

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.

(Continued).

"There's old Halladay's mill, sir," he answered, dubiously. "I don't know that it's picturesque, but it's the only one hereabouts. There's a footpath behind the post-office, and anyone will show it to you."

I thanked him and hurried on with new hope. Since the miller's name was Halladay, Howell and Herman were doubtless watching his house, and I might possibly join forces with them; but as it would not do for me to jeopardise their success by rousing suspicion I went into a little stationer's shop and bought a sketch-book and pencil before asking my way to the post-office and field path.

I had no difficulty in finding someone to direct me, and a brisk walk soon brought me to the mill itself. There it stood, silent and solitary—the only life in the picture the grubbing pigs and the scarcely less industrious cocks and hens. All round to the front and sides of the house were fields and hedges and sparsely scattered clumps of trees. Behind one of these, or in some ditch, Howell and Herman might be hiding. If so—though I could not see them—if I could make myself conspicuous they might see me and give me the office.

Relying on my sketch-book, then, to explain my appearance to others, and to get me out of trouble if accused of trespassing, I boldly left the beaten track and began to wander about the fields, but there was neither sound or movement. No voice greeted me, no friendly face appeared, and with every minute that passed the conviction strengthened that in this I was destined to play a lone hand or seek the help of the police.

"If they are here at all they must be nearer the house," I said to myself, "and, any way, I can't afford to wait." So, boldly crossing the field I was then in, I went close up to the fence which separated the field from the backyard of the mill and looked over it. There was little enough to tempt the would-be artist in the yard itself, nothing but the unsightly litter that speaks of poultry-breeding and pig-keeping. Near a gate in the fence stood a wheelbarrow containing a large can, such as oil-men use to send out paraffin and beyond the gate lay a large kitchen garden. That was all that I had time to note when the back door opened and a stout old woman came out.

"Are you wanting anything, sir?" she asked civilly.

"I should much like to get a sketch of the mill," I answered, raising my hat.

"Oh, not from the back, sir," she protested. "The yard's that littered! It's much better from the front. Won't you walk to the gate in the fence lower down

and get a look at it?"

"Really, I should like to sketch that fine old barn," I answered, prompted by no reason other than a desire to stop where I was least wanted.

"Nobody thinks much of it, sir," she stammered uneasily, "but there's a fine chimney corner in the mill as folks comes miles to see. If you'll step round to the front I'll show it to you and welcome."

That she wished to get me away it was no longer possible to doubt, but why she should be so eager to do it as once pleased me greatly, for look where I might I could see nothing suspicious.

"Are those fowls what you call buff orpingtons?" I asked.

"No, sir; oh, no, they're no particular breed. They're only—" Her jaw dropped, and I saw her glance beyond me in a sort of helpless terror, and turning in the direction that glance indicated I saw an old man coming down the path of the kitchen garden I have already alluded to. "The gentleman is an artist, William," she hastened to explain, with the precipitation of a child detected in some flagrant act of disobedience. "He is wishing to draw the barn, he says. I was just asking him to step inside and see the igitle nook."

"He's kindly welcome, I'm sure," the old man replied in a rasping tone, meant, no doubt, to imply cheery hospitality, but with his thick, black brows lowering ominously on his wife. "Mayhap he'd like to see the old oak bed in the little chamber, too, and the clock with wooden wheels? There's many artists to see 'em; some folks sets store by they things, more 'an I do myself."

For a moment I stared at the strange pair in confusion. Why was the old woman so eager that the old man should not see me at the back of the house (which seemed so uninteresting and insignificant of telling me anything), when he was even more ready than she to show me over the interior? Their accord on that one point proved that Miss Denzell was longer at the mill, but the reason for the woman's conduct baffled me. I had, however, no time to think the matter out; this offer was clearly made to allay my suspicions if I had any (for the British yeoman is too coldly exclusive to make such overtures readily), and the fact that it was deemed necessary to take such a course with me proved that they were on their guard.

"Thank you very much," I answered, carelessly, putting up my sketch-book. "I should like to see the house immensely, but I'm afraid I haven't time this afternoon, my friends will be waiting for me. They are staying at Elm Tree Farm. Might I come tomorrow and bring my friend's wife and her little boy with me?"

The old man's face cleared a little, and I thought, or at least hoped, that I had set his doubts at rest.

"Any time you like, sir," he said. "You and the lady will be kindly welcome."

I thanked them both effusively, and after inquiring the shortest way back to Elm Tree Farm, for it would never have done to take a wrong direction, I took myself off, busy with the problem they

had set me; I knew that I must not linger anywhere near now while the light lasted, and happening to turn round to take a last hopeless survey of the landscape I caught sight of the big house to which the kitchen garden belonged, and noted for the first time that the blinds were all closed, and that it appeared to be uninhabited.

What business had the old man got in an empty house? Supposing him to be a caretaker, and his errand a perfectly legitimate one, why should his wife have been so anxious not to let me see him come from thence? The answer was a simple one, it flashed across me instantly—Miss Denzell was no longer at the mill, she was shut up in that big, desolate mansion, where her cries for help could not be heard by any of the miller's customers.

Yes, that was the place I had to force my way into; there I must go as soon as the light failed and gave me the security of the evening shadows. Sick with anxiety and impatience I withdrew myself into the shelter of a clump of trees and waited for the sun to set, asking myself the crucial question. Was I too early or too late? Should I by delay permit, or by want of caution precipitate some catastrophe?

No sick man on his bed of pain ever prayed for the dawn more earnestly than I for sundown as I watched the crimson glory in the west merge slowly into purple and fade to grey, but at last the welcome darkness came, and I set out towards the house.

I found no difficulty in getting into the garden, and it did not take me long to make my first tour of inspection. The result was not encouraging. As I had expected, every means of ingress on the ground floor was firmly secured, while such of the windows above as might be reached by a good climber were apparently protected by shutters.

In hopeless obstinacy I wandered round the house again, and as I reached the back of the building for the second time I ran against a large obstacle which certainly had not been in the way a few minutes before, and stooping to examine it I found that it was the big, rough wheelbarrow that I had seen standing in the mill yard with a big oil can in it. It was right in the middle of the path, close to one of the doors I had previously tried; and its presence clearly proved that old Halladay, the miller, had just arrived and let himself in.

I tried the door, but it was as fast as ever. I cursed myself in my rage and disappointment for having missed him, but there was nothing for it now but to wait till he came out and then collar him; and waiting was torment while he was within, free to do what he liked.

How long I waited I do not know, but making all allowance for my impatience I think it was fully half-an-hour. Drawn up against the wall, my eyes fixed on the door, I was like a terrier watching a rat-hole; it was so small an accident as the crackling of a dry twig that drew my attention away for a second, and then, almost at the bottom of the garden, making for his own gate, I saw old Halladay, the miller. He had let himself out by some other door.

With a smothered exclamation I sprang after him; he heard me coming and turned and faced me. In one hand he carried the big oil-can, in the other was a stout stick.

"It's you, is it?" he said, fiercely, his eyes glaring into mine, his savage old jaw protruding, as those of the lower animals

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protrude when they long to fly at an enemy's throat yet hardly dare.

"Come!" I answered as fiercely as he. "There's no use in pretending! You have a lady shut in that house, and you must take me to her at once."

"I'll see you hanged first!" he retorted. "You try to get into that house you get into it at your peril!"

"Give me the keys!" I cried. "You're an old man don't make me hurt you."

For answer he aimed a savage blow at my head with the thick stick he carried. I dodged, and it fell on my shoulder with a crack that tingled to my finger ends. I stretched out both hands to grapple with him, but before my fingers closed he slipped through them and fell away from me on the gravel, either dead or in a fit.

What was I to do? To call for assistance would ruin my chance; to leave him thus without aid to help and die was inhuman. To my intense relief, before I had time to decide on any course, the back door of the mill house opened, and I saw against the light the figures of the old woman and a countryman.

"It's William, missus, I tell 'ee," said the man. "Summat's wrong wi' 'un; I'll run and see."

There was no time for delay now, and no necessity. I ran my hand over the old man's pocket, I found what I sought—a

bunch of keys—and was back again at the side door in a few seconds.

I found a key that fitted the lock, but the door did not yield, it was obviously bolted; still the door by which Halladay let himself out could not be secured, and I had only to try each one in succession. Keeping well in the shadow, therefore, I worked round the house, came to a door in a sort of octagonal extension, tried my keys, and a moment later found myself in the house at the foot of the grand staircase.

It seemed to me most probable that if in the house at all Miss Denzell would be above in a bedroom, not in one of the larger rooms below, so I carefully and noiselessly ascended the stairs after taking the precaution of extracting the key from the lock that no one creeping behind me should have the chance of making me a prisoner.

(To be continued.)

HARCOURT.

HARCOURT, May 8.—Mrs. Clarence Wry, over whom Drs. Keith and Ferguson held a consultation last Friday night, was taken to Moncton hospital for treatment today.

Rev. G. L. Freebern and Mrs. Freebern spent Sunday in Moncton, where Mr. Freebern supplied for Rev. Mr. Hooper. There was no Episcopal service here yesterday.

Miss Marion Wathen visited Kent Junction on Friday and Richibucto on Saturday. H. Wathen, station master at Kent Junction, passed the Sunday with his parents here. Miss Ruth Thurber, teacher at Kent Junction; Miss Kate Keswick, Harley Road; and Miss M. Alethea Wathen, Trout Brook, spent Sunday here. Mrs. Leonard Barret of Joggins, N. S., is visiting her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Ingram William Bryant of Pictou, N. S. is visiting his mother, Mrs. Annie Bryant.

Mrs. E. B. Buckenfield received news last week that her sister, Mrs. Macintosh had died in Victoria, B. C.

Misses Maud and Drusilla Smallwood and M. Alethea Wathen were initiated into Harcourt Division, S. of T. on Saturday night.

Rev. James A. Wheeler will preach in the Presbyterian church here tonight.

Miss Margaret M. Curran of West Branch, who has been living here several months, has returned home.

Rev. Mr. Townsend of Bass River, who has been visiting his mother in P. E. Island for over three months, returned on the 6th inst. His mother is still in poor health.

Hints to Pipe-Smokers.

Don't pack the tobacco too tightly in your pipe. For a comfortable smoke put in Rainbow Cut Plug Smoking Tobacco fairly loosely and press it gently down in the bowl occasionally while smoking.

ANOTHER P. E. I. DELEGATION

Charlottetown, P. E. I., May 8.—(Special)—At a meeting of the provincial executive, Premier Peters, Hons. Peter Macnutt, George Simpson and F. L. Haezard were appointed a delegation to go to Ottawa and press the claims of the Island for better winter communication and ask the Dominion government to take measures to the extent of \$30; the secretary of the exhibition, F. C. Whitman, offers \$10 for the

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ANNAPOLIS.

ANNAPOLIS, May 8.—A meeting of the fruit growers around Annapolis was held in the Town Hall on Friday evening last, for the purpose of discussing the expensive and excessive rates charged for the transportation of fruit to the English market, and to devise ways and means whereby the same could be remedied.

R. H. McKay, of Lequille, was appointed chairman, and F. C. Whitman, secretary. The chairman in a brief speech stated the object of the meeting, to be the co-operation of the fruit growers of the county in an organization for the purpose of devising ways and means for the cheapest transportation and marketing of fruit shipped to the English market. He believed that this could best be done by the co-operation of those engaged in that industry.

He was followed by James Whitman, of Round Hill, Judge Owen, F. C. Whitman and others, after which a branch of the Fruit Growers' Shipping Association was formed, for the purpose of acting in conjunction with the Round Hill organization and other branches that are likely to follow throughout the county. The object is the reduction in cost of transportation of fruit from the time it leaves the producer until it reaches the consumer, doing away with the profits received by the middle men. Following are the officers elected:—President, H. R. McKay; vice-president, John Cameron; secretary, H. Dwight Ruggles.

The merchants around town have subscribed seventy-five dollars, to be given in special prizes at the Kings and Annapolis counties exhibition, to be held here in October next. Other prizes are:—The Kings County Farmers' Association, \$5 for vegetables and grain grown by the exhibitor; S. C. Shafer, representing the Essex Fertilizer Co., offers prizes to the extent of \$30; the secretary of the exhibition, F. C. Whitman, offers \$10 for the

best original poster, the size to be 22 x 28; S. W. W. Pickup, M.P., offers a prize of \$10 in the Educational Department. There is also a prize for amateur photography. An Easter offering was taken up at St. Louis R. C. church on Easter Sunday for the pastor, Rev. Mr. Hayes, who is ill at his home in New Brunswick. It amounted to \$80.

Diphtheria in a mild form has broken out at Bear River, four cases are reported. The schools have been closed, the buildings fumigated, and every precaution taken to prevent the spread of the disease.

Samuel Armstrong, who has been compelled to resign his position on the staff of the Union Bank of Halifax here, owing to failing eyesight, left on Monday for the west, his point of destination being Calgary or Edmonton. He carries with him the best wishes of his many friends.

Aubrey W. Fullerton (formerly of the Digby Courier) passed through Annapolis Thursday, returning to Toronto from attending the funeral of his mother at Round Hill.

Scientists and Smokers.

Scientists say that the rainbow shows what constitutes a perfect ray of light. Smokers say that Rainbow Cut Plug shows what constitutes a perfect smoking tobacco.

STURDIER PEASANTS NEEDED

The sturdy English race of former times is becoming almost extinct, says the Contemporary Review and is replaced by a puny, stunted, sickly, sterile, narrow-chested, weak-boned, short-sighted, and rotten-toothed race. "What Great Britain requires for the salvation of her agriculture is, in the first place, the gradual creation of a substantial peasant class, who work with their own hands on freehold agricultural properties of moderate size."

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