

WIFE OF A STORM

THE DUCHESS

CHAPTER XXIV.—(Continued.)

He was quite as surprised as though she had given him a little blow. The sneering demon vanished from his face and a great weakness took its place; he looked suddenly older, wearied and hopeless, and, coming from the back of the chair, dropped languidly upon the seat of it.

"I'm tired of it all," he said.

"Tired of me, you mean," said she, with some spirit.

"Be that as it may, I confess I want now to have done with the whole thing. You are unhappy with me; I am—not happy with you." He made the little subtle difference in the two meanings apparent to her by the slight pause. "Let us come to some decision."

"You mean a separation?" She hated herself passionately at the moment because of the tears she fought so willfully to subdue. She stood before him, trembling, angry, in a miserable despair, yet so lovely, so sweet—a thing that was whiter than thistle-down—that he hardly dared himself to look at her lest his righteous rage should cool within him.

"Not a formal one," he said. "For heaven's sake, let us not be torn apart for the amusement of our friends! Vulgar as you deem me—with a slight frown—I would carefully avoid that. But I see no reason why we should annoy each other with these perpetual scenes and with the presence of each other."

"I don't see how you are going to manage it—just at present, at all events. You are coming with me to Cleely's, are you not?"

"Certainly not. I shall cancel the engagement. You can go your way for the future, and I shall go mine—I have had quite enough of this sort of thing. I don't care about spending the rest of my life watching you weeping over your farewells to your lovers."

"Take care!" said she, in a low voice.

"Why? Can you deny that he loves you—that he told you so—and more—more?" His brow grew black again.

"If he does love me, that is no reason why you should address me in such a tone. I could not prevent that misfortune; it was no fault of mine—I had nothing to do with it."

"Of course not—no woman ever yet had. It is the regulation answer. However, let that pass. The real matter at issue is that I shall cease to worry you with my presence. I shall accompany you and Cleely as far as town to-morrow, and then run across to Paris or somewhere."

He was as good as his word. In the morning he accompanied them to town, saw them down to the train that would take them down to Grangemore, and bade them a calm farewell upon the platform. It was all a surprise to Cleely, and, at the first knowledge of it, a regret; but after awhile she began to regard it as a salutary movement, and consoled herself with the reflection that absence has been very often proved the most beneficial of medicines.

CHAPTER XXV.

Six weeks of silence. Whether Wriothesley was in Paris or Timbuctoo was unknown to Marvel. February had come and gone, bringing its sweet promise of opening buds, and leaving that promise fulfilled. March had come in, in the orthodox way, with the roar of a lion raged, but after a day or two had subsided into the tamest of animals, and was now all smiles and sweetness—to Mrs. Verulam's deep satisfaction, as her house party had arrived.

Marvel, who had a positive talent for slipping into her clothes and looking lovely in an incredibly short space of time, had just finished her dinner toilet; and, going downstairs in the rather joyless, emotionless manner that had characterized her of late, she made her way into the inner drawing room, which communicated with the larger reception room by means of hanging curtains.

She sank with a thankful sigh into a low lounging chair, and, in the soft twilight of a glorious fire, gave herself up to thought. She was dressed, as usual, in a white clinging gown of lace and satin that rose close to her throat, but left her arms bare to the shoulder. She had raised them and thrown them behind her, so that her head could rest upon the palms of her joined hands.

"Do you always wear white?" Wriothesley had said to her once. "One would think you had vowed yourself to some saint—some order."

She remembered these words now, and was dwelling upon them with a self-regretful feeling that she had not been so vowed in her earliest infancy, when she looked up and saw Wriothesley push aside the heavy velvet curtains and come toward her.

"Well, you see I have come back!" he said, with a rather awkward laugh. In she sprang to her feet and stood looking at him with parted lips and breath that came and went with a glad haste. The melancholy disappeared from her eyes, and with a movement of frank and childish pleasure she held out both hands to him.

"Why," she said—"why?" And that was all. There was no real meaning in the foolish word, and yet a world of meaning.

He did not dare to read it as it was, or he would have clasped her to his heart and prevented many a sorrowful after-hour; he only took her hands, and bent over them and kissed them warmly.

"I did not know you were here—in the country," she said at last, in a rather uncertain tone.

"I suppose not. I ran down to the Carringtons' yesterday, and, after a capital run to-day, found myself close to the Grange; so I thought I'd look in for a moment to see how you and Cleely were getting on."

He spoke with quite a severe assumption of indifference, and naturally it answered her.

"It was good of you," she said, with a little lip smile. "But how foolish to come

so late! How will you be back in time for their dinner? It is quite a quarter past eight, I should think, now."

He pulled out his watch and looked at it.

"By Jove, so it is! I expect I had better be on the move again," he said; but he did not rise from his seat.

"If you will dine here," she began, coldly.

"Oh, no, thanks—not for the world! They will be expecting me at Carringtons'. It isn't much of a ride there, and they don't dine to-night till nine."

"It is quite ten miles!" she said, severely.

"I suppose you want to get rid of me?" rising at last, with a short laugh. "Well, I'm glad to have seen you looking so well and—emphatically—so happy! Good-night," and he held out his hand.

"You are wrong; I shouldn't mind if you sat there all night," she said, quickly; "and at least you will let me give you a cup of tea." She touched the bell near her, and when a servant entered gave him some directions. "As to my looking well and happy," she said, resentfully—"did you wish it otherwise? And don't you think you are looking very well yourself?"

"I never felt better, certainly," replied he coolly.

After this there was a considerable pause. Wriothesley, leaning forward on his seat, with his elbow on his knee and his hand stroking his mustache, stared moodily into the fire. Marvel, finding a tray placed ready for her, busied herself pouring out a cup of tea.

"Do you take sugar?" she asked, more as a means of breaking the unpleasant silence than from a want of knowledge.

"Good heavens!—we have been married for a year and a half, and don't you know that yet?" said he, with unreasonable irritation.

"You do?"—waiting with sugar tongs unpraised.

"I do."

"Here is your tea," she said a second later, standing before him, tall and pale and slender in the fire beams.

"Thank you." He started slightly, not knowing she was so near, and took the cup from her, and placed it on the rug at his feet. "How strange you look in that white gown!" he said. "Like a bride or a dead girl! Did I speak roughly to you? I don't know why it is that one so soft and young and pale as you can have such power to irritate me. I am always hurting you, it seems to me. That night we were last together—you remember? I have been sorry about that many times. I would have written saying so; but I could not be sure that you would care. Would you?"

He took the little slim hand that hung by her side and that was covered with rings—she loved them for their beauty, as a child might—and pressed it gently. He waited eagerly for her answer—with such a decided eagerness indeed that it awoke in her one of those strange, perverse moods to which poor human nature is ever heir.

"Not much," she said, with a mutinous, lovely, glance at him sideways from her expressive eyes.

"Ah!" said he.

He let her hand go, and took up his cup and drank his tea hurriedly. He was bitterly offended. He took no more notice of her, as she stood, frightened now, and grieved for her hardness, but, pushing back his chair, straightened himself as a man will before taking his departure.

"Please tell Cleely I am sorry not to have seen her; but I fear I cannot afford another moment. Good-night—good-by!"

"Not good-by!" faltered she. "You are so close to us, and—Fudge!—in a very small voice—I didn't mean that; I—should have cared!"

"Is that the truth, my dear?" said he very sadly, "or was that other answer? Who shall say?" He raised her face with his hand, and looked at it earnestly in the firelight.

"Oh, do believe what I now say!" entreated she, in a choking tone. "I don't know why I said—"

"Well, I'll try," said he; and he stooped and kissed her cheek, and a moment later was gone.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Even now, well into the middle of boisterous March as it was, the weather still maintained a smiling face. This day was almost warm if one contrasted it with one of a fortnight before; there was a perfume of primroses in the air, and delicate ferns were beginning to peep in shaded corners of the shady woods.

Mrs. Verulam, who had disposed of most of her guests by sending the women to look after the men, who had gone shooting in the early part of the morning, stood at the window of her summer parlor, and at last, emboldened by the sweetness of the view without, sung the cæcament wide and leaned out to enjoy the keen, flower-scented air.

Marvel escaped after awhile from the merry crowd, and wandered aimlessly into one of the smaller rooms that opened off the library. She stood in the window, gazing mutely out on the fast-darkening gardens, and gave herself up to the gloomy misery of the moment.

Instinctively she put up her hand and drew the locket from her neck, and gazed as if fascinated upon the pale crystal features hidden within it.

She started violently as a hand was laid upon her shoulder, and another hand seized upon the fatal locket and took it forcibly from her.

"Brooding, as usual, over the irrevocable," said Wriothesley, angrily. "Good gracious, what a senseless woman you are! Can you not grasp the fact that what is in, and that not all the protestations and bemoanings in the world can alter it? I shall destroy that talisman of yours some day; it only works you evil."

He hung the locket from him as he spoke, and to the middle of the table nearest him.

"So let your forebodings go," he said.

"They cling too fast for that," returned she, with a sad smile.

"Come out of this cold, uncomfortable room. See the fire is quite dead! No wonder you have worked yourself into a fit of the blues!"

He led her through the folding doors into the library beyond, which was empty, but rich in the possession of a glorious fire. He closed the folding doors again and pressed her gently into the depths of a huge armchair that adorned one side of the hearth.

A moment later the doors communicating with the room they had just left were again flung open—violently this time—and Mrs. Scarlett stood on the threshold. She looked old, haggard, wild. She held something clutched in her right hand, and, as she advanced into the room, she held it out to Marvel. It was the battered old locket that Wriothesley had taken from his wife and flung angrily upon a table.

"Where did you get that?" she cried, hoarsely. "Is it yours? Speak, girl!"

"It is mine—yes," said Marvel, going forward quickly, as if to take it; but Mrs. Scarlett warded her back.

"Where did you get it?" she demanded again. "Command you?"

Marvel drew back and glanced at Wriothesley, as if frightened, as if imploring his support.

"Pray try to control yourself when addressing Lady Wriothesley," he said, with a look of ill-suppressed anger directed at Mrs. Scarlett. "If indeed—coldly—it be necessary that you should speak to her at all."

"Do you hear me? Answer!" said she, precisely as though she had not heard him, which indeed she had not. "Where did you get this thing?"

"I cannot tell you that; I do not know," said Marvel, speaking as though compelled by some superior force. "All I know is that it was round my neck on the night when I was abandoned to the fury of the storm and was rescued from it by—"

She turned with a rather dreamy, confused air, and held out her hand to Wriothesley. Once again that pitiless storm seemed to break above her head.

"You—!" cried Mrs. Scarlett, in a low, piercing tone that was barely above a whisper. "That, of all others, it should be you! Sweet heaven, what a revelation for me!" She paused, and gazed as if in breathless awe at the truth was bare to her, and I would not see; but when this picture—crushing the locket between her icy fingers—looked back at me as I gazed on it, I knew."

"Knew what?" demanded Marvel, leaning forward with parted lips.

"That the face within this trinket is that of your father."

"My father?" The words fell from her in a little hushed tone. At last—at last was she to learn the mystery of her life, and through this woman? Her heart sank within her. "It is he then," she said, faintly. "But you—what do you know of him? You—?" All at once an awful expression grew within her eyes; her face blanched to a deadly pallor. Like a lightning stroke the undreamed-of truth seemed about to descend upon her; but still she made a last faint struggle against it.

"You are not—?" She faltered, and shrunk back shivering. "Oh, no—oh, no!" she cried, in wildest protestation.

"You have guessed it; I am your mother!" said Mrs. Scarlett.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Marvel did not move; she stood pale, motionless, as one smitten into marble. A great wave of emotion, strong, terrible, swept over her face, leaving it as colorless as a spent fly. There was a horror in it, mingled with a wild hope; and there were dread and a curious longing.

As for Mrs. Scarlett, she seemed all at once to have fallen into the grasp of relentless rage. Her mouth had grown thin and drawn, her eyes become sunken. She stood staring at Marvel with a gaze that was terrible because of the intensity of it.

A silence that was full of a strange fascination had fallen upon all three, but Wriothesley after awhile broke it.

"You have created an admirable situation," he said, unpleasantly—"a very dramatic denouement; but you will pardon me if I say I should like to hear something about the commencement of your plot."

"You would hear?" she said slowly, turning upon him the old enigmatical smile, which now was tinged with cruelty.

"Well, you shall. But first a question or two, if you please, my dear." "This locket—you say it was found on you the night Lady Mary Craven took you into her house? That night—tell me of it."

"There was a storm," said Marvel, confusedly. "It was a wild, tempestuous night. Often and often it all comes back to me—the roaring as of many winds, the dense darkness, the crashing of the branches overhead, the screaming of some seabirds from the shore below, and then the stepping out of the blackness of death, as it were, into the full, sweet glare of life."

"A storm? Yes. And how many years ago was it? How old were you then?"

"Three—more perhaps. I cannot tell."

"Four"—curtly. "Now, do you remember anything of the woman who abandoned you on that night?"

"It is such a vague memory I cannot describe her," said Marvel, in a distressed tone that contrasted oddly with the suppressed vehemence of the other. "She was old—worn."

"It seems to me," said Wriothesley, breaking in brusquely upon her speech, but addressing Mrs. Scarlett, "it is our own tale we are hearing, and not yours. You have made a most extraordinary assertion, and I must ask you to verify it without help from us."

He identified himself so persistently with his wife that the latter looked up at him with shining, luminous eyes and moved involuntarily nearer to him.

"Do you think I am trying to make up a story?" said Mrs. Scarlett, with a short laugh. "Why, how would it serve me to cumber myself now with a grown daughter? And are you indeed in such mad haste to hear what I have to tell? Well, hear it!" There was defiance in the glance she cast at him, but there was exhaustion in the air with which she sank into a chair near her. "When I was her age," she began, indicating Marvel by a slight gesture, "there came to the dull, secluded village where I lived some with my father a young man. My father was well-born, but poor, and therefore of small account; the young man was rich. A very orthodox beginning to a romance, eh?"

—with a cold, sneering laugh. "There was good hunting in the neighborhood, and he took a house for the season about three miles from where we lived. He saw me, met me, loved me. I was lovable, eh? I assure you—with a swift and bitter glance at Wriothesley. "I was like her!" she waved her hand toward Marvel.

"His name?" asked Wriothesley, shortly.

"Must you know that, too? Well, it hardly matters. Brandreth—Brandreth Boleau. It is so long since I have stored that name that I find almost a difficulty in speaking it," she said, heavily, with a vain attempt at lightness which failed to hide the agony that shone within her somber eyes. "He loved me, as I have said, but marriage with me would have been ruin to every worldly hope he had. There was the inevitable uncle—rich, childless, titled. The title would pass to Brandreth; but very little of the estates were entailed, and the barren honor of calling himself a lord would not have sufficed him—would hardly indeed have kept body and soul together in that state of life to which he had been called. And the old man, the uncle, had other views for him. To disappoint them meant dishonour. So we loved in silence, in secret; and then—she raised her hand to her throat as if being smothered—suddenly, five months after we had met he died!"

She paused and pressed the palm of her hand upon the locket lying on the table as if she would have crushed it in her palm.

"It was a railway accident. It was useless to do anything; he was a whole day dead before I heard of it—still, cold, the beauty frozen on his face. Oh! Her voice died away in a long gasping sigh, and she smote her hands together. "He was all in the world to me, and he was dead!" There was intolerable anguish in her tone—anguish fresh as though the story of her woe had been first told an hour ago. "Yet I lived!" she said.

She wailed a little. It became evident to Wriothesley that, apart from the excitement of the moment and the cruelty of the memories she had evoked, she was extremely ill. But, as he stepped forward to help her, she roused herself and drove him back from her with an imperious gesture.

"Don't touch me! Do you think I am such a feeble thing," she said, "that even such memories will kill me? Pah—you do not understand—you could not love like that! Well, he was dead—it was all over! And then—just then—I found that she"—pointing to Marvel, who stood with head down-bent and face ashen pale—"was to be born. That was the cruellest sting of all!"

A slight sound broke from Marvel. Wriothesley held up an entreating hand.

"Spare her what you can!" he begged. "Why should I spare her, even one pang?" she said, coldly, in the low, even tone she had maintained all through. "Was I spared? Did I not suffer? Who came to my assistance when I knew not what to do or where to turn to hide my head? At that time, too, my father died. I thanked heaven for that! For the first time a soft, a human light grew within her eyes. "He never knew," she said.

Insect Products.

In several cases industry is indebted to the insect world for unique substances. For many years the cochineal, or cactus scale plant, was used as the basis of an important red dye until practically superseded by the introduction of aniline dyes. A single species of the lac insect produces practically all the shellac stick lac and button lac in commerce. In southwestern Asia the creosote bushes are the breeding ground of enormous quantities of a lac insect, the commercial possibilities of which have not yet been developed.

A species of scale insect in China yields a pure white wax of great value and rarity. The Chinese wax is said to have ten times the illuminating power of other waxes. It is a beautiful substance, resembling beeswax more than vegetable wax in its chemical composition, and is clear white in color. Now a discovery which promises to be of great economic value comes from Mesa Grande, Cal. The vegetation in this district is infested with an insect which, on being removed from the twigs of oak on which it thrives, and compressed in quantities by the hand, becomes a more or less pliable lump, somewhat resembling rubber, but not possessing the same elasticity. Part of it has been proved by chemical analysis to be a true wax, and part resembles rubber in its physical properties. The product is equally interesting from a chemical and industrial point of view, and the supply is well high inexhaustible.

The New Journalism.

In the interest of the Biatherskite she had gone to far Fiji. To investigate the cannibal's cuisine; The result of her "Exposures" forced her rapidly to flee. Or she might have graced the royal soup tureen.

In pursuance of her duties she'd been strung up by the neck To describe a lady's feelings when she's hung; And in a diver's dress she once descended on a wreck, An adventure nearly costing her a lung.

In a patent safety coffin she had patiently allowed Herself to be interred to prove its worth; Though forgotten through some oversight she uttered not a word Of complaint about her sojourn under earth.

Devotion to her work this young woman proved by acts, And risks and dangers never made her quail; But she kicked when they assigned her to secure some "inside facts" About Jonah's being swallowed by the whale!

—New York Sun.

He Wasn't In It. "I did think I was something of a boxer," said the pugilist to his wife, as he walked the floor about 2 a. m. with their first-born.

"And aren't you dear?" asked his better half, drowsily.

"It seems not," he sadly replied. "I guess my enemies were right when they said I could not put a baby to sleep."

It Wasn't on the Map. Willie—Pa, what state is Edgley in? Pa—Edgley? Why, I don't believe I ever heard of such a town.

Willie—Well, I was just reading about a man who was hanged in Edgley and I can't find it in my geography.

AGRICULTURAL



The Mysterious Crown Gall.

What causes crown gall, what conditions favor it, what will cure it, are problems yet unsolved, according to a recent report from the Utah station, which says: "Almost sure death to a tree, without cure or preventive, supposed to be highly contagious, crown gall is becoming one of our worst orchard troubles. The galls do most damage to the peach, though the apple and pear are oftentimes badly affected, and the other fruits, the raspberry especially, are sometimes attacked. The name crown gall suggests the nature of the

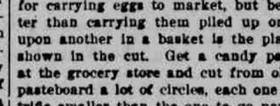


CROWN GALL.

disease. At the crown of the tree, between root and trunk, rough gall-like swellings, varying from the size of a marble to that of a man's fist, constitute the disease. When these galls encircle the tree, the flow of sap stops and death results. The galls are oftentimes found on other parts of the root system, where they do much damage, though death to the affected tree may not occur from galls found in such places. If the galls are on an unimportant root, the root may be cut off and the tree saved. But in general gall-bearing trees will have to be consigned to the brush pile, there to be burned.—Denver Field and Farm.

For Marketing Eggs. A regular egg case is doubtless best for carrying eggs to market, but better than carrying them piled up one upon another in a basket is the plan shown in the cut. Get a candy pall at the grocery store and cut from old pasteboard a lot of circles, each one a trifle smaller than the one to go next above it in the pall. Put a layer of bran in the bottom of the pall, lay the eggs thickly over it and fill in between and over them with bran. Lay on a pasteboard circle and proceed as before. The storekeeper will take out each layer of eggs, lift out the circle with the bran on it, empty the bran into a box or pail. Then when the eggs are all out he will pour the bran

are made of 2x10 boards 5/4 feet long and 3/4 feet apart at the rear. To the crosspiece b is attached a chain, c, by which it is hitched to the drill. The sloping point, d, is covered with an iron band and from the upper end a chain should run to the singletree. Instead of the one chain, c, there should be two chains, one on each side to attach it to the uprights of the drill—Orange Judd Farmer.



ATTACHMENT FOR WHEAT DRILL.

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Sharp Tools. There is little danger that either the scythe or cradle would be left dull while these operations had to be done by hand. But we have often seen mower knives dulled by contact with stones, or gummed up by the juices of grass so that it required far greater force to run the machine, besides frequent failures to cut all the grass. In such times an hour's work at the grindstone, sharpening the mower knives, will be worth that well paid.



ROO CARRIERS.

all back into your pall, putting the circles on top, to be used again and again. Packed in this way the eggs will not break, though the horse trots and the roads be rough.—American Agriculturist.

Cultivation of Corn. A system of cultivation that will give the highest yield under ordinary conditions seems to be about as follows: Cultivate deep during the early part of the season to remove weeds, conserve moisture and allow the plant an early vigorous development. Then gradually decrease the depth as the corn grows, until near the end of the season, when the cultivation should be shallow, and as far from the hill as is consistent with removing weeds, in order to avoid root pruning and to leave the soil in the best mechanical condition.—Prof. Davenport.

Growing Turnips. July is the month for planting turnips. As the seed is small, the ground must be plowed and then harrowed down to as fine condition as possible. The most important point in growing turnips is in the fine soil. Sow the seed in rows which will permit of using horse hoes, and seed with a hand drill, which is regulated so as to cover the seed perfectly. Use plenty of seed, as the 5¢ does considerable damage during some years to plants when they are last appearing. If too thick in the rows

the plants may be thinned with a hoe. Cultivate as soon as the growth of the plants will permit. If this is not done weeds and grass may get the start, especially that persistent pest known as crab grass. A light skinning of the surface close to the plants after every rain, using a hand wheel hoe, will prevent weeds and grass. After the turnip plants have made considerable growth they shade the soil and can hold their own against weeds, but the best crops are secured when the turnips are kept clean. The ground should be manured and the manure worked in with the harrow before planting the seed.

Potatoes Among the Chinese. It has always been supposed that as the potato is a native of the Rocky Mountain regions, both of North and South America, it was unknown in the old world until after America was discovered. This is probably true enough, so far as our present stock of potatoes was concerned. But the potato has been known thousands of years in China. It is said to grow wild in the regions of western China near the Tartary boundary. It is very largely grown there, and divides with rice the popular preference as an article of food. It is possible that the potato might have been introduced from western America in the long era when perhaps another continent lay between Asia and America, or when the Pacific was occasionally traversed by adventurous vessels which sailed around the coast in the far north, and then came southward to milder climates along our Alaskan coast.

Water in Farm Crops. Those crops always pay best which have most water in them, as nature furnishes the water without charge. The farmer who sells potatoes or roots of any kind of fruits sells what is four-fifths water, while most of the solid part of the fruit or root is taken by the leaves from the air. In growing such crops cultivation so as to retain moisture in the soil is more important than manures. Whatever deepens the soil enables it to hold more moisture and to grow better those crops which depend on abundant supplies of water for success. It may seem paradoxical, but it is true that soil made deep by thorough underdraining will be the moistest in time of drought.

Wheat Drill Attachment. The device shown in the sketch is simply an A-shaped sled placed just in front of the hoes of the common one-horse wheat drill to prevent trash coming in contact with them. It works almost perfectly. The sides of the sled

Kerosene is a very valuable thing about the hen house. Don't be afraid to use it. Keeping poultry in the orchard all through the spring and summer will prove profitable. The hens of most breeds pass their prime at two or three years old. The Leghorn will last longer. Eggs that are fed to chickens should be boiled twenty minutes, and then then be in a very digestible condition.