

THE QUICKENING

FRANCIS LYNDE

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CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

The walk took the pike, lying white and smooth under the night, was paced in silence, man and boy striding side by side and each busy with his own thoughts. As they were passing the dark Trace gates a loose-jointed figure loomed black against the palling, and the voice of Japheth Pettigrew said:

"Why, howdy, Brother Silas! Thought you'd gone back to South Trudgear. When are you comin' out to Litz? Zear agin to give us another of these old-fashioned, spiritual times of refreshin' from the presence of the Lord?"

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

"Yes, I reckon so; that's what makes me say what I do. There's a heap of sinners left round here, 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 burning, if you could make out to try it one more lap around the course. I been thinkin' it right plenty about you, and the preacher had cut in with a curt 'Good-night,' and was gone, with his broad-shouldered nephew at his heels, and the crowd went on with the stars for an audience of a hundred."

Pettigrew was groping for the gate latch when a hand fell on his shoulder, and a clutch of arms about his neck, a blow twisted 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 a'llin' ye?" he began; but Tom broke in with gasps of rage.

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

"Sho, now, Tom-Jeff, don't you get so serious over nothin'. I didn't see nothin' but a couple of boys always playin' possum in a hole in the big rock. And I'll leave it to you if I didn't call Cleave off and go my ways, 'fess 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 the neck of the pike as he ran. "If I should break your face in with this stick of brass, it wouldn't be any more than you've earned!"

"I tell Brother Silas on you, Tom-Jeff! You should be a man, and I done any such low-down thing as that, and I'll frizzle a fifty-dollar wharship out on his ornery hide—I will, so. Say, boy, you'd better certainly believe that o' me, do ye?"

"I don't want to believe it of you, Japheth," quavered Tom, as near to tears as the pride of his eighteen years would sanction. "But someone says and told, and made it a heap worse than that 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 me, and the pipe-line."

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 fellow is that Nan's skeered of, you can lay your hands on the man that told Brother Silas on you. If I wouldn't trouble about it none, if I was your uncle, I'd be after him."

The dinner at Woodlawn that night was a stiff and comfortless meal, as if to come to the table of the eighteen-year-old boy and the old man were a violation of the law. The table was set in an ornate brick mansion set in the woods. The table was set deep in the mechanical gloom of the day's work, as was his work. Silas Crafts was abstracted and silent. Tom's food chafed at the table, and he needed under the sharp stress of things, and the convalescent householder 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 stairs to her door, laden with coffee 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 to-night."

Thomas Jefferson entered and placed his chair so that he could see his mother without turning, and for many minutes the silence was unbroken. Then she began, as he might expect some time and in her own 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 Tolliver?"

"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 you and Doctor Tolliver, has there?"

"No, mammy, I know 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 day when you used to let me kneel with my head on your lap as you prayed; 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 all, Martha Gordon had sat silent and rigid, her thin hands 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 weep without hope, crying again and again, 'O my son, Absalom, my son, my son!'"

For Thomas Jefferson, grinding teeth, anxiously in the Boston technical school, whether he had gone late in the winter of Bereah's discontent, the stream-crossing fell in the spring of the party-year 1893, when 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 maddened, but the crimping cup of col-

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 Commodore from Boston; to a friend in the South Trudgear 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 Pettigrew 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, Fifty Avenue Hotel, Fifth Street, 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 turned his attention to the matter solidated until his paper on qualitative analysis had been neatly folded, docked and handed to the examiner.

(To be continued.)

AT DANCING SCHOOL

Some Children Enjoy the Divercion and Others Not

To most little girls and many little boys dancing school is a delight, but not to all. The mother of one small boy, who usually accompanies him to the class, partly to encourage him—regularly as the father, but he approaches her in resentful and despairing gloom—and partly to enjoy the pretty spectacle, noticed one afternoon lately that although he had bowed correctly before several little girls in turn, he had failed to secure a partner. She beckoned him to her side.

"Why wouldn't any of those little girls dance with you, Bobby?" she inquired. "Did you ask them nicely?"

"Well, mama," admitted Bobby, reluctantly, "I've been thinking of it all this time. Why, pappy's old, and he's 40 before he was born. And I've been here taking it easy and having a regular good time while 'he's been playing Blindfold to Duxbury Farley's Old Man of the Sea. Coming, pappy's he shouted; and forthwith turned 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 a man grown, stout of arm, steady of head, and otherwise fighting fit. If the storm should come, the sword must be held on all hazards, keeping steady as the old man, the Consolidated craft at all hazards. The June examinations were not far off, and these displayed the man who would be ready to hold. Meanwhile, while Caleb Gordon, in his capacity of principal stockholder, insisted 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 other side of the street, "Dear Buddy," and ended, "Your affectionate pappy," but there was made no mention of the signature. The inquiry into the affairs of Chiawasse Consolidated had revealed little, or nothing more than the general manager's ready knew. The present manager, the inquiring stockholder over to Dyckman, the bookkeeper, with instructions to get the most of the latest possible information, and:

"Dyckman's aid out of it, smooth and easy-like," Caleb's letter went on, "it allowed me to get my right about like that. Wouldn't I just make myself at home and examine the books for myself? I reckon that was about what Parley was after when he had that book expert, and I couldn't make head or tail out of Dyckman's spider tracks. Looks to me like the books are good for it to keep company in. What little I found out, young Norman told me, and he had a hole in his coat, and a weapon-load of dirt that come along with him, and he was all right."

Tom, driven now with the closing work of the college year, was unable to write another heartening letter to the hard-pressed old soldier. It had been his good fortune to win the Clark prize for the best composition in the year, and he had gained thereby a speaking acquaintance with the multimillionaire Tom's kind, who had founded it. Mr. Clark did not believe in the financial storm would grow to panic size. As for himself, Tom thought the hazardous business was a times in the Farleys. Father Caleb was a danger on the pulse of the main office, writing Boston at the first sign of its weakness.

The junior metallurgist was in the thick of the June examinations when the catastrophe befell. The brief story of it came to Tom in the first dictatorial 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, left in the deserted South Trudgear, left to answer questions; and the three Farleys, with Major Dabney, Arthur and Miss Euphrasia, were to spend the summer in Europe.

Caleb wrote in some bitterness of spirit. Through the Gordon holdings in the company he had 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 shutting-down of the company were in the list of employees. When the Farleys should have been warmly helped 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 to 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 "excuses" frankly before the examiners in the technical school, praying for such leniency as might be extended under the circumstances. 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