

THE QUICKENING

—BY—
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CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued).

Later in the day, Tom crossed the pike to the oak-shingled office of the Chlawassee Consolidated. His father was deep in the new wage scale submitted by the miners' union, but he sat up and pushed the papers away when his son entered.

"Have you seen this morning Tribune?" asked Tom, taking the paper from his pocket.

"No; I don't make out to find much time for it before I get home o' nights," said Caleb. "Anything doin'?"

"Yes; they are having a hot time in Chicago and Pullman. The strike is spreading all over the country on sympathy lines."

"Reckon it'll get down to us in any way?" queried the iron-master.

"You can't tell. I'd be a little easy with Ludlow and his outfit on that wage scale, if I were you. We don't want a row on our hands just now. Farley might make capital out of it."

Tom took an electric car for the foot of Lebanon on the line connecting with the inclined railway running up the mountain to Crestcliffe Inn. He had not seen Ardea since the midwinter night of soul-awakenings; and Alecko's finger was still pressing on the wound inflicted by the closed doors of Mountain View avenue and his father's dis-directed sympathy.

He found Major Dabney on the hotel veranda, and his welcome was not scant here, at least. The moment being auspicious, Tom sounded the master of the Deer Trace coal lands on the reorganization scheme, and found nothing but complaisance. Whatever rearrangement commended itself to Tom and his father, and to Colonel Duxbury Farley, would be acceptable to the Major.

"I reckon I can trust you, Tom, and my ve'y good friend, your father, to watch out for Ardea's little fortune," was the way he put it. "I had planned to give her a little surprise on her wedding-day; suppose you have the lawyers make out that block of new stock to Mistress Vincent Farley instead of to me?"

"Of course, Major Dabney, if you say so. But wouldn't it be more prudent to make it over in trust for her and her children before she becomes Mrs. Farley?"

"Tell me, Tom, have you had your suspicions in that qu'ah, too? I'm speaking in confidence to a family friend, suh."

"It is just as well to be on the safe side," said Tom, evasively. There was enough of the uplift left to make him reluctant to strike his enemy in the dark.

"No, suh, that isn't what I mean. You've had your suspicions aroused. Tell me, suh, what they are."

"Suppose you tell me yours, Major," smiled the younger man.

Major Dabney became reflectively reminiscent. "I don't know, Tom, and that's the plain fact. Looking back oveh our acquaintance, thah's nothing in that young man for me to put a fling on; but, Tom, I tell you in confidence, suh, I'd give five years of my old life, if the good Lord has that many mo' in His book for me, if the blood of the Dabneys didn't have to be—uh—mingled with that of these heah Yankees. I would, for a fact, suh."

"Then you'll let me place your third of the new stock in trust for her and her children?" he said. "That will be best, on all accounts. By the way, where shall I find Miss Ardea?"

"She's about the place, somewhahs," was the reply; and Tom passed on to the electric-lighted lobby to send his card in search of her.

Chance saved him the trouble. Some one was playing in the music-room and he recognized her touch and turned aside to stand under the looped portiere. She was alone, and again, as many times before, it came on him with the sense of discovery that she was radiantly beautiful—that for him she had no peer among women. There was no greeting, no welcoming light in the slate-blue eyes; and she did not seem to see when he came nearer and offered to shake hands.

"I've been talking to your grandfather for an hour or more," he began, "and I was just going to send my card after you. Haven't you a word of welcome for me, Ardea?"

"Do you think you deserve a welcome from any self-respecting woman?" she asked, in low tones.

"Why shouldn't I?" he demanded. "What have I done to make every woman I meet look at me as if I were a leper?"

"You know very well what you have done," she said evenly. "If you had a spark of manhood left in you, you would know what a dastardly thing you are doing now in coming here to see me."

"Well, I don't," he returned, doggedly. "And another thing: I'm not to be put off with hard words. I ask you again what has happened? Who has been lying about me this time?"

"You were intending to walk down to the valley?" she asked.

He nodded.

"I will walk with you to the cliff edge."

It was a short hundred yards, and there were many abroad in the gravelled walks: lovers in pairs, and groups of young people pensive or chattering. So it was not until they stood on the very battlements of the western cliff that they were measurably alone.

"Has no one told you what happened last March—on the day of the ice storm?" she asked, coldly.

"No."

"I used to think I knew you," she said, faltering, "but I don't. Why don't you despise hypocrisy and double-dealing as you used to?"

"I do; more heartily than ever."

"Tom, it is a terrible thing to say—and your punishment will be terrible. But you must marry Nancy!"

He was standing on the brink of the cliff, looking down on Paradise Valley, spread like a silver-streched may far below in the moonlight. The flare and sough of the furnace at the iron-works came and went with regular intermittency; and just beyond the group of Chlawassee stacks a tiny orange spot appeared and disappeared like a will-o'-the-wisp. He was staring down at the curious spot when he said:

"If I say that I have no duty toward Nan, you will believe it is a lie—as you did once before. Have you ever reflected that it is possible to trample on love until it dies—even such love as I bear you?"

"It is a shame for you to speak of such things to me, Tom. Consider what I have endured—what you have made me endure. People said I was standing by you, condoning a sin that no right-minded young woman should condone. I bore it because I thought, I believed, you were sorry. And at that very time you were deceiving me—deceiving every one. You have dragged me in the very dust of shame!"

"There is no shame save what we make for ourselves," he retorted. "One day, according to your creed, we shall stand naked before your God, and before each other. In that day you will know what you have done to me tonight. No, don't speak, please; let me finish. The last time we were together you gave me a strong word, and—and you kissed me. For the sake of that word and that kiss I went out into the world a different man. For the little fragment of your love that you gave me then, I have lived a different man from that day to this. Now you shall see what I shall be without it."

Before he had finished she had turned from him gasping, choking, strangling in the grip of a mighty passion, new-born and yet not new. With the suddenness of a revealing flash of lightning she understood; knew that she loved him, that she had been loving him from childhood, not because, but in spite of everything, as he had once defined love. It was terrible, heartbreaking, soul-destroying. She called on shame for help, but shame had fled. She was cold with a horrible fear lest he should find out and she should be forever lost in the bottomless pit of humiliation.

It was the sight of the little orange-colored spot glowing and growing beyond the Chlawassee chimneys that saved her.

"Look!" she cried. "Isn't that a fire down in the valley just across the pike from the furnace? It is a fire!"

He made a field-glass of his hands and looked long and steadily.

"You are quite right," he said, coolly. "It's my foundry. Can you get back to the hotel alone? If you can, I'll take the short cut down through the woods. Good-night, and—good-by."

And before she could reply, he had lowered himself over the cliff's edge and was crashing through the underbrush on the slopes below.

CHAPTER XXIII.

If Thomas Gordon, opening his eyes to consciousness on the mid-week morning, felt the surprise which might naturally grow out of the sight of Ardea sitting in a low rocker at his bedside, he did not evince it, possibly because there were other and more perplexing things for the tired brain to grapple with first.

For the moment he did not stir or try to speak. There was a long dream somewhere in the past in which he had been lost in the darkness, stumbling and groping and calling her to come and lead him out to life and light. It must have been a dream, he argued, and perhaps this was only a continuation of it. Yes, no; she was there in visible presence, bending over a tiny embroidery frame; and they were alone together.

"Ardea!" he said, tremulously.

She looked up, and her eyes were like cooling wellsprings to quench the fever fires in his.

"You are better," she said, rising. "I'll go and call your mother."

"Wait a minute," he pleaded; then his hand found the bandage on his forehead. "What happened to me?"

"Don't you remember? Two men tried to rob you last Saturday evening as you were coming home. One of them struck you."

"Saturday? And this is—"

"This is Wednesday."

The cool preciseness of her replies cut him to the heart. He did not need to ask her why she had come. It was mere neighborliness, and not for him, but for his mother. He remembered the Saturday evening quite clearly now: Japheth's shout; the two men springing on him; the instant just preceding the crash of the blow when he had recognized one of his assailants and guessed the identity of the other. "It was no more than right that you should come," he said, bitterly. "It was the least you could do, since you—"

She was moving toward the door, and his ungrateful outburst had the effect of stopping her. But she did not go back to him.

"I owe your mother anything she likes to ask," she affirmed, in the same colorless tone.

"And you owe me nothing at all, you would say. I might controvert that. But no matter; we have passed the Saturday and have come to the Wednesday. Where is Norman? Hasn't he been here?"

"He has been with you almost constantly from the first. He was here less than an hour ago."

"Where is he now?"

She hesitated. "There is urgency of some kind in your business affairs. Your father spent the night in South Tredegar; and a little while ago he telephoned for Mr. Norman—from the iron-works, I think." She had moved away again, and her hand was on the door-knob.

"You are in a desperate hurry, aren't you?" he gritted; though the teeth-grinding was from the pain it cost him to move. "Would you mind handing me that desk telephone before you go?"

"If you wish to speak to some one, perhaps I could do it for you," she suggested, quite in the trained nurse tone.

"If you could stretch your good-will to my mother—that far," he said. "Please call my office—number five-twenty-six-G—and ask for Mr. Norman."

She complied, but with only a strange young woman stenographer at the other end of the wire, a word of explanation was necessary. "This is Miss Dabney, at Woodlawn. Mr. Gordon is better, and he wishes to say—what did you want to say?" she asked, turning to him.

"Just ask what's going on; if it's Norman you've got, he'll know," said Tom, sinking back on the pillows.

What the stenographer had to say took some little time, and Ardea's color came and went in hot flashes and her eyes grew large and thoughtful as she listened. When she put the ear-piece down and spoke to the sick man, her tone was kinder.

"There is an important business meeting going on over at the furnace office, and Mr. Norman is there with your father," she said. "The stenographer wants me to ask you about some papers Mr. Norman thinks you may have, and—"

She stopped in deference to the yellow pallor that was creeping like a curious mask over the face of the man in the bed. Through all the strain of the last twenty hours she had held herself well in hand, doing for him only what she might have done for a sick and suffering stranger. But there were limits beyond which love refused to be driven.

"Tom!" she gasped, rising quickly to go to him.

"Wait," he muttered; "let me pull myself together. I—I'm weaker than a girl," he whispered. "Vince—I mean the thug, hit me a lot harder than he needed to. What was I saying?—oh, yes; the papers. Will you—will you go over there in the corner by the door and look behind the mopboard? You will find a piece of it sawed so it will come out. In the wall behind it there ought to be a package."

She found it readily—a thick packet securely tied with heavy twine and a little charred at the corners.

"That's it," he said, weakly. "Now one more last favor; please send Aunt Phrony up as you go down. Tell her I want my clothes."

"You are not going to get up?" she said.

"Yes, I must; I'm due this minute at that meeting down yonder."

"Indeed, you shall do no such insane thing!" she cried. "What are you thinking of?"

"Listen!" he commanded. "My father has worked hard all his life, and he's right old now, Ardea. If I should fall him—but I'm not going to. Please send Aunt Phrony."

She consented finally, and as she was leaving him, she said:

"I hope your mother is still asleep. She was here with you all night, and Mr. Norman and I made her go to bed at daybreak. If you must go, get out of the house as quietly as you can, and I'll have Pete and the buggy waiting for you at the gate."

(To be continued.)

Good Filling.

"Strange how some fellows look at things."

"How now?"

"Well, there's young Gately, waiting for dead men's shoes; he never can fill them in the world."

"But he expects they will be stuffed out with gilt-edged bonds."—Boston Herald.

Unusual.

Bacon—What in the world is that rooster crowing so about?

Egbert—Why, he's just discovered an egg that's never been in cold storage.—Yonkers Statesman.

Nature's Own Process.

He—Do you use pasteurized milk?

She—I suppose so. It comes from a pastured cow, anyway.—Boston Evening Transcript.

MODES of the MOMENT



PARIS—Some of the latest designs approved by the great dressmakers and tailors of Paris reveal unexpected points.

Quite the rage of the hour, for visiting dresses, is the long, straight, overdress which is half a tunic and half a princess robe. These quaint garments are molded to the figure without being actually tight-fitting, and very frequently they are beamed with a band of fur.

Indeed, we find bands of fur here, there and everywhere on the newest and most costly models, with the natural result that these garments can be suitably worn without any mantle or wrap.

With regard to the new straight tunic, which is as long as a princess robe, it must be said that when perfectly cut and fitted it is exceedingly smart. The fact that it is not actually light-fitting gives it a vague and picturesque outline.

The Japanese Sleeve.

A curious fact in connection with these close fitting tunics, and the same holds good of the modified directoire styles, is the introduction of the Japanese sleeve. We find these pretty sleeves, cut in one piece with the bodice on all sorts and conditions of dresses; in fact, for any but a tailored costume it is the exception to find a sleeve which has been attached into the armhole.

For example, take an afternoon reception dress by Rouff—a very charming model. The material was saxe blue satin striped with black velvet. The robe was short waisted and directoire in outline except the sleeves, which were quite Japanese. They reached a little below the elbows and were finished off with a narrow band of sable, similar bands appearing on the round collar and also on the deep hem of black velvet which finished off the round skirt. An attractive item of this dress was the folded band of black satin which formed the waistband, with long ends falling to the hem of the dress in front.

Another admirable reception dress, by the same artist, was composed of blue nattier satin cloth, the skirt being tight and round, the simple material being arranged in a long tablier in front. This tablier was edged with bands of silver fox and these bands were passed over the shoulders at the waist band with a broad buckle of blue enamel. The waist line of this dress was quite high and the sleeves were long and rather tight, with bands of fur arranged to simulate a gauntlet cuff.

In Khaki-Colored Velvet.

Yet another dress of the same order was composed of khaki-colored velvet, with a narrow band of black fox at the extreme hem of the round skirt, and, at the knees, a wide insertion of khaki-colored venetian gulpure. The bodice portion was absolutely plain, with a band of fur at the throat, but the Japanese sleeves had an insertion of gulpure just above the elbows, and, just below, a band of black fox.

We have been told by persons in supposed authority that round skirts are no longer considered correct for afternoon wear, for visits, receptions, etc.; but in complete opposition to this statement comes the obvious fact that our best dressmakers are giving their approval to just these very costumes, and that they are making them for their best clients.

Of Classic Design.

Some of the newest afternoon gowns, for indoor wear, are almost classic in their outline. They are composed of exceedingly supple material, such as liberty satin, silk crepe, chiffon velvet, etc., and they cling to the figure in a fascinating manner which would have delighted the Empress Josephine. As a rule the bodices of these robes are held in place, at the waist by a narrow sash of ribbon or by a silken cord. The waist line is almost always very high, and the narrow sash is introduced high up, almost under the arms. These dresses give an impression of youthful simplicity, and they are undoubtedly effective when worn by married women.

The idea of allowing the satin bodice to remain uncovered while the skirt of the same material is completely veiled in gauze, is original as well as modern.

At some of the recent race meetings many really beautiful toilets have been worn. For example, at Longchamps, when the prix du Prince d'Orange was run, the weather was superb, and all the most notable society leaders were present. A notable number of black satin tailored suides were worn, and one of the most effective of

these was that of Princess Duleep-Singh. The skirt was round and clinging, and the smart coat, of medium length, had large directoire revers and cuffs. A dainty cravat of old yellow lace appeared at the throat and the princess wore a large flat hat of cream colored felt, trimmed with a scarf of yellow lace and a couple of large roses.

Black Velvet Popular.

Baroness Raoul de Prescourt also wore a coat and skirt of heavy black satin with a superb stole and muff of black fox and a big picture hat of black velvet loaded with feathers.

Black and navy blue costumes had it all their own way that afternoon, and black velvet gowns were very much in evidence.

I have seen coats and skirts in mole gray corduroy which were as seasonable as they were beautiful, and Redfern is just now making ideal



tailored suits in twine-colored velours, with large revers of twine-colored suede embroidered in heavy silks.

At Longchamps one has a good opportunity of judging the popularity of black and white materials and black and white combinations generally. The large black felt, or velvet hat, trimmed with handsome white feathers, is rapidly becoming a sort of uniform and the same may be said of turban-ques. Wherever black can be combined with white we find the two mingled and our ultra smart Parisiennes are now appearing in black velvet costumes, made in the princess tunic style already described, in conjunction with stoles, muffs and turbans of ermine. And then on the other hand nothing is considered more correct than the severely-tailored suit accompanied by black fox furs and a large flat hat of black velvet. Black on white and white on black; these are the orders of the autocrats of the Rue de la Paix this season, and it must be admitted that the Parisiennes seem willing to obey them.

White Chamois Gloves.

I must not neglect to draw attention to the fact that white chamois gloves, especially for morning wear, are very fashionable. They are worn with tailored suits of all kinds, but they are especially effective with white serge coats and skirts, or, in the afternoon, with one of the black velvet suits mentioned above. These gloves almost always have gauntlets, though not always stiff ones, and the smart thing is to have them a size too large so that they can be drawn on and off with the ease of riding gloves.

An evening gown of faded rose satin is shown in the illustration. The overdress is embroidered in milk white garnet and steel beads. Head-dress of old lace caught at the sides with pearl ornaments.