

WICKLY'S WOODS

By H. W. TAYLOR

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

Billy Biler looked very much relieved at something. Probably at the prospect of trouble. Or perhaps that there was no public charge that any of Squire Wickly's money had gone into his pocket. At the same moment Lizzy Wickly was saying:

"I don't mind it, father. And you mustn't. We can't make it any better by worrying so over it. And so far as the land is concerned"—but she could not go on without a sort of spasm of the throat that strangled her for ten seconds—"why, it isn't such a beautiful tract as all that. Next time I'll buy a quarter section in the second bottom prairie. That will be a sensible purchase, won't it?"

Mr. Wickly looked at her with his brows knitted into the sort of lowering frown that had until to-day been unknown upon his kindly face.

"You don't seem to understand," he said, harshly and slowly, and with that strange flushing of the whole face that had made Dr. May shake his head, when he had been called in to see the sick man that morning—"that I already know that the mere loss of those ugly wooded hills and hollows is nothing! But is it nothing that I must lose my fortune of more than a million three hundred thousand, simply because I can have nothing upon which to raise a few hundred dollars when it is needed to push my case? I believe that you actually want me to fail, or delay it until I die, so that you can have it. Yes, that's it. That's the plot that you are capable of conceiving and carrying forward! You and that scoundrel, Mason! He put you up to it! That's what you were in the woods that day for!"

He came toward her with his hands clenched and his lips drawn in a sort of horrible smile that changed and vibrated between the appearance of ghastly mirth and fierce anger. She had never dreamt of such a mood in him. For he had been the best and kindest of fathers—never very helpful at bread-winning, to be sure! But so uniformly good and kind, and sensible! And now in this awful mood he surely meant to do her harm!

At that instant Mrs. Wickly coming in, fortunately announced in her ordinary cheerful manner that "dinner was ready, and go on in John; don't keep me waiting!"

As if instinctively, or by force of long habit, John Wickly turned slowly away, and with the menacing look fading into a sullen and brooding frown, he went slowly out of the room and into the kitchen, where they heard him moving a chair as he always did in sitting down to dinner.

CHAPTER IX.

"Now, Lizzy, my child," said the mother in a hurried undertone, "put on your sunbonnet and run as quick as you can to Dr. May's and tell him that I want him to come, and bring some help, if he thinks best. Run now!"

"But hadn't you better go with me? Is it safe for you alone?"

The girl clasped her arms convulsively about her mother's neck.

"It will be perfectly safe for me, Lizzy. Run, now."

The girl started, and her mother ran after her to the door.

"When you come back, don't come in where he is, Lizzy. You know what strange antipathies are often shown by—by people under great mental excitement."

She had hesitated at the very word that was ringing louder and louder through all the resounding labyrinths of the brain. She had made a generalization where the specific object was most gloriously before them. Lizzy thought, as she ran through the dry, light, yielding sand of the street. If she had said plainly what she so plainly meant she would have said:

"Don't venture near him! He is furiously insane, and is possessed of the hallucination that you and Mr. Mason are plotting to injure and thwart and destroy him. He may kill you in a sudden paroxysm of insane fury. Don't go near him! Don't go near him!"

Unheeding the knots and larger bunches of men that now literally dotted all the conjoined thoroughfares of Sandtown, scarcely stepping a foot out of the way of the wagon loads of people that were still coming in from the southwest by the River road and from the northeast by the Overcoat road, Lizzy ran on to the doctor's office, only to discover that he was not there.

"He's gone down town some's, long go. Reckon you'll find 'im mebbe some's whar they're agoin to hole the meetin on the bank bustin. I'll go down un seef I kin ketch 'im fur yuh, ef you want me to," said young Billy Dikes, who was known to be "reading medicine and tendin to Doc's hosses fur 'im," as his father, little Bill Dikes, had said jocosely in explanation of the process by which young Billy had already achieved the title of "the young Doc" upon the spontaneous motion of the humorous Hoosiers of his acquaintance.

The young Doc had clearly volunteered to "ketch 'im," as an afterthought founded upon the signs of great anxiety and distress in the young woman's face—signs of need of help that had appeared successfully to the chivalric hearts of these rough people of Sandtown ever, heretofore, and will continue so to appeal successfully, so long as one of their characteristics shall remain unplanned away by the smoothing and polishing processes of advancing civilization.

"You jist set right down right h-yur, in this h-yur chair," continued the kindly young Hoosier, exhibiting all the hospitable instincts of all the hospitable Dikeses, as far back as anybody can remember. "Is your pap much worse, Lizzy?"

All Hoosierdom has a fashion—despised of the polished East as it is—of calling everybody by his or her christened name! A fashion that it is to be hoped will not be planned away in the polishing processes of westward-advancing civilization.

"I'm afraid he's very much worse indeed," Lizzy said, taking the offered chair, and feeling that even this rude sympathy lightened the burden of her great grief. She had dreaded to reveal it to the world. But she found that the world of Sandtown knew it already, and took active and partisan interest in doing what it could to help her.

"I h-yur um say at this h-yur feller, Mason is jist about the whole cause yur pap's uh—uh—sickness?" "The young Doc" said, as he put on his hat and lingered a little.

"I don't know. I can't think so. I don't know what Mr. Mason has really done in all this terrible business. Will you please hurry, Mr. Dikes? I left mother alone with him. And I'm uneasy, so uneasy."

She sat down again as the young Doc sprang out of the open office door and ran down the street throwing up little arcs of dry, sandy loam after each broad, scraping shoe-sole until he disappeared in the crowds that still closer and closer drew to each other and grew and blocked up all the thoroughfares of Sandtown till not even a re-enforcing team from the very uttermost end of the Overcoat road dared attempt a passage, but stopped and hunched farther and farther out.

She sat and listened to the low buzz of voices in the streets and in the court house, and heard here and there louder tones, and occasionally a wild yell and then a shout of laughter that indicated some ludicrous accident to somebody by somebody else.

Then all at once there was a complete diminuendo as if all the voices had suddenly and steadily slipped away to the westward, and out of hearing. And then she saw a two-horse wagon drive away from her father's door, with a number of people in it. She had not seen the wagon drive up. She had not been looking that way. But there was something ominous in the driving away of that particular wagon, that was now far out on the Overcoat road, toward the little railroad station. She watched it with parted lips and widening eyes until it had hidden itself in the clouds of drifting, light, sandy loam that perpetually rose up and settled down upon the grayed surface of all the jimson leaves and the oak and the maple and walnut foliage, that bore their burdens of earth in patient assurance of the rain that must come and wash them clean and bright again.

And then out of the hush, the finished diminuendo of this general assembly of the makers of public opinion for this section of the Wabash country, there drove a strange and unknown two-horse carriage, with a driver, whose figure coming within the field of her abstracted and unfixed vision instantly caught and concentrated her gaze. Beyond a doubt it was Mr. Mason, this time in broad daylight, driving toward her through the crowd, and going eastward as to the railway station. He would stop when he should see her! And there were others in the carriage—one a fine, dignified looking gentleman. Was he Mr. Huntley?

She stood in the door and even stepped down into the sand outside in order to make sure that Mr. Mason would see her. He had doubtless repented of his determination to keep Prof. Huntley away from her; and now he would make all necessary and possible amends for all his ungraciousness.

If so she could very, very freely, nay even joyously forgive him. And that much the more readily because of the fact that since so many people, in fact, practically the whole community, had joined as with one voice in denouncing and threatening Mr. Mason, she had turned about and engaged, passively at first, and then actively, in his defense.

What had he done to any and all of the people of Sandtown that was half so unfair, unjust and cruel as what he had done to her? Compared with her wrongs, theirs were a matter of nothing! If she could afford to become his companion, could anybody in all Redden township afford to say aught against him?

As they drove rapidly nearer, she was conscious of something altered about his look, she could not tell precisely what. But it was something that gave him a totally different air, some way! Before, he had been thoughtful, respectful, almost subservient in all his actions in her presence.

Always watchful, respectful, and considerate, at all events, with a manifest anxiety to please her. An anxiety so manifest that perhaps it had tended to prevent her from being pleased with him at all. Now he had something of the cold, hard, haughty look of the man who is directing a great many men who are "under" him in every sense of the word.

She saw this so plainly in that brief time in which the powerful horses were walking through the heavy-pulling dry sand of the Overcoat road, that she compared this with his former bearing and felt that there was a loss—almost an uncomfortable loss.

And all these impressions and reflections were redoubled and reduplicated,

and intensified, when to her utter surprise and unending mortification the carriage did not stop, and the driver, Mr. Mason, passed with only a cold and formal inclination of his head toward her!

She fairly sunk down upon the office door sill with a feeling of shame, surprise, almost angry resentment! She looked after the carriage as the new paint on its wheels glittered in the sun. She saw them whirl the light sand up into little settling clouds, and she felt absolutely like screaming at the very top of her voice and starting in a wild chase after the rapidly disappearing vehicle.

So engrossed was she with these feelings and reflections that she was unaware of the approach of Dr. May along with "Coonrod" Redden, and a constantly increasing posse of followers.

"Lizzy, you un your mother better git into my carge, un Lum will drive you down to my house. Hits no use uh nekun a furse 'bout things 'at can't be kept. Yur pap's jist plum, slap dab crazy. Un we've jist started 'im to the assle-um. That assle-um is jist the plast fur 'im. He'll git k'yored right away of they's airy a k'yore fur 'im. They sent Billy Beasley over to that assle-um bout three-four weeks ago, wasn't it, Doc? Un by gum; he's back at home now with more sance un 'e had before he went. Yur pap ull git truck k'yur uv, Lizzy. Me un Joe Ellet un Bill Shipley ull go over to-morry ur day atter, un see to 'im. That was that ornery hee-hawun un whim-whamun feller, Mason, at druv a past jist now, boys! I h-yur 'at he's h-yur to bid in all ar moggijis. I've jist sent him partickler nodus at he'll be hosst up ef he puts his nose enside in this town the next three-four weeks, by gum!"

CHAPTER X.

The rain had put off its coming until every broad black-green glossy jimson leaf, and all the delicately palmated foliage of the wild hemp, and the maple, and the white oak had long lain under the common veil of sober gray, thrown everything over by the rolling wheels and tramping feet of the Overcoat road in the light, sandy loam—came down at last in a steady, growing patter that awoke Lizzy Wickly for the twentieth time throughout the hot, feverish, restless night.

For the twentieth time she lay and listened to the southwest wind, sweeping in gusty circles that dashed the cool, hard rain against the window panes with a shot-like rattle as if it were the diminutive pebbles of that threatening, specter-trodden, ominous Overcoat road, rising up and flying at her in a conjoined onslaught of all possible evils.

How she tried to recall the almost perfect happiness that had been hers only a few weeks ago! And how did she only succeed in fully understanding that she had then been really happy and had not known it. The angel of bliss had tarried with her for nights and days, and she, too, culpably unaware!

Her brain pictures came and went in one unvarying triangle of great troubles. Her father's dreadful mental disease, with all the divergent and dependent misery of this more than living death, blighting and destroying their happy little home at one terrible blow. Her strong and growing passion for a man whom she had never seen face to face, and whom she only knew through the partial word pictures of his friend and assistant; together with the attitude of that friend and assistant toward her.

And finally, as the smallest angle of this triangle of constantly pressing griefs—the loss of her property upon which she had built her hopes of future successes to be achieved in the great city that was so fast spreading down and across the prairies, that its subtle attraction had long ago reached the wooded hills of the Wabash country, and was drawing to itself all of the ambition, the daring, the discontent, the spirit of adventure of these wide valleys and shaded hills, and wood-hedged prairies.

Cutting into the second angle of this triangle, and even into both the others was a perplexing mixture of regret and indignation centered upon Mr. Mason. Regret that she had been left, so far as he knew or could know, in the attitude of having treated him with inexcusable rudeness and lack of feeling.

What did he think of her; what could he think of her in the light of that last evening when he had appeared for a brief time endowed with god-like attributes that enabled him to defy the very demon of the hurricane?

What a magnificent man must his principal be, indeed, to have developed such heroic qualities in this underling—the man who labored with him for a stipulated price, as he had confessed to her!

How had he slipped away like a thief under cover of the night with all the gossips of Sandtown wagging their heads and smiling the knowing smile of absolute faith in the certain villainy of the fleeing man! Why had he not taken time to come to her openly and without fear, as he had done often and often before?

And could it be true as more than intimated by Conrad Redden, that he was now in the neighborhood for the base and heartless purpose of purchasing all the heavily mortgaged property of the Sandtown people for one-tenth of its real value, just at the time when a series of unfortunate speculations had crushed the Sandtown Farmers' Bank, and thus put it out of the power of the people to borrow money with which to save their homes?

(To be continued.)

Two of a Kind.

The two sportsmen looked at each other in the parlor of the village inn, and at last entered into conversation in regard to the experiences of the day.

"And you say you have caught sixty trout in less than two hours," said one at last. "Well, I'm glad to have met you; I'm a professional myself."

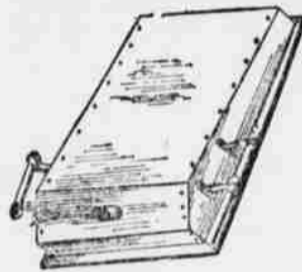
"Fisherman?" inquired the other man.

"No—er—narrator," was the reply.—Mobile Register.



Apparatus for Removing Wall Paper.

At regular intervals the wall paper in every house has to be removed and fresh paper put in its place. As a rule, wall paper does not retain its newness for any great length of time, and to keep the home looking bright and cheerful the paper has to be replenished. Removing the old paper always causes a lot of dirt, and unless everything in the room is covered or else removed entirely the dirty water splashes over it and causes damage. An improved apparatus for removing



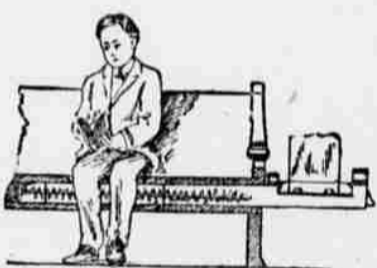
LOOSENS THE WALL PAPER.

wall paper is shown here, the invention of an Iowa man. This apparatus is a receptacle having an open face, with a flange or rim surrounding the outer edge, a scraper-blade being attached to the front edge of the rim. A handle is attached to each side of the apparatus for holding it over a covered surface. An inlet is provided in one end of the receptacle through which hot water or steam is injected, with an outlet below for removing the water when cold. By applying the apparatus to the wall the paper is loosened by the heat of the hot water or steam, there being no chance of any water being splashed around in this way. The scraper blade does the rest.

The patentee is Paul Wajts, of Ottumwa, Iowa.

Extensible Pew.

Ordinarily the seating capacity of most churches is sufficient to accommodate those who regularly attend, and generally, when plans for new churches are being drawn up, provision is made for seating the regular attendants and no more. If enough seats were provided for the increased number of members who go to church on Easter Sunday and other special occasions, the church would look bare when the average number attend. The consequence is that when a noted speaker or preacher is engaged to address a certain congregation, a great many people are attracted thereby and the church is invariably overcrowded



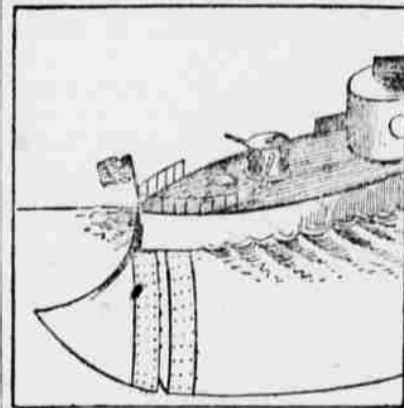
QUICKLY PLACED IN POSITION.

and many are compelled to stand. The only remedy for this is to place chairs in the aisles, and it is often necessary to do this while the service is in progress, causing noise and interruption. An extensible pew, designed to be used especially when the church is

STEERS BY THE BOW.

The Boat's Course Laid from the Front of the Craft.

An Indiana man proposes to reverse the time-honored practice of steering boats from the stern by means of his patented steering bow. His scheme is to build the hull proper in one piece, as at present, except that the forward portion is finished without the



STEERING DONE BY THE BOW.

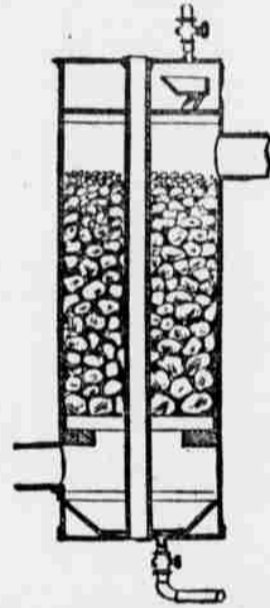
usual bow shape. This section is to be built separately and provided with a number of bearing recesses to receive pivot members in the hull plate, as well as overlapping plates to furnish a practically continuous smooth wave surface, so as not to increase the vessel's water resistance. The steering nose, or bow, is to be operated by

overcrowded, is shown in the illustration. It can be used only in combination with a bench or pew having a box seat, the extension being slidable endwise in the box seat. The outer end of the extension is formed into a depressed seat with folding back and arms, and when so folded can be pushed into the box seat so as to be out of the way when not wanted. A spring is arranged so as to normally retract the extension and hold it in position. It would require only a few seconds to withdraw the seat from its normal position, a catch preventing it from returning until released. Many churches would find this "extensible pew," as the inventor calls it, of great advantage when the ordinary seating capacity of the church is not sufficient to accommodate those who attend.

John P. Kline, of Reading, Va., is the patentee.

Heat Catcher.

It is a well-known fact that in the burning of coal or oil or other substance for heating purposes, a large amount of combustion is lost and cannot be utilized. Inventors have worked over this problem for a long time, but as yet no plausible solution has been advanced. A New Jersey man has patented a device which he calls



CATCHES THE HEAT.

a "heat catcher," an illustration of which is shown here. It is adapted to be inserted in a furnace or stovepipe to catch and distribute the heat passing therefrom. It is cylindrical in shape, a mass of refracting material being placed in the interior, through which the heated products of combustion pass. An air pipe for distributing the heat passes through the center of the refracting material, being connected with the outer air. A grate placed near the bottom holds the refracting material in position. Chambers top and bottom are provided, which are connected with inlet and outlet pipes, respectively. A perforated plate placed near the top of the upper chamber serves to distribute water over substantially the entire cross-section of the refracting material, pipes top and bottom supplying and removing the water, the latter acting as a cleanser. Obviously, all wasted heat can be collected and used by such a device.

George Thomson, of Elizabeth, N. J., is the patentee.

means of steering ropes manipulated by any of the usual methods.

A Poet's Declining Years.

Swiburne, the poet, spends his declining years in tranquil pursuit of the simple life, although it is doubtful whether the book or the fad has ever disturbed his peaceful retreat. A friend says of him that he lives in possession of his needs. "Bounded on all sides by the best books, enjoying the close companionship of the truest friend ever given to a man of genius, and finding in a long walk at postman's pace a full satisfaction for the body's craving after exercise, he lives through the twilight of his days in a greater security and under the spell of a deeper peace than he knew in the boisterous dawn of his life."

List of the Beecher Family.

Mrs. Isabella Beecher Hooker, the only surviving member of the famous Beecher family, has celebrated her 83d birthday at her home in Hartford. She is the youngest daughter of Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. She was born in Litchfield, Conn. She was married in 1841 to John Hooker, for many years the reporter of the Supreme Court, who died Feb. 12, 1901. Mrs. Hooker has two children and six grandchildren, and has for many years been actively interested in woman suffrage.

A gossip's specialty is the making of unhappy homes.