

THE QUICKENING

FRANCIS LYNDE

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CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

The mile walk down the pike, lying white and ghostly under the starlight, was paced in silence, man and boy striding side by side and each busy with his own thoughts. As they were passing the Deer Trace gates a loose-jointed figure loomed black against the palings, and the voice of Japheth Pettigrass said:

"Why, howdy, Brother Silas! Thought ye'd gone back to South Tredegar. When ye comin' out to Little Zoar ag'in to give us another of them old-fashioned, spiritual times o' refreshin' from the presence of the Lord?"

"Why do you ask that, Japheth Pettigrass? The Lord will deal with you, one day."

"Yes, I reckon so; that's what makes me say what I does. There's a heap o' sinners left round here, yit, Brother Silas. There's the Major, for one, and I know you're always countin' me in for another. I dunno but you might snatch me as a brand from the burnin', if you could make out to try it one more lap around the cou'se. I been thinkin' right p'intedly about—"

But the preacher had cut in with a curt "Good-night," and was gone, with his broad-shouldered nephew at his heels; and the horse-trader went on, with the stars for his audience.

Pettigrass was groping for the gate latch when a hand fell on his shoulder, and a clutch that was more than half a blow twirled him about to face the roadway. He was doubling his fists for defense when he saw who his assailant was.

"Why, Tom-Jeff! what's allin' ye?" he began; but Tom broke in with gaspings of rage.

"Japhe Pettigrass, what did you think you saw last Wednesday forenoon up yonder at Big Rock Spring on the mountain? Tell it straight, this time, or I'll dig the truth out of you with my bare hands!"

"Sho, now, Tom-Jeff; don't you git so servigrous over nothin'. I didn't see nothin' but a couple o' young fly-aways playin' possum in a hole in the big rock. And I'll leave it to you if I didn't call Caesar off and go my ways, jes' like I'd like to be done by."

"Yes; and then you came straight down here and told my uncle!" The hand he had been holding behind him came to the front, clutching a stone snatched up from the metaling of the pike as he ran. "If I should break your face in with this, Japhe Pettigrass, it wouldn't be any more than you've earned!"

"I tell Brother Silas on you, Tom-Jeff! You show me the man 'at says I done any such low-down thing as that, and I'll frazzle a fifty-dollar hawswhip out on his ornery hide—I will, so. Say, boy; you don't certainly believe that o' me, do ye?"

"I don't want to believe it of you, Japhe," quavered Tom, as near to tears as the pride of his eighteen years would sanction. "But somebody saw and told, and made it a heap worse than it was."

"Who do you reckon it was told on you? Was there anybody else in the big woods that mornin'?"

"Yes; there were three men testing the pipe-line. We both saw them, and Nan was scared stiff at sight of one of them; that's why I put her up in that hole."

"When you find out who that feller is that Nan's skeered of, you can lay your hand on the man that told Brother Silas on you. But I wouldn't trouble about it none, if I was you."

The dinner at Woodlawn that night was a stiff and comfortless meal, as it had come to be with the taking on of four-tined forks and the other conventions for which an ornate paneled dining-room in an ornate brick mansion sets the pace. Caleb Gordon was fathoms deep in the mechanical problems of the day's work, as was his wont. Silas Crafts was abstracted and silent. Tom's food choked him, as it had need under the sharp stress of things; and the convalescent housemother remained at table only long enough to pour the coffee.

Tom excused himself a few minutes later, and followed his mother to her room, climbing the stair to her door, leaden-footed and with his heart ready to burst.

"Is that you, Thomas?" said the gentle voice within, answering his tap on the panel. "Come in, son; come in and sit by my fire. It's right chilly tonight."

Thomas Jefferson entered and placed his chair so that she could not see him without turning, and for many minutes the silence was unbroken. Then he began, as begin he must, some time and in some way.

"Mammy," he said, feeling unconsciously for the childish phrase, "mammy, has Uncle Silas been telling you anything about me?"

"Something, Thomas, but not a great deal. You have had some trouble with Doctor Tollivar."

"Yes."

"I have known that for some little time. Your uncle might have told me more, but I wouldn't let him. There has never been anything between us to

break confidence, Tom. I knew you would tell me yourself, when the time came."

"I have come to tell you to-night, mammy. You must hear it all, from beginning to end. It goes back a long way—back to the time when you used to let me kneel with my head in your lap to say my prayers; when you used to think I was good. . . ."

The fire had died down to a few glowing masses of coke on the grate bars when he had finished the story of his wanderings in the valley of dry bones. Through it all, Martha Gordon had sat silent and rigid, her thin hands lying clasped in her lap, and her low willow rocking-chair barely moving at the touch of her foot on the fender.

But when it was over; when Tom, his voice breaking in spite of his efforts to control it, told her that he could walk in the way she had chosen for him only at the price a conscious hypocrite must pay, she reached up quickly and took him in her arms and wept over him as those who sorrow without hope, crying again and again, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

CHAPTER XIV.

Once in a lifetime for every youngling climbing the facile or difficult slope of the years there comes a day of realization, of a sudden extension of vision, of Rubicon-crossing from the hither shore of joyous and irresponsible adolescence to that further one of conscious grappleings with the adult fact.

For Thomas Jefferson, grinding tenaciously in the Boston technical school, whither he had gone late in the winter of Beersheban discontent, the stream-crossing fell in the spring of the panic year 1893, what time he was 21, a quarter-back on his college eleven, fit, hardy, studious and athletic; a pace-setter for his fellows and the pride of the faculty, but still little more than an overgrown, care-free boy in his outlook on life. Glimpses there had been over into the Promised Land of manhood, but the crumbing cup of college work and play quaffed in health-giving heartiness is the elixir of youth. The speculative habit of the boy slept in the college undergraduate. The days were full, each of the things of itself, and if Tom looked forward to the workaday future—as he did by times—the boyish impatience to be at it was gone. Chiawasse Consolidated was moderately prosperous; the home letters were mere chronicles of sleepy Paradise. The skies were clear, and the present was acutely present. Tom studied hard and played hard; ate like an ogre and slept like a log. And when he finally awoke to find himself stumbling bewildered on the bank of the epoch-making Rubicon, he was over and across before he could realize how so narrow a stream should fill so vast a chasm.

Tom received a letter from his father telling of the financial crisis, his fear for the Chiawasse Consolidated, and asking his advice.

Tom found this letter in his mailbox one evening after a strenuous day in the laboratory; and that night he sat up with the corpse of his later boyhood, though he was far enough from putting it that way. His father was in trouble, and the letter was a call for help. It seemed vastly incredible, Thomas Jefferson's ideal of steady courage, of invincible human pulsance, was formed on the model of the stout-hearted old soldier who had fought under Stonewall Jackson. What a trumpet blast of alarm must have sounded to make such a man turn to a raw recruit for help!

"It's up to me," he mused, "and I'd like to know what I've been thinking of all this time. Why, pappy's old! he was 40 before I was born. And I've been here taking it easy and having all sorts of a good time, while he's been playing Sindbad to Duxbury Farley's Old Man of the Sea. Coming, pappy!" he shouted; and forthwith flung himself down at the table to write a letter that was to put new life into a weary old man who was fighting against odds in the far-away Southland.

The lone soldier was to take heart of grace, remembering that he had a son; remembering also that the son was now a man grown, stout of arm, steady of head, and otherwise fighting-fit. If the storm should come, the watchword must be to hold on all, keeping steerage-way on the Chiawasse Consolidated craft at all hazards.

The June examinations were not far off, and these disposed of, the mansion would be ready to lay hold. Meanwhile, let Caleb Gordon, in his capacity of principal minor stockholder, insist on a full and exact statement of the company's affairs, and—here the new manhood asserted itself boldly—let that statement, or a copy of it, come to Boston by the first mail.

To this letter there was a grateful reply in which Tom read with a smile his father's half-bewildered attempt to get over to the new point of view. It began, "Dear Buddy," and ended, "Your affectionate pappy," but there was man-to-man matter between the salu-

tion and the signature. The inquiry into the affairs of Chiawasse Consolidated had revealed little or nothing more than the general manager already knew. The president had turned the inquiring stockholder over to Dyckman, the bookkeeper, with instructions to give Mr. Gordon the fullest possible information, and:

"Dyckman slid out of it, smooth and easy-like," Caleb's letter went on. "He allowed he was mighty busy, right about then. Wouldn't I just make myself at home and examine the books for myself? I reckon that was about what Farley wanted him to do. I'm no book expert, and I couldn't make head or tail out of Dyckman's spider tracks. Looks to me like all the books are good for is to keep people from finding where the company is at. What little I found out, young Norman told me. He says we're in a hole, and the first wagon-load of dirt that comes along will bury us out of sight."

Tom, driven now with the closing work of the college year, yet took time to write another heartening letter to the hard-pressed old soldier. It had been his good fortune to win the Clarkson prize for crucible tests, and to have gained thereby a speaking acquaintance with the multimillionaire iron king who had founded it. Mr. Clarkson did not believe that the financial storm would grow to panic size. As for himself, Tom thought the hazard was less in the times than in the Farleys. Father Caleb was to keep his finger on the pulse of the main office, wiring Boston at the first sign of its weakening.

The junior metallurgical was in the thick of the June examinations when the catastrophe befell. The brief story of it came to Tom in the first dictated letter he had ever received from his father, and the tremulous shakiness of the signature pointed eloquently to the reason. Chiawasse Consolidated was out of blast—"temporarily suspended," in the pleasant euphemism of the elder Farley; the force, clerical and manual, was discharged, with only Dyckman left in the deserted South Tredegar offices to answer questions; and the three Farleys, with Major Dabney, Ardea and Miss Euphrasia, were to spend the summer in Europe.

Caleb wrote in some bitterness of spirit. Though the Gordon holdings in the company, increased from time to time as the iron-master had prospered, amounted to a little more than a third of the capital stock, everything had been done secretly. The general manager's own notice of the shut-down had come in the posted "Notice to Employees." When the Farleys should leave, he would be utterly helpless; on their return they could repudiate everything he might do in their absence. Meantime, ruin was imminent. The affairs of the company were in the utmost confusion; the treasury was empty, and there were no apparent assets apart from the idle plant. Creditors were pressing; the discharged workmen, led by the white coal-miners, were on the verge of riot; and Major Dabney's royalties on the coal lands were many months in arrears.

Tom rose promptly to the occasion, and in all the stress of things found space to wonder how it chanced that he knew instinctively what to do and how to go about it. Before his information was an hour old a rush telegram had gone to his father, asking from what port and by what steamer the Farleys would sail; asking also that certain documents be sent to a given New York address by first mail. This done, he laid the exigencies frankly before the examiners in the technical school, praying for such leniency as might be extended under the circumstances. Since all things are possible for an honor-man, beloved of those whose mission it is to grind the human weapon to its edge, the difficulties in this field vanished. Mr. Gordon could go on with his examinations until his presence was needed elsewhere; and after the stressful moment was passed he could return and finish.

The return telegram from Gordonia was a day late. Knowing diplomacy only by name, Caleb Gordon had gone directly to Dyckman for information regarding the Farleys' movements. Dyckman was polite to the general manager, but unhappily he knew nothing of Mr. Farley's plans. Caleb tried elsewhere, and the little mystery thickened. At his club, Mr. Farley had spoken of taking a Cunarder from Boston; to a friend in the South Tredegar Manufacturers' Association he had confided his intention of sailing from Philadelphia. But at the railway ticket office he had engaged Pullman reservations for six persons to New York.

This last was conclusive, as far as it went; and Japheth Pettigrass supplied the missing item. The Dabneys and the Farleys made one party, and Japheth knew the steamer and the sailing date.

"Party will sail by White Star Line Baltic, New York, to-morrow. New York address, Fifth Avenue Hotel. Papers to your care 271 Broadway by mail yesterday," was the message which was signed for by the doorkeeper at the mines and metallurgy examination room in Boston, late in the forenoon of the second day; and Tom looked at the clock. Nothing would be gained by taking a train which would land him in New York late in the evening; so he plunged again into the examination pool and thought no more of Chiawasse Consolidated until his paper on qualitative analysis had been neatly folded, docketed and handed to the examiner.

(To be continued.)

Ambiguous.

"I wonder what the teacher meant about the singing of my two daughters."

"What did he say?"
"He said that Mamie's voice was good, but Maud's was better still."—Cleveland Leader

WANTED TO INFORM HIS WIFE

Timid Man Finally Discloses Knowledge That His Mother-in-Law Had Fallen in Water.

The other day, over at the swimming baths, a timid and retiring-looking man waited until the superintendent was disengaged, and then said to him:

"I do hate to give anyone trouble, but have you got a long stick or a pole of any kind you could lend me?"

"No, sir; I told you so ten minutes ago," snapped the overworked official. "So you did," replied the man, "but I thought I'd just ask once more. I think I've done my duty in the matter. Don't you think so?"

"What matter? What on earth are you talking about?"

"Why, you see, my mother-in-law dived off there, at the deep end, about half an hour ago, and as she hasn't come up yet I thought I'd like to tell my wife that I had jabbed round on the bottom for her for a while, anyway; but if I can't, why, I suppose I can't, that's all," and, pensively writing her address on a label to be tied to the old lady, when she came up, the conscientious man walked thoughtfully away.

Papa's Specialty.

"Papa," says the little son of the judge who has been given a great deal of newspaper mention because of his decision in a certain famous case, "mamma says I've got to go to bed right after dinner tonight because I disobeyed her today."

"Well, Freddie, what can I do about it? You'll have to take your medicine."

"Huh! I'd think you would give your little boy a writ of habeas corpus, too!"—Judge.

TOO BAD.



Mrs. Newton—Do you notice any improvement in your daughter's piano playing?

Mrs. Hixton—No; and I notice that there is no improvement in my husband's temper.

The Rival Belles.

He—I really believe Miss Highup tried to cut us.

She (rival belle)—If she had tried she would have succeeded. Did you ever see such a hatchet-face?—New York Weekly.

Had No Kick.

"Catch any fish?"

"None."

"Better luck next time."

"I'm satisfied. I don't care to ha-

cheap fish biting these expensive flies."

No Answer.

A little toy terrier was running after an express train, barking and snapping.

"Excuse me!" butted in a St. Bernard. "What are you doing?"

"I'm pursuing that — train," snapped the Fysta.

"Yes, I know," agreed the large canine. "But what are you going to do with it when you catch up?"

There are some fables that need no morals.

Haughty Cook.

"My dear, will you kindly ask that haughty cook of ours to stew some tripe I brought home? I haven't the nerve."

"Where is the tripe?"

"She's looking at it now through her tortoiseshell."

Short on Currency.

"Did she marry the man who rescued her?"

"Yes, and now she's discovered that her life was the only thing he ever saved."

The Natural Suggestion.

"I am all tied up in this affair with my dressmaker."

"Has she been making you a hobble skirt, too?"

Perhaps.

"Got something for us?" asked the man, coming to the door.

"I don't know. Got \$8.37?" asked the boy, looking at the tag.

WATCHING THE GREAT FLOCKS

Reading is About the Only Solace of the Lonely Sheep Herder's Life.

Most of the sheep herders are great readers. There is a big book store in Casper, Wyo., which, instead of returning to the publishers unsold periodicals, sells them to sheep herders at 5 cents each. One of the owners of the store is a sheepman.

There is an attorney practicing law in Cheyenne at present that studied his books while herding sheep. College men have been known to take a profitable post-graduate course on the sheep range, to their ultimate success in life; but the general run of sheep herders doesn't average up very well.

It is the illiterate sheep herders that

go crazy, says Everybody's. In the sheep country sheepmen will tell you that herders do not go crazy, and that there is nothing more elevating than association with sheep, or more broadening than life upon the range. Peculiarities generally are not marked there. It is noticeable in Wyoming, for example, that most men draw the upper lip back from the teeth, exposing them, rabbit fashion—a habit doubtless due to the strong white light upon the vast stretches of treeless land. They go grinning along through mirth and tragedy alike, and the white plain grins back at them, nobody counting it peculiar because it is common.

A Princely Family.

A recent periodical illustration represents a gathering of a remarkable family. Reuss is a rich little principality of Germany containing about 440 square miles. A curious fact in relation to its rulers is that all the princes are named Henry. It was on the occasion of the silver wedding of Henry XXVII that the picture referred to was taken. The numbering goes on to a certain time limit, and then begins over again.

But the princes of the house of Reuss are notable for something besides their system of nomenclature. The family of Reuss is one of the few princely families of Germany whose history for the past three centuries has been a good one.

"Perhaps," says a German writer, "no courtly house has for such a long series of years produced such fine, good, wise, excellent rulers; perhaps no other German house rests on such a firm, well-considered and lasting basis. Few houses have produced such a number of sons distinguished in war or political life; few territories have such causes for content and happiness."—Youth's Companion.

Effect of Lightning Flash.

Sitting in a dark room at night with a lightning lit storm coming on, the observer of the electrical phenomena will be unable to tell from which of the compass points a blinding flash comes, even if the room have four windows to the four points of the compass. This, of course, provided the shades be lowered sufficiently for the possible bolt to escape the eye. The roll of thunder following the flash will be the first intimation the observer has of the storm direction.

Especially is this fact marked after the rain is falling heavily and when the rain drops become reflectors of the light, giving the effect of sheet lightning. At such times when the skies seem sheets of flame, one may observe how this reflected light penetrates to every corner of a room with a brilliance not equaled by summer sunlight. The sunlight, coming in direct rays into a room, leaves its shadow spots. The reflected light of the lightning stroke leaves the ceiling and the floor equally illumined. Even the smallest object may be picked up from under a bed or other furniture a little raised above the floor.

Bad Manners.

Complaints are common of the lack of manners in the young man of today. In most instances this may be traced to want of training in early youth. You cannot begin too soon if you want to make your son a gentleman in the best sense of the word. From babyhood teach him to give in to his sisters, because they are girls and need consideration. If he pulls their hair or kicks them—for, alas! small boys are often bullies—never pass over such an offense. Do not allow any rudeness or disrespect. Demand courteous treatment, make him bring you a chair, open the door when you leave the room, walk on the outer side of the pavement, and, in fact, behave to you as he will to other women in the future.

Judged by His Company.

"Yes, sir," said old DeScadds, "I judge a man by the company he keeps."

"Thank you," rejoined young Would-bee.

"Thank me!" exclaimed the old man. "Why should you thank me?"

"Excuse me," said the young man, "but I thought you had in mind the fact that I have been keeping company with your daughter for nearly a year."—Boston Sunday Post.