

CRIPPS, THE CARRIER

R. D. BLACKMORE

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

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

"What wonders have you wrought, John Smith?"

"You know that story of Cripps the carrier and his sister. Some folk believed it, and some believed it. I did neither of the two, but resolved to get to the bottom of it. This was what I did. A brave regiment of soldiers having newly returned from India, was ordered to march from London to the Land's-end for change of temperature. They had not been supplied, of course, with any change of clothes for climate, and they felt it a little, but were exhorted not to be too particular. Two companies were to be billeted at Abingdon, last evening; and having, of course, received notice of that, I procured authority to use them. They shivered so that they wanted work; and there is nothing, your worship, like discipline."

"Of course, I know that from my early days. Will you tell your story speedily?"

"Sir, that is just what I am doing. I brought them without many words to the quarry, where ten times the number of our clodhoppers would only have shivered at one another. Bless my heart! they did work, and with order and arrangement. Being clothed all in cotton they had no time to lose, unless they meant to get frozen; and it was a fine sight, I assure your worship, to see how they showed their shoulder blades, being skinned from that hot climate, and their brown freckled arms in the white of the drift, and the Indian steam coming out of them! In about two hours all the ground was clear, and the trees put away, like basket-work; and then we could see what had happened exactly, and even the mark of the pickaxes. Every word of that girl was proved to a tittle. I never heard finer evidence. We can even see that two men had been at work, and the stroke of their tools was different. We shoveled away all the fallow rock, and mould, and stumps, and furze-roots; and, at last, we came to the poor, poor innocent body, as fresh as the daylight."

"I can hear no more! You have lost no child—if you have, perhaps you could spare it. Tell me nothing—nothing more! But prove that it was my child!"

"Why, you are only fit to go to bed! Here, Mary! Mary! Mother Hookham! Curse the bell—I have broken it! Your master is taken very queer! Look alive, woman! Stir your stumps! A pot of hot water and a foot-tub! Don't get scared. He will be all right. Hold his head up. Let me feel. Oh, he is not going to die just yet. Stop your caterwauling. He will know us all in a minute again. He ought to have had a deal more spirit. I never could have expected this. I smoothed off everything so nicely—just as if it was a lady."

"Did you, indeed? I have heard every word," said Widow Hookham sternly. "You locked the door, or I would have had my ten nails in you, long ago! Poor dear! What is a scum like you? And after all, what have you done, John Smith?"

CHAPTER IX.

On the very next day it was known throughout the parish and the neighborhood, the ancient Squire had broken down at last, under the weight of anxieties. Nobody blamed him much for this, except his own sister and Mr. Smith. Mrs. Fermitage said that he ought to have shown more faith and resignation; and John Smith declared that all his plans were thrown out by his stupidity. What proper inquiry could be held, when the universal desire was to spare the feelings and respect the affliction of a poor old man?

Mr. Smith was right. An inquest truly must be held upon the body, which had been found by the soldiers. But the coroner, being a good old friend and admirer of the Ogländers, contrived that the matter should be a mere form, and the verdict an open nullity. Mr. Luke Sharp appeared, and in a dignified reserve was ready to represent the family. He said a few words, in the very best taste, and scarcely dared to hint at things, which must be painful to everybody left alive to think of them. The crush of tons of rock upon an unprotected female form had made it unrecognizable; the hair having been cut off, was there no longer; there was really nothing except a pair of not over new silk stockings, belonging to a lady of lofty position in the county, and the widow of an eminent gentleman, but not required, he might hope, to prevent herself so painfully. Mr. Sharp could say no more; and the jury felt that he now must come, or, failing him, his son, Kit Sharp, into the 150,000l. of "Port-wine Fermitage."

Therefore they returned the verdict carried in his pocket for them, "Death by misadventure of a young lady, name unknown." Their object was to satisfy the Squire and their consciences; and they found it wise not to be too particular. And the coroner was the last man to make any fuss about anything.

"Are you satisfied now, Mr. Over-shute?" asked Lawyer Sharp, as Russel met him in the passage of the Quarry Arms, where the inquest had been taken. "The jury have done their best, at once to meet the facts of the case, and respect the feelings of the family."

"Satisfied! How can I be? Such a shock-pocus I never knew. It is not for me to interfere, while things are in this wretched state. Everybody knows what an inquest is. No doubt you have done your duty, and acted according to your

instructions. Come in here, where we can speak privately."

Mr. Sharp did not look quite as if he desired a private interview. However, he followed the young man, with the best grace he could muster.

"I am going to speak quite calmly, and have no whip now for you to snap," said Russel; "but may I ask you why you have done your utmost to prevent what seemed, to an ordinary mind, the first and most essential thing?"

"The identification? Yes, of course. Will you come, and satisfy yourself? The key of the room is in my pocket."

"I cannot do it. I cannot do it," answered the young man shuddering. "My last recollection must not be—"

"Young sir, I respect your feelings. And need ask you, after that, whether I have done amiss in sparing the feelings of the family? And there is something more important than even that at stake just now. You know the poor Squire's sad condition. The poor old gentleman is pretty well broken down at last, I fear. What else could we expect of him? And the doctor his sister had brought from London says that his life hangs positively upon a thread of hope. Therefore, we are telling him sad stories, or rather, I ought to say, happy stories; and though he is too sharp to swallow them all, they do him good, sir—they do him good."

"I can quite understand it. But how does that bear—I mean you could have misled him surely about the result of this inquest?"

"By no means. He would have insisted on seeing a copy of the Herald. In fact, if the jury could not have been managed, I had arranged with the editor to print a special copy giving the verdict as we wanted it. A pious fraud, of course; and so it is better to dispense with it. This verdict will set him up again upon his poor old legs, I hope. He seemed to dread the final blow so, and the bandying to and fro of his unfortunate daughter's name. I scarcely see why it should be so; but so it is, Mr. Overshute."

"Of course it is. How can you doubt it? How can it be otherwise. All I mean to say is that you need no more explain yourself. I seem to be always doubting you; and it always shows what a fool am I."

"Now don't say that," Mr. Luke Sharp answered, with a fine and genial smile. "You are acknowledged to be the most rising member of the County Bench. But still, there is such a thing as going too far with acuteness. You may not perceive it yet; but when you come to my age, you will own it."

"Truly. But who can be too suspicious when such things are done as these? I tell you, Sharp, that I would give my head off my shoulders, this very instant, to know who has done this villainy to my darling—to my darling."

"Mr. Overshute, how can we tell that any wrong has been done to her?"

"No wrong to take her life! No wrong to cut off all her lovely hair, and to send it to her father! No wrong to leave us as we are, with nothing now to care for! You spoke like a sensible man just now—oh, don't think that—I am excited."

"Well, how can I think otherwise? But do me the justice to remember that I do not for one moment assert what everybody takes for granted. It seems too probable, and it cannot for the present at least be disproved, that here we have the sad finale of the poor young lady. But it must be borne in mind that, on the other hand, the body—"

"The thing could be settled in two minutes—Sharp, I have no patience with you."

"So it appears; and making due allowance, I am not vexed with you. You mean, of course, the interior garments, the nether clothing, and so on. There is not a clue afforded there. We have found no name on anything. The features and form, as I need not tell you—"

"I cannot bear to hear of that. Has any old servant of the family; has the family doctor—"

"All those measures were taken of course. We had the two oldest servants. But the one was flurried out of her wits, and the other three-quarters frozen. And you know what a fellow old Splinters is, the crustiest of the crusty. He took it in bitter dudgeon that Sir Anthony had been sent for to see the poor old Squire. And all he would say was, 'Yes, yes, yes. You had better send for Sir Anthony. Perhaps he could bring oh, of course he could bring—my poor little pet to life again.' Then we tried her aunt, Mrs. Fermitage, one of the last who had seen her living. But bless you, my dear sir, a team of horses would not have lugged her into the room. She cried, and shrieked, and fainted away."

"Barbarous creatures!" said said, 'you will have to hold another inquest, if you are so unmanly. I could not even see my dear husband,' and then she fell into hysterics. Now, sir, have we anything more to do? Shall we send a letter or a coffin for the Squire himself?"

"You are inclined to be sarcastic. But you have taken great deal upon yourself. You seem to have ordered everything. Mr. Luke Sharp everywhere!"

"Will you tell me who else there was to do it? It has not been a very pleasant task, and certainly not a profitable one. I shall resign the usual reward—to be called a busybody by every one. But that is a trifle. Now, if there is anything you can suggest, Mr. Overshute, it shall be done at once. Take time to think. I feel a little tired and in need of rest. There has been so much to think of. You

should have come to help us sooner. But, no doubt, you felt a sort of delicacy about it. The worthy jurymen's feet at last have ceased to rattle in the passage. My horse will not be here just yet. You will not think me rude, if I snatch a little rest, while you consider. For three nights I have had no sleep. Have I your good permission, sir? Here is the key of that room, meanwhile."

Russel Overshute was surprised to see Mr. Sharp draw forth a large silk handkerchief and spread it carefully over the crown of his long, deep head, and around his temples down to the fine gray eyebrows. Then lifting gaitered heels upon the flat wide bar of the iron fender, in less than a minute Mr. Luke Sharp was asleep beyond all contradiction. He slept the sleep of the just.

If Mr. Sharp had striven hard to produce a powerful effect, young Overshute might have suspected him; but this calm, good sleep and pure sense of rest laid him open for all the world to take a larger view of him. No bad man could sleep like that. No narrow-minded man could be so wide to nature's noblest power. Only a fine and genial soul could sweetly thus resign itself. The soft content of well-earned repose spoke volumes in calm silence. Here was a good man at peace with his conscience, the world, and heaven.

Overshute was enabled thus to look at things more loftily. To judge a man as he should be judged, when he challenges no verdict. To see that there are large points of view, which we lose by worldly wisdom, and by little peeps through selfish holes, too one-eyed and ungenerous. Overshute could not bear the idea of any illiberality. He hated suspicion in anybody, unless it were just; as his own should be. In this condition of mind he pondered, while the honest lawyer slept. And he could not think of anything neglected, or mismanaged much, in the present helpless state of things.

CHAPTER X.

When at last the frost broke up, and streams began to run again, and everywhere the earth was glad that men should see her face once more; and forest trees, and roadside pollards, and bushes of the common hedgerow, straightened their unburdened backs, and stood for spring to look at them; a beautiful young maiden came as far as she could come, and sighed; as if the beauty of the land awaking was a grief to her.

This pretty lady, in the young moss-bud and slender-necked chalice of innocence, was laden with dew of sorrow, such as Nature, in her outer dealings with the more material world, defers until autumnal night, and russet hours are waiting. Scarcely in full bloom of youth, but ripe for blush or dreaminess, she felt the power of early spring, and the budding hope around her.

"Am I to be a prisoner always, ever more a prisoner?" she said, as she touched a willow catkin, the earliest of all, the silver one. She stroked the delicate silken tassel, doubtful of its prudence yet; and she looked for leaves, but none there were, and nothing to hold commune.

The feeble sun seemed well content to have a glimpse of the earth again, and spread his glances diffidently, as if he expected shadow. Nevertheless, there he was at last; and the world received him tenderly.

"It has been such a long, long time. It seems to grow longer, as the days draw out, and nobody comes to talk to me. My place it is to obey, of course—but still, but still—there he is again!"

The girl drew back, for a fine young man in a grand new velvet shooting coat, wearing also a long shawl waistcoat and good buckskin breeches, which (combined with calfskin gaiters) set off his legs to the uttermost—in all this picturesque apparel, and swinging a gun right gallantly, there he was, and no mistake! He was quietly trying through the covert, without any beaters, but with a brace of clever spaniels, for woodcock, snipe, or rabbit perhaps, the season for game being over. A tall, well made, and rather nice young man (so far as a bashful girl might guess) he seemed at this third view of him; and of course it would be an exceedingly rude and pointed thing to run away. Needless, also, and indeed absurd; because she was sure that when last they met he was frightened much more than she was. It was nothing less than a duty now to find out whether he had recovered himself. If he had done so, it would be as well to frighten him even more this time. And if he had not, it would only be fair to see what could be done for him.

One of his dogs—a "cocking spaniel," as the great Mr. Looker warranted—a good young bitch, with liver-colored spots and drop ears torn by brambles, and eyes full of brownish yellow light, ran up to the girl confidentially and wagged a brief tail, and sniffed a little, and with sound discretion gazed. Each black nostril was like a mark of panting interrogation, and one ear was tucked up like a small tunnel, and the eye that belonged to it blinked with acumen.

(To be continued.)

A Land of Mystery.

The Great American Desert once so called, the wild solitudes of the Western mountain ranges, and the snow wastes of the Yukon, have yielded up their inmost secrets; but the Everglades, in the southernmost interior of our southernmost State, are to-day almost as little known of white men as when the early navigators first charted the contour of the Cape of the End of April.—Century.

Willing to Be Liberal.

The Doctor—You have a bad cold, Mr. Jiggs. I'll give you some pills for it.

Jiggs—Oh, never mind, doctor. You can have it for nothing.—Harvard Lampoon.

Two-thirds of the dignity we encounter in our daily walk is merely bluff.

EVERY ONE ASKS HIM

HOW HE GOT RID OF HIS OBSTINATE MUSCULAR RHEUMATISM.

Mr. Jones Tells of the Way by Which He Treated Himself Successfully When Doctors Failed.

Six physicians, all of them good, one of them a specialist, had done their best for Mr. Jones at different times during three years, and still he suffered fearfully from the tortures of rheumatism.

The rheumatism that had been dormant in his system was suddenly brought to an acute stage by exposure while he was drawing ice in February, 1901. From that time on for a period of more than three years he was a constant sufferer. He tried many kinds of treatment, but the rheumatism wouldn't budge. When regular doctors failed, and one remedy after another proved useless, many said: "I should think he would give it up and save his money."

Of his condition at this time, Mr. Jones says: "My rheumatism started in my right thigh, but in time it appeared in every muscle of my body. I lost the use of my left arm entirely and nearly lost the use of my right one. My feet were badly affected, especially the bottoms of the heels. When my right side was affected there was swelling, but the left side didn't swell when the disease settled there. The internal organs didn't seem to be involved at all. The trouble was all in the muscles and the nerves."

Among the few who still encouraged Mr. Jones to think that a cure might yet be found was a friend who had reason for great confidence in Dr. Williams' Pink Pills, and acting on her advice he bought a box of them in September, 1904. The story of what followed is brief, but nothing could be more satisfactory.

"When I was on the third box," says Mr. Jones, "I could realize a change for the better. I felt sure then that Dr. Williams' Pink Pills were the right medicine for my case. I kept on with them for several weeks longer and now I am entirely well, and everybody is asking what I took."

Mr. William Jones lives at Oxford, Mich. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills effect wonderful cures in rheumatism, because they work directly on the blood which is the seat of the disease. They are sold by every druggist.

The brown discoloration may be easily removed from pudding dishes, custard cups and the like by rubbing with a flannel and sand soap, powdered pumice, or if not very dark, a little whiting will answer.



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.

"MY WIFE'S PEOPLE COMING."

"We Have Had a Splendid Winter" in Western Canada. Canada's lush this year is wonderfully great and considerably ahead of any previous year. It is always interesting to those who contemplate moving to read expressions of opinion from those living in the country. It is therefore our pleasure to reproduce the following written to an Agent of the Government and forwarded to the Immigration Branch of the Department of the Interior at Ottawa:

Birch Hills, Sask, Canada,
Feb. 1st, 1905.

Dear Sir:

I take pleasure in dropping you a few lines to let you know how we are getting along up here and how we like the place. We have been here close on to a year now and think the place is fine. We have been out every day this winter working in the bush getting out logs for buildings, etc., getting rails for fencing. We have not suffered with the cold as much as we did in Chicago. My little boys are out every day with their sleighs having a good time. The lowest temperature has been this winter is 34 below and it is very still, no wind.

We had a splendid summer; we put up about 50 tons of hay and will have about 30 tons to sell; hay brings \$8 per ton now and will be higher in the spring. We have 20 acres broke and ready for crop. We worked on the Can. Nor. Ry. for a while this summer and am just 3 miles from the railroad and townsite. The steel is all laid to within 2 miles of the river and we often see the train bringing supplies for the bridge.

My wife's people are coming up about May. I wish you would write them and if there should be anyone coming to Prince Albert that could do with a half a car let them know. The homesteads are all taken up within 12 miles of us. I often think if this land were only in the States what a rush there would be; it is the richest land and the most productive I ever saw, and the climate is OK.

I know that people back there that I write to do not believe me when I write them what a splendid winter we are having, they think we are all frozen up. We have only about 8 inches of snow, and there are cattle on the range that have not been rounded up this winter. Day after day the thermometer raises up to 50 and 60 and I don't believe we have had a day this winter that it has stayed at zero. My wife says that we used to think that zero was cold in Chicago. But we don't mind it one bit. Christmas night we went out and drove 5 miles with our three little boys; it was 20 below, and there was not a whimper from any one of them; I'd hate to do it in old Chicago.

Well, I guess I will close, and you can tell anyone in the U. S. that they cannot do better than come to the Prince Albert District. I remain, yours truly,

(Signed) J. D. HEAD.

EXCURSIONS

TO THE
FREE GRANT LANDS
OF WESTERN CANADA

During the months of March and April, there will be excursions on the various lines of railway to the Canadian West. Hundreds of thousands of the best Wheat and Grazing lands on the Continent free to the settler. Adjoining lands may be purchased from railway and land companies at reasonable prices, as to routes, apply for information to Superintendent of Immigration, Ottawa, Canada, or to W. V. Bennett, 35 New York Life Building, Omaha, Neb., Authorized Government Agents.

Please say where you saw this advertisement.

A mixture composed of equal parts of vinegar and linseed oil is said to be good for cleaning and polishing furniture. Apply with a flannel cloth and polish with a soft duster.

Conviction Follows Trial

When buying loose coffee or anything your grocer happens to have in his bin, how do you know what you are getting? Some queer stories about coffee that is sold in bulk, could be told, if the people who handle it (grocers), cared to speak out.

Could any amount of mere talk have persuaded millions of housekeepers to use

Lion Coffee,

the leader of all package coffees for over a quarter of a century, if they had not found it superior to all other brands in Purity, Strength, Flavor and Uniformity?

This popular success of LION COFFEE can be due only to inherent merit. There is no stronger proof of merit than continued and increasing popularity.

If the verdict of MILLIONS OF HOUSEKEEPERS does not convince you of the merits of LION COFFEE, it costs you but a trifle to buy a package. It is the easiest way to convince yourself, and to make you a PERMANENT PURCHASER.

LION COFFEE is sold only in 1 lb. sealed packages, and reaches you as pure and clean as when it left our factory.

Save these Lion-heads for valuable premiums.

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