The Red Witch

Or The Wooing Of Constantia.

CHAPTER IV.

He came in, in the slow, dignified manner that belonged to him. His face was cadaverous; his inches many. He was rather Italian in type, and his eyes were black and plaintive. He was delicately reserved in his demeanor, and there was a suspicion of hauteur in the way he wore his eye glass. He had a very kindly opinion of his own merits, which is an excellent thing if one wants to get on in the world. Not that Mr. Featherston wanted to get on. He was only thirty-two and the richest man in the county.

Miss McGillicuddy received him with as near an approach to civility as she knew. He shook hands with everybody in the silent way that belonged to him, and that somehow helped him to the consideration with which he was always treated; and then looked cautiously round him, as if to know where he should sit. This slow glance made everybody feel, somehow, how poorly furnished the drawing-room was, and how squalid it must appear to him after his own luxurious home. Finally he seated himself next to Constantia. This quite hemmed her in. Barry was on her left, he on her right, Miss McGillicuddy before her, the window behind. It gave her the feeling, somehow, that there was no escape.

She was very glad, however, that Featherston had come in, had broken up the rude speech that she felt was on her aunt's lips, and for another——. She blushed softly as she felt Mr. Featherston's glass bearing down upon her.

"So glad," he said, looking at Constantia but speaking to her aunt, "that your—our mission, rather, is going on so prosperously."

Miss McGillicuddy drew herself up. She grew self-important, and was evidently pleased. Constantia looked indifferent because she knew to what Featherston was referring, but Barry, who knew nothing, stared. All at once it dawned upon him that the Blue Ribbon movement was in question, and that Featherstone was making hay while the sun shone, by pretending an interest in it to Miss McGillicuddy. He had adopted the new temperance fad as a means towards getting into her good graces, and from hers to Constantia's. This discovery filled the heart of the Limerick man with rage. Not towards Featherston—he was too honest-hearted for that—but towards himself, in that the simple device had not first suggested itself to him.

"Yes, it prospers," said Miss McGillicuddy, in the deep voice that had struck terror into so many hearts. "Yesterday I made several converts. Three new names by my endeavors were enrolled upon our list."

"Three! Your energy is indeed marvellous," said Mr. Featherston. "It surpasses that of most." He pulled his mustache meditatively and shifted his glass from one eye to the other. "And these new people?" he asked.

"Mrs. Duffy, of Tan-yard Lane, was the first whom I convinced."

"Duffy—Duffy?" questioned Featherston, putting his forefinger to his brow with an appearance of deep thought.

"You know her," explained Constantia, softly. "She is the old widow who lives near the church and who subsists principally on the three shillings a week allowed her from the Charity fund."

This sorrowful bit of information was, I regret to say, beer and skittles to Mr. Barry. He was glad to his heart's core that the first recruit had proved so poor a one—to a widow, subsisting on charity, the temptation to drink must be small. It would, therefore, be impossible to Featherston to make much out of it. He laughed alone in the exuberance of his joy, forgetful of the impression he was making on Miss McGillicuddy.

"No difficulty in stopping that old lady's grog," he said, still laughing gayly. "Not much of it to be got out of three shillings a week!"

Silence followed this rash remark; Featherston coughed gently, and Miss McGillicuddy, as though wakening slowly from an unpleasant dream turned her head towards the culprit, and fixed him with a baleful eye. It unhinged Mr. Barry directly, and put an instantaneous termination to his mirth.

"Not only your opinions but yourself, Mr. Barry," she said, slowly, "are strange to me. I feel no embarrassment, therefore, in telling you that if you came here to scoff and jeer at what I believe to be a righteous work, I shall ask you to——"

"Scoff—jeer!" interrupted Barry, with great presence of mind, now quite alive to the danger of the situation. "My dear Miss McGillicuddy, how can you so misjudge me? True, I am in a sense a stranger to you, but that is a misfortune I hope every day of my life to combat." He cast a glance at Constantia, who refused to see it. "As to my opinions, I feel convinced they are yours. You accuse me with treating this new mission with disrespect. On the contrary, I regard it as a benefaction to my country, and a most requisite thing in these benighted days when the land is laid waste with rapine and murder, and when, no doubt, lawlessness is fed by the spirituous liquors you so wisely contemn."

He felt nearly as eloquent as an Irish Member when he had got thus far, and stopped short, delighted with his outburst.

Miss McGillicuddy returned to her first point and went on.

"The other names upon my list," she said, "are John Byrne and Michael Walsh."

"Ah! Men!" exclaimed Featherston, growing gently animated once more. "As a rule I feel more gratitude when the converts are of my own sex. One rejoices more over the reclamation of a man than a woman!"

"Ungallant!" said Constantia, with a swift smile that made her lovely.

"No, no, I assure you." He seemed to lose himself for a moment in that wondrous smile, and then recovering himself went on quickly: "They are more prone to error." He took his eyes reluctantly from Constantia and again gave his undivided attention to her aunt. "These men; I should like to have a talk with them," he said. "You can give me their addresses?"

A dull red flamed into Miss McGillicuddy's cheeks. She grew confused. Constantia, graceless, laughed aloud.

"One of the men is ten years of age," she said; "the other eight. She folded her hands upon her lap, and valiantly refrained from looking at Barry, who was choking with joy in the background. "Their reformation is a subject for public rejoicing."

Miss McGillicuddy cast a withering glance at her. She would have probably broken into unparliamentary language, but that Feacherston came to the rescue.

"To begin young is to begin well," he said gravely and cleverly. He was looking full at Constantia now as though challenging her to attribute to him that vilest of all sins, hypocrisy. There was, however, no suspicion in the face she uplifted to his. It was evident that she believed in him, if she did not altogether believe in his doctrine. She had subdued her amusement, and was quite calm again.

"I hope we have you on our side," said Featherstone.

She shook her head, but said nothing.

"Constantia will join us," said Miss McGillicuddy decisively.

"No, I think not," contradicted Constantia, quietly.

"Constantia will join us," repeated her aunt, exactly as if she had not heard the clear, distinct voice.

"I shall not, indeed," returned the girl, coldly. "I dislike extreme measures and the touch of affectation in the matter. I object to the pharisaical way in which the mission is conducted. The blue ribbon is, in my opinion, a mistake. Parade is death to anything that should be long-lived."

"Hear! hear!" cried Mr. Barry, forgetting himself for the second time. Miss McGillicuddy half rose from her seat. She was evidently about to launch into bitter invectives when once again Featherston intervened.

"There is much truth in what your niece has said," he murmured softly; "but I think if she will go a little deeper into our real meaning she will see the use of the blue ribbon to which she now so—so vigorously objects. In the rush and bustle of life people are only too prone to forget, unless things are perpetually held up before their eyes. We hold up to them the blue ribbon to remind them always of the great work in which we would have them join. We would eradicate everywhere the fatal weed—intemperance. The love of drink, like money, might justly be termed the root of all evil."

This speech raised a curious expression on Barry's face, who now addressed him directly.

"You mean us to understand that you yourself, then never touch anything?" he said, leaning forward. "Champagne—beer—nothing?"

His tone was sharp.

"Nothing," returned Featherston, with a pleasant smile.

He did not try to improve on the simplicity of his answer. He left it so.

"I had no idea you were a teetotaller," said Barry rather pointedly.

"What an objectionable word that is!" said Featherstone, still smiling, but lifting his shoulders in a faintly deprecatory manner. "I hardly know why it should be so, but it always strikes me as being in a degree—shall we say—er—vulgar. A teetotaller, as you put it, my dear fellow, I certainly was not a year ago, but as an example to my tenantry I became one. It is really," with a little wave of the hand, "no self-denial; and the effect is good!"

"Deuced good!" said Barry, with a barely restrained animosity, as he marked the effect upon the elder Miss McGillicuddy, who was plainly ready to worship Featherstone as a modern saint.

At this moment two figures went past the window, and the sound of two voices wafted inwards to the drawing-room. One was high, shrill, voluble, and eminently youthful; the other was deep and manly. Almost directly afterwards Mr. Stronge was announced.

He came in, with Norah at his heels.

He was a man of about thirty-four who looked fully his age, but no more. There was nothing very particular that could be said of him—nothing decided. A description of him should, perforce, be a rather negative one. He was not very tall and not very short; not very stout, not very thin; not very ugly and certainly not very handsome. Two things about him, so far as surface knowledge went, were alone positive. His eyes, a dark luminous gray, were so beautiful that they would have redeemed a plainer face. They were undeniably attractive, earnest, and fulfilled with honesty and that greatest of all beauty—loving-kindness. He was rich, too—there was no doubt about that; rich enough to come under the head of a modern Croesus. That his father made these riches by means of trade was, perhaps a draw-back in the eyes of the county families round, who, though for the most part poor, could count their ten and twelve generations.

The elder Miss McGillicuddy received him with a certain reservation. She was not accustomed to hold these levees, and her mind misgave her that Constantia had something to do with it. Three men in her house, and all at once! She cast a searching glance at her niece, who was looking wonderfully meek, as she murmured a common-place word or two of welcome to Mr. Stronge. To him, however, had she known it, these words were not commonplace at all; they were, on the contrary, a very accumulation of all sweetness and light.

Miss McGillicuddy pondered. Could they all be here because of that graceless girl? Could even two of them? Featherston she acquitted; he came for the good cause. But the others? Barry, of course, was fool enough for anything; but could a sensible man like Mr. Stronge be so carried away by the wiles of a silly creature like Constantia, as to spend his time dancing attendance upon her? No; it was impossible. And yet——

She was civil enough to Stronge, however, in spite of her lingering suspicion. He was not, indeed, a man to whom it would be easy to be rude. To Garrett Barry she showed her rough edge without hesitation, and even to Featherstone she could betray impatience, but Stronge was of very different stuff to either of these. He was a man of no birth, yet his face was full of a gentle dignity as restraining as the bluest blood could produce—a dignity that rendered it very difficult for any one to offer him an offensive word.

Miss McGillicuddy sat then in silence meditating on many things, and feeling slightly baffled, when her gaze fell on the luckless Norah. How did that child come here? How did she dare to defy the rules laid down, that forbid the entrance into the drawing-room of muddy boots?

"What brings you here, Norah?" she demanded sharply.

"She came in with me," answered Mr. Stronge, quickly, scenting mischief in the breeze. He took the child's hand in his, and feeling it tremble slightly, tightened his grasp on it, and drew her close to him with a very kindly smile. "I met her in one of the fields as I came towards the house and she most considerately turned with me and bore me company, and entertained me most delightfully by the way. She has indeed been very kind to me," said Mr. Stronge, turning to the little, thin child beside him and laughing to her, not at her, which latter is a thing that all children hate.

"H'm" responded Miss McGillicuddy dryly, as if she could have said more.

Conversation then became general. In the course of it, Mr. Stronge, who was an agreeable sociable sort of person, said:

"I was up just now at Ballymore. I went to call upon Mrs. Dundas, who is quite an old acquaintance of mine."

He did not say friend, and Constantia noticed it.

"She seems to be quite the old acquaintance of everybody," said Miss McGillicuddy with a sniff.

"Her coming among us will, I have no doubt, be a great acquisition," put in Mr. Featherston, who had seen and admired Mrs. Dundas.

"I suppose so," replied Stronge. There was, however, in spite of the acquiescence, a lack of enthusiasm in his tone.

"She is remarkably handsome," went on Featherston, who had brightened up a bit.

"Is she? As a girl she was remarkably plain," said Miss McGillicuddy; "a thin, awkward creature, with flaming hair and no manners."

"Yes, I remember her," exclaimed Barry, laughing; "she was ordinary, certainly, and her clothes used to hang on her as loose as bags. Yet now she is beautiful. I was never so astounded in my life as when I saw her yesterday. And yet, somehow, her beauty, in my opinion, is—er—unpleasant. She would strike me as being——"

"Subtle?" suggested Mr. Stronge.

Constantia shot a glance at him. Was Donna subtle?

"What do you think of her?" asked Featherston, addressing her suddenly.

"She is my cousin," returned she simply. She was glad she had this to say, as it saved her having to answer his question; but her words wrought consternation among them.

"Yes, she is closely connected with us," said Miss McGillicuddy, in her graveyard voice, "though for many years we have lost sight of her. We believed, indeed, she had quite dropped out of our lives, when this sudden marriage with Mr. Dundas brought her back not only to Ireland, but to every part of it where she had passed much of her earlier life. It is a good match, I hear, in many respects. We all thought she would have married Lord Varley, but doubtless, this John Dundas, from what I hear, is the better man for her, as he is more likely to keep her in order—and that she would require. A curb, a curb, for Donna! As for Varley, he is a man of no character whatsoever."

To this sweeping comment no one made reply.

"By-the-bye, Lady Varley is giving a dance on the seventeenth," said Stronge, presently, looking at Constantia. You will be there?"

"Yes." She smiled at him as she answered, and Stronge colored beneath that touch of sunshine as a boy in his teens might have done.

"Varley is away, and it is uncertain whether he will be back for it.

"Indeed," continued Mr. Featherston, "Mrs. Dundas gave me to understand that Lady Varley was very doubtful about it. A cousin of mine is to arrive on the seventeenth. I hope he will be in time at all events."

"A cousin of yours?" asked Constantia, with some eagerness. A newcomer was an event in Carmeen.

"Carew O'Grady. You must have heard me mention him, I think. He has been abroad for years. He was at one time an attache at Constantinople, and for the last year or two has been travelling in the East. He has come home, however, and I have asked him to stay with me for as long as it suits him."

As he spoke he put on the little touch of pomposity that always broke out when he was alluding to anything that touched his family pride.

"He is in reality The O'Grady," he said, "the head of that family, but he prefers the ordinary prefix to his name, I think you will like him." He was addressing Constantia. He seemed anxious to interest her in this cousin. Constantia was pleased half consciously at this mark of his regard, and as she usually did when her eyes met his, she blushed delicately.

The blush was not lost on Andrew Stronge.

To be Continued.

ONE ON UNCLE SAM.

John Bull :—"You're liable to lose your grip on that hammer, uncle, if you don't watch out."

BLOWING HIS OWN NOSE.

When George IV. was Prince Regent he visited Doncaster, and at the time His Royal Highness was suffering from a cold.

One day the Royal party were showing themselves to the people from a balcony.

Which is the Prince? I must see the Prince! cried an excited old Yorkshire woman, who had come to see the First Gentleman in Europe.

That's him, said a bystander, pointing upwards; him with a handkerchief in his hand.

Him! cried the old lady in profound contempt. That the Prince! Why he blows his own nose!

THERE ARE OTHERS.

He—Why the professor has spent three years investigating sun spots.

She—Goodness! And people say women are inquisitive!

At Panama the average rise and fall of the tides is 2ft., the lowest for ocean tides; but the Mediterranean has a tide of 6in. only.

A Run Down System

SHOWS THAT THE BLOOD AND NERVES NEED TONING UP.

This Condition Causes More Genuine Suffering Than One Can Imagine—How a Well Known Exeter Lady Obtained a Cure After She Had Begun to Regard Her Condition as Hopeless.

From the Advocate, Exeter, Ont.

"A run down system!" What a world of misery those few words imply, and yet there are thousands throughout this country who are suffering from this condition. Their blood is poor and watery; they suffer almost continuously from headaches; are unable to obtain restful sleep and the least exertion greatly fatigues them. What is needed to put the system right is a tonic, and experience has proved Dr. Williams' Pink Pills to be the only never-failing tonic and health restorer.

Mrs. Henry Parsons, a respected resident of Exeter, Ont., is one of the many who have tested and proved the value of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. For many months she was a great sufferer from what is commonly termed "a run down system." To a reporter of the Advocate she gave the following story in the hope that other sufferers might benefit from her experience:—"For many months my health was in a bad state, my constitution being greatly run down. I was troubled with continual headaches, my appetite was poor and the least exertion greatly fatigued me. I consulted a physician but his treatment did not appear to benefit me and I gradually became worse, so that I could hardly attend to my household duties. I then tried several advertised remedies but without result, and I began to regard my condition as hopeless. A neighbor called to see me one day and urged me to try Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. Having tried so many medicines without receiving benefit, I was not easily persuaded, but finally I consented to give the pills a trial. To my surprise and great joy I noticed an improvement in my condition before I had finished the first box and by the time I had taken four boxes of the pills I was fully restored to health. I no longer suffer from those severe headaches, my appetite is good, I can go about my household duties without the least trouble; in fact I feel like a new woman. All this I owe to that best of all medicines, Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and I would strongly urge other sufferers to give them a trial."

Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are recognized the world over as the best blood and nerve tonic, and it is this power of acting directly on the blood and nerves which enables these pills to cure such diseases as locomotor ataxia, paralysis, St. Vitus' dance, sciatica, neuralgia, rheumatism, nervous headache, the after effects of la grippe, palpitation of the heart, that tired feeling resulting from nervous prostration; all diseases resulting from vitiated humors in the blood, such as scrofula, chronic erysipelas, etc. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are sold by all dealers in medicine or can be had by mail, post paid, at 50 cents a box, or six boxes for $2.50, by addressing the Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

HOW HE FIXED IT.

George, said the Eminent Business Man, you have been with me a long time. You have faithfully performed your duties. If there is anything I admire in an employe it is virtue. You possess that attribute in large, perceptible gobs.

Oh, sir, you are very kind, very considerate! exclaimed the grateful serf.

Yes, George, you have a lot of virtue, and as virtue is its own reward and I need the money, hereafter I will, etc., etc.

HEARD IT WRONG.

Put some vaseline on the tire, said a bicycle repairer to a new apprentice who had just gone to work that morning.

Ten days later the apprentice regained consciousness and found himself in a hospital. He at once summoned his employer. When the bicycle repair-man arrived at the bedside, the apprentice said meekly:

I fear I did not understand you, sir; I thought you said put some gasolene.

ADJUNCTS TO BARGAINING.

Judkins: I learn through your agent you have bought the properties on either side of your house and got them dirt cheap. How did you manage it?

Foxley: Easily enough. My wife is an elocutionist, my daughter plays the piano, George plays the cornet, I play the violin, Bob plays a banjo, Charley rattles the bones, and little Johnnie has a drum.

Cora (at Madge's wedding): What on earth are you crying for, Bertha? This isn't your marriage?

Bertha' I know (boo-hoo). That's why I'm crying.

Dudely: You look at me as if you thought I was an idiot, eh? Stranger: Why, no; you can't be such an idiot, after all. Your remark shows that you read a man's thoughts at a glance.