

The Siege of the Seven Suitors

By
MEREDITH NICHOLSON

HEZEKIAH bade Wiggins exchange horses with her, and while he was reading the saddle girths I explained to Ezekiah the situation at Hopefield and told her of Dick's scamper across the fields.

"There's no use fooling with this thing any more. I'll take Wiggy to the house and lock him up until I've been numbered six. It's safest."

"Not much it isn't. I don't intend that Cecilia shall have the pleasure of refusing you."

"I'd like to know why not. It's only to fill the gap."

"Oh," said Ezekiah, "that would be an embarrassment to me all the rest of my life. Listen carefully. Take Wiggy in by the back way and give him a picture book to look at. Leave Cecilia alone on the terrace when you're all ready and see what happens. If Dick's on his way to the house he's going to do something, and he must feel the edge of my displeasure. I owe him a few on general principles."

"What does all this mean? You say there's nothing wrong at the house?" began Wiggins as we left Ezekiah and started toward Hopefield.

"Nothing whatever the matter. Everything perfectly all right, but you've got to keep mum now and do what I tell you. I've worked hard for you, old man, and when it's all over I'm going to send you a bill for professional services. Come."

I urged my horse to its utmost, and Wiggins rode steadily beside me. The fright Orton had given him had done my friend good, and I felt that I was dealing with a live man at last.

"I'll tell you all about this after we have a good night cigar tonight."

We rode direct to the stable, and I took Wiggins to my room by the back stairs and bade him help himself to my raiment. He was perfectly tractable, and I was glad to see that he trusted implicitly to my guidance.

I met Miss Octavia in the lower hall. She was just in from the kennels.

"I hope, Arnold, that you have not been without entertainment. By the way, if you should by any chance see Ezekiah you will kindly intimate to her that if she returns that mare she borrowed this morning in reasonably good condition I will overlook her indiscretion in taking it from the stable without permission."

She did not wait for a reply, but continued on to her room, and I went direct to the terrace. Cecilia and Pepperton were just going into the house to look up a book or piece of music which they had been discussing. Cecilia was making herself interesting, as she so well knew how to do, and she seemed in no wise anxious.

"We had forgotten tea," she said. "Aunt Octavia has just ordered it."

"She and Mr. Pepperton may have their tea. I believe the air outside will do you good for a little longer—so if you don't mind, Pepperton, Miss Hollister will resume her promenade alone."

Pep has told me since that he thought me quite mad that afternoon. I bade Cecilia patrol the long terrace slowly. She turned up the collar of the covert coat and obeyed, laughing a little nervously, but asking no questions. The scene could not have been more charmingly set. The great house loomed darkly behind her; beneath lay the garden, over which the dusk was stealing goldenly.

She paused suddenly as I watched from the window and I stepped out to see what had attracted her attention. There into the garden from its farthest entrance fled the six suitors who had previously come to sit beneath the windows of their stricken lady. Having failed to visit their wrath upon the perfidious Dick they had changed their clothes and returned to Hopefield. If Ezekiah had not expressly commanded me not to become the sixth man, I should have offered myself on the spot and waited only until Cecilia had made the inevitable answer before summoning Wiggins to end the whole affair. Such, however, was not to be the order of events.

The procession, headed by Ormsby, was within a few yards of the terrace. Cecilia, apparently unconscious of their proximity, continued her promenade. In a moment she must recognize them, ask them into the house, give them tea and otherwise destroy my hope of securing her happiness before the day's end.

A chorus of yelps and barks, as of dogs suddenly released, greeted my ear. The oncoming suitors heard it, too, and the line wobbled uncertainly. Then round the house swept mastiffs, hounds, terriers—a collection of prize winners such as few kennels ever boasted—loping gayly in unbounded freedom toward unknown and forbidden pastures.

The vanguard of fox terriers leaped down into the garden, with the rest of the pack at their heels. Happy dogs, to find grown men ready for a gamboll. Four of the suitors found one

of the proper exits into the road; two leaped the box hedge on the other side without shaking a leaf.

I ran round the house, stumbling through the rear guard of the troupe canines and passing the kennel master, who had rallied the stable men and was in hot pursuit.

"Somebody turned 'em out—turned 'em out!" he shouted and swept profanely by. The gate of the kennel yard stood open. A familiar figure, running low, paused and then sprinted nimbly along the paddock fence. A white sweater was distinguishable for a moment on a stone wall, then it followed a pair of enchanted heels into oblivion.

Time had been passing swiftly, and the shadows were deepening. I retraced my steps toward the terrace, hearing the cries of pursued and pursuers growing fainter. I had not yet gained a position from which I could see Cecilia, when a man appeared some distance ahead of me, walking guardedly in one of the garden plots. He came uncertainly, pausing to glance about, yet evidently led toward the terrace by a definite purpose. All may be fair in love and war, but I confess to a feeling of pity for John Stewart Dick as I watched him slowly advancing to his fate. He was going boldly now, and I felt a sudden liking for him, nor can I believe that he was other than a manly fellow with sound brains and a good heart.

I reasoned as I marked his approach to the terrace that he had been loitering in the neighborhood, probably watching Cecilia and Pepperton, and when the architect retired he had assumed that the sixth man had spoken. The appearance of his former comrades of the Inn had doubtless disturbed him, and I had me, then, thanks to the resourceful Ezekiah, they were large routed, and the coast was clear.

I watched him draw nearer to Cecilia as I have watched deer go down to a lake to drink. He would speak now, I was confident of it, and I stole round to the side entrance and sent word to Wiggins to go to the drawing room and wait for me.

Miss Octavia and Pepperton still lingered over their teacups. The row made by the fugitives from her kennels had not, it seemed, penetrated to the library, and Miss Octavia bade me join the talk, which had to do, I remember, with some project for a national hall of fame that had incurred her characteristic displeasure. A hall of immortal rascals in pillories she thought far likelier to please the masses.

In fifteen minutes I saw Cecilia crossing the hall. She stopped where I could see her quite plainly and thrust her hand into the pocket of her coat. Out flashed the silver notebook. She made a swift notation with the pencil that now, I knew, wrote the fate of the sixth man.

I went out and spoke to her and walked beside her to the drawing room door, where Hartley Wiggins was waiting.

Miss Octavia had risen when I returned to the library, and it was time to dress for dinner.

"Just a moment, Miss Hollister. Something of great interest is about to occur." And I made excuses for detaining her for perhaps five minutes, not more.

"You have never yet deceived me, Arnold Ames, and such is my confidence in you that if you tell me that something interesting will soon occur I have no reason to doubt you. It is worth remembering, however, that fowl is not improved by prolonged roasting."

I heard Wiggins laugh in the hall, and Miss Octavia raised her head. Then Cecilia came into the room and walked directly to her aunt.

"Aunt Octavia, here is the little silver notebook you gave me in Paris. I have just written Mr. Wiggins' name in it, and as I have no further use for the book, I return it with my love and thanks."

Without a word Miss Octavia turned to the wall and pressed the button twice.

"William," she said as the butler appeared, "you may serve Oriana 97, and be careful not to freeze it to death; and the hour for dinner is changed to 8. Arnold, you may yourself drive to Gooseberry bungalow for my brother

and niece. They dine with me tonight."

Ezekiah and I built our bungalow in the orchard where on that October afternoon I found her munching a red apple on the stone wall. She is the most scrupulous of housewives and only now took me to task for scattering the hearth with fragments of the notes

from which this narrative has been written. She has just been reading these last pages with meditative brown eyes and not without occasionally reaching for the pen and retouching some sentence in which, she says, soot from my chimney doctoring days has clogged the ink. Cecilia and Wiggins live at Hopefield across the fields. Miss Octavia insisted on this, for the reason that the sword of Hartley's great-grandfather, found in the chest under the old house, gives him inalienable rights to the premises. Miss Octavia and her brother Bassford are traveling

abroad and enjoying those mild adventures to which they are both temperamentally inclined.

My name is joined to Pepperton's on his office door. Pepperton proposed this arrangement, with so many assurances of faith in me that I could not refuse him; but I knew well enough that Miss Octavia had first put it into his head. So while I have called myself a chimney doctor in these pages, I am again an architect.

"You ought to say something more about the Asolando," Ezekiah has just a Democratic minority organization of forty or more representatives will at tempt to upset the president's free wool program. It is expected that the administration will be sustained by a large majority.

Senate leaders have pledged to the president their support of the sugar and wool provisions as finally accepted in the house. Senator Myers of Montana, who has been counted on by some of the anti-free wool forces as their ally, has informed members of the finance committee and has stated publicly that he favors the free wool program and will uphold the president's course as to this schedule.

The full Democratic membership of the house resumed consideration of the tariff behind closed doors today.

Republican members of the house ways and means committee who had no part in preparing the Underwood bill are now working on substitute cotton and wool schedules.

Alaskan railroad legislation, which also is to be the subject of senate hearings, will be pressed for early action. Senator Pittman, chairman of the territories committee, will attempt to have an Alaskan government-rail road bill passed through the senate before the session is taken up.

Murmured at my shoulder, "Every body will ask whether we ever went back there."

"Of course we go back there. Ezekiah, every time you come to town and can get hold of me."

"You'd better explain that Aunt Octavia started the tea room and still owns it and makes money out of it, though she rarely goes there, but sends Freda, the maid, to collect the profits. And it won't do any harm to say that when she met you there that day she decided at once that you would be a proper husband for me. Any one who reads your book will want to know that."

Ezekiah is always right. So herewith the chronicle.

The New Laureate.

(With acknowledgment to A. C. Swinburne.)

Now who shall sing for Britain
As English laureate,
In rhythmic words, flame written,
To bravely serve the state
And bid her doff the ermine
Of nestling moths and vermin.
Her kingly garb of lies,
Cast it aside forever,
From dark tradition sever
Her soul and bid it rise?

No weaking bard, time serving,
Who'll, basely bidden, write
False tributes, undeserving,
Blind, groping in the night;
To praise in rime disjointed
Some ruler of anointed,
A ghost with tinselled head,
And sing of royal wassail
While thrall and serf and vassal
Still vainly strive for bread.

But one with Milton's lyre,
With pen to pierce each wrong,
With Swinburne to inspire
His red blood beats of song,
With rude but fearless diction
Destroy the purple fiction
Of medieval night,
All ancient falsehoods scorning
And hail the newer morning
Of man's diviner right.

—Richard Linthicum in New York World.

EX-PRESIDENT'S DOUBLE WILL LECTURE ON RUM.

Retired Pittsburgh Police Sergeant to
Talk on Drink Evil.

What to do with the doubles of our ex-presidents has been determined in the case of Thomas J. Morley, retired police sergeant of Pittsburgh, who looks so much like William H. Taft that when Mr. Taft saw him the former president fairly gasped in astonishment.

Tom will descend on the ravages of the demon rum. He will lecture to railroad men under the auspices of the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie railroad in connection with the nation wide "safety first" campaign.

"I wrestled with drunks more than twenty years in the big police station in Pittsburgh," said Morley, "and now I am going to wrestle with the evil itself." Morley is built for wrestling. He is physically and mentally fitted for it.

"If ever a man had experience with drink, either as its devotee or an observer, I think I am that man. I have attended funerals of my former pals and associates who died from the effects of strong drink. About fifteen years ago I was almost down as a result of it, but I made up my mind that devotion to drink and neglect of family were mistakes and beneath a real man, so I cut them out."

Morley is more than fifty years old, possesses a good stage appearance, has a deep voice and in addition to a good memory has a natural knack of "putting across" what he has to say.

General Manager Yobe of the Pittsburgh and Lake Erie heard in a roundabout way of Morley's ambition and realized the power for good a man like Morley would be to a corporation.

As a result, through L. H. Turner, superintendent of motive power of the road, Tom Morley will make his debut on the temperance platform before several hundred of the road's employees in Groveport, O., in the near future.

THE END.

COURTHOUSE HID OLD PAPERS

Find Documents Signed by Presidents Jackson, Arthur and Grant.

Valuable papers, which have lain in a closet in the Greeley (Colo.) courthouse for years apparently forgotten, were unearthed the other day by County Clerk J. E. Snook, the very existence of which had been entirely unknown in the past decade. Included in the lot were a number of land patents for which the owners have been invited to call.

One was issued to Jeremiah Williams, a corporal in Captain Clum's company in the war of 1812, in exchange for scrip which he got for services. The patent was signed by Andrew Jackson on Oct. 1, 1837.

Another was granted to Elizabeth Cochran on Oct. 20, 1874. This patent was issued while U. S. Grant was president of the United States.

Land patents were also issued to James Russell and to Samuel Roberts in 1870.

President Chester A. Arthur signed the patent granted to Michael Carey, and there is also one for John Benson signed by the same hand.

CARDS IN CAPITOL PILLAR.

Deck Buried Eighty-one Years Ago is Found at Jefferson City.

A deck of playing cards excellently preserved was taken from between two of the stones used in the construction of pillars which decorated the entrance of the old state capitol at Jefferson, Mo., which was destroyed by fire some time ago.

The pillars were constructed of sandstone blocks eighty-one years ago. The cards were found in a hole made to hoist the heavy stones into place. There was no name or writing upon the cards.

Daughter at Baughman Home.

From Tuesday's Daily.

This morning at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Baughman, who reside on the Dovey section, west of this city, a fine new daughter made her appearance at an early hour. The little lady is of the regulation weight and the delighted parents think she is just the sweetest little girl that has made her appearance for some time.

Suffragists to Storm Resorts.

The strenuous suffragists will carry their war to the summer resorts in the mountains and by the seashore. Several hundred "equal suffrage" orators will stump the pleasure resorts of the country during the summer months from Bar Harbor to the Pacific coast. Next fall the suffragist clans will gather in Washington and make ready for an attack on the house.

U. S. GOVERNMENT CROP REPORT THE WORK OF 130,000 PEOPLE

Vast Army of Correspondents Engaged In Collecting Important Facts. Of Vital Importance to Business Welfare of the Nation.

WHEN the department of agriculture sends out its monthly report with the latest crop news in it few people realize that more than 130,000 reporters have had a part in gathering the facts therein set forth. Everybody knows about the crop reports, but not everybody knows how they are collected and how the estimates are reached.

For instance, when the department says that the average condition of winter wheat on April 1 was 91.6 per cent of a normal against 80.6 on April 1, 1912, what is the basis of the percentage? Is some previous year taken as the base and the percentage figured from that? And, if so, how is the base year selected?

It isn't. The percentage doesn't mean any comparison with any other year. The percentage is based on what the people in the vicinage expect of their land. A farmer can tell pretty well what the yield ought to be. If he knows that it ought to produce twenty-five bushels and he does not look this year for more than twenty bushels he reports that he estimates 80 per cent.

And it is the farmer, generally speaking, who furnishes the information on which the bureau of statistics of the agricultural department makes its estimates. Most of the 130,000 reporters are not paid. They are classified as "voluntary correspondents," which means that they furnish the information about their respective regions without getting a cent for it. The only thing they get out of it is that they receive the publications of the department of agriculture without having to write and ask for them.

The Department's Staff.

In each county which has any agricultural importance there is a correspondent of the department, who has several assistants who can be called in if necessary. He furnishes a report for the county. In addition there is a correspondent in each township. They do not furnish their reports to the county correspondent, but send them in directly to the department of agriculture, which checks up the estimates if there is a disagreement and figures out from the different reports the estimate for the state.

In addition the department has what it calls "field agents," who travel over several states at a time and report what they observe, and it has state correspondents, who conduct their work independently of the "voluntary correspondents" who are reporting directly to Washington.

The voluntary correspondents are subdivided as county correspondents, township correspondents, individual farmers and special cotton correspondents. The number of counties of agricultural importance in the United States is approximately 2,800. The correspondent selected by the department in each of these counties is chosen with special reference to his qualifications, and each is expected to secure data from his several assistants in different parts of the county, and also to supplement these with information obtained from his own observation and knowledge.

Many Special Reports.

Besides these county correspondents, with their assistants, and the township correspondents (the latter numbering 32,000), at the end of the growing season reports are received from a large number of individual farmers and planters on the results of their own individual farming operations during the year. Valuable data are also secured from 30,000 mills and elevators.

As for the correspondents employed by the department, the special field service consists of twenty traveling agents, each of whom covers a separate group of states. These agents, who are chosen for their statistical training and practical knowledge of crops, travel systematically over the districts assigned to them. It is their business to question the best informed persons in each neighborhood which they visit—farmers, country merchants, implement dealers and others—and to collect information in every way. Their reports are rendered monthly, sometimes by mail and sometimes by telegraph, and if conditions require more frequent reports they are made.

States Gather Statistics.

Each of the state statistical agents reports for his state as a whole and maintains a corps of correspondents entirely independent of those reporting directly to the department at Washington. The state statistical correspondents report monthly to the state agent on schedules furnished them.

The reports are then tabulated and weighed according to the relative product or area of the given crop in each county represented and are summarized by the state agent, who coordinates and analyzes them in the light of his personal knowledge of conditions and from them prepares his reports to the department.

The special lists of voluntary correspondents, outside of the county and township correspondents, are widely varied. The "individual farmers," as

they are listed at the department, supply information at harvest time regarding yields. Then there are what are called "special price" correspondents, who report concerning the prices received by farmers for their products.

How Figures Are Obtained.

When all the separate independent tabulations and computations of reports received from the voluntary correspondents are received, they are brought together by states and, in conjunction with the reports from the department's salaried field agents and state statistical agents, form the basis of each of the monthly reports issued by the bureau of statistics. The division of domestic crop reports tabulates and computes the results of all the reports received from the various classes of voluntary correspondents.

Despite the fact that these voluntary correspondents receive no pay, they seem to like the work, to judge by the length of time they stick to it. An inquiry made in January, 1912, showed that of the entire list of county correspondents 88 per cent had served more than one year, 67 per cent more than two years, 42 per cent more than six years, 21 per cent more than eleven years, 4 per cent more than twenty-six years and 1 per cent more than thirty-six years. The average length of service of all the county correspondents was about seven years.

The department considers this stability of service as evidence of a high standard of quality. It believes that careless or indifferent farmers would not take the pains to report, month after month and year after year, without being paid.

How Reports Are Handled.

All the reports of the state statistical agents and special field agents are sent directly to the secretary of agriculture. He retains in his possession those of the reports which deal with certain crops of a highly speculative character—corn, wheat, oats and cotton—and does not turn them over to the bureau of statistics until the morning of the day when the bureau is to issue its report. But the reports on other crops are delivered by him to the bureau as soon as he receives them, to enable their tabulation long enough in advance of the preparation of each crop report to render them ready for use when they are needed. The precaution in the case of the speculative crops was adopted as a result of the "cotton leak" scandal of some years ago, when advance information got out to interested parties.

The reports of the voluntary correspondents are tabulated and computed and the results turned over to the chief of the bureau of statistics to be tabulated in connection with the reports of the state and special field agents.

Precautions Against Leakage.

When the monthly crop estimates are finally made additional precautions are taken against leakage. The crop reporting board, which does the final work, consists of five members, with the chief of the bureau as chairman, and its personnel is changed each month. The meetings are held in the office of Chief Victor H. Olmsted, and the doors are locked and all the telephones disconnected.

It may be said that, after all and despite the numerous correspondents who check one another up, the reports on crops issued by the bureau of statistics cannot be mathematically exact since they are gathered from the conclusions of farmers, interviews with merchants, etc. This is true. The reports do not purport to be other than estimates. They are not the results of actual enumeration, as are the figures reported decennially by the census bureau.

But, while they may not be exactly accurate, as no estimate can be, they are given as the best available data and represent the fullest information at the time they are made.

The government has been doing the work of collecting agricultural statistics for fifty years, but the present broad scope of the work is a matter of only a few years. It was widened into its present large field under Secretary Wilson and multiplied many times in size and efficiency in the last six or seven years.

FORMER PLATTSMOUTH BOY IN THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

The following item from the Omaha Bee of this morning will be of much interest to the older residents of this city, as Colonel Dorrington was reared in this city and married here, but removed with his family many years ago to the western part of the state:

Colonel Al Dorrington, formerly of Chadrón, now head of prisons in the Philippines, visiting Mayor James C. Dahlman, declared in favor of a workhouse for prisoners and believes all prisoners should be taught some useful trade.

Colonel Dorrington called on the mayor along with Gould Dietz and the three discussed prison reforms at length. Colonel Dorrington says he has charge of about 10,000 prisoners in the Philippines and all of them are taught some trade, which sends them out of prison able to earn an honest living.

After a visit at Lincoln Colonel Dorrington will leave for Washington. He is on his vacation, part of which was spent at his old home in Chadrón.

Daughter at Baughman Home.

From Tuesday's Daily.

This morning at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Baughman, who reside on the Dovey section, west of this city, a fine new daughter made her appearance at an early hour. The little lady is of the regulation weight and the delighted parents think she is just the sweetest little girl that has made her appearance for some time.



"William," she said, "you may serve Oriana 97."