Fingers Washed.

From Saturday's Daily.

Anton Toman, who is employed in the Burlington machine shops, has been enjoying a short vacation from his duties the past two days as a result of getting two of his fingers tangled up in the machinery. The injuries are not very serious but painful and annoying to the young man.

Boy Bit by Dog.

This afternoon as Clyde Brittain was passing along one of the houses near the jail a vicious dog ran out and bit him quite severely on the calf of the leg, inflicting a very painful wound that is was necessary to have dressed by a physician.

COMMISSIONER'S PROCEEDINGS

Plattsmouth, Neb., June 2, 1912. Board met pursuant to adjournment. Present, C. R. Jordan, C. E. Heebner and Julius A. Pittz, County Commissioners; L. C. Morgan, County Clerk. Minutes of previous session read and approved, when the following business was transacted in regular form: Bill presented, Ed Donat tax receipt No. 7089, dated May 26, 1912, "paid under protest for the reason over assessed, and the same was refused on the grounds 'no jurisdiction in the matter,' and tax receipt returned to Mr. Donat.

It hereby ordered that the County Clerk be instructed to notify the Nebraska Telephone Co. to move their poles on the west side of the road No. 24 in the NW 1/4 of section 12-12-12, it appearing that the poles are now in the road 16 feet from the property line.

The following claims were allowed on the general fund:

James Murray, helping county assessor on Manley road	5.00
C. W. Bator & Co., coal to Kusbinsky, Collins and farm	14.50
Hans Olsson, mds. to Lizzie Craik	16.90
C. E. Heebner, salary and laundry	72.90
Hans Johnson, mds. to Lizzie Craik, Weeping Water City, 3rd ward	5.00
Hans Johnson, mds. to Mrs. Winchel	5.25
Ell D. Keckler, room for election, Center precinct	5.00
Hammond & Stephens, supplies to county superintendent	22.60
E. Manspeaker, salary	45.90
Hans Stevens, salary and laundry	78.90
D. C. Morgan, salary and expense	215.15
Weeping Water, Republican, printing to county	27.50
G. H. Manners, auto hire to commissioners	12.00
Union Ledger, notice to Board of Equalization	.75
A. E. Palling, assessing Salt Creek precinct	108.12
L. Appleman, assessing Greenwood precinct	114.54
A. F. Nickels, assessing Rock Bluffs precinct	174.64
J. C. Wandrich, assessing Nehawka precinct	191.60
E. P. Betts, assessing Tipton precinct	84.20
J. W. Glines, assessing Center precinct	93.24
J. D. Bramblet, assessing Liberty precinct	194.00
A. D. Bennett, assessing Plattsmouth City	192.00
P. E. Ruffner, assessing Plattsmouth City	192.00
G. W. Snyder, assessing Plattsmouth precinct	134.00
Albert Heneger, assessing Mt. Pleasant precinct	199.13
J. W. Ruland, assessing Weeping Water precinct	199.16
John T. Crozier, assessing Weeping Water City	84.46
The Plattsmouth Journal, printing and supplies to county	25.95
The Plattsmouth Water Co., water to court house	14.10
M. Archer, State vs H. Johnson	4.20
C. D. Quinton, same	4.28
C. H. Olson, same	1.00
C. M. Seyler, same	2.50
C. R. Jordan, salary	45.10
C. H. Taylor, salary and expense	126.48
Neb. Lighting Co., gas to court house, jail and street lamp	22.66
Wm. Holly, mds. to county and papers	11.20
Plattsburgh, Turvering room for election, Plattsmouth 2d ward	6.00
J. H. Tams, salary	85.00
J. W. Brendel, assessing Avoca precinct	192.05
Mary E. Foster, salary and expense	165.62
Louis Keckler, help to county surveyor on Manley road	3.00
G. P. Eastwood, mds. to court house	.20
S. E. Girardeau, mds. to Mrs. Allen	10.45
Fred Patterson, salary	48.00
Julius A. Pittz, salary and mileage	12.90
W. K. Fox, stamps	7.62
A. W. White, mds. to Fullerton and Johnson	20.00
Hillyard Mfg. Co., sanitation help to court house	74.25
Lorenz Bros., mds. to county farm	50.90
J. Hatt & Son, mds. to Ellen Mayes	7.00
A. E. Bach, mds. to Monroe	3.90

The following claims were allowed on the Road fund:

J. C. Niday, road work, Road District No. 11	\$109.20
A. P. Seibert, same, No. 11	115.90
A. W. Krooklow, same, No. 8	97.00
Ben Beckman, same, No. 10	179.00
Robert Swacker, same, No. 6	24.00
Treasurer Louisville Village, proportion R. D. No. 18	220.00
Phelan & Davis, nails, etc. to Road District No. 10	24.40
E. T. Tool, road work, Road District No. 15	29.40
The Farmers Lumber, Coal and Implement Co., lumber, Road District No. 7	54.93
E. T. Tool, coal, hardware, etc. to Road District No. 7	155.20
The Farmers Lumber, Coal and Impl. Co., lumber to Road District No. 6	27.75
T. F. Stroud & Co., scrapper for Road District No. 5	19.50
Wm. Ash, road work, Road District No. 13	27.50
W. M. Boucher, same, No. 10	12.80
C. Roseow, same, No. 16	2.50
T. A. Butterfield, same, No. 6	27.65
J. Altonse, same	92.00
W. P. Yoho, same, No. 12	1.50
J. C. Lomeyer, same, No. 3	85.00
F. W. Wilken, same, No. 8	27.00
S. B. Jordan, same, No. 14	4.00
L. Lamb, same	3.50
S. J. Waldraft, same, No. 6	24.10
Joe Allen, same, No. 16	125.00
W. M. Boucher, same	12.80
A. J. Bird, same	9.00
A. J. Bird, same, No. 6	29.75
J. I. Wagner, same, No. 4	58.90
Ed James, same, No. 12	25.60
G. P. Eastwood, mds. to Road District No. 1	1.25
J. H. Latron, hardware to Road District No. 15	9.35
Harvey Rasp, road work, Road District No. 16	6.00
G. W. Leach, same, No. 11	63.20
Walter Beers, same, No. 27	35.45
Geo. W. Voss Co., lumber, Road District No. 12	22.10
Fred Patterson, surveying roads, Inheritance Tax fund	5.80
Wm. H. Rush, road work, Road District No. 7	178.70
Wm. Hassler, repair work, Road District No. 1	45.50
Wm. Gillman, helping surveyor, Inheritance Tax fund	3.00
John F. Weicheln, road work, Road District No. 1	58.90
George Poissal, grading roads, Road District No. 17	177.25
Village Treasurer, vivo, proportion road fund, Road District No. 28	160.00
Same, Greenwood, same, No. 29	200.00
Same, Eagle, same, No. 18	149.00
Same 80, Bend, same, No. 19	70.00
Same Elmwood, same, No. 25	300.00
Same Weeping Water, same, No. 24	500.00
Same Murdock, same, No. 21	120.00
Ben Beckman, commissioners' road fund, road work, Road District No. 10	79.10

The following claims were allowed on the Bridge fund:

The Farmers Lumber, Coal and Impl. Co., bridge material	5.59
A. E. Seibert, bridge work	6.50
Geo. W. Voss Co., bridge lumber	68.55
George Poissal, bridge work	214.24
Wm. H. Rush, same	25.75
Nebraska Construction Co., estimate on account bridge work	1000.00

Board adjourned to meet in regular session Monday, June 16, 1912. D. C. MORGAN, County Clerk.

NEW IDEA

-Manure Spreaders-

The Best Manure Spreader ON THE MARKET TODAY!

AVERY Corn Planters and Cultivators!

In fact it is my intention to carry a general line of Farm Implements of all kinds. Call and see me for whatever you may need.

D. B. EBERSOLE,

SOUTH SIXTH ST., Plattsmouth, Neb.

friends and look after some matters of business with the merchants for a few hours.

Adam Fornoff of Cedar Creek was in the city today for a few hours attending to some matters of business.

L. H. Young of near Nehawka was in the city today for a few hours looking after some trading with the merchants.

E. M. Godwin of the vicinity of Murray was up today from his farm to attend to some matters of business with the merchants.

Andrew Schoeman of Louisville was a business visitor in this city yesterday and took time to call at this office and renew his subscription.

W. G. Meisinger came in from his farm, west of this city, this morning to attend to some trading. He reports the rainfall as being light in his section.

F. L. Burdick of Nehawka was attending to business matters in this city today. He called at this office and ordered the Plattsmouth Journal sent to his address for a year.

John Kraeger, one of the good reliable farmers of Mt. Pleasant precinct, drove up this morning from his home and spent several hours looking after some trading and visiting with his friends.

Mrs. Dr. E. C. Graves of Peru, Neb., who has been visiting her friend, Miss Olive Jones, for a few days, departed this morning for Omaha to visit for a short time before returning home.

Best Laxative for the Aged. Old men and women feel the need of a laxative more than young folks, but it must be safe and harmless and one which will not cause pain. Dr. King's New Life Pills are especially good for the aged, for they act promptly and easily. Price 25c. Recommended by F. G. Fricke & Co.

Local News

From Friday's Daily.

Adam Hild and wife of near Mynard came in yesterday to attend the funeral of Mrs. Fred Ohlenhausen.

Fred Beins of Havelock, who was called here by the death of his brother, August Beins, departed last evening for his home.

R. L. Propst of Mynard was a passenger this morning for the metropolis, where he was called to look after some matters of business.

Jake Hild and wife were in the city for a few hours yesterday, coming in to attend the funeral of the late Mrs. Ohlenhausen at St. Paul's church.

Misses Mayme and Rose O'Donnell came up from Union Wednesday evening for a visit with relatives and to attend the Larson-Edwards wedding.

C. F. Harris of Union was in the city today for a few hours, being called as a witness in the case of the First National bank vs. Jefferson Cross, et al.

Herman Beck and wife, from west of Murray, came up this morning and were passengers on the early Burlington train for the metropolis to spend the day.

Philip A. Meisinger and brother, Ed Meisinger, were passengers this morning for Glenwood, Iowa, where they attended to some business matters for a short time.

Gus Hollenberg and R. W. Wright, of the vicinity of Murray, were visitors in this city yesterday and called at this office, at which time Mr. Hollenberg subscribed for the Semi-Weekly Journal.

From Saturday's Daily.

William Puls of Murray came up this morning to visit his

-BARGAINS-

IN

-Corn Planters!-

Sure drop, variable edge drop, high wheel

\$36.00

WHILE THEY LAST!

AUGUST GORDER

Plattsmouth, Nebraska