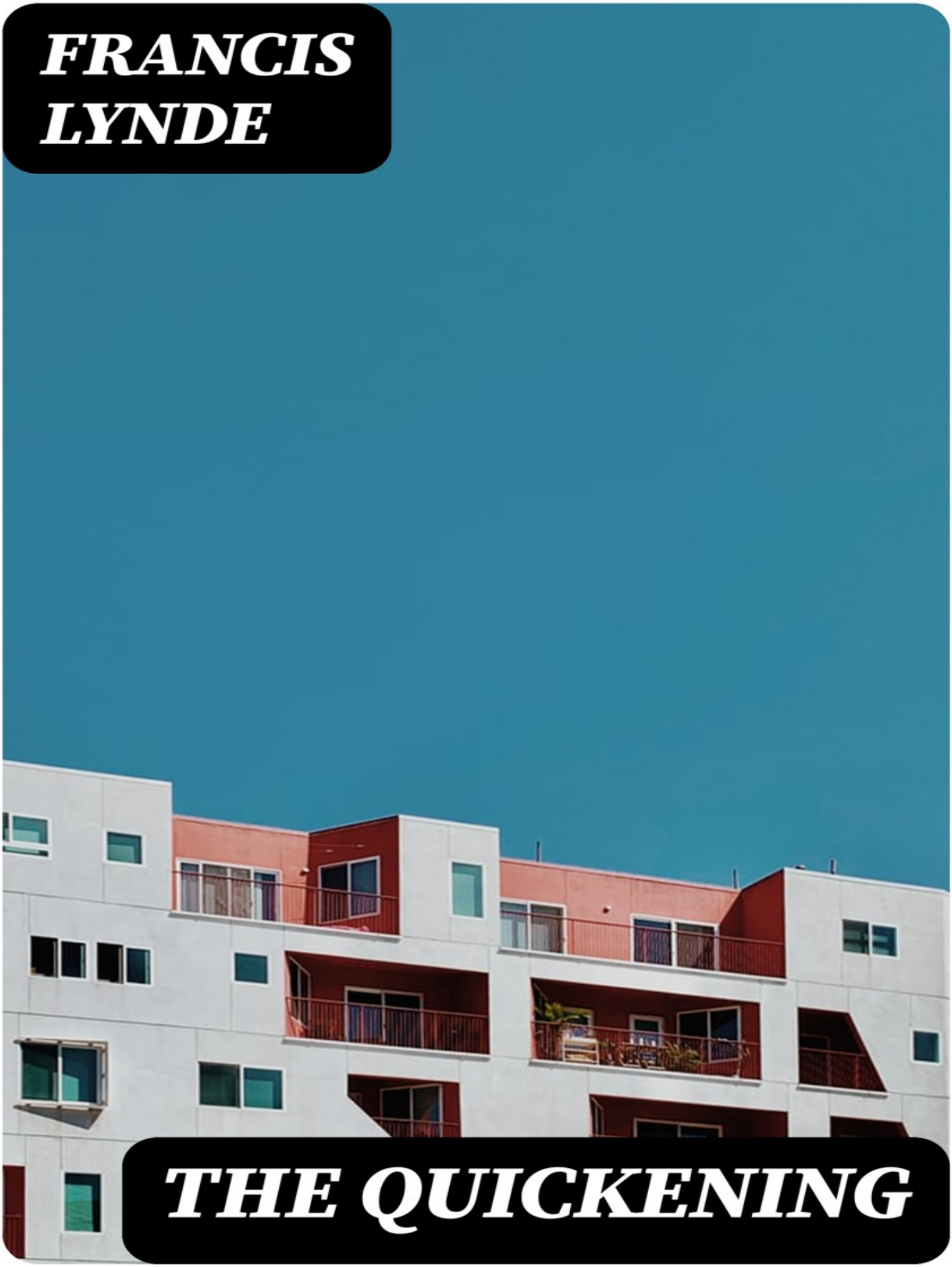
FRANCIS LYNDE



THE QUICKENING

Francis Lynde

The Quickening

EAN 8596547369240

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

I

BETHESDA

Table of Contents

The revival in Paradise Valley, conducted by the Reverend Silas Crafts, of South Tredegar, was in the middle of its second week, and the field—to use Brother Crafts' own word—was white to the harvest.

Little Zoar, the square, weather-tinged wooden church at the head of the valley, built upon land donated to the denomination in times long past by an impenitent but generous Major Dabney, stood a little way back from the pike in a grove of young pines. By half-past six of the June evening the revivalist's congregation had begun to assemble.

Those who came farthest were first on the ground; and by the time twelve-year-old Thomas Jefferson, spatting barefooted up the dusty pike, had reached the church-house with the key, there was a goodly sprinkling of unhitched teams in the grove, the horses champing their feed noisily in the wagon-boxes, and the people gathering in little neighborhood knots to discuss gravely the one topic uppermost in all minds—the present outpouring of grace on Paradise Valley and the region round-about.

"D'ye reckon the Elder'll make it this time with his brother-in-law?" asked a tall, flat-chested mountaineer from the Pine Knob uplands.

"Samantha Parkins, she allows that Caleb has done sinned away his day o' grace," said another Pine Knobber,

"but I ain't goin' that far. Caleb's a sight like the iron he makes in that old furnace o' his'n—honest and even-grained, and just as good for plow-points and the like as it is for soap-kittles. But hot 'r cold, it's just the same; ye cayn't change hit, and ye cayn't change *him*."

"That's about right," said a third. "It looks to me like Caleb done sot his stakes where he's goin' to run the furrow. If livin' a dozen years and mo' with such a sancterfied woman as Martha Gordon won't make out to toll a man up to the pearly gates, I allow the' ain't no preacher goin' to do it."

"Well, now; maybe that's the reason," drawled Japheth Pettigrass, the only unmarried man in the small circle of listeners; but he was promptly put down by the tall mountaineer.

"Hold on thar, Japhe Pettigrass! I allow the' ain't no dyed-in-the-wool hawss-trader like you goin' to stand up and say anything ag'inst Marthy Gordon while I'm a-listenin'. I'm recollectin' right now the time when she sot up day and night for more'n a week with my Malviny—and me a-smashin' the whisky jug acrost the wagon tire to he'p God to forgit how no-'count and triflin' I'd been."

Thomas Jefferson had opened the church-house doors and windows and was out among the unhitched teams looking for Scrap Pendry, who had been one of a score to go forward for prayers the night before. So it happened that he overheard the flat-chested mountaineer's tribute to his mother. It warmed him generously; but there was a boyish scowl for Japheth Pettigrass. What had the horse-trader been saying to make it needful for Bill Layne to speak up as

his mother's defender? Thomas Jefferson recorded a black mark against Pettigrass's name, and went on to search for Scrap.

"What you hiding for?" he demanded, when the newly-made convert was discovered skulking in the dusky shadows of the pines beyond the farthest outlying wagon.

"I ain't hidin'," was the half-defiant answer.

"You're a liar," said Thomas Jefferson coolly, ducking skilfully to escape the consequences.

But there were no consequences. Young Pendry's heavy face flushed a dull red,—that could be seen even in the growing dusk,—but he made no move retaliatory. Thomas Jefferson walked slowly around him, wary as a wild creature of the wood, and to the full as curious. Then he stuck out his hand awkwardly.

"I only meant it 'over the left,' Scrap, hope to die," he said. "I allowed I'd just like to know for sure if what you done last night made any difference."

Scrap was silent, glibness of tongue not being among the gifts of the East Tennessee landward bred. But he grasped the out-thrust hand heartily and crushed it forgivingly.

"Come on out where the folks are," urged Thomas Jefferson. "Sim Cantrell and the other fellows are allowin' you're afeard."

"I ain't afeard," denied the convert.

"No; but you're sort o' 'shamed, and that's about the same thing, I reckon. Come on out; I'll go 'long with you."

Then spake the new-born love in the heart of the big, rough, country boy. "I cayn't onderstand how you can hold out, Tom-Jeff. I've come thoo', praise the Lord! but I jest

natchelly *got* to have stars for my crown. You say you'll go 'long with me, Tom-Jeff: say it ag'in, and mean it."

Again the doubtful-curious look came into Thomas Jefferson's gray eyes, and he would not commit himself. Nevertheless, one point was safely established, and it was a point gained: the miraculous thing called conversion was beyond question real in Scrap's case. He turned to lead the way between the wagons. The lamps were lighted in the church and the people were filling the benches, while the choir gathered around the tuneless little cottage organ to practise the hymns.

"I—I'm studyin' about it some, Scrap," he confessed, half angry with himself that the admission sent the blood to his cheeks. "Let's go in."

It was admitted on all sides that Brother Crafts was a powerful preacher. Other men had wrestled mightily in Zoar, but none to such heart-shaking purpose. When he expatiated on the ineffable glories of Heaven and the joys of the redeemed, which was not too often, the reflection of the celestial effulgences could be seen rippling like sunshine on the sea of faces spreading away from the shore of the pulpit steps. When he spoke of hell and its terrors, which was frequently and with thrilling descriptive, even so hardened a scoffer as Japheth Pettigrass was wont to declare that you could hear the crackling of the flames and the cries of the doomed.

The opening exercises were over—the Bible reading, the long, impassioned prayer, the hymn singing—and the preacher stood up in a hush that could be felt, and stepped forward to the small desk which served for a pulpit.

He was a tall man, thin and erect, with a sallow, beardless face unrelieved by any line of mobility, but redeemed and almost glorified by the deep-set, eager, burning eyes. He had a way of bending to his audience when he spoke, with one long arm crooked behind him and the other extended to mark the sentences with a pointing finger, as if to remove the final trace of impersonality; to break down the last of the barriers of reserve which might be thrown up by the impenitent heart.

The hush remained unbroken till he announced his text in a voice that rang like an alarm-bell pealed in the dead of night. There are voices and voices, but only now and then one which is pitched in the key of the spheral harmonies. When the Reverend Silas hurled out the Baptist's words, *Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!* the responsive thrill from the packed benches was like the sympathetic vibration of harp-strings answering a trumpet blast.

The thin, large-jointed hand went up for silence, as if there could be a silence more profound than that which already hung on his word. Then he began slowly, and in phrase so simple that the youngest child could not fail to follow him, to draw the picture of that Judean morning scene on the banks of the Jordan, of the wild, unkempt, skin-clad forerunner, thundering forth his message to a sin—cursed world. On what deaf ears had it fallen among the multitude gathered on Jordan's bank! On what deaf ears would it fall in Zoar church this night!

He classed them rapidly, and with a prescient insight into the mazes of human frailty that made it seem as if the doors

of all hearts were open to him: the Pharisee, who paid tithes —mint, anise and cummin—and prayed daily on the street corners, and saw no need for repentance; the youth and the maiden, with their lips to the brimming cup of worldly pleasures, saying to the faithful monitor, yet a little while longer and we will hear thee; the man and woman grown, fighting the battle for bread, living toilfully for time and the things that perish, and hearing the warning voice faintly and ever more faintly as the years pass; the aged, steeped and sodden in sin unrepented of, and with the spiritual senses all dulled and blunted by lifelong rebellion, willing now to hear and obey, it might be, but calling in vain on the merciful and long-suffering God they had so long rejected.

Then, suddenly, he passed from pleading to denunciation. The setting of The Great White Throne and the awful terrors of the Judgment Day were depicted in words that fell from the thin lips like the sentence of an inexorable judge.

"'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels!'" he thundered, and a shudder ran through the crowded church as if an earthquake had shaken the valley. "There is your end, impenitent soul; and, alas! for you, it is only the beginning of a fearful eternity! Think of it, you who have time to think of everything but the salvation of your soul, your sins, and the awful doom which is awaiting you! Think of it, you who are throwing your lives away in the pleasures of this world; you who have broken God's commands; you who have stolen when you thought no eye was on you; you who have so often committed murder in your hating hearts! Think not

that you will be suffered to escape! Every servant of the most high God who has ever declared His message to you will be there to denounce you: I, Silas Crafts, will meet you at the judgment-seat of Christ to bear my witness against you!"

A man, red-faced and with the devil of the cup of trembling peering from under his shaggy eyebrows, rose unsteadily from his seat on the bench nearest the door.

"'Sh! he's fotched Tike Bryerson!" flew the whisper from lip to ear; but the man with the trembling madness in his eyes was backing toward the door. Suddenly he stooped and rose again with a backwoodsman's rifle in his hands, and his voice sheared the breathless silence like the snarl of a wild beast at bay.

"No, by jacks, ye won't witness ag'inst me, Silas Crafts; ye'll be dead!"

The crack of the rifle went with the words, and at the flash of the piece the man sprang backward through the doorway and was gone. Happily, he had been too drunk or too tremulous to shoot straight. The preacher was unhurt, and he was quick to quell the rising tumult and to turn the incident to good account.

"There went the arrow of conviction quivering to the heart of a murderer!" he cried, dominating the commotion with his marvelous voice. "Come back here, Japheth Pettigrass; and you, William Layne: God Almighty will deal with that poor sinner in His own way. For him, for every impenitent soul here to-night, the hour has struck. 'Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation.' While we are singing, *Just as I am, without one plea*, let the doors of

divine mercy stand opened wide, and let every hard heart be softened. Come, ye disconsolate; come forward to the mercy-seat as we sing."

The old, soul-moving, revival hymn was lifted in a triumphant burst of sound, and Thomas Jefferson's heart began to pound like a trip-hammer. Was this his call—his one last chance to enter the ark of safety? Just there was the pinch. A saying of Japheth Pettigrass's, overheard in Hargis's store on the first day of the meetings, flicked into his mind and stuck there: "Hit's scare, first, last, and all the time, with Brother Silas. He knows mighty well that a good bunch o' hickories, that'll bring the blood every cut, beats a sugar kittle out o' sight when it comes to fillin' the anxious seat." Was it really his call? Or was he only scared?

The twelve-year-old brain grappled hardily with the problem which has thrown many an older wrestler. This he knew: that while he had been listening with outward ears to the restless champing and stamping of the horses among the pines, but with his inmost soul to the burning words of his uncle, the preacher, a great fear had laid hold of him—a fear mightier than desire or shame, or love or hatred, or any spring of action known to him. It was lifting him to his feet; it was edging him past the others on the bench and out into the aisle with the mourners who were crowding the space in front of the pulpit platform. At the turn he heard his mother's low-murmured, "I thank Thee, O God!" and saw the grim, set smile on his father's face. Then he fell on his knees on the rough-hewn floor, with the tall mountaineer called William Layne on his right, and on his left a young girl from the choir who was sobbing softly in her handkerchief.

June being the queen of the months in the valleys of Tennessee, the revival converts of Little Zoar had the pick and choice of all the Sundays of the year for the day of their baptizing.

The font was of great nature's own providing, as was the mighty temple housing it,—a clear pool in the creek, with the green-walled aisles in the June forest leading down to it, and the blue arch of the flawless June sky for a dome resplendent.

All Paradise was there to see and hear and bear witness, as a matter of course; and there were not wanting farm-wagon loads from the great valley and from the Pine Knob highlands. Major Dabney was among the onlookers, sitting his clean-limbed Hambletonian, and twisting his huge white mustaches until they stood out like strange and fierce-looking horns. Also, in the outer ranks of skepticism, Major Dabney's foreman and horse-trader, Japheth Pettigrass, found a place. On the opposite bank of the stream were the few negroes owning Major Dabney now as "Majah Boss," as some of them,—most of them, in fact—had once owned him as "Mawstuh Majah"; and mingling freely with them were the laborers, white and black, from the Gordon iron-furnace.

Thomas Jefferson brought up memories from that solemn rite administered so simply and yet so impressively under the June sky, with the many-pointing forest spires to lift the soul to heights ecstatic. One was the singing of the choir, minimized and made celestially sweet by the lack of bounding walls and roof. Another was the sight of his father's face, with the grim smile gone, and the steadfast eyes gravely tolerant as he—Thomas Jefferson—was going

down into the water. A third—and this might easily become the most lasting of all—was the memory of how his mother clasped him in her arms as he came up out of the water, all wet and dripping as he was, and sobbed over him as if her heart would break.

II

Table of Contents

THE CEDARS OF LEBANON

Table of Contents

Thomas Jefferson's twelfth summer fell in the year 1886; a year memorable in the annals of the Lebanon iron and coal region as the first of an epoch, and as the year of the great flood. But the herald of change had not yet blown his trumpet in Paradise Valley; and the world of russet and green and limestone white, spreading itself before the eyes of the boy sitting with his hands locked over his knees on the top step of the porch fronting the Gordon homestead, was the same world which, with due seasonal variations, had been his world from the beginning.

Centering in the broad, low, split-shingled house at his back, it widened in front to the old-fashioned flower garden, to the dooryard with its thick turf of uncut Bermuda grass, to the white pike splotched by the shadows of the two great poplars standing like sentinels on either side of the gate, to the wooded hills across the creek.

It was a hot July afternoon, a full month after the revival, and Thomas Jefferson was at that perilous pass where Satan

is said to lurk for the purpose of providing employment for the idle. He was wondering if the shade of the hill oaks would be worth the trouble it would take to reach it, when his mother came to the open window of the living-room: a small, fair, well-preserved woman, this mother of the boy of twelve, with light brown hair graying a little at the temples, and eyes remindful of vigils, of fervent beseeching, of mighty wrestlings against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world.

"You, Thomas Jefferson," she said gently, but speaking as one having authority, "you'd better be studying your Sunday lesson than sitting there doing nothing."

"Yes'm," said the boy, but he made no move other than to hug his knees a little closer. He wished his mother would stop calling him "Thomas Jefferson." To be sure, it was his name, or at least two-thirds of it; but he liked the "Buddy" of his father, or the "Tom-Jeff" of other people a vast deal better.

Further, the thought of studying Sunday lessons begot rebellion. At times, as during those soul-stirring revival weeks, now seemingly receding into a far-away past, he had moments of yearning to be wholly sanctified. But the miracle of transformation which he had confidently expected as the result of his "coming through" was still unwrought. When John Bates or Simeon Cantrell undertook to bully him, as aforetime, there was the same intoxicating experience of all the visible world going blood-red before his eyes—the same sinful desire to slay them, one or both. And as for Sunday lessons on a day when all outdoors was beckoning—

He stole a glance at the open window of the living-room. His mother had gone about her housework, and he could hear her singing softly, as befitted the still, warm day:

"O for a heart to praise my God!"

and it nettled him curiously. All hymns were beginning to have that effect, and this one in particular always renewed the conflict between the yearning for sanctity and a desire to do something desperately wicked; the only middle course lay in flight. Hence, the battle being fairly on, he stole another glance at the window, sprang afoot, and ran silently around the house and through the peach orchard to clamber over the low stone wall which was the only barrier on that side between the wilderness and the sown.

Once under the trees on the mountain side, the pious prompting knocked less clamorously at the door of his heart; and with its abatement the temptation to say or do the desperate thing became less insistent, also. It was always that way. When he was by himself in the forest, with no particularly gnawing hunger for righteousness, the devil let him alone. The thick wood was the true whisk to brush away all the naggings and perplexities that swarmed, like house-flies in the cleared lands. Nance Jane, the cow that did not know enough to come home at milking-time, knew that. In the hot weather, when the blood-sucking horse-flies and sweat-bees were worst, she would crash through the thickest underbrush and so be swept clean of her tormentors.

Emulating Nance Jane, Thomas Jefferson stormed through the nearest sassafras thicket and emerged regenerate. What next? High up on the mountain side, lifted

far above Sunday lessons and soul conflicts and perplexing questions that hung answerless in a person's mind, was a place where the cedars smelled sweet and the west wind from the "other mountain" plashed cool in your face what time a sun-smitten Paradise Valley was like an oven. It would be three good hours before he would have to go after Nance Jane; and the Sunday lesson—but he had already forgotten about the Sunday lesson.

Three-quarters of the first hour were gone, and he was warm and thirsty when he topped the last of the densely-wooded lower slopes and came out on a high, rock-strewn terrace thinly set with mountain cedars. Here his feet were on familiar ground, and a little farther on, poised on the very edge of the terrace and overtopping the tallest trees of the lower slopes, was the great, square sandstone boulder which was his present Mecca.

On its outward face the big rock, gray, lichened and weather-worn, was a miniature cliff as high as the second story of a house; and at this cliff's foot was a dripping spring with a deep, crystalline pool for its basin. There was a time when Thomas Jefferson used to lie flat on his stomach and quench his thirst with his face thrust into the pool. But that was when he had got no farther than the Book of Joshua in his daily-chapter reading of the Bible. Now he was past Judges, so he knelt and drank from his hands, like the men of Gideon's chosen three hundred.

His thirst assuaged, he ascended the slope of the terrace to a height whence the flat top of the cubical boulder could be reached by the help of a low-branching tree. The summit of the great rock was one of the sacred places in the temple

of the solitudes; and when the earth became too thickly peopled for comfort, he would come hither to lie on the very brink of the cliff overhanging the spring, heels in air, and hands for a chin-rest, looking down on a removed world mapping itself in softened outlines near and far.

Men spoke of Paradise as "the valley," though it was rather a sheltered cove with Mount Lebanon for its background and a semicircular range of oak-grown hills for its other rampart. Splitting it endwise ran the white streak of the pike, macadamized from the hill quarry which, a full quarter of a century before the Civil War, had furnished the stone for the Dabney manor-house; and paralleling the road unevenly lay a ribbon of silver, known to less poetic souls than Thomas Jefferson's as Turkey Creek, but loved best by him under its almost forgotten Indian name of Chiawassee.

Beyond the valley and its inclosing hills rose the "other mountain," blue in the sunlight and royal purple in the shadows—the Cumberland: source and birthplace of the cooling west wind that was whispering softly to the cedars on high Lebanon. Thomas Jefferson called the loftiest of the purple distances Pisgah, picturing it as the mountain from which Moses had looked over into the Promised Land. Sometime he would go and climb it and feast his eyes on the sight of the Canaan beyond; yea, he might even go down and possess the good land, if so the Lord should not hold him back as He had held Moses.

That was a high thought, quite in keeping with the sense of overlordship bred of the upper stillnesses. To company with it, the home valley straightway began to idealize itself from the uplifted point of view on the mount of vision. The

Paradise fields were delicately-outlined squares of vivid green or golden yellow, or the warm red brown of the upturned earth in the fallow places. The old negro quarters on the Dabney grounds, many years gone to the ruin of disuse, were vine-grown and invisible save as a spot of summer verdure; and the manor-house itself, gray, grim and forbidding to a small boy scurrying past it in the deepening twilight, was now no more than a great square roof with the cheerful sunlight playing on it.

Farther down the valley, near the place where the white pike twisted itself between two of the rampart hills to escape into the great valley of the Tennessee, the split-shingled roof under which Thomas Jefferson had eaten and slept since the earliest beginning of memories became also a part of the high-mountain harmony; and the ragged, red iron-ore beds on the slope above the furnace were softened into a blur of joyous color.

The iron-furnace, with its alternating smoke puff and dull red flare, struck the one jarring note in a symphony blown otherwise on great nature's organ-pipes; but to Thomas Jefferson the furnace was as much a part of the immutable scheme as the hills or the forests or the creek which furnished the motive power for its air-blast. More, it stood for him as the summary of the world's industry, as the white pike was the world's great highway, and Major Dabney its chief citizen.

He was knocking his bare heels together and thinking idly of Major Dabney and certain disquieting rumors lately come to Paradise, when the tinkling drip of the spring into

the pool at the foot of his perch was interrupted by a sudden splash.

By shifting a little to the right he could see the spring. A girl of about his own age, barefooted, and with only her tangled mat of dark hair for a head covering, was filling her bucket in the pool. He broke a dry twig from the nearest cedar and dropped it on her.

"You better quit that, Tom-Jeff Gordon. I taken sight o' you up there," said the girl, ignoring him otherwise.

"That's my spring, Nan Bryerson," he warned her dictatorially.

The girl looked up and scoffed. Hers was a face made for scoffing: oval and finely lined, with a laughing mouth and dark eyes that had both the fear and the fierceness of wild things in them.

"Shucks! it ain't your spring any more'n it's mine!" she retorted. "Hit's on Maje' Dabney's land."

"Well, don't you muddy it none," said Thomas Jefferson, with threatening emphasis.

For answer to this she put one brown foot deep into the pool and wriggled her toes in the sandy bottom. Things began to turn red for Thomas Jefferson, and a high, buzzing note, like the tocsin of the bees, sang in his ears.

"Take your foot out o' that spring! Don't you mad me, Nan Bryerson!" he cried.

She laughed up at him and flung him a taunt. "You don't darst to get mad, Tommy-Jeffy; *you've got religion*."

It is a terrible thing to be angry in shackles. There are similes—pent volcanoes, overcharged boilers and the like—but they are all inadequate. Thomas Jefferson searched for

missiles more deadly than dry twigs, found none, and fell headlong—not from the rock, but from grace. "*Damn!*" he screamed; and then, in an access of terrified remorse: "Oh, hell, hell, hell!"

The girl laughed mockingly and took her foot from the pool, not in deference to his outburst, but because the water was icy cold and gave her a cramp.

"Now you've done it," she remarked. "The devil'll shore get ye for sayin' that word, Tom-Jeff."

There was no reply, and she stepped back to see what had become of him. He was prone, writhing in agony. She knew the way to the top of the rock, and was presently crouching beside him.

"Don't take on like that!" she pleaded. "Times I cayn't he'p bein' mean: looks like I was made thataway. Get up and slap me, if you want to. I won't slap back."

But Thomas Jefferson only ground his face deeper into the thick mat of cedar needles and begged to be let alone.

"Go away; I don't want you to talk to me!" he groaned. "You're always making me sin!"

"That's because you're Adam and I'm Eve, ain't it? Wasn't you tellin' me in revival time that Eve made all the 'ruction 'twixt the man and God? I reckon she was right sorry; don't you?"

Thomas Jefferson sat up.

"You're awfully wicked, Nan," he said definitively.

"'Cause I don't believe all that about the woman and the snake and the apple and the man?"

"You'll go to hell when you die, and then I guess you'll believe," said Thomas Jefferson, still more definitively.

She took a red apple from the pocket of her ragged frock and gave it to him.

"What's that for?" he asked suspiciously.

"You eat it; it's the kind you like—off 'm the tree right back of Jim Stone's barn lot," she answered.

"You stole it, Nan Bryerson!"

"Well, what if I did? You didn't."

He bit into it, and she held him in talk till it was eaten to the core.

"Have you heard tell anything more about the new railroad?" she asked.

Thomas Jefferson shook his head. "I heard Squire Bates and Major Dabney naming it one day last week."

"Well, it's shore comin'—right thoo' Paradise. I heard tell how it was goin' to cut the old Maje's grass patch plumb in two, and run right smack thoo' you-uns' peach orchard."

"Huh!" said Thomas Jefferson. "What do you reckon my father'd be doing all that time? He'd show 'em!"

A far-away cry, long-drawn and penetrating, rose on the still air of the lower slope and was blown on the breeze to the summit of the great rock.

"That's maw, hollerin' for me to get back home with that bucket o' water," said the girl; and, as she was descending the tree ladder: "You didn't s'picion why I give you that apple, did you, Tommy-Jeffy?"

"'Cause you didn't want it yourself, I reckon," said the second Adam.

"No; it was 'cause you said I was goin' to hell and I wanted comp'ny. That apple was stole and you knowed it!"

Thomas Jefferson flung the core far out over the tree-tops and shut his eyes till he could see without seeing red. Then he rose to the serenest height he had yet attained and said: "I forgive you, you wicked, wicked girl!"

Her laugh was a screaming taunt.

"But you've et the apple!" she cried; "and if you wasn't scared of goin' to hell, you'd cuss me again—you know you would! Lemme tell you, Tom-Jeff, if the preacher had dipped me in the creek like he did you, I'd be a mighty sight holier than what you are. I cert'nly would."

And now anger came to its own again.

"You don't know what you're talking about, Nan Bryerson! You're nothing but a—a miserable little heathen; my mother said you was!" he cried out after her.

But a back-flung grimace was all the answer he had.

III

Table of Contents

OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN

Table of Contents

Thomas Jefferson's grandfather, Caleb the elder, was an old man before his son, Caleb the younger, went to the wars, and he figured in the recollections of those who remembered him as a grim, white-haired octogenarian who was one day carried home from the iron-furnace which he had built, and put to bed, dead in every part save his eyes. The eyes lived on for a year or more, following the

movements of the sympathetic or curious visitor with a quiet, divining gaze; never sleeping, they said—though that could hardly be—until that last day of all when they fixed themselves on the wall and followed nothing more in this world.

Caleb, the son, was well past his first youth when the Civil War broke out; yet youthful ardor was not wanting, nor patriotism, as he defined it, to make him the first of the Paradise folk to write his name on the muster-roll of the South. And it was his good fortune, rather than any lack of battle hazards, that brought him through the four fighting years to the Appomattox end of that last running fight on the Petersburg and Lynchburg road in which, with his own hands, he had helped to destroy the guns of his battery.

Being alive and not dead on the memorable April Sunday when his commander-in-chief signed the articles of capitulation in Wilmer McLean's parlor in Appomattox town, this soldier Gordon was one among the haggard thousands who shared the enemy's rations to bridge over the hunger gap; and it was the sane, equable Gordon blood that enabled him to eat his portion of the bread of defeat manfully and without bitterness.

Later it was the steadfast Gordon courage that helped him to mount the crippled battery horse which had been his own contribution to the lost cause; to mount and ride painfully to the distant Southern valley, facing the weary journey, and the uncertain future in a land despoiled, as only a brave man might.

His homing was to the old furnace and the still older house at the foot of Lebanon. The tale of the years

succeeding may be briefed in a bare sentence or two. It was said of him that he reached Paradise and the old homestead late one evening, and that the next day he was making ready for a run of iron in the antiquated blast-furnace. This may be only neighborhood tradition, but it depicts the man: sturdy, tenacious, dogged; a man to knot up the thread of life broken by untoward events, following it thereafter much as if nothing had happened.

Such men are your true conservatives. When his son was born, nine years after the great struggle had passed into history, Caleb, the soldier, was still using charcoal for fuel and blowing his cupola fire with the wooden air-pump whose staves had been hooped together by the hands of his father, and whose motive power was a huge overshot wheel swinging rhythmically below the stone dam in the creek.

The primitive air-blast being still in commission, it may itself say that the South, in spite of the war upheaval and the far more seismic convulsion of the reconstruction period, was still the Old South when Caleb married Martha Crafts.

It was as much a love match as middle-age marriages are wont to be, and following it there was Paradise gossip to assert that Caleb's wife brought gracious womanly reforms to the cheerless bachelor house at the furnace. Be this as it may, she certainly brought one innovation—an atmosphere of wholesome, if somewhat austere, piety hitherto unbreathed by the master or any of his dusky vassals.

Such moderate prosperity as the steadily pulsating iron-furnace could bring was Martha Gordon's portion from the beginning. Yet there was a fly in her pot of precious

ointment; an obstacle to her complete happiness which Caleb Gordon never understood, nor could be made to understand. Like other zealous members of her communion, she took the Bible in its entirety for her creed, striving, as frail humanity may, to live up to it. But among the many admonitions which, for her, were no less than divine commands, was one which she had wilfully disregarded: *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.*

Caleb respected her religion; stood a little in awe of it, if the truth were known, and was careful to put no straw of hindrance in the thorny upward way. But there are times when neutrality bites deeper than open antagonism. In the slippery middle ground of tolerance there is no foothold for one who would push or pull another into the kingdom of Heaven.

Under such conditions Thomas Jefferson was sure to be the child of many prayers on the mother's part; and perhaps of some naturally prideful hopes on Caleb's. When a man touches forty before his firstborn is put into his arms, he is likely to take the event seriously. Martha Gordon would have named her son after the great apostle of her faith, but Caleb asserted himself here and would have a manlier name-father for the boy. So Thomas Jefferson was named, not for an apostle, nor yet for the statesman—save by way of an intermediary. For Caleb's "Thomas Jefferson" was the stout old schoolmaster-warrior, Stonewall Jackson; the soldier iron-master's general while he lived, and his deified hero ever afterward.

When the mother was able to sit up in bed she wrote a letter to her brother Silas, the South Tredegar preacher. On

the margin of the paper she tried the name, writing it "Reverend Thomas Jefferson Gordon." It was a rather appalling mouthful, not nearly so euphonious as the name of the apostle would have been. But she comforted herself with the thought that the boy would probably curtail it when he should come to a realizing sense of ownership; and "Reverend" would fit any of the curtailments.

So now we see to what high calling Thomas Jefferson's mother purposed devoting him while yet he was a helpless monad in pinning-blankets; to what end she had striven with many prayers and groanings that could not be uttered, from year to year of his childhood.

Does it account in some measure for the self-conscious young Pharisee kneeling on the top of the high rock under the cedars, and crying out on the girl scoffer that she was no better than she should be?

IV

Table of Contents

THE NEWER EXODUS

Table of Contents

One would always remember the first day of a new creation; the day when God said, *Let there be light*.

It has been said that nothing comes suddenly; that the unexpected is merely the overlooked. For weeks Thomas Jefferson had been scenting the unwonted in the air of sleepy Paradise. Once he had stumbled on the engineers at work in the "dark woods" across the creek, spying out a line

for the new railroad. Another day he had come home late from a fishing excursion to the upper pools to find his father shut in the sitting-room with three strangers resplendent in town clothes, and the talk—what he could hear of it from his post of observation on the porch step—was of iron and coal, of a "New South," whatever that might be, and of wonderful changes portending, which his father was exhorted to help bring about.

But these were only the gentle heavings and crackings of the ground premonitory of the real earthquake. That came on a day of days when, as a reward of merit for having faultlessly recited the eighty-third Psalm from memory, he was permitted to go to town with his father. Behold him, then, dangling his feet—uncomfortable because they were stockinged and shod—from the high buggy seat while the laziest of horses ambled between the shafts up the white pike and around and over the hunched shoulder of Mount Lebanon. This in the cool of the morning of the day of revelations.

In spite of the premonitory tremblings, the true earthquake found Thomas Jefferson totally unprepared. He had been to town often enough to have a clear memory picture of South Tredegar—the prehistoric South Tredegar. There was a single street, hub-deep in mud in the rains, beginning vaguely at the steamboat landing, and ending rather more definitely in the open square surrounding the venerable court-house of pale brick and stucco-pillared porticoes. There were the shops—only Thomas Jefferson and all his kind called them "stores"—one-storied, these, the wooden ones with lying false fronts to hide the mean little

gables; the brick ones honester in face, but sadly chipped and crumbling and dingy with age and the weather.

Also, there were houses, some of them built of the pale red brick, with pillared porticoes running to the second story; hip-roofed, with a square balustered observatory on top; rather grand looking and impressive till you came near enough to see that the bricks were shaling, and the portico floors rotting, and the plaster falling from the pillars to show the grinning lath-and-frame skeletons behind.

Also, on the banks of the river, there was the antiquated iron-furnace which, long before the war, had given the town its pretentious name. And lastly, there was the Calhoun House, dreariest and most inhospitable inn of its kind; and across the muddy street from it the great echoing train-shed, ridiculously out of proportion to every other building in the town, the tavern not excepted, and to the ramshackle, once-a-day train that wheezed and rattled and clanked into and out of it.

Thomas Jefferson had seen it all, time and again; and this he remembered, that each time the dead, weather-worn, miry or dusty dullness of it had crept into his soul, sending him back to the freshness of the Paradise fields and forests at eventide with grateful gladness in his heart.

But now all this was to be forgotten, or to be remembered only as a dream. On the day of revelations the earlier picture was effaced, blacked out, obliterated; and it came to the boy with a pang that he should never be able to recall it again in its entirety. For the genius of modern progress is contemptuous of old landmarks and impatient of delays. And swift as its race is elsewhere, it is only in that