

The Crimson Slipper.

BY DORA LANGLOIS,

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

(Concluded)

Key-Crimson Slipper etasim acinn
"You're Mr. Duncan, sir, ain't you?" he demanded, ducking his head towards me in the conventional humble style.

"That's my name," I replied. "And who are you I'd like to know? And why do you come prying about my house?"

"My name is Howell, sir," he answered. "I'm a private detective, and you are, it seems, the gentleman who sent for me."

The answer brought me up with a sharp turn. I looked at the man with astonishment. He was no longer sitting on the edge of his chair with the air of one who apologises for being alive; on the contrary, he was leaning back regarding me, not insolently, but with a smile of quiet humor.

"If you are James Howell," I said, "why in Heaven's name didn't you come up to the house and ask for me?"

"I beg your pardon, sir," he corrected me quite politely and deferentially, but, nevertheless, in the tone of one who knew his own mind. "If you think a minute you'll see that when an inquiry agent is summoned to a town which has been the scene of a very recent crime he is bound to make a few inquiries on his own hook before he takes on the offered job."

"So you have been making inquiries about me, Mr. Howell?" I said, cynically. "Are they satisfactory may I ask?"

"As far as they go, sir," he replied. "I'll ask you to note that you cut short my investigations in a manner to which I am not altogether accustomed; that I had only time to ask one or two questions about you in the city before I left town, and only half-an-hour here yesterday before the pubs closed; so you can hardly expect me to have done much yet."

He produced a pocket-book as he spoke, and fluttering the leaves continued: "Nevertheless, as I didn't know you from Adam yesterday I think I've made fair use of my time. Correct me if I've gone wrong, sir, for these are only statements not yet verified."

Then he turned coolly to his book and read aloud: "Richard Duncan, Esq., junior partner of the firm of Spalding, Carvel and Duncan, Engineers, of the Barbican, now renting a shooting-box near the scene of the least tragedy from the accused Sir Robert Birchall. Does not appear to have been acquainted with the deceased nor with Sir Robert and Lady Birchall, but is interested in Miss Mary Denzell, a young person of equivocal position and unknown antecedents lately residing at the Barrows. That is all I've got down," he said, closing his book and looking at me squarely in the eye. "I hope I'm not offensive, sir?"

"I might have considered you offensive yesterday morning," I replied, coloring slightly in spite of myself, "especially in your references to the lady; but I don't know that I object to your analytical style now."

"Ah!" he said, slowly, "a good many things have happened since yesterday morning, I daresay."

It was just the sort of trite remark that anyone might make and mean nothing thereby; but I had an idea that Mr. Howell did not deal in the banalities of conversation, so I demanded at once:

"What do you mean by that?"

"It's plain on the face of it, sir," he said. "You sent me a wire yesterday about midday. Now you were in London, where you could have seen me personally, the day before; therefore, as you didn't communicate with me on the spot, I presume that something fresh happened after you got home, and before you sent the wire. Something else happened last night, I should fancy, or you wouldn't have come home with the milk this morning with a cob that looked as if he hadn't another ten minutes' work in him, and a gent beat you on a cycle cursing you up hill and down dale."

"You seem to be pretty well informed," I said.

"It's my business to be," he answered, coolly; "in my own interests first and then in my clients'. It saves time, trouble, and temper if I make sure that I shall like a job before I touch it."

"May I ask if these elaborate precautions, and the fact that you have coupled my wire with the Danvers's affair mean that you doubt whether you would care to undertake my work?" I demanded.

"Not at all," he answered; "they only mean that it was my business to settle the question to my own satisfaction. I don't need to be told that a gentleman doesn't wire to me to come from London here unless something has occurred to upset his usual course of life. I do not connect you in any way with the crime at the Barrows; all the same, I'd have betted anyone a new hat before I left London that you couldn't give me my instructions without naming Mr. Danvers, and I am absolutely sure now that you cannot do it, sir."

"And how come you to be so certain now?" I asked.

"Without meaning to be offensive, because you are interested in Miss Denzell," he replied.

"You are right," I said with a hard laugh that came from a heart sore enough. Heaven knows! "I am interested in Miss Denzell. I applied last night for a warrant for her arrest."

"Perhaps it was only my sick fancy that made me think the man was gazing at me too keenly; perhaps I was correct, and even then Howell read my secret, but any way I hurried on before he could question me."

"And if I had not caught you looking over my garden wall what would you have done, Mr. Howell?"

He crossed his legs, looked up at the ceiling, and answered quietly, "I should have presented myself at ten o'clock, sir, in a respectable rig, and asked for instructions."

"And if my account of myself and those notes of yours had not tallied?"

"I should have told you, sir, that I was a trifle too busy to start the job; or something to that effect."

"Upon my word! you are amazingly frank," I remarked.

"When a man is found looking over a garden wall, is collared and shaken, and dragged into a house, he consults his own dignity best, sir, by being frank," he replied.

"We will score the frankness against the shaking and cry quits," I said. "And now what next, Mr. Howell?"

"Your instructions, if you please, sir," he answered, calmly.

I simply looked at him in surprise, for the cool way in which he had treated me had certainly not led me to suppose he wanted employment or anything else from me.

"Yes, he continued, with a smile, 'I'm glad you look on it that we are quits. It's sportsmanlike on your part, though to get even over personal matters is no part of my business, and I don't think you're quite aware how hard you hit. It's a good job you went for my chest and not my face—a black eye is too conspicuous; but, take it all in all, I think I shall like to work for you. I've been receiving in a good many ways in my time, and for a change I don't mind being punched by a man who took me for a spy on him.'"

I paused for a moment, and he went on: "I think I've made myself pretty plain, sir—I had to under the circumstances; but there's one thing more that I say to all my clients, without distinction of age, position or sex, before I allow them to give themselves away by taking me into their confidence, and that thing's this. I'm a good 'tec, but I don't have the luck of some of my conferees."

"How do you mean?" I interrogated.

"It's this way, sir, he explained. 'I can keep my ears open and my mouth shut as well as any; I can back myself to get on a track as soon, perhaps sooner than most; but I don't have the luck in these private affairs of never finding out something just a trifle beyond what I was asked to look for. All I see and all I know goes into my report to my employer. He has only to say, 'Don't mention that little matter,' and I know where I am; but I can't go round facts to get at facts beyond them, and so sometimes I offend, and it's best for those who want to employ me to know my failing.'"

I rose and poured out my visitor a glass of spirits. "Mr. Howell," I said, "circumstances have arisen since I sent for you which leave me nothing to employ you on."

He did not start; if he gave any token of surprise it was no more than the merest flicker of the eyelid—just a momentary veiling of the keen eye beneath.

"Very good," he said; "then my bill against you, sir, is one day's salary and expenses, and railway fare to and from London."

"Half a moment," I replied, re-seating myself. "Let us make it a little more, Mr. Howell. I am going to tell you the whole case, and if there is anything I can do you may possibly see it; personally, my case appears to me to be without hope."

"That's when we are generally called in," Howell answered. "Except in divorce cases, where a man may always hope that

KIDNEY TROUBLES

Increasing Among Women, But Sufferers Need Not Despair

THE BEST ADVICE IS FREE

Of all the diseases known, with which the female organism is afflicted, kidney disease is the most fatal, and statistics show that this disease is on the increase among women.



Unless early and correct treatment is applied the patient seldom survives when once the disease is fastened upon her. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound is the most efficient treatment for kidney troubles of women, and is the only medicine especially prepared for this purpose.

When a woman is troubled with pain or weight in loins, backache, frequent, painful or scalding urination, swelling of limbs or feet, swelling under the eyes, an uneasy, tired feeling in the region of the kidneys or notices a brick-dust sediment in the urine, she should lose no time in commencing treatment with Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, as it may be the means of saving her life.

For proof, read what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound did for Mrs. Sawyer.

"I cannot express the terrible suffering I had to endure. A derangement of the female organs developed nervous prostration and a serious kidney trouble. The doctor attended me for a year, but I kept getting worse, until I was unable to do anything, and I made up my mind I could not live. I finally decided to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound as a last resort, and I am to-day a well woman. I cannot praise it too highly, and I tell every suffering woman about my case."

Mrs. Emma Sawyer, Conyers, Ga.
Mrs. Pinkham gives free advice to women; address in confidence, Lynn, Mass.

something will turn up, we don't expect a call till things look very black. Go on, sir. You say the case is hopeless; well, I'm ready to begin there."

His imperturbability steadied me a little. I had had just at first that horrid sensation of false shame which had overcome me when I found myself in handcuffs.

Now I remembered that he must have seen a great deal of the seamy side of life; he must have known cases in which innocent men were as hard driven as I, and so I pulled myself together and told him clearly and distinctly all that the reader knows, save that I naturally did not detail my own emotions (that being a thing a man cannot do viva voce) and that I was careful to abstain from mentioning the great statesman's name.

"Now, what do you make of it?" I asked, when the tale was told. "What can I do?"

"Nothing, sir," he answered, gravely. "I'm afraid that your friend on the cycle put the whole case in a nutshell. The fact that you gave instant information, and did your best to ensure the recovery of the paper as soon as it had been taken from your house, doesn't, and never will, show your innocence."

"Exactly," I replied. "It's quite plain that I can never rehabilitate myself unless by some good luck I can find the paper and restore it voluntarily myself."

"There's very little hope of that," he said, shaking his head. "Still, as I am here I may as well look round. It's just possible that they did not drive to Santrigg and train for York, in which case you might get on the real scent first; but the odds are a thousand to one against your ever setting eyes on that paper again. No, sir, I'm afraid that the only man I might do a bit of good to is Sir Robert Birchall; and I'd take his case up on 'spec tomorrow if I was at liberty."

"You have my permission," I answered. "That means, of course, that you see some light. 'Come now! Who killed Roger Danvers?'"

"Guessing's a bad habit," the inquiry agent remarked, thoughtfully, pulling his chin. "but as a guess one might say Mr. Montgomery."

"Mr. Montgomery?" I gasped, for the idea had never occurred to me.

"As a guess—purely as a guess," he insisted.

"But," I stammered, "how do you arrive at it?"

"I take it this way," he explained. "When he found you and his wife together yesterday morning his manner showed jealousy, or, at least, that he was suspicious of her intercourse with other men; but it also showed that he didn't at all understand what there really was between you, or he would not have dared to be unamiable. Then she makes a remark which leads you to suppose that he is fully in her confidence, and he goes off without daring to say another word."

"Well, but," I demanded, "how are you going to reconcile that?"

"I'm not trying to," he answered. "The two appearances can't be reconciled; but, as a man's actions are more reliable than a woman's words, we may take it that he did not know you had found her slipper. The probability is that she went to the moor, and that he followed her; she saw him, and in her fright (guessing that his blood was up) ran away. When she got home she said nothing about it, and neither did he. Perhaps she heard the shot, perhaps she didn't; any way, she would get to know that Mr. Danvers was unaccountably absent before the murder was actually discovered; then she would see that instead of being in her husband's power he was in hers. She had to speak of the slipper to deceive you; but, of course, it was her allusion to the moor that alienated him and sent him off like a whipped cur."

"Good Heavens!" I cried. "A man like that, with everything in the world to make life pleasant, driven to crime by a wicked woman?"

"It's not the first time that has happened," Howell answered, dryly. "It's a very old experience. By the way, there's one thing very odd in what you've told me."

(To be continued.)

ABBHEY'S

Recommended

by the
FACULTY

Used by the masses, who, unsolicited, certify to its worth.

Tones the Stomach and Stirs the Liver to healthy action.

Effervescent

Is Nature's Remedy for Tired, Fagged-out and Run-down Men

If taken regularly contributes to the Perfect Health, Makes Life Worth Living.

ALL
DRUGGISTS.

SALT.

Flour - White Bread - Light Price - Right

Then HOME'S BRIGHT

All Essentials for a Bright Home found in

FIVE ROSES FLOUR

Artificial bleaching not required.

Lake of the Woods Milling Co. Ltd.

Now is the Time to Subscribe for THE 8-Page 1-Cent EVENING TIMES.

To Rise Every Morning Fit to Face the World One Needs All One's

VITALITY

A Cold or a Cough
is a severe handicap
and it spells

DANGER

To Avoid, or Cure, Seek the Best Remedy

George Philps

I. C. R. Ticket Agent and Exchange Broker, St. John, N. B., says: "I was completely cured of influenza cold by a bottle of Hawker's Tolu and Wild Cherry Balsam."

H. A. McKeown

Ex-M. P. P., St. John, N. B., says: "I take great pleasure in stating that I have used Hawker's Tolu and Cherry Balsam for the last eight years and consider it the best cough cure I ever used. I find Hawker's Liver Pills an excellent liver regulator."

Canadian Drug Co., Limited

Sole Proprietors

St. John, N. B.