

WICKLY'S WOODS

By H. W. TAYLOR

CHAPTER I.

Coming back from the small dry goods store that served the government for a postoffice, John Wickly, as everybody familiarly called the head of the Wickly family, was observed to be moving at a significantly rapid pace, and to have his head extraordinarily high in the air.

Mrs. Wickly, at the kitchen table ironing very diligently, saw him through the open window, dumped the smoothing iron suddenly and heavily upon the scorched section of an old and worn blanket and ran through the sitting room and out to the front door.

"Now what is it you've got this time, John? You needn't try to hide it. I know what it is, sir. I saw you start out of the postoffice on a trot the minute you broke it open—"

"Broke open the postoffice, ma? That's an indictable offense, punishable with fine and imprisonment," called out Miss Lizzie Wickly from her writing table in the sitting room.

"Wait till I come and box your ears, Miss Prunes and Miss Prisms. I was talking about the letter—not the post office. Of course I mentioned the post office. But—"

"That explanation is sufficient, ma. I won't mark you as low as zero for this; because I want to let you off before you make a more inexcusable mistake. What letter did you get? Suppose you bring the document in, and let's all discuss it."

"You'd better go on with your writing, my young lady. You're only trying to find some plausible excuse for leaving off. I know you, Miss. Now, I'll warrant that you haven't written two pages since you came in from hoeing the cabbage. Where is the letter, John? Don't keep a body waiting all day from her ironing. You won't have a clean thing for to-morrow—neither of you. And preaching at Mount Zion, too! Right under your noses."

"No, the preaching isn't through the minister's nose, like it was Sunday before last—we can survive its being under ours, can't we, pa?"

And Miss Lizzy could be seen through the "middle door" chucking in a very mellow, little good-natured laugh, as she sat at the small walnut writing table in the light of the west window, away from the sun, and shielded from observation of the passing public by a dozen trainings of morning glory vines, now gay with a profusion of variously tinted flowers, too pretty to be also sweet.

"Why, it's a letter from the honorable Mr. Biler concerning my—my estate, you know," said Mr. Wickly, endeavoring to put on an appearance of great unconcern, as if letters of the import of this one passed between the honorable Mr. Biler and himself every day of the seven on which Uncle Sam carries the mail about the continent.

"Now, John Wickly, you know there's more than that in that letter. Hand it here, till I read it myself. Don't you suppose I could tell by the way you struck out for home that there was something more than usual in this letter? Now give it here, and come in till I read it."

And the sturdy Mrs. Wickly held out her hand and full-veined right hand in so imperious a manner that Mr. John Wickly was constrained to draw the document from the pocket of his black alpaca summer coat and deliver it with a triumphant grin into the hard palm aforesaid.

"Now then, you read that and see if it doesn't mean something. Some people that I am acquainted slightly with have often expressed doubts on the subject of the great Wickly estates in England."

Here he leered triumphantly in the direction of the walnut writing table and the morning glory vines that just now began to rustle their green gray leaves in the prairie breeze.

"But after one glance at the contents of this letter, I don't think any person of mature judgment would—"

"Now, pa, you wait till I read it," calls out Miss Lizzy, laughing still, but not so gaily—in fact, with just the faintest sound of vexation in the laugh or shade of it upon her fair brow, perhaps. "You know I always get a different meaning out of those letters—every one of them. And haven't the meanings that I got out of them been much more nearly the true meanings than those that you and ma got out of them?"

"Why, Liz, that's about the size of it," said John, sitting down in the doorway at the feet of his wife, who was already deep in the mystery of the letter as to be oblivious to everything else. "You've been a great deal nearer right about them than I have been, anyhow. But then it may be said in view of this letter that the others were preliminary? Heretofore the letters have been inquiries into family history, the tracing of relatives and relationships, and so on. But this—"

"Why there's to be a great meeting of the heirs at Chicago next Tuesday!" cried Mrs. Wickly, in the truest burst of enthusiasm.

"A meeting of the heirs!" exclaimed Miss Lizzy in amazement, and with real interest very plainly depicted upon her very expressive countenance.

"A meeting of all the heirs," repeated Mr. Wickly, with that grave judicial and impartial nod of the head which discloses the entire lack of any merely personal and selfish interest of the speaker in the subject matter of the discourse.

"The heirs and their counsel meet there for the purpose of—of—what is the exact language of the letter on that point, Matt?" said Mr. Wickly, jerking his wife's apron gently, to call her

back to the things of this particular portion of the great world. "What is the exact language of the letter on that point?"

"Heb! Why, lemme see! Yes! Here it is! For the purpose of determining upon the first step to be taken; and if thought advisable, to select and secure some one of the counsel for their heirs to go direct and at once to England and make the proper examination of all the records so as to enable him to see exactly what proofs it will be necessary for them to make in order to obtain possession of the property." There; that's the exact language of the letter. And nothing, in my opinion, can be clearer than that," said Mrs. Wickly, holding the letter in her hand, and very manifestly appealing to the young lady at the table for confirmation of her conclusion.

The young lady at the table sat absent, and perhaps lazily, drumming upon her pretty, white front teeth with the tip of the ebony handle of her pen.

"What do you think of it, Lizzy?" calls out Mr. John Wickly, without looking up, and pretending to occupy himself in picking a "raveling" off his wife's blue calico dress.

"I think that means more expense," finally the young lady spoke, and without stopping the tattoo upon the pretty, white front teeth. "It means car fare and hotel bills at Chicago. And then it means contributions from the heirs to pay the expenses that the lawyer must incur in his trip to England. How many of the heirs are there?"

"Give a guess!" suggested Mr. Wickly, winking at his wife.

"Twenty?" suggested Miss Lizzy, looking sideways out of the corners of her large brown eyes.

"Thirteen hundred and eighty-four to date; and some of the back counties to hear from," said Mr. Wickly, in a burst of triumph at this surprising denouement.

"Thirteen hundred and eighty-four!" exclaimed both ladies in a breath.

"Thirteen hundred and eighty-four!" repeated Mr. Wickly, by way of emphasis.

"I consider that number an ill omen," said Miss Lizzy, again drumming upon the pretty, white front teeth and opening the large brown eyes to their widest in order to see, or not to see, between the greenish-gray leaves of the morning glory vines that ambuscade her as to the prying eyes of the side street and the more remote curiosity of the front street.

"Why?" asked both her auditors, facing round toward her, and remaining so in expectation of the somewhat delayed reply.

"Because it's exactly the amount I gave for the land. And because," she went on after a slight pause, and waving her ebony baton toward the range of hilly woodland that from the north and east reached almost to the village of Sandtown, "that is the exact amount of the two mortgages upon it now."

CHAPTER II.

The daughter resumed the drumming, and the mother, looking agast at this coincidence of ominous circumstances, cast her eyes down at her husband.

"Nonsense, Liz," said Mr. Wickly, smiling a little, but slightly annoyed, too, "what can that have to do with it? That's of no consequence at all. The land has grown in value on account of the rise in timber lands everywhere. Of course you couldn't have gotten such an amount upon a mortgage if the cash value of the land wasn't twice as much, at least. And it has again doubled in value—since the last mortgage, I mean."

"How?" asked the young lady, meaning to ask after the particular method of the increase in value.

"I asked at the bank; and Zell told me that you could have as much more upon the land whenever you wanted it."

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Mr. Wickly glanced keenly at his daughter, and saw a gratified smile come into her eyes and spread swiftly down to her dimpled cheeks and her red lips.

"Twice thirteen hundred and eighty-four are twenty-seven hundred and sixty-eight. And that means that my land is worth more than five thousand. I begin to feel somewhat like an heiress myself," she said smiling. "I guess you will have to go to Chicago, pa. I won't have to mortgage my land for that, you know."

Mr. Wickly drew a long breath of deep and satisfying relief, and the thoughtful puckers at the root of his nose rippled away in a smile that had the peculiarity of starting in the region of his eyes.

"And what becomes of the owner of thirteen hundred and eighty-four, Lizzy?" He laughed as he got up, and stretched himself down again as to his arms, shoulders and head, emitted what might be termed a notably contented little grunt at the conclusion of the yawn.

"John de Wickly died in 1384," said the young lady, with due solemnity. "He was the only member of the Wickly family at all noted, from its beginning down to myself. We stand as sort of milestones along the highway of the Wickly family—he the great John, noted for speaking and writing original and heterodox thoughts; and I to become noted for exactly the same things. Now there must be other likenesses in us. For of course I don't look like him."

"Look like him!" exclaimed Mr. Wickly with a laugh. "I should say not. John was as ugly an old mortal as you'd find in a day's ride—according to all the authentic likenesses of him. He must have had eyes like yours, Liz! Big round brown ones."

"Nonsense!" said the young lady, irreverently. "Everybody knows that all

those old paintings from which the engravings are made, exaggerated the eyes ludicrously. Why, they all have eyes exactly alike. Look at our presidents, for instance. Don't you see that all of them down to Jackson had those same big round black eyes, according to the artist? Maybe that was the one common trait that made them all presidents. But more likely it was the peculiarity of the artist—it was his style in eyes. Isn't that Mr. Mason yonder, ma? I wonder if he is coming here? If he is, I'm going out in the garden to hoe the beets. And you can tell him that I'm engaged for the present."

"Why can't you stay in and entertain your teacher and monitor, Miss Lizzy? I don't understand this new departure as to the garden, John," said Mrs. Wickly, mischievously. "I used to have all the hoeing and weeding of the garden to do until Mr. Mason came here to board. And now I declare I hardly know a garden when I see it. I heard him discoursing to Liz—"

"Now, ma!" said the daughter, with a very pretty frown due to the concentration of purpose in drawing on her gardening gloves, perhaps. "Now, ma! Didn't he have all that about the absolute necessity for physical labor for everybody, in those sermons that he preach—"

"Through his nose, Liz," suggested Mr. Wickly, with a shout of laughter, boisterous as a boy's.

"Now don't laugh that way, pa. Of course he'll hear you, and know that we're making fun of him. And I wouldn't want to insult him so grossly."

"Insult him, indeed! He's entirely too sensible a fellow to be insulted in any such trivial way. What an everlasting worker he is! That professor, J. Allison Huntley, must have an easy time of it. I can't see what's left for him to do! This man seems to manage all the digging, and all the gathering up of fossils, and all the writing in the field book. And he carries the surveying apparatus himself with one rodman and one chainman. I've seen them myself. And I've never seen Prof. Huntley at all. Not a glimpse of him."

"Yes! Isn't that queer? None of us have seen Prof. Huntley, although he has been here since the last of March—the 24th day exactly. I know, because I made the lettuce bed that day. I suppose he feels too high above the Sandtown people to present himself amongst them. I should think he'd come to hear his able assistant, Mr. Mason, preach of a Sunday, anyhow," put in Mrs. Wickly, with some energy and indignation.

"Why, ma, he takes the train home on Saturday morning or Friday evening! Of course he wouldn't care to stay over just to hear Mr. Mason preach! Isn't there all the wise preachers of the great city for him to pick and choose among? And isn't it right, too, for him to put all the coarse, mechanical work upon his employes? I don't see why you people should find so much fault with Prof. Huntley. I think he's a splendid gentleman, and I am dying to make his acquaintance. But I must hurry out. Mr. Mason is only across the street."

Shaking her head at her mother, Miss Lizzy, pulling up the long gloves, and pulling down the long sunbonnet, ran out into the garden, chirping a little fragment of a love ditty.

"She won't hear a word against that Huntley," said Mrs. Wickly with a laugh. "I believe the girl's in love with a man she never saw. So I do."

"Oh, like enough! Like enough! She isn't in love with Mason, though! Poor fellow! I absolutely pity him, Matt. She teases and worries him to death, whenever she can bring herself to bear his society for a minute! Now, she'll hoe that garden till high noon if he stays in the house that long. I've a mind to send him into the garden just to tease her a little."

"Better let her have her own way about it. If she doesn't like his company, the less she has of it the better she will be pleased. And I don't want her to get so she won't speak to him. For his preaching and example have certainly done a great deal in stimulating her to more persistent work at her writing. And that pleases me. Besides, she has obtained for her the writing up of a little summer resort pamphlet for some of the railroads, and she is to get nearly a hundred dollars for it. Think of that and other work that it will naturally bring! That's how she can let you go to Chicago this time."

Mr. John gave a low whistle, and muttering something to the effect that he supposed it was in reality a roof, Huntley's influence that was doing all these fine things for their daughter, turned to greet Mr. Mason, while Mrs. Wickly, declaring all her irons ice cold, ran back to the kitchen.

(To be continued.)

Get Lightning Snap Shots.

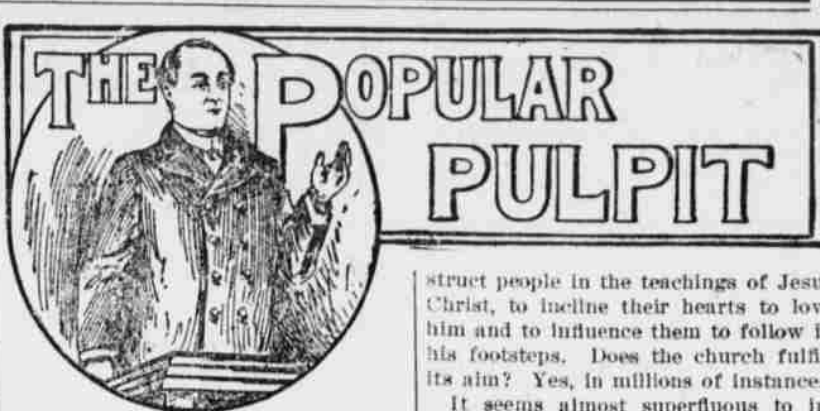
An Italian named Luciano Butti has perfected a photographic apparatus capable of registering the incredible number of 2,000 photographic impressions a second. The most minute and least rapid and casual movements of birds and insects on the wing, which have hitherto defied science, can, it is claimed, be registered with accuracy, thus opening a new world of natural observation to ornithologists. The films used cost \$10 a section for the 2,000 impressions.

Could Figure It Out.

"How long have you been out of work, my good man?" asked the head of the household as he parleyed with the rusty-looking caller.

"I was born in '68, sir."—Detroit Free Press.

Mere woman is not counted as a personal entity in the census of Siam, but the queen appears in bloomers and a fancy blouse at public receptions. Electric street cars, controlled by Danes, run at a fast pace over an eleven-mile route in and about Bangkok.



THE GREAT SEARCH.

"How should man be just with God."—Job ix, 2.

This cry, "How may I be right?" is the cry of the ages. Human history is the record of our attempt to answer it. Man is naturally a truth seeker, and this is the search of all truly great souls. The enduring monuments of literature are those that have in some measure answered this question. All things that have been worth while have helped us to know and to realize the right. Health, happiness, freedom, morality, all are but parts of the right; all are but sections of the sublime whole for which man ever seeks. The search manifests itself in different ways; it may be as science, the passion for the knowledge of the right relations of things; as justice, for right relations amongst men; as philosophy, as ethics, as religion. Back of all our life is the instinct of progress; we push forward the perfect. And perfection we now know rests not in more things but in bringing all the things that are into right relations with one another.

The idea that any man can be right regardless of others we scout as absurd. The ideal civilization we work for here, even the heaven we long for, is simply a condition of living where the things that separate, despoil, and introduce discord are no more. The hope of the race is to be in right relations with all things. All the great religions are as the footprints of peoples who have sought the truth that would lead them to be right and just with one another, with the world, and with the great unseen powers behind all being. Our universal sense of wrongness is but part of our passion for rightness.

The sense of imperfection and the desire for improvement have marked all religions that have influenced men. In the Jew this desire for righteousness was supreme. Job is but a type. Coming to himself amongst the ruin of all the things he counted most precious, he forgets their loss in his desire to solve the great problem. What is right and how may I reach it? Somewhere he knows there is a solution to all the riddles of his friends and the questions of his own heart. An orderly universe is not crowned by a being whose life must ever remain an unsolved riddle. Men are not adrift in a fog with no hope of taking bearings. If men have marked the natural world with lines of latitude and longitude for the guidance of its travelers, the moral world is not without its markings.

Job's very question contains the only answer that has ever satisfied man. God himself is the great meridian of all morality. From him we may measure all relationships and get them right. That is the essential message of the Bible; it strikes that first of all in "In the beginning God—"

Every life is right in the measure that it adjusts itself to the unvarying will; amongst the nations they have the kingdom who do his will. The world has made progress in precisely the proportion that this will has been realized. The promise of the present is that this great standard, this universal law by which all may find the right, has been made known to all through a life. One of our own has set forth God. One has lived who has shown us how to live. For every problem there is now an example of its solution. For every difficulty there is something better far than a declaration of duty; there is the great Doer of the deed. He has come near to man than men might come near to one another. He reveals the right.

But below these peaks lies the same great mountain range. Below all these oppositions which spring from the religion of the head is the great bed rock of the religion of the heart. Logic always divides, love always unites. The Christian's heart is full of sympathy, full of generosity, full of tolerance, full of patience, full of love. We must bring the heart into business, in spite of the teaching that "business is business," which means that all the higher sentiments must be removed from industrial or commercial transactions. The unnatural war between labor and capital will never end until justice, which is simply love in righteous action, shall prevail.

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struct people in the teachings of Jesus Christ, to incline their hearts to love him and to influence them to follow in his footsteps. Does the church fulfill its aim? Yes, in millions of instances.

It seems almost superfluous to inquire why people should join the church. And yet there are obvious reasons why this question should be raised and answered. Multitudes of people—more than half of the nation's population—are not members of the church; they need the church; the church needs them. They should consider this question, and should consider it in a manner becoming manhood and womanhood.

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