

WICKLY'S WOODS

By H. W. TAYLOR

CHAPTER III.

"Would you mind taking a little walk with me, Miss Wickly? I want you to see just what we are doing, and what we are going to do in the way of digging up your park, before we go too far with it. Prof. Huntley mentioned the matter twice last week. And after considering it, we concluded that you ought to see for yourself, and fully understand the situation. We have concluded that our researches must be much more extensive than we at first contemplated. And perhaps Prof. Huntley thought that an additional compensation ought to be given you under the circumstances; and has made such a statement to the Board," said Mr. Mason, on a Saturday afternoon some two weeks after the occurrences detailed in the first chapter.

"I wish you would take her away somewhere, Mason," exclaimed John Wickly in mock despair. "She's in one of her teasing moods, and has been tormenting the life out of me for the last hour. Don't take her, though, unless you are fully satisfied that you can endure unutterable things. For I think she takes about as much delight in teasing you as me."

"Tensing! Now, Mr. Mason, you shall judge between us. Here are the Chicago papers with accounts of the meeting of the Wickly heirs, illustrated with life-like portraits of a great many of them—pa included. Now don't you think that family ought to get an estate of fifty millions—simply upon their personal good looks?"

There was a very merry twinkle in the mischievous brown eyes of Lizzy Wickly, as she skillfully avoided the sudden grasp with which her father attempted to get possession of the papers.

"Now, remember, Mr. Mason, that this is the way the Wickly, or Wickly, heirs appeared, to fair and impartial artists who delineated them to the life. Aren't they ugly? There ought to be some penalty attached to such unmitigated ugliness as these pages display."

"Oh, bless you; there is. A very harsh penalty, too; since the victims never live long enough to serve out the sentence," retorted Mr. Wickly, with a laugh that had something artificial in it to Mr. Mason's ear. Therefore he hastened to say:

"If you are ready, Miss Lizzy, and don't mind the walk—"

"Oh, I shall be delighted, I assure you," said Lizzy, putting on her hat before the little mirror over the dressing case.

They went along the sandy street hedged with an enormous growth of wild hemp and jimson weeds, wherever the absence of a dwelling made it unnecessary to clear away the rapid growth of the hot June days. People stared at them out of windows, and came to the doors to prolong the view after they had passed.

Little squads of men ceased talking as they came up, and preserved a critical and vigilant silence until they were well past these spots on their way to the woods. Everywhere Sandtown had its three hundred pairs of eyes upon the pedestrians, and did not attempt to conceal that fact. Lizzy blushed a little indignantly.

"I haven't got accustomed to the village Argus yet," she said with a light laugh, as they turned out of the road leading eastward and took their way up a little straight lane crowded with the staple jimson and wild hemp, the dead white stalks of both plants glistening like bleached skeletons with knotted joints among the dark lustrous green of the luxuriantly growing young plants.

"Nor has the village Argus come to know you thoroughly," answered Mr. Mason, smiling. "When it does come to make your acquaintance thoroughly, you will find it the most docile of animals, even winking at the largest of your peccadilloes—assuming that these are of any magnitude at all."

"Which is an unwarranted assumption, sir. Haven't I been perfect, even in the critical eyes of the village Argus?"

There was the light and bantering air of the merry young woman out to be entertained, and entertaining, certainly. But there was also a quick and searching after-glance that might mean something more, something deeper.

"Do you mean to ask me a conventional question which should have a conventional answer, Miss Lizzy? You know I am so used to the bare and abstract solution of plain arithmetical and algebraic propositions and problems, that—"

He hesitated and glanced at her doubtfully.

"Let me be solved by the very sternest rules of your science, Mr. Mason," she said, with her brows drawn just a trifle, and the short upper lip now so compressed as to hide the gleam of her very pretty white teeth. "I suppose that in very truth a young woman is seldom favored with a calm and impartial judgment upon herself from a competent source. And really, I think that all of us have a secret craving to measure ourselves with those who have already attained eminence in some laudable direction."

"And have you, too, that distrust of the hasty and formal conventional verdict, that leads us to desire to have the verdict reviewed again?" he laughed. "Come this way, Miss Wickly. You will be floundering between a Scylla of walnut stump and a Charybdis of jimson weeds in a moment. And that calls me back to what I had intended to say of the village Argus. I became acquainted with it late enough in life to hate and condemn it at first, and afterward to yield it a tardy but ever growing respect

and esteem. The espionage of the village and the country is, after all, no mere vulgar and despicable curiosity."

"What else can it be, Mr. Mason? What else but the evidence of a total lack of good breeding? The rudeness of an ignorant and uncultivated people?" she asked, her upper lip curling in scorn at the very contemplation. "For instance, the gauntlet of bold and unblinking starings through which even you, man as you are, did not come un wounded, just now."

They had gone beyond the utmost limit of the straggling village of Sandtown, and had even begun a series of gentle ascents by which the road, no longer a rail-walled lane, led gradually over gentle knolls to the sharp wooded ridges of the river bluffs.

As Lizzy concluded her invective she turned and glanced back toward the village. At that distance figures of people in little groups on the street or at doors and windows could be seen fixed and motionless, with faces toward the two strollers. Mr. Mason turned also, and both being struck by something ludicrous in the situation, laughed very heartily.

"I confess that a laugh is a great handicapping of a philosophical proposition. Nevertheless, I must say that so far nobody has read the riddle of the Sphinx aright. The progressive world sets itself about the instantaneous reforming, developing and lifting of the lower stratum of society up to the higher level of each epoch. In very fact, Miss Wickly, such a proceeding is as unphilosophical and materially impossible as that those apple trees should bear their fruit before the flowers and leaves, and even the twigs."

He paused again and looked at her scrutinizingly, and a little apprehensively, but with the apprehensive element slipping out rapidly.

"I think I catch your meaning—totally new and strange as it is to me. Would you, for instance, have me give up my effort to instruct and enlighten the very ignorant children of the still more ignorant people of Sandtown? Or, more comprehensively, would you have all effort at instruction and advancement of the lower classes, the poor and uneducated, stopped for once and all?"

Now, indeed, the element of apprehensiveness had disappeared entirely from the look which Mr. Will Mason cast upon his fair and serious, but skeptical questioner. In its place was a half-suppressed, eager, delighted anticipation, which she saw there so distinctly, so unmistakably, that she could not restrain the involuntary smile of instant recognition.

Mr. Mason flushed a little, and his smile had something of embarrassment in it. Were his unuttered thoughts to be seen at a single glance of this girl of nineteen years? "You can hardly have an idea, Miss Lizzy," he said, apologetically, and looking away while he made broadsword cuts at the very vulnerable heads of the jimson weeds with his hickory walking stick, "how hungry I get for the companionship of educated and refined people. Or, rather, isn't it for a sort of intellectual combat that we pine, in a solitude of observations on the price of wheat, the next election, and what your friend Redden's last acquisition in Alderney cows cost him? If I hadn't discovered you and your father and mother here in this secluded spot to which I have been condemned by fortune, I should have been tempted to try conclusions with fate by resigning my position and fleeing back to the city."

"Not in the face of such a lovely scene as this, Mr. Mason, surely!"

CHAPTER IV.

They had reached the summit of the highest of the sand mounds that lie as if in little eddies of that mighty stream that once swept from the great lakes down the valley of the Wabash toward the ocean.

"Was there ever anything so lovely? Look at that faint golden green of the fringing willows of this bright, bright river! And the darker green deepening into blue and purple of the patches of woodland on the other side. And then beyond that, the upward sweep of the strange, fair, lonely, lonely, solemn prairie. I could never be unhappy nor greatly discontented in the presence of a scene like this."

Lizzy had involuntarily turned away from him, holding her hand outstretched, in a sort of girlish ecstasy of admiration toward the wide river bottom and the boundless prairie beyond.

They stood in silence for almost a minute, their eyes resting upon a bright reach of limpid, sparkling river cut off by a mass of the distant blue green woodland, now upon a dim and misty light blue vista of valley that from the dark and defined border of diminishing line of woodland drawn up in martial array to witness the passage of the unceasing flood of waters, led on and on into the undefined dominions of northern sky, islanded with banks of unmoving clouds of creamy white.

"You are a poet, Miss Lizzy. And I am not," said the assistant geologist, presently. "I think this fact fully explains the great difference between us. You can never weary of the beautiful things of wood and field and flood. I, on the other hand, must have the beautiful and the good in some human creature."

He spoke this last sentence almost in an inaudible murmur, and now with his head turned away and the cane making broadsword sweeps among the ranks of hostile jimsions.

"We must go on, Mr. Philosopher, or we shall be too late to make a very thorough inspection of the field of your spring

labors. And I have not forgotten, too, that I had put you upon dangerous ground by my question a few moments ago. How do you answer it?"

They began the walk again, now disappearing from the vision of the three hundred pairs of eyes, in the thickest of hazel and dwarf oak that intermeditated between the sandy prairie land of the river bottom and the primeval forest of the upland hills. Unconsciously they had quickened their pace as if it had been the beauty of the valley and prairie that had held them back heretofore.

"I meant to express my view that the proletariat is that immovable, imperishable, immutable, base and germinal of humanity out of which has always grown the slender and comparatively sparse, delicate and perishable roots and flowers—the educated, the refined, the intellectual men and women, and even cities and communities of the earth. But I'm afraid you will look upon this as a lecture, Miss Lizzy. And if I remember, you have stipulated against lectures."

"Then your lecture at Mount Zion four weeks ago—"

"Was aimed at you, Miss Lizzy, I must confess. I thought that I saw in you great possibilities, if only there were behind you the motive power of necessity for continued exertion, coupled with the physical ability to cope with sustained effort—or rather to achieve sustained effort. And if I mistake not, the seed fell upon fallow ground. Have I not seen you armed with hoe and sunbonnet performing prodigies in the well-kept garden behind your father's house? Believe me or not, Miss Lizzy, to the extent of my deserts—you have really taken a long step toward quieting the Argus of Sandtown. After awhile it will blink complacently upon all your goings in and your comings out. There goes a fox squirrel. How the wary scamp runs straight for his own fortress, past many inviting trees."

"But you are quite sure that my garden exercises are the direct result of your Mount Zion lecture, Mr. Philosopher?" she said, with a little pique disclosed in her voice, as well as in the arched brows and the drooping lids. "Might I not arrive independently at the conclusion that I ought to 'work the garden, as Mr. Redden puts it? But my, what a heap of ugly red dirt, Mr. Mason. Is this where you get all the heaps of ugly rough stones that I saw in the office of the State geologist once?"

They went on through the woods slipping down steep declivities, through beds of brown leaves knee deep, leaping across little slender, shaded rills, pulling great bunches of "sweetwilliam" her and there, looking at the surprisingly tall, slender saplings of ash and elm, and poplar, and hickory, that seemed to be in such a hurry of growth to get up into the sunshine above the high tops of the parent trees that they could not afford material for lateral growth.

Here a bunch of wild raspberry vines held its clusters of black, soft, sweet berries too temptingly toward them, and their fingers and lips were stained with the purple juices.

Here a hen pheasant, spreading her drooping wings and erecting her black ruff fluttered along in a way that so aroused the latent hunter instinct in Lizzy Wickly that she intuitively gave chase, and only relinquished the pursuit when the wily bird, having succeeded in her diversion, and being satisfied of the security of her numerous little brown brood, finally flew high up in a leafy oak and immediately stood so straight up that it looked very much like a bit of dead limb.

Here a tangle of wild rose bushes covered with the sweet smelling "forbears," of all the Marechal Niels and the Jacqueminots and sweet tea roses—prettier and sweeter than any of their noble and haughty descendants, called the ramblers irresistibly to them, and held them a long, long time in admiring investigation, and delightful acquisition.

It was at the end of this episode, and when the glories of the wild rose tangle had been exhausted, that Lizzy held up a large bouquet of the roses, the sweet-williams, some wild pinks, some very richly tinted bluebells and a setting of long, rich, yellow-green ferns to the admiring gaze of Mr. Mason.

"This bouquet I shall leave at your tent for Prof. Huntley. If after seeing this he shall still persist in keeping away from Sandtown and the Wickly residence I shall be driven to seek him in his lair. Isn't that the tent owner, Mr. Mason?"

There was an odd, puzzled, uncomfortable, apprehensive and abashed look or combination of looks on Mr. Mason's face, that made an impression upon Lizzy Wickly. Was he not hurt? Was the poor old fellow so very jealous? And was she altogether right in romping through the woods in this hoydenish way with him?

For although his long and abundant brown hair was plentifully sprinkled with gray, announcing that the "cooling time" of life had fully arrived, was his close shaven face not ruddy and preternaturally young?

"That is the tent, Miss Lizzy. And we are upon it in the nick of time. For here comes a black cloud so rapidly and unexpectedly that—yes, we will have to run or get a sprinkling. Quick! Give me the flowers so you can hold your skirts. Now give me your hand. Not the left hand. That's ominous in a race like this. Now, hold hard, so I won't have to hurt your fingers in my grasp. Now, then. I'll never forgive myself if I get you a wetting that would spoil your pretty dress, and that love of a hat."

(To be continued.)

And There Are Others.

Oldbach—I tell you, sir, the women are going to rule this country after a while.

Enpeck—After a while! Why, I thought they ruled it now.

Somewhat Different.

"And did she really tell you her age?" asked the woman.

"Oh, no," replied the man; "just the age she tells people she is."

SANTO DOMINGO

The Improvident Little West Indian Republic...

The recent determination of the United States to assume temporary control of the finances of the Dominican republic once more brings that restless little West Indian government into public view, writes William K. Lane. It has been apparent that affairs in the republic have reached a critical stage. Its chief difficulty, eliminating the ever present tendency to revolutionize at the slightest pretext, seems to be a wonderful capacity to get into debt and a corresponding incapacity to get out again.

The national debt of the tiny mulatto republic now amounts to the respectable total of \$35,000,000, which in consideration of the comparatively unimportant figure cut by Santo Domingo in the congress of western nations is altogether too great. That has been the opinion of its impatient creditors for a long time, and more than one of them has protested that some settlement should be effected. Some of them have even declared their willingness to undertake a receivership, promising to wind up the affairs of the improvident republic with amazing celerity.

Such a proposition from a foreign state—Santo Domingo has shown a

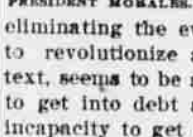
the Dominicans are ardent admirers of the greater republic.

The island on which the republic of Santo Domingo is established is, next to Cuba, the largest of the West Indies. One-third of its area is devoted to the republic of Haiti, and the remainder constitutes Santo Domingo. These contiguous republics are often confused, but they are quite dissimilar in most features. The Dominicans are much more refined and circumspect in their ways than their neighbors and are less addicted to actual bloodshed in their periodical revolutions. They are for the most part mulattoes of Spanish and negro origin. The few Spanish families that have not intermingled with the prevailing type constitute the aristocracy of the republic and hold themselves loftily aloof from their less fortunate neighbors.

Education in its proper sense is practically unknown. The average Dominican has not yet awakened to the necessity of adding to the knowledge with which nature has endowed him. The mulatto population, numbering at least half a million, is not inclined to be quarrelsome, but trouble is fomented by political tricksters who are trying constantly to obtain an opportunity to loot the public treasury. The people are for the most part industrious and patient, submitting to continual misgovernment and official peculation with remarkable good nature.

The president of the republic is practically a dictator. As often as suits his convenience he submits to an election, and he is careful to have it occur at a time when there is no well organized opposition. The general system of government is copied after that of the United States. Officials are plentiful, and the national revenues are far from sufficient to maintain the annual expenditure. Add to this the fact that a large proportion of the is

PRESIDENT MORALES.



Eliminating the ever present tendency to revolutionize at the slightest pretext, seems to be a wonderful capacity to get into debt and a corresponding incapacity to get out again.

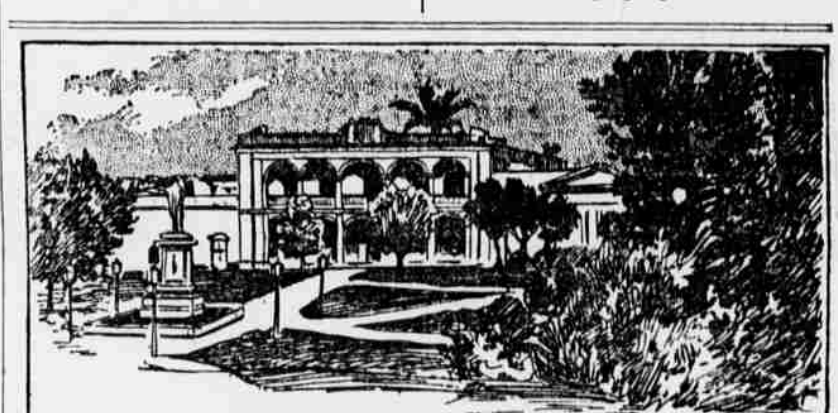


ENTRANCE TO SANTO DOMINGO HARBOR.

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SANTO DOMINGO'S NATIONAL PALACE.

remarkable impartiality in the selection of her victims, many of them being European—could not be tolerated by the United States. The shade of the late James Monroe would rise in indignant protest at the mere suggestion. If there is any adjusting to be done it is clearly the privilege of the United States to do it. There does not seem to have been the slightest objection to that way out of the difficulty. It is most satisfactory to the foreign creditors, and the Dominicans themselves were so enthusiastic over the proposition that they tried at once to borrow more money on the strength of it.

In the carrying out of its interference it will be necessary as a preliminary first step for the United States to restore the republic to a condition



SANTO DOMINGO STREET SCENE.

of internal quietude. When this is effected the American readjusters will proceed to take charge of the country's revenues and pay off its obligations, those to American citizens receiving first attention. Reduced to its final terms, the proposition seems to be that the United States shall make the Dominicans behave themselves long enough to pay their debts. When that is accomplished the dusky republicans will be free to resume their spendthrift career if they so elect. It is possible that by that time they may become so enamored of the thrifty business methods of their guardians that they will choose to walk in their footsteps ever after. It is certain that

gally collectible revenue never reaches the national treasury, and the cause of Santo Domingo's bankruptcy becomes apparent.

The annual revenue is \$1,700,000, and the military establishment, including the navy, costs \$4,800,000 a year. All the officials are the personal appointees of the President, and the army is composed of men friendly to his interests. Judging from the past, the chief object of each administration has been to mulct the people of the largest possible amount before a revolution brings about a new division of the spoils. Under these circumstances politics has become the chief business of the republic, and other and equally important interests have been neglected. Agricultural and commercial pursuits have suffered so greatly from the rapacity of the government and lack of encouragement that they are practically at a standstill.

Santo Domingo is the garden of the western tropics. Nature has given it a soil adapted to a wider range of products than can be found in any corresponding area in the West Indies. The list is a long one, including cocoa, tobacco, all kinds of tropical fruits, sugar cane, coffee, vanilla, rubber and many other valuable things. In the interior mountainous region forests of mahogany and other timber abound. The whole country is in a state of constant verdure, and thermal fluctuations are almost unknown. General Carlos F. Morales is the present head of the Dominican government.

One Small Pair.

"Well, Mr. Hart," said the doctor, "I congratulate you. You are the father of—" "Ah!" exclaimed the proud man, "A Hart turns up, eh? I hope it's the Jack—that is, a boy." "Two boys. Twins, in fact." "The deuce!"—Philadelphia Record.

Terra Firma Good Enough. Sunday School Teacher—What lesson are we supposed to learn from the story of Jonah and the whale?

New Pupil—Dat a guy orter have sense eruff to stay on dry land.

Nothing takes the conceit out of some men like being compelled to serve on a jury.