

The Crimson Slipper.

BY DORA LANGLOIS,

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

(Continued.)

"And how does its destruction affect you?" he asked. "You said you did not know it was in the desk."

"I did not know it was in the desk," I replied, "and its destruction affects me because I have been accused of stealing it. I'd have given half the world to find it myself and take it back to its owners. But you mustn't blame Miss Denzell; she did not know I was accused."

"You said something about her giving it back," Herman urged. "Do you think there's any chance of that?"

"No, I'm afraid not," I replied. "I'm sure she would have done that if she had known all the circumstances; but I do not think she has done it."

"These men who are hanging about the house," Herman inquired, "they are after the paper, of course? Are they its rightful owners?"

"They are the owners' agents and spies," I answered. "Very well, then," he said. "There is a very simple way of finding out if she has destroyed the paper or given it up; for, of course, if she has given it up the men will have cleared off by now."

"I suppose so," I admitted. "Then come along and draw them if they're still about," said Herman. "Draw them?" I repeated, stupidly.

"Yes," he said. "Out quick by the window and cut across the moor like mad towards the station; double off and come back round the clump of sycamore trees on the other side of the house. I'll cut straight across to them as soon as you're well started, and if you're being followed I shall see your men."

"And you will not tell them anything about it? You promise not to mention her name."

"All right, I promise," Herman answered, but with so ill a grace, with such a distinct fall of countenance, I saw I had hit the mark in divining that there was more in his proposal than appeared in his words. "Come, off you go—be sharp!" he added. "If the men are still here we must find Miss Denzell to-night and see if we can't clear this mess up for both of you."

CHAPTER IX.

I made no further ado, action of any sort was a relief. I caught up my hat, sprang through the window, crossed the lawn, and went at my best pace down the road. I am too heavy a man to be a first-class sprinter; my powers are best for long distances, but I knew that I went quite fast enough to make my hat, if I had one, follow without time for caution or concealment. I got back in about five minutes, and stood up leaning against the night-shelf to get my wind, waiting for Herman.

He came in presently. "You are watched," he said. "There are two of them. They came after you in grand style on bicycles, but the beggars must know the lie of the land thoroughly, and they're pretty wide awake. One was a little behind the other, and directly you got round the sycamores he caught sight of you, saw the game, and guessed you were making for home. Of course, the fellow who was nearest could not have seen you were going back till he had passed me, but the other whistled him off, and I didn't get a squint at them. There's another thing, old 'Bob' (the cob) 'is safe in his stable. I can't make it out, I could have sworn I saw him and the cart in the lane. But it is a good thing he is here; we must get him out and drive round to Miss Denzell's place at once."

"No," I said, decidedly. "It's no use, Herman. If these men are so wide awake, they'd follow us to her place, and, as I've said, I'm not going to drag her into this on any account."

My friend stamped his foot. "Are you quite a fool, Duncan?" he demanded. "Do you mean to say that you are accused of stealing, or, at least, of having unlawful possession of, an important document, and that you are not going to make any attempt to clear yourself?"

"Not at her expense," I answered, firmly. "That's my final decision, Herman, so don't bother me about it."

Herman opened his mouth to re-monstrate again, but at that moment a tap came to the door, and Minting, breathless and agitated, came hurriedly in.

"Please, sir," he began (too full of his news to remember his sulky dignity), "our horse and trap's been stole. It passed me on the road a good way off, and I've come back as fast as ever I could to tell you."

"Nonsense, man!" cried Herman. "Bob's certainly in his stable, and the cart's in the coach-house too, I darsay. Come along and we'll look."

"I couldn't be mistook, sir," Minting protested; "I see the yellow wheels quite plain. I'm sure it was our cart and Bob. I know Bob's haction to a tee."

But Herman was already out of the room, and Minting followed. As for me, I walked over to the desk with the heavy steel poker in my hand. I was not interested in the question they were deciding, but if that desk held any more secrets it was going now to surrender them. I lifted it down on to the floor, opened it, tore out the inner lids, and smashed it to pieces. In a minute or two there was nothing left of the article for which I had paid twenty-five pounds but a bundle of kindling wood and a few

shillings' worth of broken silver.

The door opened, and Herman came back. "The horse and cart are both there, I suppose?" I said, listlessly.

"They're there right enough," Herman answered. "Minting only made the same mistake as I did, for the turn-out I saw in the lane was certainly like ours. But it's very strange, Duncan; those fellows who came after you just now are not the two men Minting and I saw hanging about yesterday and again this morning."

"Oh, that's nothing," I replied, cynically. "I'm a person of importance, my boy! I've a whole regiment at my back, and they relieve guard in the usual manner—but how do you know they are not the same?"

"Because," Herman said, "Minting recognized our two men in the trap he thought was ours; they had Miss Denzell with them, and were driving very fast when they passed him."

"That's good news, Herman," I cried, eagerly. "Then she has not destroyed the paper, she has given it up. She naturally could not give it to the two men who were away after me on the other side of the moor."

Herman's face, however, did not reflect the intense relief on mine. "Are you sure that you can trust them, Duncan?" he demanded, gravely. "To tell you the truth these fellows struck me and Minting as two very evil-looking foreigners."

"Foreigners?" The word came from my lips with a gasp, and I dropped into my chair as though he had struck me a heavy blow on the chest.

"Yes, foreigners," he repeated. "I don't know their nationality, of course, for I did not hear them speak, but they were not Englishmen, that I'll swear. Didn't you know? Does it make any difference to you?"

A heavy groan was my only response, not till that moment had I even dimly suspected the possibility of treachery on Mary Denzell's part. I could not have brought myself to look on her as in collusion with the other parties to Danvers' dirty bargain. But this one fact that I might so easily have learnt, and had so blindly missed, changed the whole aspect of affairs. If the men were foreigners my country was betrayed, I was utterly ruined, and the woman I had trusted was a traitress to the murdered rook—she had realized on her only available case."

The shame and agony of my humiliation was far worse than the thought of my own position. Poor fool! I had seen a woman once with tears in her eyes, I had spent a couple of hours with her alone, and without prudence, without question, I had become her slave. I saw her now, this paragon of my imagination, with her robe of innocence smirched and stained. I acknowledged that her beauty had been my snare, and her nun-like life a sham, put on to mask Heaven alone knew how much of viciousness and of shame.

Herman's voice broke in upon my stupor. "Duncan," he said, "For Heaven's sake tell me, did you think you were only being watched by Englishmen?"

I nodded. "Then," he said, "I think I know what all this means."

"It means," I retorted, "that if they got out of England, or even mail the paper, all's lost."

Herman paused. "The chances are they won't mail it," he said. "I don't agree with you," I replied. "They won't risk having it found on them; you don't know what it is."

"I tell you I can guess," he retorted, "and you don't know or don't reckon with the corruption of foreign officials. These men are more commercial than patriotic; if they've got a secret to sell they'll want their reward before they hand it on to bigger men who may wish to divide the spoil with them. Any way, it's your only chance, for you can't stop every letter packet that goes aboard a boat within the next twelve hours."

I looked at him and clearly saw the inference, the course of conduct he wished me to adopt, and then to my shame I broke down.

Herman was a good friend to me in that terrible minute of abasement in which my love for the woman fought with my duty to my country and nearly conquered; nearly—but, thank Heaven, not quite.

"I think he knew which would win in the end, and gave me that minute's respite to bury my dead out of sight. I was a man again when it was over stronger in my resolution for the tears she had made me shed."

"Come," I said rising. "We can't stop them on the road, but we can stop them at some port—you're right there. I will go to the police-station and charge her with entering this house and robbing me."

"And the men too," he said. "I can describe them, and you must charge them as accomplices. Stay a moment, I'll tell Minting to get the cart out. You are doing right, Duncan. It won't take us long to drive to the police-station, and in half-an-hour it will be done."

"In half-an-hour it will be done!" I repeated, grimly, as he left me. "In half-an-hour the woman I hoped to make my wife will be proclaimed by me as a felon. When I see her face again, if ever I see it, I shall be in the witness-box and she in the prisoner's dock."

It did not take us long to reach Santhwaite, nor to tell our story.

"It's a very strange case, sir—very strange indeed! You bring a charge of housebreaking and larceny, and yet you tell me that the act was seen and no objection made."

It was Inspector Bronson who spoke to us in the ordinary charge-room of the little police-station, and his face and voice were distinctly antipathetic.

"My friend was under a false impression," I said, lamely. "He thought that the lady had some sort of right to be there and to take the paper."

"And how do I know that the impression was false?"

"You have to take my word for that," I retorted, with more heat than discretion, "or you must accept the consequences. You know the position of a prosecutor who brings an unfounded charge."

"I hardly knew myself as I spoke, for the anger and heat were real. I was using all my force to compel the man to do will. I was not exasperating him to drive him to bawling me in my avowed design. Somewhere at the back of my mind I knew that my temper was unwise, but I could not restrain it. To be through with it, to be done with the thing, was all I asked. I would not give way; I would not budge an inch, though I was lashing myself with a thong the mere end of which flicked him."

"Yes," said the inspector, drily, "I know the position of a prosecutor who brings a malicious and vexatious charge, and I know the position of the officer who is fool enough to take it."

"It seems to me you have no option," I replied.

"Does it?" he answered, with a nasty glance. "Perhaps you know the procedure better than I do? Come," he added, turning towards Herman as though he regarded him as the sinner of us two and therefore more worthy of notice, "you're a man of the world, sir—the fact that you let the lady come into the house and help herself shows that there was nothing surprising in her coming in like that."

"She had never been in my house before," I said, hotly.

"Then your friend made a queer mistake," the inspector responded, "that's all that I can say."

"I acknowledge the mistake," Herman admitted. "I am not in the habit of being inquisitive. I didn't know. I merely thought it was all right."

(To be continued.)

DE VONDE A CLEVER ACTOR.

Chester DeVonde and a clever company under the direction of Phil LeVoy, will open a two weeks' engagement at the Opera House, commencing Monday, April 24, in point of general excellence, the production in which they will appear is sure, to

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(Montreal Witness.)

Yesterday pulpit references were made in nearly all the Protestant churches in the city to Saturday afternoon's service of prayer—one of thousands being held on that day throughout the world—for a world-wide religious revival. The Rev. Dr. Johnston referring to it yesterday morning at the American Presbyterian church, in the lecture room connected with which the service was held, said it was one of the most remarkable gatherings he had ever witnessed. It was arranged by the Protestant Ministerial Association, and there were upwards of three hundred persons present, representative of every denomination in the city. The success of the meeting was such that it was arranged to hold a service of a similar kind at the same place next Saturday afternoon.

The Rev. Dr. Symonds, president of the Ministerial Association, briefly opened Saturday's service, and that was the only formality of the afternoon. He said they were uniting in prayer with hundreds and thousands of people throughout the world. They had to remember that there were times when the sense of the power and the reality of the Holy Spirit needed to be revived within the church, and there was a general feeling that one of these periods had come upon the world. Let them pray that the Holy Spirit might descend upon the church both here and elsewhere. Dr. Symonds added that he had received a letter from a mother asking the prayers of the assembly for the conversion of an erring son.

Then, without pre-arrangement, but as they were moved to it, the following prayed in turn:—The Rev. J. L. Gilmour, Olivet Baptist Church; the Rev. C. E. Bland, Sherbrooke Methodist Church; the Rev. G. Osborne, Troop, St. Martin's Church; the Rev. F. M. Devey, Stanley Presbyterian Church; the Rev. Mr. Dart, and one well-known lady.

During the afternoon the hymns, "Holy Spirit, Faithful Guide," "Come Holy Spirit, Heavenly Dove," and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" were sung.

"In my mind," said the Rev. G. Osborne, Troop last evening, at St. Martin's Church, "there is no doubt that the universal desire for a religious awakening is to be traced to the Prayer Circle, instituted about three years ago, at the Keswick convention in England. This convention has been held for the past thirty years at Keswick, situated in

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one of the most beautiful districts of the lake country. Lasting for a week, usually in July, the convention is attended by upwards of 6,000 church people of all denominations and classes. About three years ago the Keswick convention formed a prayer-circle, the object of the daily prayer of each member to be a world-wide revival. I doubt if there is a country in the world today in which a member of this prayer-circle will not be found.

The Welsh movement, Mr. Troop considers attributable to this source, and in it may be seen an answer to the universal prayer such as may be expected to spread over the whole world at any time.

Last Friday was set apart by the King's Daughters as a day of prayer, and Archbishop Bond and the Bishop-Coadjutor, have requested that on Good Friday prayers be offered up in all the Anglican churches of the diocese of Montreal, for a religious awakening throughout the church at large.

At Knox Church yesterday morning, the Rev. James Fleck preached an earnest and convincing sermon on the text, "O Lord, revive thy people," Habakkuk iii., 2, pointing out the justification that Christians had for looking for a revival. He believed that Canada was about to share in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, that had so abundantly blessed Wales, and urged his hearers to pray for such a revival.

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THE SHETLAND ISLES.

Rev. F. S. Bamford Talks Interestingly of a Peculiar People.

Rev. Frederick S. Bamford, who was given a call to the Carleton Baptist church last Sunday, has recently closed a four-years' pastorate in the Shetland Islands. Mr. Bamford is a native of Lancashire, England, is thirty-five years of age, and has been in the ministry thirteen years. He speaks in high terms of the people of the Shetland Islands, and says that they are of a very generous disposition. They also resemble the Canadians, far more than do any other class in the British Isles.

There is an exceedingly healthful climate in the Shetland Isles. The temperature never rises above 76 degrees in the summer, and seldom falls below zero in the winter. The inhabitants of the Isles, are almost wholly engaged in the making of hosiery and other knitted goods.

There are one hundred islands, and only twenty-nine are inhabited. While Mr. Bamford was engaged in the Shetland Isles, he gave monthly lectures on the teaching of scepticism, which did much to remove false ideas prevalent in the place.

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