

THE QUICKENING

BY FRANCIS LYNDE

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CHAPTER XII.—(Continued.)

It was on a crisp morning in the second week of January when the prolonged agony of suspense drove him to the mountain. His mother was sitting up, and was rapidly recovering her strength. His father had gone back to his work in the iron plant, and his uncle was preparing to return to his charge in South Tredegar. With no particular destination in view, it was only natural that his feet should find the familiar path leading up to the great boulder under the cedars. He had not visited the rock of the spring since the summer day when he and Nan Bryerson had taken refuge from the shower in the hollow heart of it, nor had he seen Nan since their parting at the door of her father's cabin under the cliff. Rumor in Gordonia had it that Tike Bryerson had been hunted out by the revenue officers; and for reasons which he would have found it difficult to declare in words, Tom had been shy about making inquiries.

For this cause an apparition could scarcely have startled him more than did the sight of Nan filling her bucket at the trickling barrel-spring under the cliff face of the great rock. He came on her suddenly at the end of the long climb up the wooded slopes, at a moment when—semi-tropical growth having had two full seasons in which to change the natural aspect of things—he was half-bewildered with the unwanted look of the place. But there was no doubt about it; it was Nan in the flesh, a little fuller in the figure, something less childish in the face, but with all the fascinating, wild-creature beauty of the child-time promise to dazzle the eye and breed riot in the brain of the boy-man.

"Did you know I was coming? Were you waiting for me, Nan?" he bubbled, gazing into the great black eyes as eagerly as a freed dog plunges into the first pool that offers.

"How could I be knowin' to it?" she asked, taking him seriously, or appearing to. "I nev' knowed school let out this time o' year."

"It's let out for me, Nan," he said, meaningly. "I came home—for good—nearly three weeks ago. My mother has been sick. Didn't you hear of it?" She shook her head gravely.

"Say, Nan; I hope you haven't got to hurry home," he interposed, when she stooped to lift the overflowing bucket. "I want to talk to you—to tell you something."

"Air you a man now, Tom-Jeff, or only a boy like you used to be?" she asked.

"I'm big enough to be in my own way a good deal of the time. I believe I could muddy Slim Cantrell's back for him now, at arm-holds."

"Where's your preacher's coat, Tom-Jeff? I was allowin' you'd be wearin' it nex' time we met up."

"I reckon there isn't going to be any preacher's coat for me, Nan; that's one of the things I want to talk to you about. Let's go over yonder and sit down in the sun."

The place he chose for her was a flat stone half embedded in the up-climbing slope beyond the great boulder. She sat facing the path and the spring, listening, while Tom, stretched luxuriously on a bed of dry leaves at her feet, told her what had befallen; how he had been turned out of Beersheba, and what for; how, all the former things having passed away, he was torn and distracted in the struggle to find a footing in the new order.

"They-all up yonder in that school where you was at hasn't got much sense, it looks like to me," was her comment. "You're a man grown now, Tom-Jeff, and if you want to play cards or drink whisky, what-all business is it o' their'n?"

"You stand by your friends, right or wrong, don't you, girl?" he said, in sheerest self-gratulation. "That's what I like in you. You asked me a little while back if I was a man or a boy; I believe you could make a man of me, Nan, if you'd try."

"If you'd said that two year ago," she began, in a half-whisper that melted the marrow in his bones. "But you was only a boy then; and now I reckon it's too late."

"You mean that you don't care for me any more, Nan? I know better than that. You'd back me if I had come up here to tell you that I'd killed somebody. Wouldn't you, now?"

He waited overlong for his answer. There were sounds in the air; a metallic tapping like the intermittent drumming of a woodpecker mingled with a rustling of some small animal scurrying back and forth over the dead leaves. The girl leaned forward, listening intently. Then three men appeared in the farther crooking of the spring path, and at the first glimpse of them she slipped from the flat stone to cover behind Tom, trembling, shaking with terror.

"Hide me, Tom-Jeff! Oh, hide me, quick!" she panted. "Looker there!"

He looked and saw the three men walking slowly up the pipe-line which drained the barrel-spring. They were too far away to be recognizable to him, and since they were stopping momentarily to examine the pipe, there was

good hope of an escape unseen.

Tom waited breathless for the propitious instant when the tapping of the pipe-men's hammers should drown the noise of a dash for effacement. When it came, he flung himself backward, whipped Nan over his head and out of the line of sight as if she had been feather-light, and rolled swiftly after her. Before she could rise he had picked her up and was dragging her to the climbing point under the lip of the boulder cave.

"Up with you!" he commanded, making a step of his hand. "Give me your foot and then climb to my shoulder—quick!" But she drew back.

"Oh, I can't!" she gasped. "I—I'm too skeered!"

Jumping to catch the lip of the cavern's mouth, he ascended cat-like, and a moment later he had drawn her up after him.

"I'd like to know what got the matter with you all at once," he said, severely, when they were crowded together in the narrow rock cell; and then, without waiting for her answer: "You stay here while I drop down and keep those fellows away from this side of things."

But it was too late. The men were already at the barrel-spring, as an indistinct murmur of voices testified. The girl had another trembling fit when she heard them, and Tom's wonder was fast lapsing into contempt or something like it.

"Oh-h-h!" she shuddered. "Do you reckon they saw us, Tom-Jeff?"

"I shouldn't wonder," he whispered back unfeelingly. "We could see them plain enough."

"He'll kill me, for shore, Tom-Jeff!" Tom's lip curled. The wolf does not mate with the jackal. Not all her beauty could atone for such spiritless cringing. Love would have pitied her, but passion is not moved by qualities opposite to those which have evoked it.

"Then you know them—or one of them, at least," he said. "Who is he?" She would not tell; and since the murmur of voices was still spainly audible, she begged in dumb-show for silence. Whereupon Tom shut his mouth and did not open it again until the sound of the voices had died away and the fainter tapping of the hammers on the pipe-line advertised the retreat of the inspection party.

"They're gone now," he said, shortly. "Let's get out of here before we stifle."

But a second time ill chance intervened. Tom had a leg over the brink and was looking for a soft leaf bed to drop into, when the baying of a hound broke on the restored quiet of the mountain side. He drew back into hiding.

The girl's ague fit of fear had passed, and she seemed less concerned about the equivocal situation than a girl should be; at least, this is the way Tom's thought was shaping itself. He tried to imagine Ardea in Nan's place, but the thing was baldly unimaginable. A daughter of the Dabneys would never run and cower and beg to be hidden at the possible cost of her good name. And Nan's word did not help matters.

"What makes you so cross to me, Tom-Jeff?" she asked, when he drew back with an impatient exclamation. "I hain't done nothin' to make you let on like you hate me, have I?"

"I don't hate you," said Tom, frowning. "If I did, I shouldn't care." Just then the hound burst out of the laurel thicket on the brow of the lower slope, running with its nose to the ground, and he added: "That's Japhe Pettigrass' dog; I hope to goodness he isn't anywhere behind it."

But the horse-trader was behind the dog; so close behind that he came out on the continuation of the pipe-line path while the hound was still nosing among the leaves where Tom had lain sunning himself and telling his tale of woe.

"Good dog—seek him! What is it, old boy?" Pettigrass came up, patted the hound, and sat down on the flat stone to look on curiously, while the dog coursed back and forth among the dead leaves. "Find him, Caesar; find him, boy!" encouraged Japheth; and finally the hounded pointed a sensitive nose toward the rift in the side of the great boulder and yelped conclusively.

"D'ye reckon he climm up thar", Caesar?" Pettigrass unfolded his long legs and stood up on the flat stone to attain an eye-level with the interior of the little cavern. Tom crushed Nan into the larthest cranny, and flattened himself lizard-like against the nearer side wall. The horse-trader looked long and hard, and they could hear him still talking to the dog.

"You're an old fool, Caesar—that's about what you are—and Solomon allowed thar' wasn't no fool like an old one. But you needn't to swaller that whole, old boy; I've knowed some young ones in my time—sometimes gals, sometimes boys, sometimes both. But thar' ain't no 'possum up yonder, Caesar; you've flew the track this time, for certain. Come on, old dog; let's be gettin' down the mountain."

The baying dog and the whistling man were still within hearing when

Tom swung Nan lightly to the ground and dropped beside her. No word was spoken until she had emptied and refilled her bucket at the spring, then Tom said, with the bickering tang still on his tongue:

"Say, Nan, I want to know who it is that's going to kill you if he happens to find you talking to me."

She shook her head despondently. "I cayn't nev' tell you that, Tom-Jeff."

"I'd like to know why you can't."

"Because he'd shore kill me then."

"Then I'll find out some other way."

"What differ' does it make to you?" she asked; and again the dark eyes searched him till he was fain to look away from her.

"I reckon it doesn't make any difference, if you don't want it to. But one time you were willing enough to tell me your troubles, and—"

"And I'll nev' do it naree 'nother time; never, never. And let me tell you somethin' else, Tom-Jeff Gordon; if you know what's good for you, don't you nev' come anigh me again. One time we used to be a boy and a girl together; you're nothin' but a boy yet, but I—oh, Tom-Jeff—I'm a woman!"

And with that saying she snatched her bucket and was gone before he could find a word wherewith to match it.

CHAPTER XIII.

The twilight was glooming to dusk when Silas Crafts came out of the church and locked the door behind him. If he were surprised to find Tom waiting for him, he made no sign. Neither was there any word of greeting passed between them when he gathered his coat tails and sat down on the higher step, self-restraint being a heritage which had come down undiminished from the Covenanter ancestors of both.

"The way of the transgressor is hard, grievously hard, Thomas. I think you are already finding it so, are you not?"

"That doesn't mean what it used to, to me, Uncle Silas; nothing means the same any more. It's just as if somebody had hit that part of me with a club; it's all numb and dead. I'm sure of only one thing now: that is, that I'm not going to be a hypocrite after this, if I can help it."

"Have you been that all along, Thomas?"

"I reckon so"—monotonously. "At first it was partly scare, and partly because I knew what mother wanted. But ever since I've been big enough to think, I've been asking why, and, as you would say, doubting."

"You have come to the years of discretion, Thomas, and you have chosen death rather than life. If you go on as you have begun, you will bring the gray hairs of your father and mother in sorrow to the grave. Leaving your own soul's salvation out of the question, can you go on and drag an upright, honorable name in the dust and mire of degradation?"

"No," said Tom, defiantly. "And what's more, I don't mean to. I don't know what Doctor Tollivar wrote you about me, and it doesn't make any difference now. That's over and done with. You haven't been seeing me every day for these three weeks without knowing that I'm ashamed of it."

"Ashamed of the consequences, you mean, Thomas. You are not repentant."

"Yes, I am, Uncle Silas; though maybe not in your way. I don't allow to make a fool of myself again."

"Tom, my boy, if any one had told me a year ago that a short twelve-month would make you, not only an apostate to the faith, but a shameless liar as well—"

"Hold on, Uncle Silas. That's mighty near a fighting word, even between blood kin. When have you ever caught me in a lie?"

"Now!" thundered the accusing voice; "this moment! You have been giving me to understand that your sinful rebellion at Beersheba was the worst that could be charged against you. Here, at your own home, when your mother had just been spared to you by the mercies of the God whose commandments you set at naught, you have been wallowing in sin—in crime!"

"If I can sit here and take that from you, it's because it isn't so."

"Wretched boy! Out of your own mouth you shall be convicted. Where were you on Wednesday morning?"

"I was at home most of the time; between 10 o'clock and noon I was on the mountain."

"There were three of you; a hardened, degraded boy, a woman no less wicked and abandoned, and the devil who tempted you."

"It's a lie! I just happened to meet Nan Bryerson at the spring under the big rock. I don't have to defend myself! If you can believe I'm that low-down, you're welcome to!" Then, abruptly: "I reckon we'd better be going on home; they'll be waiting dinner for us at the house."

"Not yet, Thomas Gordon; there is a duty laid on me. I had hoped and prayed that I might find you repentant; you are not repentant. Your father has a letter from Doctor Tollivar; the doors of Beersheba are open to you again. I had hoped—" The pause was not for effect. It was merely that the man and the kinsman in Silas Crafts had throttled the righteous judge. "It breaks my heart, Thomas, but I must say it. You have put it out of your power to say with the Psalmist, I will wash mine hands in innocence; so will I compass thine altar, O Lord." You must give up all thoughts of going back to Beersheba."

"Don't trouble yourself," said Tom, with more bravado. "I wouldn't go back there if it was the only place on earth." Then suddenly: "Who was it that told on me, Uncle Silas?"

"Never mind about that. It was one who could have no object in misstating the fact—which you have not denied. Let us go home."

(To be continued.)

PICK APPLES FOR STORAGE

Fruit Not Too Ripe and Yet Not Too Green—Hard Problem to Hit Proper Time.

(By R. B. RUSHING.)

There are two things to be avoided in picking apples for cold storage; first, fruit must not be fully matured; second, the fruit should not be too green.

When fruit is allowed to fully mature on the trees the very best and most perfect cold storage in the country will not carry it for any considerable length of time without heavy shrinkage.

On the other hand, when you pick the fruit too green, while it will likely carry well, it will lack size, color and flavor; and experienced apple dealers will want from 50 cents to \$1 discount per barrel according to the market.

Just when to pick fruit so that it will not be too ripe and so it will not be too green, is sometimes a hard problem.

Where a man has a large orchard and only a small force to do his work, he will have to commence earlier, and possibly the first fruit he picks will be too green, and the last fruit he picks will be too ripe.

He must so plan his work that the bulk of his fruit will be picked about the proper time.

The heaviest shrinkage I ever sustained in cold storage, except on wind-falls and apples picked off of the ground, was on fruit that seemed to be perfect when it came in, beautiful and highly colored, large and smooth; yet inside of a month or two I noticed that these barrels were slack.

Inside of 3½ months the shrinkage was such that they had to be repacked. In four or five months the shrinkage was very great.

It could not have been the fault of the storage, for there were others right beside it, in the same room, the same temperature, the same humidity, and the same care, and practically no shrinkage at all.

What was the cause of this fruit not keeping? Nothing more or less than because the apples had been allowed to fully mature on the trees.

The best and surest way to handle fruit fully matured is to put it on the market at once.

Most any man with a medium-sized orchard can pick and pack the greater portion of his fruit without it being fully ripe; but in case he cannot, he would better have it a little green than too ripe.

Green fruit will gradually mellow in cold storage, and such varieties as Huntsman and Grimes Golden will gradually change from green in color to a yellowish tinge very much like the natural color of the fruit when ripe. Ben Davis and Winesap and some other sorts, however, will not change much, if any.

It therefore is very desirable that the red apples be allowed to mature as much as possible without getting too ripe in order to get the proper color.

Good nice apples always sell for much greater prices later in the season and therefore it is profitable to have them placed in cold storage in the proper condition so as to keep well.

LABOR SAVED BY SEPARATOR

Fewer Utensils Are Necessary and Skim Milk May Be Fed to Farm Animals at Once.

Because it saves all waste of butter fat. What is the use of feeding cows good corn, hay and other stuff that costs money and then allowing the product to go to waste?

Less work is necessary to handle milk with the separator than without, because there are fewer utensils to be used and the skim milk may be fed to the pigs and calves and chickens at once and does not have to be handled again.

Forty or fifty dollars will buy a good separator, big enough for a herd of four or five cows and it will save its cost the first year. If properly cared for a separator is good for ten years.

The cream from a separator will bring more money because it is uniform in richness and is sweeter because as it is separated while the milk is warm and fresh it does not absorb odors as it would if left standing around.

The separator saves hauling milk to the creamery and then hauling the skim milk back to the farm. Then skim milk hauled any considerable distance becomes cold and sometimes dirty and tainted and not fit to feed.

If a farmer has ten or more cows he will require a larger separator—one that will handle say 150 pounds of milk in about 15 minutes and he then should have a small gasoline engine to do the work. It is quicker and cheaper than hand power.

POULTRY NOTES.

Without doubt corn is more commonly fed to poultry in this country than any other grain.

Green sprouted oats have been very widely exploited in recent years as a green food for poultry.

CAP and BELLS



SEASONABLE TITLE IN SOUTH

Southern Gentleman Dubbed "General Humidity" Because of His Extreme Unpleasantness.

On the wide veranda of an old southern hotel sat the titled gentlemen with their weekly papers and cooling mint juleps.

"Jeff," whispered the Chicago man who had just arrived, "can you tell me the different titles of those gentlemen?"

The old colored hostler grinned.

"Yess, boss. Ah kin tell po' ebb'y one ob dem. Dat big stout gen'man wid de empty julep glass am General Tom, sah. De uddeh gen'man wid de broad grin am General Chesteh, sah. De lean gen'man dat am talkin' about de wah am General Clay, sah."

The Chicago man was interested.

"Ah, indeed! And who is that crabbed-looking individual sitting in the corner?"

"Him? Lands, boss, he am so disagreeable en so unpleasant en he maks yo' so wahm we does call him General Humidity."

A Book Lover.

The old parson was endeavoring to do a little missionary work behind the big stone walls.

"What brought you here, my son?" he queried of an inmate.

"I am here, sir, because of my fondness for books," answered No. 2323.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the good man in surprise. "What kind of books, may I ask?"

"Pocketbooks," briefly answered the other.

Sameness of Opinion.

"I suppose," said the young man with the rolled collar and baggy trousers, as he sat down beside a stranger on one of the park benches, "you wouldn't take me for a member of a millionaire's family, would you?"

"No," answered the stranger, after sizing him up, "frankly speaking, I wouldn't."

"Neither would the millionaire," rejoined the young man, sadly, "I asked him last night."

Tough Luck.

"I suppose," said the kind lady, as she handed the husky hobo a generous wedge of apple pie, "that your lot is full of hardships?"

"Dat's de proper word fer it, ma'am," replied the h. h. "In de winter w'en de farmers ain't doin' nothin' but eatin' apples an' drinkin' hard cider it's too cold fer me t' be trampin' around; an' in de summer peeples' alers offerin' me work."

IT NEEDED EXERCISE.



Mr. Billyuns—My automobile looks like it had been subjected to mighty bad treatment. Did you have it out while I was away?

His Chauffeur—Yis, sor. I—er—er—exercised it a little, sor, ivry day, 'or.

Went Wrong.

Black, angry clouds o'erspread the sky; Kiljordan's lawn was very dry; He sprinkled it with might and main—Yet all the same, it didn't rain.

Want Something Better.

"I always find," said Deacon Hardacre, "that the Lord will provide, somehow."

"Yes, but the people of this country are gettin' so they ain't willin' to be provided for merely somehow," replied the infidel of the neighborhood.