

"THE LADIES, GOD BLESS THEM!"

Painting, Preaching, Travelling — But Not Marriage

THE upper corridor of the Wellington Public Library has, for the past few weeks, been ablaze with "Turneresque" sunsets, for here are exhibited a few of the works of the Rev. C. Wickham, Wellington's octogenarian artist. As I gazed at the sketches I found myself becoming interested in Mr. Wickham. I had heard that he was a preacher, a painter, a world traveller, and a bachelor. None of these occupations considered singly would necessarily make Mr. Wickham a fit subject for a newspaper column, but the combination of all four seemed rather unusual. And there are very few men who can boast of being bachelors of eighty-seven years' standing, for even the most hardened bachelors usually succumb in their forties. Had it been an intentional evasion, I wondered, or was it merely that Mr. Wickham had been too absorbed in his painting, preaching, and travelling to notice that there were other things than souls and sunsets?

I decided to find out. People who knew Mr. Wickham told me that he was no inveterate woman-hater. It was therefore without misgivings that I presented myself, notebook in hand, at the door of his Oriental Bay studio.

Rather a Big Subject

Mr. Wickham opened the door. I was ushered in with that old-world courtliness which must have fluttered the heart of many a Victorian miss when Mr. Wickham was in his dashing and be-whiskered thirties. I explained my business.

"You want to hear something about my paintings? One of these newspaper cuttings may help you."

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Wickham, I really wanted to hear your views on Women."

"Women?" said Mr. Wickham cautiously. "I'm afraid that's rather a big subject. I don't think I'm very well qualified to express myself on it."

"Perhaps you could tell me how it was that you never married?" I suggested.

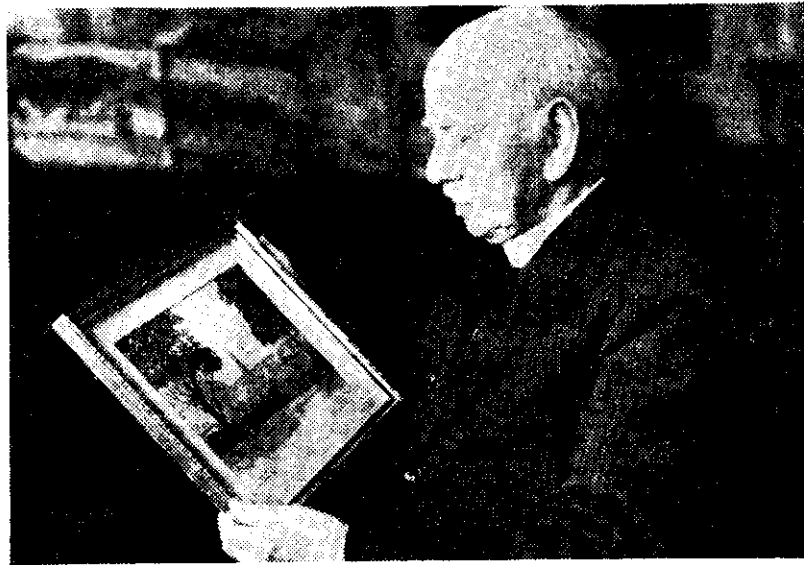
"I'll tell you something about my life," said Mr. Wickham. "That may explain why I didn't."

"Then it wasn't that you disapprove of women or of marriage?"

"No, certainly not. I have a great admiration for the ladies." He bowed gallantly, "and I think that every man should marry. But somehow in my eighty-seven years I don't seem to have had time to think about it."

Stamps For Queen Victoria

"I'll tell you something of my life. I was educated very badly at a private academy and started work at fourteen making stamps at Somerset House for



THE REV. C. WICKHAM: He prefers his sunsets

Queen Victoria. I made on the average 36,000 stamps a week, and for that I got 4/- . After several years I got a job as Clerk of Works, a position connected with the building trade. I decided to better myself, so for three years I spent all my evenings at night school studying architecture. This was the time when I should have been going out with my young lady, if I'd had one. I couldn't have taken her to the pictures because of course there were no pictures, but I might have taken her to a music-hall or perhaps to the theatre. But I was too busy. And on week-ends when young couples usually 'walk out,' I was tramping miles into the country with my sketch-book and paints. I used to walk as much as forty miles there and back to get away from London and into the country.

Ministry at Penzance

"When I was thirty I decided to leave the building trade and go in for the ministry. That meant going to college and studying hard for several years. I was so much engaged already that I never got engaged to a lady. After four years I became a Congregational minister at Penzance, in Cornwall."

"Where the pirates used to be?"

"I don't think there were any pirates in my day, but many of the fathers and grandfathers of my parishioners had been wreckers. They used to light false beacons above the rocks, and then plunder the wrecked vessels."

"You must have been rather lonely in Penzance. Didn't you think of marrying then?"

"I felt I couldn't very well marry on £150 a year. Then I was called to London, where I laboured for fourteen years. There were 1,000 children in my Sunday schools, and my people used to say I was too busy looking after other

people's children to have any of my own. By this time I was a hardened and crusty bachelor." Mr. Wickham's blue eyes twinkled.

"When I was 72 I was invited out to Australia for six months as a temperance lecturer. Then I came on to New Zealand and fell in love with it. I've been here ever since. I'm too old to preach now but I'm not too old to paint pictures."

Women Who Paint—Themselves

"Have you ever thought of painting anything other than scenery? Portraits, for instance?"

"Like Turner, I prefer my sunsets. But I am a great admirer of the human form and face, particularly of the ladies. In fact I have such a reverence for female beauty that I think that is partly why I never married. But I don't paint them and I wish they wouldn't paint themselves. It's enough to frighten any man off. I hope that girls will soon return to their natural beauty. When you see so much falseness — painted eyebrows, painted lips, painted cheeks—you wonder if the heart is false too. And I object as an artist as well as a man. Those glaring colours aren't like nature—they're a travesty of it."

"But surely it is less blameworthy for the modern woman to alter the shape of her lips than it was for the Edwardian woman to alter the shape of her figure?"

The Greeks Did It

"Well, I didn't like that either. Both are going against nature. Nature is usually right, as I, as an artist, ought to know. But don't get it into your head that I disapprove of the young ladies of to-day. I like them. I like the way they take part in things. I've always believed that woman should be man's equal. She should stand by man's side—his comrade,

not his competitor. I've seen a big change in woman in my time — I've seen her fighting her way to political freedom, and I've cheered her on. I remember the days when women wore cinolines, but I prefer the clothes women wear to-day — plain costumes and simple frocks. The beauty and neatness of women's dress to-day is a pleasing contrast to the flounces and furbelows and fluttering bonnet strings of women in my younger days. Over-decoration is artistically wrong. The Greeks loved simplicity."

"But the Greek women wore make-up and dressed their hair very elaborately. By the way, do you think it contrary to nature for women to cut their hair?"

"I have no objection to it. It's their own and they can do what they like with it. I judge a woman by the length of heart and not by her hair."

"And have you in general found that women have large hearts?"

"Yes, when I look back over my life and think of the hundreds—no thousands—of women who have fed me and looked after me and cheered me and delighted me with their beauty and kindness I say, 'The ladies—God bless them!'"

—M.B.

Meals During Spring Cleaning

DURING the housewife's busy season she tends to leave meals more or less to chance, and to manage somehow by flying in at the last minute to dash to the frying pan or to warm up some of yesterday's stew. This is asking for trouble, not only from one's weary body, which rebels at such treatment and deals out an attack of indigestion, but from one's weary family, which is likely to deal out attacks of criticism. I have noticed that the harder we women work and the nervier we get the less do we permit such criticism to pass unnoticed.

So for the sake of the health and happiness of the family, remember that the more bustled you are and the harder you are working—and the family too for that matter—the more necessary it is that you should plan to serve good, nutritious, and easily digested meals.

One can plan meals so that everything that has to be served hot can be cooked in the oven at the one time, and as nearly as possible in the one dish, to have trouble in serving. One can plan meals for which a simple cold pudding can be prepared overnight. One can plan to make several milk puddings or pies at one time for serving on successive days. One can plan to have salads at a moment's notice by washing lettuce overnight and making large quantities of salad dressing once every week. —From an A.C.E. Talk