

THE QUICKENING

BY FRANCIS LYNDE

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CHAPTER XXVII.—(Continued.)

It was well beyond the Woodman dinner-hour before he could make 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-pit to hit him. And I fully meant to do it."

"I was afraid," she faltered. "I knew, you know—Japheth had told me, in—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 didn'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 so?"

"No—I don't think," 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. 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—old money business—to you for a minute or two?"

"If you like," she permitted.

"I think the other kind of talk is more profitable."

"A curious thing has come to pass—quite a miraculous thing, in fact. Chickawee will pay the better part of its debts and—quite a redemption, if you will—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 compensation that missed no object of pity."

"True; but the next best thing is to have the young woman who married 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 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 emptied 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 felt 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. Henrich" and Mr. Young-Dickson 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 not."

The murmur of voices in the adjoining room had suddenly become a storm, with the smooth tones of Mr. Henrich vainly trying to allay it. In the thick of it the door of communication flew open and a white-haired, fierce-mouthed 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 aimed at him. Indeed, the Major seemed not to see him.

"What's all this I'm hearing now for the very first time about these low-down, schemin' scoundrels that want to mix their uh white-globe blood with our'n?" he roared at Ardea, quite heedless himself with passion.

"Wasn't it enough that they should use my name and rob my good friend Caleb? That scoundrel young houn'-dog must pay his cost 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 wrong."

"What 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.

"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 weak link, 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 his hands.

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

She stood before him with her hands clasped and the clear-wet 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 honest boy that ever breathed?" asked Ardea, gathering her skirts preparatory to the stream crossing.

"It is. But you didn't walk it, it was you remember; you fell off. Wait a second and give me those axes. I'll cut the first cut and take your hand."

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

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WOOL GROWERS MEET AND DISCUSS TARIFF LAW

President Frank W. Gooding, of Idaho, Delivers Able Address.

PORTLAND—Sixty-five dollars was the price I paid for the suit I am wearing on this platform this morning," exclaimed Dr. J. M. Wilson of Douglas, Wyo., in responding to the addresses of welcome that had been made to the delegates to the annual convention of the National Woolgrowers' Association at the Armory, "and, ladies and gentlemen, all that the sheepman and woolgrower got out of it was \$5.25. That is all I have to say at this time on the tariff question."

Dr. Wilson is a fluent and happy speaker, and being regarded as one of the brightest men among the flock-masters, effort will be made to have him accept the honor of president of the association. President Gooding, who delivered his annual address, said in substance: "I am glad to say that you will not be in position to fill the office for another term. Dr. Wilson's response ran in a humorous vein and made a great hit with the thousand or more delegates gathered in the entertainment hall of the Armory."

President Fred W. Gooding of the national association, in delivering his address, took up the various questions that confront the sheep and wool industry and laid particular stress upon the necessity for the retention of the tariff on wool. He urged closer cooperation among the men engaged in the industry and spoke for betterment in transportation facilities and along other lines by which the industry can be brought to a higher and more profitable standard. President Gooding is one of the most influential sheep and wool men in the country and has also other very large interests in Idaho and the Pacific northwest.

The convention opened immediately after adjournment of the state association, which was unable to finish its work on the day it was adjourned. It was nearly 11 o'clock when the national convention was called to order.

William D. Wheelwright delivered the address of welcome on behalf of Governor-elect Oswald West, who was unable to be present. Mr. Wheelwright wanted known nothing of wool, but realized that the industry was one of immense importance to the world, and particularly to this part of the country. City Attorney Frank S. Grant delivered an eloquent address of welcome for Mayor Simon.

Dr. Wilson, president of the Chamber of Commerce, bid them welcome on behalf of the chamber and touched upon Portland as a steadily increasing market for the products of the wool industry. He was accompanied by the Portland Commercial Club, extended the welcome of the club of Portland and the club, saying that the city was wide open, that the business men had contributed liberally to entertain the guests, and that the committee had prepared a feature that had been prepared for them to the fullest extent, and not to overlook anything.

About 200 delegates arrived from Idaho, and more are following with every incoming train.

The address of President Frank W. Gooding of Idaho was an able discussion of the tariff question as affecting wool and conservation. President Gooding is one of the heavy sheep raisers of the west and was a member of the legislative committee which spent a large part of last winter at the committee on wool and conservation. In part, President Gooding said:

"Since the passage of the Payne-Adair tariff law, there has been a persistent and malignant assault upon the tariff schedules designed to protect the wool industry from the depredations of coyotes, wild cats and other predatory animals. If it is admitted that each of these animals killed six sheep prior to being destroyed, it would make a total loss of 60,000 sheep in Idaho during the past year from this source alone. It does not seem that these sheep marauders are being exterminated. If we allow for only 100 distinctively sheep growing states in the west, the less would amount to half a million sheep and lambs annually."

"Nor is this the only, nor possibly the greatest loss to the wool industry from the depredations of wild animals. Game birds and game animals, the eggs of birds, domestic fowls and other live stocks are all preyed on by the predatory beasts. It is estimated that coyotes, wolves, wild cats and other marauders kill more than 100,000 sheep and lambs annually. The destruction of these animals is a general benefit and should be accomplished through a general effort and paid for from funds created by general taxation."

"It is not difficult to find excellent reasons for making uniform the law providing for the bounty on bounties on the killing of predatory animals. As is now the case, in one state, the feet of the animal are indications of its destruction, in another the scalp is taken, while in perhaps a third the tail is called for. Because of this lack of uniformity, it has long been known that two or more bounties are often collected for the death of one animal and the slayer is still left with the pelt to sell."

\$234,470,750 Fire Loss.

Chicago—Statistics made public here show that losses by fire in the United States and Canada in 1910 amounted to \$234,470,750, or over \$300,000,000 more than the losses in 1909. December losses were exceptionally heavy, aggregating \$21,528,900. There were 25 fires during the year, which caused damage of \$500,000 or more, and in the loss exceeded \$1,000,000 each. In only two preceding years have the fire losses been heavier than in 1910, one being the year of the Chicago fire, the other of the San Francisco.

Commercial Life Falls.

Los Angeles—After forsaking the ministry for the calling of commercial agent for the Salt Lake route at Santa Ana, G. L. Moore found that love for the ministry was too strong and his resignation has just been handed to Frank H. Adams, general agent of the company. Mr. Moore will take up the duties of a Methodist minister at Spokane, Wash. Mr. Moore took up railroading and found his salary was not