



Erskine Dale Pioneer

by John Fox, Jr.

Illustrated by R.H. Livingstone

CHAPTER XI—Continued.

"Precisely," answered Erskine, "and when?"

"At the first opportunity."

"From this moment I shall be waiting for nothing else."

Barbara, reappearing, heard their last words, and she came forward pale and with piercing eyes:

"Cousin Erskine, I want to apologize to you for my little faith. I hope you will forgive me. Mr. Grey, your horse will be at the door at once. I wish you a safe journey—to your command." Grey bowed and turned—furious.

Erskine was on the porch when Grey came out to mount his horse.

"You will want seconds?" asked Grey.

"They might try to stop us—no!"

"I shall ride slowly," Grey said. Erskine bowed.

"I shall not."

Nor did he. Within half an hour Barbara, passing through the hall, saw that the rapiers were gone from the wall and she stopped, with the color fled from her face and her hand on her heart. At that moment Ephraim dashed from the kitchen.

"Miss Barbara, somebody gwine to git killed. I was wukkin' in de ole field an' Mars Grey rid by cousin' to himself. Jist now Mars Erskine went tearin' by de landin' wid a couple o' swords under his arm." His eyes too went to the wall. "Yes, bless Gawd, dey's gone!" Barbara flew out the door.

In a few moments she had found Harry and Hugh. Even while their horses were being saddled her father rode up.

"It's murder," cried Harry, "and Grey knows it. Erskine knows nothing about a rapier."

Without a word Colonel Dale wheeled his tired horse and soon Harry and Hugh dashed after him. Barbara walked back to the house, wringing her hands, but on the porch she sat quietly in the agony of waiting that was the role of women in those days.

Meanwhile, at a swift gallop Firefly was skimming along the river road. Grey had kept his word and more: he had not only ridden slowly but he had stopped and was waiting at an oak tree that was a cornerstone between two plantations.

"That I may not kill you on your own land," he said.

Erskine started. "The consideration is deeper than you know."

They hitched their horses, and Erskine followed into a pleasant glade—a grassy glade through which murmured a little stream. Erskine dropped the rapiers on the sward.

"Take your choice," he said.

"There is none," said Grey, picking up the one nearer to him. "I know them both." Grey took off his coat while Erskine waited. Grey made the usual moves of courtesy and still Erskine waited, wondering, with the point of the rapier on the ground.

"When you are ready," he said, "will you please let me know?"

"Ready?" answered Grey, and he lunged forward. Erskine merely whipped at his blade so that the clang of it whined on the air to the breaking-point and sprang backward. He was as quick as an eyelash and lithe as a panther, and yet Grey almost laughed aloud. All Erskine did was to whip the thrusting blade aside and leap out of danger like a flash of light. It was like an insect boxer falling according to rules unknown—and Grey's face flamed and actually turned anxious. Then, as a kindly fate would have it, Erskine's blade caught in Grey's guard by accident, and the powerful wrist behind it seeking merely to wrench the weapon loose tore Grey's rapier from his grasp and hurled it ten feet away. There is no greater humiliation for the expert swordsman, and not for nothing had Erskine suffered the shame of that long-ago day when a primitive Indian had led him to thrusting his knife into this same enemy's breast. Now, with his sword's point on the earth, he waited courteously for Grey to recover his weapon.

Again a kindly fate intervened. Even as Grey rushed for his sword, Erskine heard the beat of horses' hoofs. As he watched it from the ground and turned, with a wicked smile over his grinding teeth, came Harry's shout, and as he rushed for Erskine, Colonel Dale swung from his horse.

The sword-blades clashed, Erskine whipping back and forth in a way to make a swordsmen groan—and Colonel Dale had Erskine by the wrist and was between them.

"How dare you, sir?" cried Grey hotly.

"Just a moment, young gentlemen," said Colonel Dale calmly.

"Not a moment, Uncle Harry—"

"Just a moment," repeated the Colonel calmly. "Mr. Grey, do you

think it quite fair that you with your skill should fight a man who knows nothing about fells?"

"There was no other way," Grey said sullenly.

"And you could not wait, I presume?" Grey did not answer.

"Now, hear what I have to say, and if you both do not agree, the matter will be arranged to your entire satisfaction, Mr. Grey. I have but one question to ask. Your country is at war. She needs every man for her defense. Do you not think your lives belong to your country and that it is selfish and unpatriotic just now to risk them in any other cause?" He waited for his meaning to sink in, and sink it did.

"Colonel Dale, your nephew grossly insulted me, and your daughter showed me the door. I made no defense to him nor to her, but I will to you. I merely repeated what I had been told and I believed it true. Now that I hear it is not true, I agree with you, sir, and I am willing to express my regrets and apologies."

"That is better," said Colonel Dale heartily, and he turned to Erskine, but Erskine was crying hotly:

"And I express neither."

"Very well," sneered Grey coldly. "Perhaps we may meet when your relatives are not present to protect you."

"Uncle Harry—" Erskine implored, but Grey was turning toward his horse.

"After all, Colonel Dale is right."

"Yes," assented Erskine helplessly, and then—"It is possible that we shall not always be on the same side."

"So I thought," returned Grey with lifted eyebrows. "When I heard what I

did about you?" Both Harry and Hugh had to catch Erskine by an arm then, and they led him struggling away. Grey mounted his horse, lifted his hat, and was gone. Colonel Dale picked up the swords.

"Now," he said, "enough of all this—let it be forgotten."

And he laughed.

"You'll have to confess, Erskine—he has a quick tongue and you must think only of his temptation to use it."

Erskine did not answer.

As they rode back Colonel Dale spoke of the war. It was about to move into Virginia, he said, and when it did—Both Harry and Hugh interrupted him with a glad shout:

"We can go!" Colonel Dale nodded sadly.

Suddenly all pulled their horses in simultaneously and raised their eyes, for all heard the coming of a horse in a dead run. Around a thicketed curve of the road came Barbara, with her face white and her hair streaming behind her. She pulled her pony in but a few feet in front of them, with her burning eyes on Erskine alone.

"Have you killed him—have you killed him? If you have—" She stopped helpless, and all were so amazed that none could answer. Erskine shook his head. There was a flash of relief in the girl's white face, its recklessness gave way to sudden shame, and, without a word, she wheeled and was away again—Harry flying after her. No one spoke. Colonel Dale looked again and Erskine's heart again turned sick.

CHAPTER XII

The sun was close to the unseen sweep of the wilderness. Through its standing rays the river poured like a sea of gold. The negroes were on the way slaying from the folds. Erskine,

chaffing, and the musical clanging of trace-chains came from the barnyard. Hungry cattle were mooing and full-uddered mothers were mooing answers to bawling calves. A peacock screamed from a distant tree and sailed forth, full-spread—a great gleaming winged jewel of the air. In crises the nerves tighten like violin strings, the memory-plates turn abnormally sensitive—and Erskine was not to forget that hour.

The house was still and not a soul was in sight as the three, still silent, walked up the great path. When they were near the portico Harry came out. He looked worried and anxious.

"Where's Barbara?" asked her father.

"Locked in her room."

"Let her alone," said Colonel Dale gently. Like brother and cousin, Harry and Hugh were merely irritated by the late revelation, but the father was shocked that his child was no longer a child. Erskine remembered the girl as she waited for Grey's coming at the sundial, her face as she walked with him up the path. For a moment the two boys stood in moody silence. Harry took the rapiers in and put them in their place on the wall. Hugh quietly disappeared. Erskine, with a word of apology, went to his room, and Colonel Dale sat down on the porch alone.

As the dusk gathered, Erskine, looking gloomily through his window, saw the girl flutter like a white moth past the box-hedge and down the path. A moment later he saw the tall form of Colonel Dale follow her—and both passed from sight. On the thick turf the colonel's feet too were noiseless, and when Barbara stopped at the sundial he too paused. She was unhappy, and the colonel's heart ached sorely, for any unhappiness of hers at ways troubled his own.

"Little girl!" he called, and no lover's voice could have been more gentle. "Come here!"

She turned and saw him, with arms outstretched, the low moon lighting all the tenderness in his fine old face, and she flew to him and fell to weeping on his breast. In wise silence he stroked her hair until she grew a little calmer.

"What's the matter, little daughter?"

"I—I—don't know."

"I understand. You were quite right to send him away, but you did not want him harmed."

"I—I—didn't want anybody harmed."

"I know. It's too bad, but none of us seem quite to trust him."

"That's it," she sobbed; "I don't, either, and yet—"

"I know. I know. My little girl must be wise and brave, and maybe it will all pass and she will be glad. But she must be brave. Mother is not well and she must not be made unhappy too. She must not know. Can't my little girl come back to the house now? She must be honest and this is Erskine's last night." She looked up, brushing away her tears.

"His last night? Ah, wise old colonel!"

"Yes—he goes tomorrow to join Captain Clark at Williamsburg on his foolish campaign in the Northwest. We might never see him again."

"Oh, father!"

"Well, it isn't that bad, but my little girl must be very nice to him. He seems to be very unhappy, too."

Barbara looked thoughtful, but there was no pretense of not understanding.

"I'm sorry," she said. She took her father's arm, and when they reached the steps Erskine saw her smiling. And smiling, almost gay, she was at supper, sitting with exquisite dignity in her mother's place. Of Erskine, who sat at her right, she asked many questions about the coming campaign. Captain Clark had said he would go with a hundred men if he could get no more. The rallying point would be the fort in Kentucky where he had first come back to his own people, and Dave Vandell would be captain of a company. He himself was going as guide, though he hoped to act as soldier as well. Perhaps they might bring back the Hair-Buyer, General Hamilton, a prisoner to Williamsburg, and then he would join Harry and Hugh in the militia of the war came south and Virginia were invaded, as some prophesied, by Tarleton's White Rangers, who had been ravaging the Carolinas. After supper the little lady excused herself with a smiling courtesy to go to her mother, and Erskine found himself in the moonlight on the big portico with Colonel Dale alone.

"Erskine," he said, "you make it very difficult for me to keep your secret. Hugh alone seems to suspect—he must have got the idea from Grey, but I have warned him to say nothing. The others seem not to have thought of the matter at all. It was a boyish impulse of generosity which you may regret—"

"Never," interrupted the boy. "I have no use—less than ever now."

"Nevertheless," the colonel went on, "I regard myself as merely your steward, and I must tell you one thing. Mr. Jefferson, as you know, is always at open war with people like us. His hand is against coach and four, silver plate, and aristocrat. He is fighting now against the law that gives property to the eldest son, and he will pass the bill. His argument is rather amusing. He says if you will show him that the eldest son eats more, wears more, and does more work than his brothers, he will grant that that son is entitled to more. He wants to blot out all distinctions of class. He can't do that, but he will pass this bill."

"I hope he will," muttered Erskine. (TO BE CONTINUED.)

Probably Had.

He—"Haven't I seen you somewhere some time?" She—"Oh, very likely. I was there at the time you mention."

Improved Uniform International Sunday School Lesson

By Rev. P. B. Fitzwater, D. D., Teacher of English Bible in the Moody Bible Institute of Chicago.

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LESSON FOR DECEMBER 24

A LESSON IN TRUST AND PREPAREDNESS

LESSON TEXT—Luke 12:13-40.

GOLDEN TEXT—The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment.

—Luke 12:23.

PRIMARY TOPIC—The Story of a Foolish Rich Man.

JUNIOR TOPIC—A Foolish Rich Man.

INTERMEDIATE AND SENIOR TOPIC—Rich Toward God.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULT TOPIC—True Riches.

Since on October 8 we had a lesson on the birth and childhood of Jesus, many will doubtless prefer to have this new lesson instead of the Christmas lesson.

I. A Warning Against Covetousness (vv. 13-21).

1. The Occasion (vv. 13-15). One of the company requested Jesus to be umpire in a disputed estate. Two brothers were in trouble over an inheritance. Christ refused to enter the sphere of the civil law and warned against the spirit of avarice. Christ's mission was preeminently spiritual.

2. Enforcement of the Warning (vv. 16-21). The parable of the rich man shows clearly that to be concerned with earthly riches while neglecting God is the height of folly. The Lord's warning is of great importance today; for many are seeking gold and forgetting God. Note (1) his increase in goods (v. 16). His riches were rightly obtained, for the ground brought forth plentifully. This shows that a man may be rich because of the Lord's blessing upon him. (2) His perplexity (v. 17). His land was producing more than his barns would hold. He did not want it to go to waste. If he had possessed the right views of life and a sense of stewardship before God, he would have seen that his barns at least had enough for his personal needs and that he could have distributed his surplus to the needy and for benevolent purposes. (3) The fatal choice (vv. 18, 19). He chose to enlarge his barns and give up his life to ease and luxury. It ought to be a delightful task for men whom God has made rich to devote their time and energy to the distribution of their possessions to benevolent purposes. (4) The awful indictment (vv. 20, 21). God calls him a fool.

II. The Certain Cure for Anxiety (vv. 22-34).

Having shown the folly of the rich man who gained gold but lost God, He now urged the disciples to trust God and dismiss all anxious care. He assured them that they need not be anxious even for the necessities of life. Note:

1. The Argument (vv. 22, 23). This is summed up in one brief sentence: "The life is more than food, and the body is more than raiment." The God who gave the life and made the body should be trusted to provide food and clothing.

2. The Illustrations (vv. 24-28). (1) God's care for the fowls (vv. 24-26). The ravens do not sow nor reap—they have no storehouse or barn, yet they live, for God feeds them. If God does not forget the fowls, certainly He would do more for His children. (2) God's care for the flowers of the field (vv. 27, 28). If God is so careful of those flowers which appear but for a day, how much more will He clothe His children!

3. The Exhortations (vv. 29-34). (1) Make not the getting of food and clothes your chief concern. Trust God to provide them. (2) Seek the kingdom of God (v. 31). Those who make God's kingdom first shall have all their needs supplied (Phil. 4:19). (3) Be not afraid (v. 32). God's good pleasure is upon His own, and all good things will He give them. (4) Practice self-denial in order to be able to give gifts to those in need (vv. 33, 34). The doing of such deeds will tend to lift the thoughts upward to God—to trust Him.

III. Be Ready for the Coming of the Lord (vv. 35-40).

Having warned the disciples against the acquisition of worldly goods while forgetting God, and shown them the needlessness of anxiety for food and clothes, He shows them the blessedness of being in a state of readiness when the Lord shall come. Conviction as to the certainty of the Lord's coming is the sure cure for worldliness and anxious care. This attitude of heart He made clear by two parables—that of the returning of the Lord and that of the thief. The Lord will be so pleased with those who are waiting for Him that He will take delight in sitting at the banquet with them, and even serve them. The parable of the thief shows that the time of the Lord's coming is not known.

Paul's Wish.

I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.—Philippians 3:8-11.

So Many Ravens.

The Lord never had so many ravens as he has this morning.—T. De Witt Talmage.

God is Known Everywhere.

In Judah is God known; His name is great in Israel.—Psalm 76:1.

FAMED NEW ENGLAND CHURCH

Edifice Erected at Bennington, Vt., 160 Years Ago, Known All Over the Country.

Early this month the First Congregational church in Bennington, Vt., which has the double distinction of being the first church built in the state of Vermont and the reputation of being the most beautiful example of colonial church architecture in northern New England, celebrated its 160th anniversary.

The Bennington church is famous all over the country. It has been photographed perhaps as often as any church in the United States, a day seldom passing without some tourist halting for a snapshot. It is located on the heights at the western side of the township overlooking Bennington village.

The First church was organized the first week of December, 1702. This was before Vermont had become a separate state, and while it was a part of New Hampshire.

In connection with its construction, there is an entertaining legend. In the days when the Bennington folk decided that they must have a church, there was but one book on church architecture in the whole district, and this was owned by an architect in Bennington. The local folk studied the book and devised the church after suggestions contained in it.

After the church was built it became famous throughout the district and, soon, other townships wanted to build and sent to Bennington to borrow the book. Bennington informed them they would have to come and do their studies in architecture on the spot, as the book would be kept in the town.

From village and hamlet, came committees of builders, carpenters, stone workers and window and interior finishers. The book was lent to them and they met in the church to read and digest it. After their studies were done, the committee used to assemble and discuss the plans for their own church, devising modifications of the design used in Bennington, in order to get original results.

Thus the church became the model for all Vermont's church builders.

Flamingo Curious Bird.

A curious combination of beautiful coloring and ungainly form is presented by the flamingo. In shape it is midway between a goose and a stork, ranging, when full grown, between 5 and 6 1/2 feet in height. Its humped body is supported on legs amazingly long and thin, while its slender neck curves upward like a big letter S, and ends in a small head with a great flat down-curving beak.

The lower part of this beak forms a deep, broad box, into which the upper part fits like a cover. When the bird is feeding on shellfish or water plants in the shallow mud flats the neck is twisted like a corkscrew until the head is upside down; then the top of the beak is pushed along through the mud like a scoop shovel, gathering in the food morsels.

During the nesting period the female builds a curious mound of mud like a tiny volcano, in the crater of which a single egg is laid. On this the mother bird sits with legs drawn up like a grotesque statue on a pedestal.

Oldest of Reptiles.

The "tuatara lizard" is said to be the most remarkable creature now living in New Zealand and the oldest existing type of reptile. So deeply are naturalists interested in this curious species of animal, which seems to be as closely related to turtles as to lizards, that legislative protection has been secured for it, says the Washington Star. Unfortunately, the eggs of the creature do not appear to be covered by the protective act, and gratification has been expressed in certain quarters that only one man, a Mr. Henegham, who can be trusted, knows where to look for the precious eggs. Before they are all destroyed it is hoped that the biologists will have an opportunity to determine how the strange animal is developed, and whether it is more a lizard than a turtle or more a turtle than a lizard.

Young Russians Illiterate.

What struck me most, as I went through the Russian villages, was the fact that the young generation—the boys and girls under sixteen and even up to eighteen—were mostly illiterate.

I could not quite believe that the revolution had not given the people what was their most elementary demand. But the more I questioned the people, the more I realized that it was so.

As a result of revolution, civil war, famine, and all the other evils, a generation was growing up in those villages that had not seen the inside of a school. Throughout the entire country—in the cities as well as in the villages, but especially in the latter—the schools have perhaps suffered most from the turmoil. Millions of children of school age are without schooling.

Louis Levine in the Atlantic Monthly.

According to Size.

A certain bakery makes bread of two sizes, a large 10-cent loaf and a smaller 6-cent loaf. It also has some customers of large proportions and some small.

A few days ago a salesman was making retail deliveries and stopped at a double in which live a very large and a rather small woman, both of whom are good customers. The two came out at the same time, the stout one calling out "two large"; the other calling immediately, "two small."

Indianapolis News.

W.L. DOUGLAS

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W. L. Douglas shoes are actually demanded year after year by more people than any other shoe in the world

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No Matter Where You Live shoe dealers can supply you with W. L. Douglas shoes. If not convenient to call at one of our 110 stores in the large cities, ask your shoe dealer for W. L. Douglas shoes. The factory is in Lowell, Mass. The factory is in Lowell, Mass. The factory is in Lowell, Mass.

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