The Red Witch

Or The Wooing Of Constantia.

CHAPTER VIII.

It was not until quite an hour after O'Grady had parted from her that he entirely understood the greatness of the shock Lady Varley's announcement had given him. He had wondered at, whilst admiring the calm self-possession with which she—a young girl as he had deemed her, a neophyte in the battle of life—had accepted his assistance at first, and afterwards seated herself, and invited him to share her lounge with an open forgetfulness or disregard of that law of society that dwells on formal introductions between those hitherto unknown to each other. But Lady Varley!—he was her guest. That she thought of only, and that it was her duty to be gracious to him, and delicately friendly.

O'Grady was angry with himself because he could not treat his accidental meeting with Lady Varley as a jest, a thing to laugh over with his cousin. But he could not! And—was it a jest? There was no element of amusement in it after all, when one analyzed it. It was a mere nothing. He had met a woman whom he felt he could have loved, and had only discovered when too late that——

Pshaw! what he meant was that he had discovered that she was "wooed, an' married, an' a'." That was all. It was the merest trifle out of the tale of one's life, a matter of ten minutes or so.

It was rather a bore, however, the way in which the whole scene clung to him; he could not shake it off, though he would gladly have done so. It was only a question of time, of course; and in a day or two he promised himself he would have so far forgotten the episode that he would have to jog his memory before he could bring to mind whether Lady Varley's hair was black, or brown, or red; or if her eyes were——

They rose before him then. Great, strange, sad yearning eyes, that seemed to reproach him for his determination to obliterate them from his memory. All the next day he scarcely thought of her, but on the second he grew restless. On the fourth day he permitted an idea, that up to that he had kept scrupulously in check, to start into life and grow. It was to the effect that courtesy compelled him to go to Araglin and once again apologize to Lady Varley for the mistake he had made. If—his brow grew dark red as this fear suggested itself—if, by any possibility, she had grown to believe he knew who she was all the time! Yes he must go, he must see her at all risks. He determined on walking to Araglin, though it was six miles away; but a tramp through the awakening woods could not be otherwise than pleasant and would probably be a rich treat.

He reached Araglin at last, and entered it, not by the wide entrance gate open to all, but by a side-gate that led through a little bit of dense underwood, and so into a sidewalk. Before him lay the lawn, and on his right a graveled path, where, as he looked, he could see a figure moving slowly and with care.

It was Lady Varley. Something was in her arms. A little bundle, all white cambric and lace, that showed clear against her black gown. A baby!

It was a very tiny bundle (though it had seen six months of our sad and troubled life), and she held it close-pressed against her heart, as though it was so much one with her that she could never let it go. She was looking at the little thing and her face was fair with the sweet flush of motherhood. There was something of the divine in her expression. Her whole soul seemed wrapt in the fragile creature that she held; an almost passionate love lit her dove-like eyes as she gazed on it; she appeared to have no thought beyond the little mite that lay so quiescent, so terribly quiescent, upon her breast.

O'Grady came forward into the fuller light. Lady Varley, seeing him, greeted him with a smile. It was the gentlest smile in the world, and full of graciousness. O'Grady, encouraged by it, came up to her, and pressed the hand she gave him. The baby was lying upon her left arm as calm as it, unfortunately, always was.

"I thought," said O'Grady, "that I would come up to-day and tell you (I had no time then, had I?) how I regretted the many absurd things I said to you, not knowing——"

"As for that," said she; she burst out laughing carefully, as should a married woman, yet merrily as a girl—"it was very strange, was it not?" she said. "But, of course, you could not know! When I told Lord Varley of it, he said it was a pity I had ever enlightened you. And, perhaps, yes; but when I heard you were to stay in our neighborhood I knew you would have found out, no matter whether I spoke or were silent."

"Yes; it didn't matter at all," said O'Grady. He was looking into her pure, beautiful eyes, and as he looked, he felt that nothing mattered, only that she was lost to him. He struggled with himself, and regained presently his composure. "Yet I am glad you spoke," he said.

"So am I," returned she graciously: "otherwise you would not have known who I was, and" with a gentle smile, "I should not be indebted to you for this visit."

"This is my little daughter," said she now, in a tone quite different from anything he had ever heard before; there was a subdued but terrible passion of tenderness in it. She threw back the silken covering round it to let him more closely view her treasure. "You think?" she questioned vaguely, yet with her eyes upon him as if waiting for something.

"She's charmingly pretty," said O'Grady, with much presence of mind, stooping as he spoke over the little frail blossom. It was, perhaps the happiest thing he could have said—save one.

"And—and healthy, too, eh?" said she, still with her eyes on his. They widened as she gazed, and a suspicion of nervous terror grew within them.

"And healthy too, of course," responded he, laughing, though in truth laughter was far from him. Then something, perhaps the innate truthfulness within him, compelled him to add with a depreciatory shake of the head: "Not that I am a judge."

"An excellent one," declared she quickly. "You agree with our doctor here. He says baby is strong, very strong; and—and that she will be stronger every day."

She smiled at O'Grady; she seemed suddenly to grow full of unspeakable gladness. Poor mother! With a wild longing she clung to each frail thread of hope held out to her. Her child, her all, must be strong and rich in life; must thrive, and flourish, and bloom by-and-by into gracious girlhood. All this she set her heart upon, whilst that tiny object of her soul's desire lay pale and languishing upon her heart.

May God have pity upon all such mothers.

"Just now," went on Lady Varley, taking courage to express a fear, because of the encouragement he had given her, "she is not looking her best. We think," smiling up at O'Grady, who was a tall man, with an expression full of the heavenliest confidence, "she is teething; that is what is makes her so pale. You think her pale?" anxiously.

The child was ghastly.

"I dare say, as you have told me it is only her teeth," said O'Grady, hurriedly. "This village doctor of whom you speak, he may not be very efficient. Is there no other?"

"Yes; there is Doctor Griffin." She mentioned a Dublin physician whose skill with children's diseases was not to be questioned. "He has been here before to see baby. Last week he was here. But it is only teething I assure you: only that," cried she, with a sharpness full of despair.

"Nevertheless, send for him again," said O'Grady.

At this moment Mrs. Dundas, escorted by Lord Varley, turned the corner and was almost within touch of them. Just so long as one might draw a heavy breath there was silence, then:

"Ah, so glad!" exclaimed Donna, rustling towards Lady Varley with extended hands and a beaming smile. The smile was excellently well got up, and yet there was something about it that struck O'Grady as being forced. Was she "so glad" to find Lady Varley in this secluded walk, where it might reasonably be supposed that no one would be found?

"I met Lord Varley on the avenue," she said, "and when I found you were not indoors, I determined on storming this part of your grounds. It occurred to me, happily that there might be a distant chance of finding you here. I wanted so badly to see you, and consult with you about our Young Men's Christian Association meetings."

"Am I one of your young men?" asked Varley, laughing, who had caught her last words, but not the beginning of her speech. He spoke in a general way, of course, as if including his wife in his quertion, but he cast a swift, amused glance at Donna, who, however (being wise in her way), declined to have anything to do with it.

Lady Varley smiled faintly.

"As for the meetings," she said, "I shall be very glad, of course, to help in any way. To help young men to a better, a higher idea of life, to a purer standard of thought and action what work can be nobler? Yes, I am glad you came to consult me." She strove to throw off the mantle of grief that was enveloping her. "It was fortunate you thought of seeking me here, or perhaps I should have missed seeing you."

She said this a propos of Mrs. Dundas's remark that she came purposely to this walk to find her.

Lord Varley, who had been listening, answered her.

"It was the merest chance," he said. "It was, as I thought, the last place in the world to dream of finding you. I thought you were in the village, and impressed that fact upon Mrs. Dundas."

Donna did not change color. She turned her expressive eyes upon a tall lily growing near, as if lost in admiration of it, until the first supreme moment or two was passed, and then she turned them upon Varley, and shot a glance at him that should have slain—a little lightning affair that Lord Varley did not see, but that O'Grady did.

Lady Varley was looking at her husband. After a pause, during which you might have counted twenty, she said very gently:

"You mistake, Frederic. Mrs. Dundas knew I should be here. She tells me that is why she came."

Her manner and expression were so calm that O'Grady was for a while deceived by it. Mrs. Dundas was not. She perfectly understood the meaning of Lady Varley's words, and did not forgive her for it. She Lady Varley—had, in a sense been ungenerous, but only because she would not submit to the thought that any woman (even the lovely, lawless thing before her) could be her rival in the esteem of her husband. "Well, she should see," thought Donna, with all the vicious anger of a bad woman towards a good one; and if she chose to ignore the truth, so much the easier and the quicker would the end come that should convince the haughty woman of her—Donna's—power.

O'Grady rushed into the breach with a pleasant common-place, and conversation was tossed lightly to and fro for ten or fifteen minutes.

Mrs. Dundas was particularly brilliant. She was introduced to O'Grady, and quite dazzled him with her beauty. She, indeed, devoted herself to him for the short time they were together—only quarter of an hour altogether, yet long enough to betray to O'Grady (who had seen and studied many men in his time) that Lord Varley grew restless as her smiles waxed kinder.

Lady Varley, on the contrary, seemed preoccupied.

Presently, a break occurring in the conversation, Varley turned to Mrs. Dundas, and said something to her about the conservatories. She hesitated for a moment, and then declared her desire to see them.

"All the county talks of them," she said, smiling at Lady Varley; and then: "You will come?"

"If you could excuse me," replied Lady Varley with extreme quietude. "I am not very well to-day and it is quite a walk there and back. Lord Varley will show them to you, and—afterwards I hope you will let me give you a cup of tea?"

Donna murmured a word or two, to the effect that she feared if the walk was too long, there would be no time left for the cup of tea. They had gone about a yard or two, when Lady Varley roused herself with an effort, and called to her husband.

"Frederic," she said quickly, yet without any undue haste, "a word before you go—I am sure Mrs. Dundas will excuse me. Baby is not so well to-day," she paled as she said this. "You will be passing the house on your way to the conservatories, will you not go into the library for a moment and telegraph to Doctor Griffin to come down to-morrow? I would do it myself, but—it will not take you a moment," she said

"What is the matter with her this time?" asked Varley. There was some amusement and some impatience in his tone. Lady Varley shrank beneath it.

"It is her teeth—only her teeth," she said softly, yet with a haste that was suggestive of an anguish—an ever present dread—that she was perpetually but ineffectually striving to force into the background. "Still I am uneasy."

Varley laughed good-humoredly; so did Donna. She was a childless woman.

"When are you not?" said Varley, still openly amused. "And telegraph for Griffin again? She is an expensive little animal, isn't she?"

He spoke carelessly. One could see at a glance that he cared little for the expense of bringing down from town, twice in the same week, a physician so skilled in infantile diseases that his fame was on the lips of all; but his tone was without feeling for the tiny, weakly creature for whom the great man was needed. It stung to the very soul the mother, whose every hope was in it. She flushed from cheek to brow—a flush that faded almost as it was born into a deadly pallor. Was she thinking then, as her passion died, if it were now indeed possible for money to buy that frail, sweet life in which all hers was centered? This was the cruel fear she kept in abeyance; but sometimes it conquered her—as now.

Of one thing O'Grady became assured as he watched her; that she loved the child better than the father! This explained the yearning in her eyes, the sorrowful curve of her lips. Fear for the child—for her only consolation!

When she spoke, however, it was calmly, and without a suspicion of reproach. She seemed to pass over everything. "You will telegraph?" she asked, looking at Varley.

"When I have shown Mrs. Dundas the houses," returned he lightly. Then with a laughing allusion to the child, "I dare say she will survive until then." His manner was not ill-natured; he could not see how his wife paled before that word "survive," because his eyes were on Donna.

"Oh no," cried the latter prettily, "you must telegraph at once—at once—do you hear? Why should I cause a delay? She turned swiftly to Lady Varley. "He shall do it now—this moment," she said, with a little air of authority, for which O'Grady could have willingly have slain her

Lady Varley threw up her head.

"It is of no consequence at all," she said, "I beg you will think no more of it. Go and enjoy—your flowers."

She moved to one side, thus giving a dismissal, and sank into a low garden-chair. The nurse had moved towards the house with the child. She sat quite motionless until her husband and Mrs. Dundas were out of sight; then she rose to her feet and confronted O'Grady with a rather wan smile.

It hurt him to think that she should thus pain herself in an attempt to throw off care, to show him civility. This was treating him like an ordinary acquaintance. He started as he came to this point in his meditations. Could it be possible that he was less than an ordinary acquaintance—that he was a bare stranger? Could it be true that he had seen her only once before? An absurd feeling that he had known her all the days of his life had taken possession of him.

"I forgot," she said slowly, "you too might have liked—to see the flowers. They are," striving to regain the ordinary every-day tone, "well worth a glance. We have a wonderful man from Aberdeen, who understands the culture of——"

"Pray do not," interrupted O'Grady earnestly. She stopped as if thankful. "You look very tired," he went on; "shall I take you back to the house?"

"Yes, that is it," she said feverishly. She looked passionately relieved. "I cannot bear to leave her for any long time," she went on as if explaining; "I always feel as if—as if I must keep her in sight." She sighed heavily, then looked at him suspiciously as though dreading the effect of her words. "I shall send that telegram, myself," she said, "though you will understand that it is a mere freak of mine; a rather unnecessary caution."

"I quite understand," returned O'Grady gravely. He turned with her, and went back to the house by a side path that did not converge towards the walk by which Mrs. Dundas and Varley had gone.

As these last had disappeared round the corner, and when she found they were quite beyond view, Mrs. Dundas had stopped short and looked at Varley, a fine contempt in her eye. Her mind was full of his fatal disclosure, anent the true meaning of her coming to the particular spot where Lady Varley was found.

"I do hate a fool!" she said disdainfully. Which piece of outspoken criticism so tickled Varley that he roared with laugnter for a full minute without cessation. To him it was one of Mrs. Dundas's charms that she could always amuse him. Presently she was good-tempered, she laughed too, and after that she explained to him his fault, which only seemed to increase his amusement. "It's a judgment upon you. You see you oughtn't to lie, Don," said he. "Well, the whole affair was hardly worth that frown of yours. Yolande is incapable of bearing malice, even if she understood: which I am sure she didn't."

"Which I am sure she did. I watched her hands. A woman can command her eyes, but her fingers never. As you spoke she clutched tightly a little fold of her gown. And good heavens! what a gown, suggestive of sackcloth and ashes! She must be doing pennance for your sins, my good boy."

"You pay her a compliment. You exonerate her from sins of her own."

"As for that," said Donna, "it strikes me that she was rather glad to get us out of the way. She would not accompany me to the houses, she was too tired. That secluded walk was pleasant, let me tell you. And—that Mr. O'Grady—very good to look at."

"You are at fault there," he said coldly. "For the future let us leave Lady Varley's name out of the conversation."

To be Continued.

BABY IN THE HOME.

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All children in every home in the country need at some time or other a medicine such as Baby's Own Tablets, and this famous remedy has cured many a serious illness and saved many a little life. Mothers insist upon having it because it contains no opiate or harmful drugs. It is purely vegetable, sweet and pleasant to take and prompt in its effect.

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Mrs. John McEwan, Bathurst Village, N.B., writes: "My baby was almost constantly troubled with colic before I gave him Baby's Own Tablets, but since giving them to him he has not since suffered. Every mother should keep these tablets always at hand."

They cost 25 cents a box. You can find them at your druggist's or, if you do not, forward the money direct to us and we will send the tablets prepaid. The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co., Dept. T., Brockville, Ont.

Blinks has a perfect mania for condensing everything. Did you hear how he proposed? No. He held up an engagement ring before the girl's eyes and said, Eh? And what did she say? She just nodded.

What is Jimmy howling about now? He thought his grandmother had sent him a box of chocolate for his birthday, but it turned out to be a box of soap.

WORLD'S CAPITAL CITIES.

SOME OF THEM SAID TO BE IN THE WRONG PLACE.

Manchester, for Instance, Should be the Capital of England.

Cities are so usually born, not made, that the manufacture of a capital and seat of Government for the Commonwealth of Australia invites attention. One of the three hitherto unknown places—Orange, Yass or Bombala—in New South Wales is to be turned into the Federal capital.

On a site of 100 square miles a model city is to be built and this will be the national centre of Australia. How many countries would change their capitals if they could start afresh with a clear field and no favor?

To start with, Manchester is the true geographical and social centre of England. It is central, which London is not. It is likewise free from fear of invasion, while a sudden dash across the ninety miles from France would strike the Empire at its heart. The position of Woolwich, too, is terribly exposed. Manchester, on the other hand is nicely inland, yet within hail of Liverpool, while it has now its ship canal. It is the converging point of the arterial railways and for $5 you can go to any part of the Kingdom. Emphatically, London should be at Manchester.

Equally ill-placed is St. Petersburg. It is at the very edge and end of Russia. As for the value of its position on the sea, the Neva is frozen up six months out of the twelve.

It was a vast mistake of Peter the Great to transport his capital from Moscow to the northern morass. Moscow is central, and the building of railways has in no sense made it more open to attack. The Russian lines are of a different gauge to all others and so would be useless to an invader, while Russia would concentrate troops upon them. The Muscovite's dissatisfaction with St. Petersburg is shown by his constant glances at Constantinople, and his determination to establish his capital on the sunny Bosphorus some day.

Paris is almost an ideal capital, only the war with Germany showed its openness to

ATTACK AND CAPTURE.

Orleans would be better, being on a river like Paris, and rather more inland and central. It would be impossible to suggest a better capital for Germany than Berlin. Neither could Vienna be improved upon for situation.

Rome, too, is good. Its weakness is defensive. Of all European capitals it has been most often in the hands of an enemy. In its long history Rome has been besieged and captured over thirty times. But for the matter of that, London and St. Petersburg are the only two capital cities of Europe that have never been occupied by a foreign foe.

When the Commonwealth of South Africa comes into being it is safe to bet that Cape Town will not be the capital. It is the John o' Groats of the land. Bloemfontein or Johannesburg, both central and handy to the rest of the country, will be made the seat of Federal Government.

In fixing up the United States, the Americans located the head of the Republic inland, and established Washington. There is a great deal to be said for having the capital away from the enthusiasms and wild fancies of the mob of big cities. In France, for instance, Paris is so clamorous in a crisis that the Government falls before the sober and solid rest of the country can get a word in.

Calcutta, again, is a painfully lob sided centre of Indian life. The Mogul Emperors arranged things better when they fixed their throne at Delhi.

THE EMPEROR OF CHINA

realized the disadvantages of a capital within touch of the sea last year. So much so that he took himself and his court to Suchan in the middle of China, whither the allies dare not follow. It is said that the Powers contemplate requiring the removal of the Chinese Government from Pekin to Nankin, the old capital, which is within easy reach of Shanghai.

A map of the world shows the awkward position of London as the centre of the British Empire. For her world-domain Alexandria or Cairo is the ideal capital. Situated between East and West, North and South; holding the key to the lock of Asia in the Suez canal; a glorious climate; the magnificent Mediterranean before and all Africa behind down to the Cape, which is the back-door to Asia, Alexandria is the natural capital of the world.

If ever the Gulf Stream should chill or be diverted, converting Britain into an Arctic land, or her coal supply should give out, Britons might accept the invitation that Disraeli put into the mouth of an Arab sheik, and, taking ship and treasure, transport the whole nation bodily to establish the capital of Anglo-Saxondom at Alexandria.

Mr. Dumley was making an evening call, and Bobby, who was allowed to sit up a little later than usual, put to him the following question: Mr. Dumley, do you want to make twenty-five dollars in ten minutes? Do I want to make twenty-five dollars in ten minutes? laughed the man. Certainly I do. But how can I make twenty-five dollars in ten minutes Bobby? Mamma will give it to you She told pa that she would give twenty-five dollars to see you hold your tongue for ten minutes.