The Red Witch

Or The Wooing Of Constantia.

CHAPTER XXV.

Mrs. Dundas held an assembly at her home not long after. All the county was there and everything went with the abandon which characterized Donna's entertainments. There was dancing for the young folks and sedate games for the old folks. For those who preferred more excitement there were games of chance and high stakes. Donna lost heavily to Featherston, and in an interview afterwards he told her of his implacable hatred for her since she had revealed his true character to Constantia.

She told Varley of her debt, and he at once gave her an I.O.U. for the amount. He completely lost his head and tried to persuade her to fly from her husband with him. As he was in the middle of this attempt her husband came in and Varley lost no time in making his escape.

When he had left her presence, he had passed hurriedly through the hall, and being in a mood that desired solitude above all other good, made for a room little frequented and but dimly lit, where he felt sure he might find himself alone. He flung open the door, closed it as vehemently, and throwing himself into a chair gave himself up to thought.

"Time, time alone," he cried, in a clear, vibrating tore, "and opportunity are all I want. And then—riddance of this cursed stagnation, and life—with her !"

Something seemed to rise out of the dark corner before him to confront him as he spoke ; a tall, indistinct shape, that after a while resolved itself into O'Grady. He looked leaner, darker, more bronzed than ever in the uncertain light as he stood and looked silently at Varley.

The latter sprang to his feet with an oath.

"Where the deuce have you come from ?" he said then. There was insolence in his tone. Had the fellow heard—understood ? He watched him with lowering brow, and nervous, shifting eyes.

"Where the deuce have you come from ? would be more to the purpose," said O'Grady, in his slow, methodical way. There was, however, a ring in his voice that spoke of anger, contempt, and a suppressed rage that bordered on disgust.

"What do you mean ?" said Varley, drawing a step nearer. His blood was surging in his veins, and he was in that humor when a man would go as quickly to seek a quarrel as a kiss from the beloved.

"Do you compel me to answer ? Is an answer necessary ?" In his turn O'Grady had moved a little ; he was now much nearer to the man addressed. His eyes were glowing ; he waited for Varley's next word.

"Speak," said Varley peremptorily.

"You do compel me, then !" said the other coldly. "Well, hear me ! For many days it has been upon my mind to tell you what I think of you ; to give you my true and unvarnished opinion of your conduct. To-night you generously" (with a sneer) "offer me an opportunity. I accept it. I——"

"You ! Who are you, sir ?" broke in Varley fiercely. What the devil do you mean by bringing me to task ? What do you know of me ?"

"Very little, sir, I acknowledge ; which is to my credit, I fancy. But that little is bad. In my opinion," said O'Grady, with the utmost calmness, "you are a most consummate scoundrel !"

"What ?" said Varley, in a low tone.

He seemed paralyzed. He placed a trembling hand on the back of the chair near him as if to support himself, and his face grew livid. His rage was so great that it mastered him, and deprived him of energy for the moment.

"Haven't you grasped it ?" said O'Grady, with a curl of lip. "Must I explain ?" Then all at once his manner changed, and his studied calm deserted him. Passion, nerce and strong, conquered prudence, and came to the front. "You !" he said. "Are you a devil or a man, that you treat that creature so ? An angel is given you from heaven ! There are some who would think it their highest good to be able to minister to her happiness ; whilst you —you !—cast the sacred gift from you, and scorn, and insult, and betray her for one unfit to be named in her presence. Great heaven ! that such things should be ! And what is to be the end of it ? Do you think the world is blind ? Do you think your assignation with that woman to-night was unknown ? Does it ever dawn upon you that that little tale will be carried home to her to plant another dagger in her gentle breast ? Has she not suffered enough already at your hands ? Is there no——"

Varley put up his arm. The gesture was so imperious that O'Grady paused, and regarded him with expectancy. The pause was lengthened. Varley's face was as white as death, and his nostrils were distended. At last he spoke :

"Your wonderful solicitude for Lady Varley deserves my warmest gratitude," he said, with an evil laugh. "I thank you—in her name. Your manner, though no doubt one of your strongest points, is, I confess, a little mystifying to so dull a mortal as I am. It leads me to imagine that you believe I no longer have an interest in Lady Varley. It even leads me to believe that you"—he looked straight at his adversary, and again that evil laugh broke forth—"want her."

The deadly insult to his wife had hardly passed his lips when O'Grady had him by the throat. The tall, thin, powerful man swung him to and fro in his paroxysm of rage and disgust as lightly as though Varley (who was a well-grown man) was but a child in his grasp. The latter did his best to retaliate, but, infuriated though he was, his efforts were vain. He could not shake off O'Grady's hand, long and sinewy as it was, and firm as iron, though delicate enough to look at. The two men glared at each other savagely, speechless, but maddened with a hatred that would never know abatement. Then suddenly Varley's face changed. The veins swelled ominously upon his forehead. His breath grew labored, and came at last in little stifled pants. His hold on O'Grady relaxed. Some passionately angry thought within the latter had perhaps induced him unconsciously to tighten his grasp on his enemy's throat.

"See !" he said, with a touch of rather devilish satisfaction in the thought, "I shake you as I would a rat ! So ! so ! Now go !" He hurled him back against the wall. "And repent if it be in you !"

CHAPTER XXVI.

Constantia's feeling towards Featherston had undergone a considerable change since that night of Mrs. Dundas' masked ball. A change, cruel indeed, because it is always terrible to the young when the first doubt, the first distrust of the one thing beloved dawns upon the mind. She had believed so entirely in Featherston ; had so counted on his love for her, wordless though it had been. He had not spoken, indeed, but there had been glances, fond insinuations, lover-like pressures of the hand, delicate gifts of flowers that had convinced her as surely as any spoken testimony of his truth.

It was a bright, an almost oppressively bright afternoon, and on tree, and field, and drooping flowers the sun shone vigorously. The slated roof of the Cottage looked burning hot, and even in the erstwhile cool recesses of the garden, where shade might reasonably be sought, comfort from the noontide heat there was none. This Constantia, swinging lazily in her hammock, acknowledged to herself.

The sound of steps upon the garden path roused her from her idle dreaming ; and it was with a start and a vivid blush—wild and sweet as a hedge-rose—that she saw Barry and Mr. Stronge bearing down upon her. She was full of life and activity at all times, and now she sprang gracefully to the ground, and confronted them, still with warm, flushed cheeks. Her eyes looked misty and a little dreamy from her waking slumber and her musings amongst the hot blown roses.

"Aunt Bridget is within," she said hurriedly. "Come in ; you shall see her."

This noble promise failed to raise joy in the breasts that heard. However, perforce they turned, and accompanied Constantia into the dreaded presence.

Miss MacGillicuddy was, as usual, sunk in the depths of gloom. At the weekly Dorcas meeting she had just been insulted by the wife of a neighboring clergyman, a busy, pretentious little person who gave to her parish a baby every twelve months, and rather more of her opinions than they cared for. There was, however, justification for her in her skirmish with Miss MacGillicuddy, as she might reasonably be supposed to know more of the shape and size of a shirt for a new-born babe than a "benighted spinster," as Mrs. Ratkin somewhat irreverently termed the old lady.

It was quite a relief to the still indignant spinster when she beheld Barry enter the drawing-room. Here was a target on which to loose her shafts. She rose to receive the little group of three with an aspect stormy, and suggestive of dangers ahead.

"You !" she said, with a snort, fixing the luckless Barry with a stony stare. When she had sufficiently gorgonized him, she went on to the others. "How d'ye do ?" she said to Stronge, of whom she was a little afraid, giving him a bony hand. Then her eyes fell on Constantia. "It is quite a relief to see you at last, Constantia," she said. "I began to think evil had befallen you. What have you been doing with yourself all the afternoon ? Philandering, as usual, I suppose."

She drew a long breath. It became plain to the others that this was only a mild preliminary canter, and that now she was about to launch out into a volly of vituperative abuse that would lay the wretched Barry's head low in the dust. But relief was near. Andrew Stronge, leaning a little forward, caught the irate lady's eye, and by means of a perfectly calm smile and a gentle movement of the right hand, magnetized her so far that he delayed the words already trembling on her lips.

"I know you will be glad to hear," he said genially, "that Lady Varley is looking ever so much better than she did when last I saw her."

"Oh, yes ! You have noticed that, too," broke in Constantia, forgetting her shyness of him in her anxiety to back up and prevent the cascade about to be let loose on Barry.

"I am glad to hear it," said Miss MacGillicuddy. "I trust she is getting into a better frame of mind. To fight against the Divine decrees seems to me to betoken a certain amount of moral depravity." She almost forgot Barry in her eagerness to level abuse on some one else.

Constantia flushed warmly, and rose to her feet.

"You are tired, Aunt Bridget," she said quietly. "We only distress you. I have promised Norah to take her for a walk this evening, and so, if you will excuse——"

"Take me, too," whispered Barry, in an imploring tone. Stronge heard it, and brought himself leisurely to his feet.

"Yes, dear Miss MacGilicuddy ; I fear we called in an unlucky hour," he said. "We must only hope we have not done you any harm. Now pray"—going on rapidly, as he saw her open her lips as if to speak, "I entreat you to take my advice. A cup of tea for a bad headache, and to lie down. No, not a word, indeed, you must not try to persuade us to stay. A cup of tea, remember,' squeezing her hand in farewell, "and an hour's rest ; that is all that is required. Good-bye, good-bye ! Now, do try my remedies."

He covered Constantia's and Barry's retreat, and presently they found themselves once more in the open air, their numbers augmented by one. Norah had joined them.

"I tried to catch you," cried the child, running panting up to them, "to stop you going in. She is in an awful temper. Some one vexed her at her meeting, and she has been prancing round the house ever since.

They had entered the wood by this time, and the cool and leafy boughs arching above their heads filled them with a certain sense of rest and peace. Through the trees little patches of mossy sward, sun-smitten, lay like tufts of gold ; but, for the most part, the hot rays of the dying monarch were excluded, and a light that was almost twilight pervaded everything. It was delicious after the intolerable glare of the more open ground, and they wandered on aimlessly, but full of enjoyment, for some time.

The wood was Featherston's, and it adjoined the fields that encircled the Cottage ; to step from them into the dark shadows of the trees was but the work of a moment. The charm of the golden midsummer weather was full upon them, and it was not until a slight glimpse of the house reached her through an avenue of limes that Constantia remembered how far she had come.

"How far we have come !" she said, in a quick, dismayed tone—a tone almost frightened, that exercised Stronge's mind not a little ; "too far. See, there is the house."

"Let us go on to the gardens. It is quite early ; there is plenty of time," urged Barry.

"Oh, no !" said Constantia, stepping back upon the path. "See, how strange it would look to Mr. Featherston to see us taking possession of his place in this sort of way ! If he were at home, he might think—"

"Still, the gardens, Con ! And I hear they are lovely now," entreated Norah coaxingly. She slipped her hand round her sister's waist, and gazed with tender entreaty into her eyes. "And if he is away from home," she said.

"He is," said Barry. "He is at Fermanagh."

"Well, let us go, then," said Constantia.

Not a word escaped them as they skirted the avenue, and presently emerged upon a low, level bit of sward close to the range of windows that belonged to the library, billiard-room, smoking-room, and the little den where Mr. Featherston was popularly supposed to meditate on godly deeds, to make up his clothing club and other charitable accounts, and where, according to Barry, he was in the habit of saying his prayers.

"If he only had a little tent now," he said, "he could hold a Blue-ribbon meeting wherever he went. His list of teetotallers would be filled to overflowing. He will create quite a sensation in Fer—— Ah !"

The ejaculation dropped from him involuntarily. He changed color. His gaze was riveted upon the window of the room where the good young man was supposed to wrestle with the higher powers for the subjugation of drunkenness in the village ; and lo and behold, what he saw there was the good young man himself !

His companions followed his gaze, and were electrified in turn. To come face to face with a person you have good reason for believing to be many miles away, is always a shock, more or less. It was decidedly more to Constantia in this instance, as she would not have been seen by Featherston so close to his house for anything that could be offered her. Before she had sufficiently recovered herself to arrange for a hasty retreat, Featherston had moved away and returned ; and what was this he now held ?

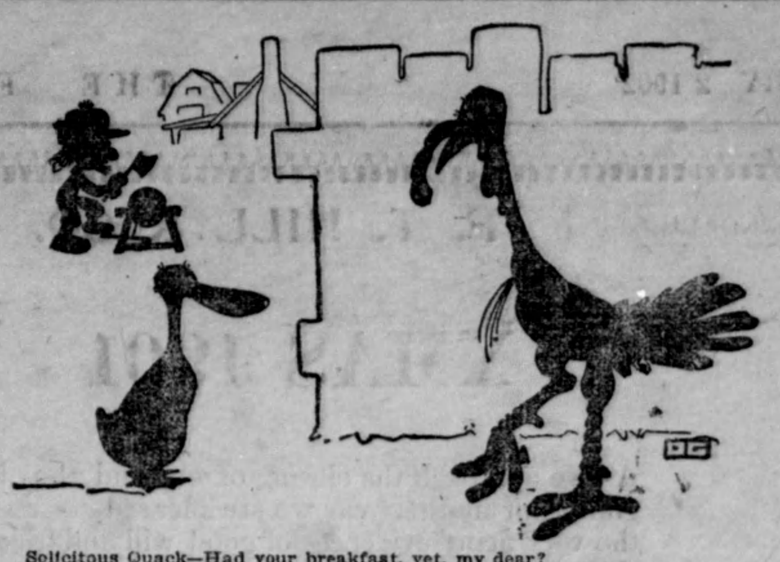
Constantia gazed as if fascinated at this new object in the picture. She felt she was growing very pale, and that her hands were trembling. Was her last belief in him to be now rudely shattered—here—to-day ?

It was a long-necked bottle, of goodly proportions. By no means an empty bottle. It was three-quarters full of a liquid of a pale gold color. It seemed to those looking on that they could, even at that distance, read the word Cognac upon it.

Mr. Featherston, who evidently ignored the superior charms of a decanter, eyed the ordinary brandy bottle with a friendly glance, and pulling the cork from it, proceeded to pour its contents into the tumbler until the latter was quite half full—erous measurement allowed. To lift it to his lips after this, and drink it with unmistakable relish, seemed a simple matter to this apostle of temperance !

"Come, come," whispered Constantia, turning, and with one consent, they all turned and fled the spot, and ran back towards the wood. In silence they made their way, until they came to a tiny dell, secluded, moss-grown, living in the very heart of the swaying trees ; and here they stopped, out of breath a little, and looked one upon the other. No one spoke.

(To Be Continued).



Solicitous Quack—Had your breakfast, yet, my dear?
Facetious Turk—No; but I'll have a little chop after awhile.

FRIENDS ARE CONVERSING.

"Take my advice and get married."

"I have a horror of perpetual slavery."

"Ah, my dear boy, if you only could find a wife like mine—so good, so kind, so affectionate, so devoted."

"Well, then, I'll wait until she's a widow."

CRYING BABIES.

The Cry of an Infant is Nature's Signal of Distress.

Babies never cry unless there is some very good reason for it. The cry of a baby is nature's warning signal that there is something wrong. Every mother ought to get to work immediately to find out what that something wrong may be. If the fretfulness and irritation are not caused by exterior sources, it is conclusive evidence that the crying baby is ill. The only safe and judicious thing to do is to administer Baby's Own Tablets without the slightest delay.

For indigestion, sleeplessness, the irritation accompanying the cutting of teeth, diarrhoea, constipation colic, and simple fevers, these marvellous little tablets have given relief in thousands of cases and saved many precious baby lives. Do not give a child so-called "soothing" medicines; such only stupify and produce unnatural sleep. Baby's Own Tablets are guaranteed to contain no opiate or other harmful drugs; they promote sound, healthy sleep because they go directly to the root of baby troubles. Dissolved in water these tablets can be given to the youngest infant. Mrs. Walter Brown, Milby, Que., says:—"I have never used any medicine for baby that did as much good as Baby's Own Tablets. I would not be without them."

Baby's Own Tablets are for sale at all drug stores, or will be sent direct on receipt of price (25 cents a box) by addressing the Dr. Williams Medicine Co., Brockville, Ont.

NEW BICYCLE AMBULANCE.

Bicycles are such a convenient means of transportation that it is nothing extraordinary that inventors should apply the idea of the carriage to an ambulance for emergency cases.

The picture shows a machine fitted with an ambulance which can be manipulated by the rider alone without the aid of another person. It is intended primarily as a means of reaching the injured as soon as possible rather than providing a rapid means of transporting the sufferer to a hospital.

The bicycle is provided with a curved bar at the front and rear, which are clamped to the frame and provided with sockets to receive the sides of the frame. The latter is of light tubing, and has braces to stretch the canvas when the stretcher is opened.

When not in use the braces are folded in line with the frame, and the whole may be rolled up and attached to the bicycle without interfering with the rider sufficiently to impede his progress. To steer the wheel when the stretcher is in use an elongated handle is clamped on the front fork, extending nearly to the level of the canvas, the operator using one hand to steer the ambulance and the other to steer the bicycle.

He (at the hotel table)—"I've wondered how these waiters can remember so many orders at once." She (who had often wondered the same thing)—"Oh, do you? How can they remember so much?" He (triumphantly)—"They don't."

Careful Parent—"Before I can give consent to your proposed marriage to my daughter, I must know something about your character."

Suitor—"Certainly, sir, certainly. Here is my bank-book."

Careful Parent (after a glance)—"Take her, my son, and be happy."

Is Not This Stealing ?

In Spite of at Least Half a Dozen Imitators, Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine has More than Three Times the Sale of any Remedy Recommended for Throat and Lung Troubles.

Have you been imposed upon when asking for Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine by being offered an imitation? Many have been, and we know of some who have changed their druggist as a result. It is not safe to deal with a druggist who offers imitations and substitutes. An honest druggist will not offend his customers by such questionable methods.

The use of Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine has become so universal that on all sides are springing up preparations of turpentine and linseed, put up in packages similar to Dr. Chase's, with the object of making sales on the reputation of this famous remedy. Is not this dishonest. Is it not stealing, or even worse? For, besides the injury done to the proprietors of Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine, the people are being deceived. In some cases, no doubt, even life is lost as a result.

Are you being deceived? Have you asked for Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine and been given an imitation or substitute? There is no doubt about the virtue of this great throat and lung remedy. It is too well known as a thorough cure for bronchitis, croup, whooping cough, asthma, coughs and colds to need further words of commendation. What we want to do is to warn you against these imitations. To be certain that you are getting the genuine, be sure that Dr. Chase's portrait and signature are on the wrapper.

Dr. Chase's Syrup of Linseed and Turpentine has reached phenomenal sales, because it cures when other remedies fail. It is far-reaching in effect, curing the cold as well as the cough, and uprooting the most serious forms of bronchitis, asthma, and similar throat and lung diseases. Twenty-five cents a bottle. Family size, three times as much, 60 cents. At all dealers, or Edmanson, Bates & Company, Toronto.

A handsome and useful Christmas present for mother or grandmother is Dr. Chase's Last and Complete Receipt Book. Illustrated folder free.