

# CRIPPS, THE CARRIER

BY  
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Author of "LORNA DOONE," "ALICE LORRAINE," ETC., ETC.

## CHAPTER II.

"Of all slow people in this slow place I am quite certain that there is none so slow as Cripps, the carrier."

This "hot spache," as the patient Zachary would perhaps have called it, passed the lips of no less a person than old Squire Oglander. He, on the 20th day of December (the day after that we began with), was hurrying up and down the long, straight walk of his kitchen garden, and running every now and then to a post of vantage, from which he could look over the top of his beloved holly hedge, and make out some of the zig-bags of the narrow lane from Beckley. A bitter black frost had now set in, and the Squire knew that if he wanted anything more fetched out of his ground, or anything new put into it, it might be weeks before he got another chance of doing it. So he made a good bustle, and stamped, and ran, and did all he could to arouse his men, who knew him too well to concern themselves about any of his menaces.

"I tell you we are all caught napping, Thomas. I tell you we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. The frost is an inch in the ground already. Artichokes, carrots, parsnips, beet-root, even horse-radish for our Christmas beef—and upon my soul, a row of potatoes never even dug yet! Unless I am after you at every corner—well, I am blessed if I don't see our keeping onions!"

Farming, planting, gardening, breeding, training of dogs, and so on—all of these quiet delights fell softly on a very active mind, when the vigor of the body began to fail. He loved his farm, and he loved his garden, and all his attempts at improvement, and nothing better than to point out his own mistakes to rash admirers. But where is the pleasure of showing things to strangers who know nothing? The old man's grand delight of all was to astonish his own daughter, his only child, Grace Oglander.

This it was that made him work so hard at the present moment. He was determined to have his kitchen garden in first rate winter order by the time his daughter should come home from a visit to her aunt at Cowley. Now this sister, Mrs. Fernitage, had promised to bring home their joint pet Gracie in time for the dinner at 5 o'clock that very day, and to dine there with them; so that it was needful to look alive, and to make quick step of everything. Moreover this good Squire had some little insight into the ways and meaning of the weather of the neighborhood. He knew as well as a short-tailed field mouse that a long frost was coming. The sharp dry rustle of the upturned leaves of holly and of ivy, the heavy stoop of the sullen sky, the patches of spaded mould already browning with powdery crispness, the upward shivering look of the grass, and the loss of all gloss upon everything,

And bring me the little truck basket, Mary; I dare say that will hold them. Just in time, they are only just in time. To-morrow would have been a day too late."

The Squire was to pay a guinea for this bushel of early Oakleaf potatoes, a sort that was warranted to beat the Ashleaf by a fortnight, and to crop tenfold as much. The bag had been sent by the Henley coach from a nursery, and left at the "Black Horse" in St. Clement's, to be called for by the Beckley carrier.

"Stay now," cried the Squire; "now I think of it we will unpack the bag in the brewery, Mary. They have had a fire there all the morning. And it will save making any mess in here. Miss Grace is coming, bless her heart! And she'll give it to me, if she finds any dirt."

"But, sir, if you please, Master Cripps never hurrieth."

"Well, we don't want Cripps. We only want the bag. Jem will bring it into the brewery, if you want to sit with Cripps. Cripps is tired, I dare say. These young men's legs are not fit for much. Stop—call old Thomas; he's the best after all. If I want a thing done, I come back to the old folk after all."

"Well, sir, I don't think you have any reason to say that. Howsoever, here cometh Mr. Kale. Mr. Kale, if you please, you be wanted."

Presently Thomas Kale, the man who had worked so long in the garden there, followed his master across the court, with the bag of potatoes on his back. The weight was a trifle, of course, being scarcely over half a hundredweight; but Thomas was too old a hand to make too light of anything.

"I've knowed the time," he said, setting down the sack on the head of an empty barrel, "when that there weight would have failed, you might say, to crook my little finger. Now, make so bold—do you know the reason?"

"Why, Thomas, we cannot expect to be always so young as we were once, you know."

"Nout to do wi' it. Less nor nout. The reason lie all in the vittels, maister; the vittels is fallen from what they was."

"Thomas, you give me no peace with your vittels. You must groan to the cook, not to me, about them. Now cut the cord. Why, what has Cripps been about?"

The bag was made of stout gray canvas, not so thick as sacking, and as the creases of the neck began to open, under the slackening cord, three or four red stripes were shown, such as are sometimes to be found in the neck of a leather mail bag, when the postmaster has been in a hurry, and dropped his wax too plentifully. But the stripes in these creases were not dry and brittle, as of run sealing wax, but clammy and damp, as if some thick fluid had oozed from dripping fingers.

"I don't like the look of it," cried the old Squire; "Cripps should be more careful. He has left the bag down at his brother the butcher's. I am sure they never sent it out like this. Not that I am of a squeamish order, but still—good heavens! What is this that I see?"

With scarcely time for his cheeks to blanch, or his firm old hands to tremble, Squire Oglander took from the mouth of the sack a coil of long, bright golden hair. The brown shade of the potatoes beneath it set off its glistening beauty. He knew it at a glance; there was no such hair in all Oxfordshire but his Gracie's. A piece of paper was roughly twisted in and out the shining wreath. This he spread in the hollow of his palm, and then put on his spectacles, and read by the waning light these words, "All you will ever see of her."

## CHAPTER III.

Worth Oglander, now in his seventieth year, although he might be a trifle fat, was a truly hale and active man. His limbs were as sound as his conscience; and he was well content with his life and age. He had seen a good deal of the world and of enemies, in the stirring times of war. But no wrong lay in the bottom of his heart, no harm ever done to any one, except that he had killed a few Frenchmen, perhaps, as all Englishmen used to be forced to do.

"Whoever has played this trick with me," said the Squire, as soon as he recovered himself, "is, to say the least of it, a blackguard. Even for a Christmas joke, it is carrying things a great deal too far. I have played, and been played, many practical jokes, when there was nothing else to do. But this is beyond—Thomas, run and fetch Cripps. I will get to the bottom of this, I am resolved."

In a minute or two Master Cripps came in. His face was a little flushed, from the power of the compliments paid to Mary, but his eyes were quite firm.

"Servant, sir," he said, touching his forelock, nearly of the color of clover hay; "all correct, I hope, Squire, safe and sound and in good condition. That's how I deaver all goods."

"Tell me the meaning of this." As he spoke Mr. Oglander held up the bright wreath of hair and pointed to the red stains on the sack. Cripps, as behooved a slow-minded man, stared at the hair, and the bag, and the Squire, the roof of the brewery, and all the tubs, and then began feeling in his hat for orders.

"Cripps, are you dumb; are you tipsy, or what? Or are you too much ashamed of yourself?"

"I ain't done naught for to be ashamed of—me, nor my father avoore me."

"Then will you tell me what this means? Are you going to keep me all night?"

"Squire, I never, I never see'd 'un. I know no more than a sto-un. I know no more than the dead, I do."

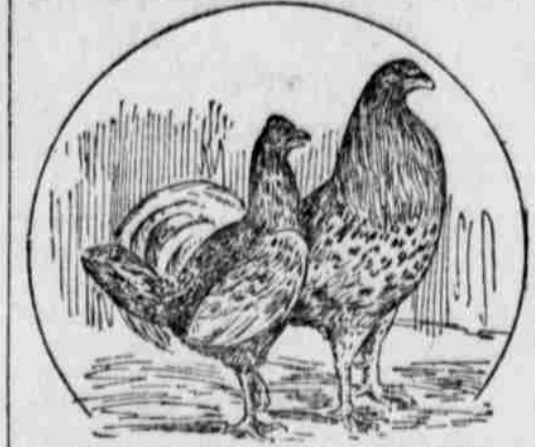
"Where did you get the bag? Was it like this? Who gave it to you? Have you let it out of sight? Did you see anybody come near it?"

"Squire, I can't tell'e such a many things. They heft up the barg to me at the 'Black Horse,' where the bargs is always left for you. I took no heed of 'un, out of common. And no one have a titched him since, but me."



### A Fine Table Fowl.

For some years the old English game fowl of England has been coming to the front. We see much in print about the revival of the old English game. This fowl occupies a foremost place as table poultry. They are most delicate and fine flavored fowls, a well known fact to those who have feasted



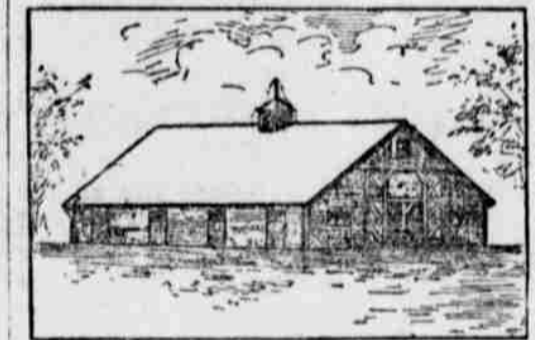
OLD ENGLISH GAMES—SPANGLED.

on what we call pit game. In fact, it is said that they outrank the pheasants in delicacy when served on the table. They grow very fast and are always plump and ready for the spit any time after they are six weeks old.

The colors bred are black breasted reds, brown breasted reds, duckwings blue reds, piles, black, white and spangles, the latter the most popular. As shown by the illustration, these fowls are beautifully built and free from the long shanks of our standard games. They have full, plump breasts and longer bodies than our exhibition games. In fact, they are the same as our pit games, only they are bred to exhibition form and color and not for the pit.—Country Gentleman.

### Practical Sheep Barn.

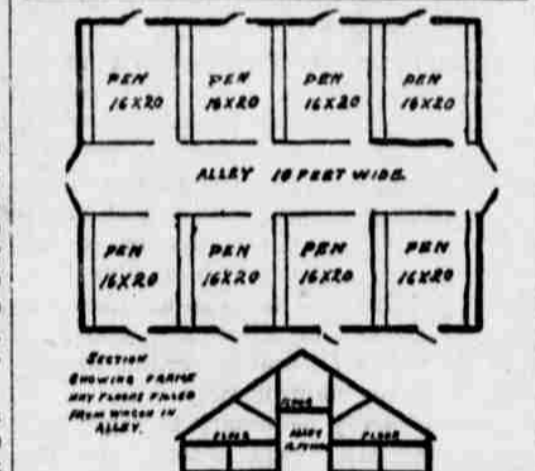
The plan shown is intended for a sheep barn, although it would answer equally well for cattle, and is arranged in such a manner that hay is stored



A \$500 BARN.

over the pens at the sides, and this space is filled directly from a wagon driven through the center alley.

The space at each side of the alley is divided up into separate pens by the feed racks and each pen has a separate window and door. This gives



ARRANGEMENT OF THE BARN.

plenty of light and permits egress to yards outside. While this barn is only ten feet at the side, it gives ample storage for hay and a large amount of room without any waste space. The cost will not exceed \$500.

### Whitewashing the Trees.

Whitewash may often be applied to fruit trees, especially apple trees, to good advantage. For this purpose the brine may be slaked in the usual manner with cold water, though hot water is preferable for that purpose. By adding some skim milk to the wash it can be made to adhere better to the bark. To make it adhere still better, some people add a thin solution of glue to the wash. This whitewash should be of such a consistency as to be easily applied with a spray pump, and the application should be made in the spring. It aids in keeping off fungous diseases and insect pests.

### Woolless Sheep.

A variety of sheep grown in the Barbados Islands is being introduced into the Southern States under the direction of the Department of Agriculture. The breed is claimed to be excellent for the production of mutton. The habits resemble those of the goat—great browsers, easy keepers. The lack of wool enables them to endure warm climates without suffering from the heat. These sheep are fawn colored, streaked with black, males weighing about eighty pounds, and females seventy-five pounds.

# DERANGED NERVES

DISTRESSING TROUBLES LEFT BY ST. VITUS AND GRIP.

Woman Afflicted for Years by Strange Spells of Numbness and Weakness Recovers Perfect Health.

When she was fourteen years old, Mrs. (da L. Brown had St. Vitus' dance. She finally got over the most noticeable features of the strange ailment, but was still troubled by very uncomfortable sensations, which she recently described as follows:

"One hand, half of my face, and half of my tongue would get cold and numb. These feelings would come on, last for about ten minutes, and then go away, several times a day. Besides I would have palpitation of the heart, and my strength would get so low that I could hardly breathe. As time went on these spells kept coming oftener and growing worse. The numbness would sometimes extend over half my body."

"How did you get rid of them?"

"It seemed for a long time as if I never could get rid of them. It was not until about six years ago that I found a remedy that had virtue enough in it to reach my case. That was Dr. Williams' Pink Pills for Pale People, and they have since entirely cured me."

"Did it take long to effect a cure?"

"No! I hadn't taken the whole of the first box before I saw a great improvement. So I kept on using them, growing better all the time, until I had taken eight boxes and then I was perfectly well, and I have remained in good health ever since with one exception."

"What was that?"

"Oh! that was when I had the grip. I was in bed, under the doctor's care, for two weeks. When I got up I had dreadful attacks of dizziness. I had to grasp hold of something or I would fall right down. I was just miserable, and when I saw the doctor was not helping me, I began to take Dr. Williams' Pink Pills again. In a short time they cured me of that trouble too, and I have never had any dizzy spells since."

Mrs. Brown lives at No. 1705 DeWitt street, Mattoon, Illinois. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are without an equal for the rapid and thorough cure of nervous prostration. They expel the poison left in the system by such diseases as grip and are the best of tonics in all cases of weakness. They are sold by every druggist.

### FACE LIKE RAW BEEF.

Burning Up with a Terrible Itching Eczema—Speedily Cured by Cuticura.

"The Cuticura Remedies cured me of a terrible eczema from which I had suffered agony and pain for eight long years, being unable to obtain any help from the best doctors, and trying many remedies without success. My scalp was covered with scabs and my face was like a piece of raw beef, my eyebrows and lashes were falling out, and I felt as if burning up from the terrible itching and pain. Cuticura gave me relief the very first day, and made a complete cure in a short time. To my great joy, my head and face are now clear and well.—Miss Mary M. Fay, 75 West Main St., Westboro, Mass."

The Thames flows at the rates of two miles an hour.

Mrs. Winslow'SOOTHING SYRUP for children teething, softens the gums, reduces inflammation, allays pain cures colic. Price 25c bottle.

There are 10,920,000 Germans in the United States.

Millions in Oats. Salzer's New National Oats yielded in Mich., 240 bu., in Mo., 255 bu., in N. D., 310 bu., and in 30 other states from 150 to 300 bu. per acre. Now this Oat if generally grown in 1905, will add millions of bushels to the yield and millions of dollars to the farmer's purse!



Homebuilder Yellow Dent Corn grows like a weed and yields from 157 to 200 bushels and more per acre! It's the biggest yielder on earth! Salzer's Speltz, Beardless Barley, Macaroni Wheat, Pea Oat, Billion Dollar Grass and Earliest Cane are money makers for you, Mr. Farmer.

JUST SEND THIS NOTICE AND 10c in stamps to John A. Salzer Seed Co., La Crosse, Wis., and receive their big catalog and lots of farm seed samples. (C. N. U.)



For Cupboard Corner

# St. Jacobs Oil

Straight, strong, sure, is the best household remedy for

## Rheumatism

Neuralgia Sprains  
Lumbago Bruises  
Backache Soreness  
Sciatica Stiffness

Price, 25c. and 50c.



MR. OGLANDER HELD UP THE BRIGHT WREATH OF HAIR.

"Now, measter, 'ee no call to be so grum! None of they things'll be a hap-orth the worse. The frost'll ony swaten 'em."

"You sany, I know all your talk. Hold your tongue. Sweeten them indeed! And, when we want them, are we to dig them with mattocks, pray? Or do you thick-heads expect it to thaw to order when the pot is bubbling? Stir your lazy legs, or I'll throw every one of you on the workhouse, the moment the first snow falls."

The three men grinned at one another, and proceeded leisurely. They knew much better than the Squire himself what his gentle nature was.

"Man and boy," said the eldest of them, speaking below his breath, as if this tyranny had extinguished him; "in this here garden have I worked, man and boy, for threescore year, and always g'ien satisfaction. Workuss! What would his father a' said, to hear tell in this garden of workuss? Workuss! Well, let an coom, if a' will! Can't be harder work."

"Tummuss, Tummuss, you may say that," said another lazy rascal, shaking his head, with his heel on his spade, and then wiping his forehead laboriously; "'tis the sweat of our brow. Tummuss, none of 'em thinks on—but there, they was boon to be driving us!"

Squire Oglander made as if he heard them not; and then he hurried to the hedge again, and stood on the wall of the leaf-mould pit, and peered over the beard of hollies. And this time he spied in the distance Cripps, or at any rate the tilt of the Crippsian cart, joggling sedately to the rhythm of the feet of Dobbie.

"Hurrah!" cried the Squire, who was still as young in mind as if he had no body. "By George, we shall be just in time. Never mind what I said, my lads. I was a little bit cross, I know. Take out the crumbs from the bottom of your trenches, and go two inches deeper. Our new potatoes are come at last!"

Squire Oglander, having retired now from the army and all warfare, was warmly devoted to the hearts of peace.

and the shuddering rattle in the teeth of a man who opened his mouth to the wind at all—many other things than these, as well as all of them, were here.

But the strange thing, in this present matter, was that Squire Oglander was bent not only on digging potatoes, but also on planting them, this very day. Forsooth it was one of his fixed dates in the chronicles of the garden, that happen what might, or be the season whatsoever it chose to be, new potatoes and peas he would have by the last day of May, at the latest. And this without any ignoble resort to forcing-pit, hotbed, or even cold frame; under the pure gaze of the sky, by that time they must be ready. But in the highlands of Oxfordshire this requires some skill and management. In the first place, both pea and potato must be of a kind that is ready to awake right early; and then they must be humored with a very choice place; and after that they must be shielded from the winter's rages. If all these "musts" can be complied with, and several "ifs" are solved aright, the gardener may hope to get pleasure from his early work.

"Inside and outside, all look alive!" cried the Squire, running to and fro; "Gracie will be home; Miss Grace, I mean, and not a bit of fire in the drawing room grate! No Christmas boxes for any of you! Now, I did not mean that, Mary, as you might know. Inside, the women and outside, the men—now what is this paper for, my dear?"

"That there Cripps, sir, have a sent 'un in. He be gettin' so perrikular!"

"Quite right. Quite right. Business is business. No man can be too particular. Let him sit down. He wants me to sign this paper, does he? Very well; tell him to come next week. My fingers are cramped with the wind. Tell Cripps—now don't you be in such a hurry, Mary; Cripps is not a marrying man."

"As if I would touch him, with a pair of tongs, sir! A Hookham to have a Cripps, sir! A man who always smells as if he had been a' combing a horse!"

"Ah, poor Mary, the grapes are sour. Tell bachelor Cripps to send in the bag."