

# THE QUICKENING

BY FRANCIS LYNDE

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## CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued.)

It was well beyond the Woodlawn dinner-hour before he could muster up the courage to cross the lawn to Deer Trace. No word had passed between him and Ardea since the September afternoon when he had overtaken her at the church door—counting as nothing the effort she had made to speak to him on the night of vengeance.

She was sitting at the piano in the otherwise deserted music-room when he entered; and she broke a chord in the middle to give him both of her hands, and to say, with eyes shining, as if the rescue were a thing of yesterday:

"O Tom! I knew you had it in you! It was fine!"

"Hold on," he said, a bit unsteadily. "There must be no more misunderstandings. What happened that night three weeks ago, had to happen; and five minutes before it happened I was wondering if I could aim straight enough in the light from the slag-pot to hit him. And I fully meant to do it."

"I—I was afraid," she faltered. "I knew, you know—Japheth had told me, in—justice to you. That was why I ran across the lawn and called to you."

"Looking it all over, I don't see that there is much to choose between me and the men I've been hunting down. They went after the things they needed, without much compunction for other people; and so did I. On the night of the—on the night when you called to me and I wouldn't answer, I was going down to rub it in; to tell them they were in the hole and that I had put them there. I met a man at the gate who told me what Japheth told you. It made a demon of me, Ardea. I took the man's gun and followed Vincent around the yard. I meant to kill him."

"The provocation was very great," she said, evenly. "Why didn't you do it, Tom?"

"Now you've cornered me: I don't know why I didn't. I had only to walk away and let him alone when the time came. The slag-spilling would have settled him. But I couldn't do it."

"Of course you couldn't," she agreed, convincingly. "God wouldn't let you." "He lets other men commit murder; one day, or such a matter."

"Not one of those who have named His name, Tom—as you have."

"Now that it's all over, the taste of it is like sawdust in the mouth; I'll admit that much. I'm free; free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave," as David put it when he had sounded all the depths. Is that being sorry?"

"No—I don't know," she confessed.

"You think I ought to go back to first principles: get down on my knees and agonize over it? Sometimes I wish I could be a boy long enough to do just that thing, Ardea. But I can't. The mill won't grind with the water that has passed."

"But the stream isn't dry," she asserted, taking up his figure. "What will you do now? That is the question: the only one that is ever worth asking."

"They took to the woods, the waste places, the deserts—those men of old who didn't understand. Some of them went blind and crazy and died there; and some of them had their eyes opened and came back to make the world a little better for their having lived in it. I'm minded to try it."

"You are going away?"

"Yes; out to the 'beyond' in Northern Arizona. There is a new iron field out there to be prospected, and Mr. Clarkson wants me to go and report on it. And that brings us back to business. May I talk business—cold money business—to you for a minute or two?"

"If you like," she permitted. "Only I think the other kind of talk is more profitable."

"A curious thing has come to pass—quite a miraculous thing, in fact. Chlawassee will pay the better part of its debts and—redeem its stock; or some of it, at least." He rose and stood beside her. "Isn't it a thousand pities that Colonel Duxbury couldn't have held on to his shares just a little longer?"

"Yes; he is an old man and a broken one, now." There was a sob in her voice, or he thought there was. But it was only the great heart of compassion that missed no object of pity.

"True; but the next best thing is to have the young woman who marries into the family bring it back with her, don't you think? Here is a check for what Mr. Farley's stock would have sold for before the troubles began. It's made payable to you because—well, for obvious reasons: as I have said, he lost out."

"You are still the headlong, impulsive boy, aren't you?" she said, not altogether approvingly. "You are paying this out of your own money."

"Well, what if I am?"

"If you are, it is either a just restitution, or it is not. In either case, I can't not be your go-between."

"Now look here," he argued; "you've got to be sensible about this. There'll be four of you, and at least two incompetents; and you've got to have money

to live on. I made Colonel Duxbury lose it, and—"

"Not another word, if you please. I can't do your errand in this, and I wouldn't if I could."

"You think I ought to be generous and give it to him, anyway, do you?"

"I don't presume to say," was the cool rejoinder. "When you have come fully to your right mind, you will know what to do, and how to go about it."

He crumpled the check, thrusting it into his pocket, and made two turns about the room before he said:

"I'll see them both hanged first!"

"Very well; that is your own affair."

He fell to walking again, and for a full minute the silence was broken only by the murmur of men's voices in the library adjoining. The Major had company, it seemed.

"This is 'good-by,' Ardea; I'm going to-morrow. Can't we part friends?" he said, when the silence had begun to rankle unbearably.

"You've hurt me," she declared turning again to the window.

"You've hurt me, more than once," he retorted, raising his voice more than he meant to; and she faced about quickly, holding up a warning finger.

"Mr. Henniker and Mr. Young-Dickson are in the library with grandpa. They will hear you."

"I don't care. I came here to-night with a heart full of what few good things there are left in me, and you—you are so wrapped up in that beggar that I didn't kill—"

"Hush!" she commanded, imperatively. "Grandfather has not heard; he knows nothing, and he must never—"

The murmur of voices in the adjoining room had suddenly become a storm, with the smooth tones of Mr. Henniker vainly trying to allay it. In the thick of it the door of communication flew open and a white-haired, fierce-moustached figure of wrath appeared on the threshold. For a moment Tom's boyish awe of the old autocrat of Deer Trace came uppermost and he was tempted to run away. But the wrath was not directed at him. Indeed, the Major seemed not to see him.

"What's all this I'm hearing now for the ve'y first time about these heah low-down, schemin' scoundrels that want to mix thei-uh white-niggeh blood with ouhs?" he roared at Ardea, quite beside himself, with passion.

"Wasn't it enough that they should use my name and rob my good friend Caleb? That snivelin' young houn'-dog must pay his cou't to you while—"

The Major's face had been growing redder, and he choked in sheer poverty of speech. Moreover, Tom had come between; had taken Ardea in his arms protectingly and was fronting the fire-brand Dabney like a man.

"That's enough, Major," he said, defiantly. "You mustn't say things you'll be sorry for after you cool down a bit. Miss Ardea is like the king; she can do no wrongs."

There was a gasping pause, the sound of a big man breathing hard, followed by the slamming of the door, and they were alone together again, Ardea crying softly, with her face hidden on the shoulder of shielding.

"Oh, isn't it terrible?" she sobbed; and Tom held her the closer.

"Never mind," he comforted. "You know he will be heartbroken when he comes to himself. You are his one ewe lamb, Ardea."

"I know," she faltered; "but O Tom! it was so unnecessary; so wretchedly unnecessary! It's—it's more than two whole months since—since Vincent Farley broke the engagement, and—"

He held her at arm's length to look at her, but she hid her face in her hands.

"Broke the engagement!" he exclaimed, almost roughly. "Why did he do that?"

She stood before him with her hands clasped and the clear-welled eyes meeting his bravely.

"Because I told him I told him I could not marry him without first telling him that I loved you, Tom; that I had been loving you always and in spite of everything," she said.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

"Tom, isn't this the same foot-log you made me walk that day when you were trying to convince me that you were the meanest boy that ever breathed?" asked Ardea, gathering her skirts preparatory to the stream crossing.

"It is. But you didn't walk it, as you may remember; you fell off. Wait a second and give me those azaleas. I'll go first and take your hand."

Tom Gordon, lately home from a full half-year spent in the unfettered solitudes of the Carriso Iron fields, to be married first, and afterward to start up—with Caleb for superintendent—the idle Chlawassee plant as a test and experimental shop for American Aqueduct, was indemnifying himself for the long exile.

On this Saturday evening in the lovers' month of June he had walked Ardea around and about through the fragrant summer wood of the upper creek valley, retracing, in part, the footsteps of the boy whose fishing had been spoiled and the little girl who was to

be bullied into submission; and so rambling they had come at length to the old moss-grown foot-log which had been a newly-felled tree in the former time. Tom went first across the rustic bridge, holding the hand of ecstatic thrillings, and pausing in mid-passage that he might have excuse for holding it the longer.

It was during the mid-passage pause, and while she was looking down on the swirling waters sometime of terrifying, that Miss Dabney said:

"How deep is it, Tom? Would I really have drowned if you and Hector had not pulled me out?"

"It's a thankless thing to spoil an idyl, but you could have waded out."

She made the adorable little grimace which was one of the survivals of the yesterdays, and suffered him to lead her across.

"And I have always believed that I owed my life to you—and Hector!" she said, reproachfully.

"You owe me much more than that," he affirmed broadly, when they had sat down to rest—they had often to do this, lest the way should prove shorter than the happy afternoon—on the end of the bridge log.

"Money?"—flippantly.

"No; love. If it hadn't been for me, you might never have known what love is."

"It is a high gift," she said, soberly; "the highest of all for a woman. Once I thought I should live and die without knowing it, as many women do. I wish I might give you something as great."

"I am already overpaid," he asserted. "For a man there is nothing so great, no influence so nearly omnipotent, as the love of a good woman. It is the lever that moves the world—what little it does move—up the hill to the high planes."

Silence while she gathered the sweet-smelling tangle in her lap into some more portable arrangement. And afterward, when they were drifting slowly homeward in the lengthening shadows, a small asking.

"Mr. Morelock is coming out to-morrow to hold service in St. John's, and I shall go to play for him. Will you go with me, Tom?"

He smiled out of the gold and sapphire depths of a lover's reverie.

"One week from the day after the day after to-morrow—and it will be the longest week-and-two-days of my life, dearest—your grandfather will take you to church, and I shall bring you away. Won't that be enough?"

She took him quite seriously.

"I shall never be a Felicitia Young-Dickson, and drag you," she promised.

"But, O Tom! I wish—"

"I know," he said, gently. "You are thinking of the days to come; when the paths may diverge—yours and mine—ever so little; when there may be children to choose between their mother's faith and their father's indifference. But I am not indifferent. So far from it, I am only anxious now to prove what I was once so bent on disproving."

"You yourself are the strongest proof," she interposed. "You will see it, some day."

"Shall I? I hope so; and that is an earnest hope. And really and truly, I think I have come up a bit—out of the wilderness, you know. I am willing to admit that this is the best of all possible worlds; and I want to do my part in making it a little better because I have lived in it. Also, I'd like to believe in something bigger and better than protoplasm."

Her smile was of the kind which stands half-way in the path to tears, but she spoke bravely to the doubt in his reply.

"You do believe, Tom, dear; you have never seen the moment when you did not. It was the doubt that was unreal. When the supreme test came, it was God's hand that restrained you; you know it now—you knew it at the time. And afterward it was His grace that enabled you to do what was just and right. Haven't you admitted all this to yourself?"

They had crossed the white pike to the manor-house gates and were turning aside from the driveway into the winding lawn path when he said:

"To myself, and to one other." Then, very softly: "I sat at my mother's knee last night, Ardea, and told her all there was to tell."

Ardea's eyes were shining. "What did she say, Tom, dear—or is it more than I should ask?"

"There is nothing you may not ask. She said—it wasn't altogether true, I'm afraid—but she put her arms around my neck and cried and said: 'For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'"

She slipped her arm in his, and there was a little sob of pure joy at the catching of her breath. The moon was just rising above the Lebanon cliff-line, and the beauty of the glorious night-dawn possessed her utterly. Ah, it was a good world and a generous, bringing rich gifts to the steadfast! Instinctively she felt that Tom's little confession did not require an answer; that he was battling his way to the heights which must be taken alone. So she came in the sacred hush of the young night to a great tulip-tree on the lawn, and where a curiously water-worn limestone boulder served as a rustic seat wide enough for two whose hearts are one they sat down together, still in the companionship that needs no speech. It was Tom who first broke the silence.

"I have been trying ever since that night last winter to feel my way out," he said, slowly. "But what is to come of it? I can't go back to the boyhood yesterdays; in a way I have hopelessly outgrown them. Let us admit that religion has become real again; but Ardea, girl, is isn't Uncle Silas' religion, or—or my mother's, or even yours. And I don't know any other."

"It is all right, dear; there is only the one religion in all Christendom—perhaps in all the world, or in God's

part of it. The difference is in people."

"But this thing that has been slowly happening to me—this thing I am trying to call conviction: shall I wake up some day and find it gone, with all the old doubts in the saddle again?" he asked it almost wistfully.

"Who can tell?" she said, gently. But it will make no difference; the immutable fact will be there just the same, whether you are asleep or waking. We can't always stand on the Mount of Certainty, any of us; and to some, perhaps, it is never given. But when one saves his enemy's life and forgives and forgets—O Tom, dear: don't you understand?"

But now his eyes are love-blinded, and the white-gowned figure beside him fills all horizons.

"I can't see past you, Ardea. Nevertheless, I'm going to believe that I feel the good old pike solid underfoot \* \* \* and they say that the House Beautiful is somewhere at the mountain end of it. If you will hold my hand, I believe I can make out to walk in it; blindfolded, if I have to—and without thinking too much of the yesterdays."

"Ah, the yesterdays!" she said, tenderly. "They are precious, too; for out of them, out of their hindrances no less than their helpings, comes to-day. Kiss me, twice, Tom; and then I must go in and read to Major Grandpa."

(The end.)

## FACTS ABOUT THE NAVY.

### One-Fourth of United States Fleet Practically Worthless.

The statement is widely printed that the United States is now the "second naval power of the world." This assertion may please patriotic pride. The difficulty is that it is not strictly true.

Any real comparison of naval strength must primarily rest, not on the total number of vessels built or building, nor on the entire tonnage of such craft. It depends on the ships which are effective judged by exacting modern standards. Thus within the next three years England will have seventeen armorclads of the Dreadnought or "super-Dreadnought" type, Germany will have thirteen. This country will have ten.

The bulk of the German navy is composed of ships constructed at a later date than our own. The Kaiser's fleet has comparatively few vessels that will need to be sent to the scrap-heap in the near future. Not fewer than one-fourth—possibly one-third—of the large naval craft under the American flag are regarded by competent observers as practically worthless for fighting purposes to-day. Most of them were excellent when they were built. But marine architecture moves with gigantic strides in the twentieth century. It is believed that one floating fortress like the lately launched Florida could whip three or four of our older battleships.

It is the very big and very powerful ship that counts. This republic is gradually creating a respectable array of these. Its proportionate rank is far higher than it was even half a dozen years ago. But there is small use or sense in boastful proclamations which do not accord with the facts.

### How Weasels Carry Eggs.

According to the Scotsman, a weasel was recently surprised crossing the public highway leading from Jedburgh into Oxnam Water. It was observed to be carrying something under its chin and pressed against its slender neck, and when a collie dog belonging to one of the onlookers made a dash at the little creature it dropped its burden—a hen's egg—and, gliding under the roadside hedge, disappeared in the woodland. On being picked up the egg was found to be without a crack. The nearest poultry run is about 300 yards distant from the place where the weasel was intercepted.

### England's Fatal Saturday.

Authorities on things supernatural may be able to explain why Saturday has been a fatal day to the rulers of England. William III. died on Saturday, March 8, 1702; Queen Anne on Saturday, August 1, 1714; George II. on Saturday, October 25, 1760; George III. on Saturday, January 29, 1820, and George IV. on Saturday, June 26, 1830. George I. just missed Saturday by two hours, dying at 2 a. m. on Sunday, and the late King Edward breathed his last just a quarter of an hour before midnight, Friday night, May 6.

### Second Choice.

The woman was lightly clad and evidently not too well off.

"Have you no heart?" she asked.

"None." The man's answer was gruff, almost harsh.

"None whatever?"

"Absolutely none."

"Then I guess you may give me a pound of liver."—Tit-Bits.

### Her Great Boast.

"Did you have a good time on your boat trip?"

"A good time? I should say I did! I was the only one permitted to eat at the captain's table."—Detroit Free Press.

### Descriptive.

"Is he broke?"

"Broke! Why, his assets rattle around in his liabilities like a pea in a coal bucket."—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

## CHOSE POOR TIME TO JOKE

Street Car "Humorist" Found That He Had Run Against the Wrong Woman.

A young man with a bouquet done up in tissue paper and a line of talk he thought was funny came to grief on a trolley car that runs from New York to Flushing over the Queensborough bridge.

The car was crowded and he hung onto a strap and started to talk to his nearest strap-hanging neighbor. His conversation was interspersed with a few jokes that were considered good when Jo Miller was a babe in arms. Still, he proved they were good by telling them loudly and getting a laugh or two. It encouraged him, and he continued:

"Now, is a man stood in the middle of a bridge that was 200 feet long and was ten feet high, what would his name be?" he asked.

The man next to him gave it up.

"Murphy," was the answer.

"Why Murphy?" inquired the other.

"Because his father's name was Murphy," said the entertainer.

"I don't see that," said the other strap-hanger.

Having got this one past, and noticing that a young woman laughed, he announced he was in favor of woman suffrage.

"I think every woman should vote. Women ought to vote," he said. "She should stop going through our pockets and learn to have some respect for the ballot and leave the money alone that a man gets by voting. Who made woman? God made her, and then he sat down and laughed about it when he saw her."

"Oh, he did, did he?" said a woman of athletic build. And she arose in her seat and smashed his hat down over his eyes. Then she added: "You're a loafer."

Some one opened the door and she pushed him out upon the rear platform, saying:

"If you come in here again with your insulting remarks, I'll see that you are thrown off the car."

Like many others that have been licked, he failed to come back.

### A Good Parry.

Dr. Charles F. Aked, discussing his recent good-natured controversy with Father Bernard Vaughan, smiled and said:

"I have a great respect for Father Vaughan. He is one of those clergymen who never lose their temper. It is of him—is it not?—that the story of the thousand-year indulgence is told."

"What will you reply to this father?" a controversialist demanded. "On my last visit to Rome I saw on a church door a table of indulgences, and in this table a remission of a thousand years of punishment was promised for one life!"

"The controversialist bent forward, believing he had scored a splendid point."

"Yes, father," he repeated, "a thousand years off for a single life! What do you say to that?"

"What do I say? The priest cried, gayly. 'Why, I say it was dirt cheap. What more would you want for your money?'"

### She Knew.

Chief Joe Engleman, leader of the Miamis, was talking in Peru, Ind., about his tribe's claim against the government.

"We Miamis will never fall into the same trap twice," said, in the cultivated tones of a university man, the handsome chief. "We know from experience what to expect. We are like the beautiful girl who accepted the hand of her millionaire employer."

"Yes, Clarence," the girl said, patting the millionaire's scant gray hair, "I will marry you, but I have one request to make."

"Name it, my love," said the dotting old man.

"Let me select," she replied, "my successor at this desk."

### Automobile Lunches.

A man who detests what he calls picnic food—otherwise the cold food usually eaten at luncheon time when motoring—has hit upon a plan by which it is possible to have hot lunches when stranded far from home.

Glass jars are filled with hot soup, coffee, chocolate, or any desired beverage, another contains hot chicken terrapin, lobster newburg, creamed crab, dried beef, or any dish that can be prepared ahead of a meal.

The jars are then put in by the engine of the motor, and when wanted are found to be as hot and delicious as when packed.

### Exhausted.

"Mister Grocer, ma says send her a can o' peas an' a pound o' butter an' five pounds o' sugar an' charge it!"

"Lucy, you run right back and tell your mother we are just out of charge it."

### Impoliteness.

"It was very impolite of you to talk so loud at the theater."

"Impolite!" replied Miss Cayenne.

"You ought to have heard what some of the actors were saying!"