

The Crimson Slipper.

BY DORA LANGLOIS,

Author of "A Belle from the Blue," "The Red-Headed Woman," "The Kiss of Judas," "The Secretary's Daughter," "Victoria's Dream," &c.

(Continued.)

Having now no smoke I passed without asking him for a light. Quarter of a mile further on I came to another cross-track, and there, like a sentinel also, stood another mackintosh individual.

"They're waiting for each other," I said to myself, "and one of them has mistaken the rendezvous. If both obstinately stick to their own opinion they'll be some time before they meet."

Knowing, however, our insular habit of regarding any suggestion from a stranger as an impertinence I abandoned my first good-natured impulse, and passed on without telling the second man where to find the first.

I had got at last within sight of the chimneystack of my house when a third man in a mackintosh suddenly stepped out of the darkness and asked me civilly if I could tell him if he was on the right road for a house called Elsinore?

"You are near it now," I answered. "I am going there; but if you want my friend, Mr. Herman, I'm sorry to say he is away."

"I am going to call on Mr. Duncan," the stranger replied, "on rather important business; and I hope I shall find him at home."

"He is out at present," I answered, with a smile, "but if you will come with me he'll be at home when we get there, and delighted to offer you a rather over-done dinner."

"Are you Mr. Duncan, then?" he asked, coming a little closer to me.

"I am," I answered, "but I have not the pleasure—"

The sentence was never completed, for he had given vent to a shrill whistle, and before I could recover from my surprise he had collared me.

I don't think I have mentioned the fact that I am a big man, or that I come of a Cumberland family, and I suppose I had better repair that omission now as a sort of explanation of the fact that the man who had laid hands on me found himself a moment later lying somewhere among the heather off the road. I could not strike him as he was far too close to me, but he had not closed with me scientifically, and I got rid of him fairly easily.

"You treacherous wretch!" I said, as I straightened myself, but I had not fairly recovered my balance when another man was on my back.

Now, if the newcomer had taken ordinary care he ought to have tripped me easily, but the very feel of his grip told me that he had never handled a wrestling man. I bent myself from the hips and moved my elbows; his feet left the ground, and he came over my head with his legs straddling like a raw schoolboy's.

It was well for him that the sand was soft, for a man tackled as I was without warning has neither time nor inclination to think about his adversary's neck.

I started at once to run for Elsinore, only to find my way barred by a third man, who not only appeared to be my equal in size and weight, but was more scientific than the other two, if I might judge by the attitude into which he had thrown himself to wait for me. I did not like the look of this ugly customer; the road was too narrow just where he stood for me to get round him and keep my flying heels out of reach of his hands, so I doubled back again and almost ran into the arms of two more men coming up from behind, while the individual who had tackled me first was just picking himself up, and showed a distinct inclination to join in the proceedings.

That made three men who had not as yet had a taste of my quality, one other not much the worse for wear, and a possible fifth. Under the circumstances, therefore, I saw no loss of dignity in bellowing like a bull in the hope of making my position known at Elsinore.

"Stop his mouth! Stop his mouth!" cried the elder of the two fresh men I have spoken of as coming from the direction of the Barrows. "Stop that infernal noise, can't you! Hobbart and Dicks, you were too soon."

"They had got hold of me now, and with the assistance of the man who had barred the way to Elsinore, who knew what he was at, and didn't give any chances, it is not to be wondered at that they did very much what they liked with me. The best I could manage was to pull one or two of them down with me when I took my first ignominious roll in the wet sand road.

After that I was too busy to worry about the future chronicling of events; things happened too rapidly for me to make mental photographs of the incidents as they occurred. That I kept the fight up for a good five minutes is not due to any special prowess on my part (though I do not deny that I did some very good work), but to the fact that I soon became conscious that the object of my assailants was to make a capture without unnecessarily injuring me; for no matter how hard I hit—and I certainly hit hard every time they gave me half a chance—they simply closed round me and dragged on me, and swayed me this way and that, but never struck me until I attempted to shout, and then they let me have it—though it was not science, not even fist-cuffs, it was pure "lambing."

At last, after a final roar for help on my part (for I naturally employed those tactics to which they showed the greatest objection,) I found myself face downwards on the sand with one man certainly on my head, and, as far as I could judge from the uneven distribution of weight, a couple of others on my body.

My nose was buried in the sand, a considerable quantity of which had got into my mouth. Breathing under the circumstances was difficult

and painful, and I came to the conclusion that I had better cease such wriggling as was possible and give them time to think of the advisability of turning me before I smothered.

The discretion was almost immediately rewarded. The man on my back who was compressing my chest so painfully got up, someone appeared to come to his assistance, and my hands were tied behind me.

Then as I showed myself amenable to reason the other brute got off my head, and I was allowed a little fresh air while they tied my legs.

I had lost a certain amount of interest in the proceedings, but not being a sandworm I enjoyed the change of position. Then the elder of this mackintosh crew of brigands—whom I now recognized as the man who had spent such a long time at the inn—leant over me and began quite kindly to wipe the sand out of my mouth with my handkerchief. His consideration did not even stop there. He had some scent upon him, it seemed, and he poured it on to his own handkerchief and held it to my nostrils.

I thought him a very obliging highwayman, experienced a sense of irresponsibility very pleasing after my late exertions and so went placidly off to sleep with my head on my late assailant's knee.

CHAPTER V.

I woke up again under the impression that Minting was snoring very loudly, and that his conduct in the matter did not shew a due respect for me.

"I shall have to speak to him about it, Herman," I said, sitting up and rubbing my eyes. "I shall certainly speak about it; he might be a steam-engine."

Then I discovered that I was really in a railway carriage myself, that neither Minting nor Herman was present, and that my travelling companions were my friends of the moor. They were all five there, loling in various attitudes, and all bearing on them, one way or another, something that might be called "Richard Duncan, his mark."

"Let me see," said the leader of the gang, the fine, soldierly fellow who had wiped my face free of sand. "Mr. Duncan came away without his dinner didn't he? Dicks, see if you can repair the omission."

Mr. Dicks, who had contracted a bad gravel-rash, and was, I fancied, the gentleman who had gone over my head, smiled blandly and produced a luncheon basket. "Mr. Duncan did not dine," he said, "though he very politely invited Hobbart to dinner. Perhaps he will not object to a make-shift?"

He opened the basket and handed it to me, and I must confess that my sense of outraged dignity was not proof against the cold game and salad the basket contained. I thanked him, and began to eat.

The leader of the party watched me, every now and then consulting his watch. Presently he spoke.

"We shall be in York in five minutes," he said. "You smoke, Mr. Duncan?"

"I do," I replied.

(To be Continued.)

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ST. JOHN AND HALIFAX.

A St. John Man on a Halifax Delegation to Ottawa.

(Maritime Merchant.)

While speaking of the results of the delegation which had advanced the steel-shipbuilding question so far, we may speak of a matter in connection therewith that does not appear on the surface, namely, the real friendliness of St. John and Halifax.

It may be admitted that rivalry exists between these two cities, as there should be; but some take the matter far too seriously. As a matter of fact the influential element in both cities, take an interest in the mutual prosperity of the two places, and this was shown forth in the fact that St. John sent a delegate to assist Halifax in securing the concessions she so much desired in connection with steel-shipbuilding. St. John, is not for the time directly interested in this matter, but is willing to lend a hand to push things along that will be to the benefit of the Maritime Provinces, and even of her rival city.

And why not? Some day St. John may need the good offices of Halifax and then no doubt, Halifax will be prepared to grant her co-operation. It is an unusual thing to see a St. John man on a Halifax delegation, but it shows how things really are and that while there is natural rivalry, there is a spirit of co-operation in the hearts of both cities.

Many changes are suggested for the St. John Board of Trade by prominent and active members, who are anxious to enlarge the membership and increase the interest. Not that the St. John Board has not been active and useful in the past; but the people are evidently imbued with the same idea which infected Halifax, and has worked out so successfully here. The Merchant wishes all speed to its Forward Movement.

GLASGOW AND CHICAGO.

The Scottish City Will Send Municipal Tramway Manager to Help Mayor Dunne.

Chicago, April 8.—Non-partisan organization of the next City Council is practically assured by statements from aldermen on the organization committee and other holdover Council members. Republican as well as Democratic aldermen agree that Mayor-elect Dunne should not be hampered in his efforts to bring immediate ownership. The mayor-elect has received a reply to a cablegram to the lord provost of Glasgow asking that a month's furlough be given to the manager of the municipal tramways of that city to visit Chicago and advise with the mayor regarding the street car situation in Chicago. The cablegram from Glasgow reads as follows:—

The Corporation of Glasgow unanimously and cordially agrees to the request of your municipality. Tramway manager unable to leave before the 10th of May. Letter follows.

Lord Provost.

"Value to be based on the earning capacity" is the suggestion made by traction interests as to the price to be paid in case the city determines to take over the street car properties. Were this arrangement carried out it would establish the following present value for the properties figured on at a five per cent basis: Chicago City road, \$33,744,880; Union Traction Company, \$30,325,980; total, \$64,070,860. The position of the traction people in suggesting this arrangement is that it would enable the city to acquire the street car properties without paying anything for watered stock, or bonds issued against the franchise.

Frank Oliver, M. P., who was sworn in minister of the interior at Rideau Hall shortly after 10 o'clock Saturday morning, left at 12.40 for Edmonton to arrange for his re-election. The writ for the election has been issued. Nomination will take place on April 25 and polling on May 2. It is not known whether there will be any opposition to Mr. Oliver, but whether or not his election is thought certain.

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