

CRIPPS, THE CARRIER

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CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued.)

"Well, Russel, now or old, here it is. And you must bear in mind how I felt, and what everybody was saying. In the first place then, you must remember that there was a great deal said about a pair of my silk stockings. Now I shrank particularly from having an intimate matter of that sort made the subject of public gossip. It was neither becoming nor adylike, to drag little questions of my wardrobe into the eye of the nation so. Already it was too much to know that a pair of such articles had been found bearing my initials. Most decidedly I refused, and I am sure any lady would do the same, to go into a hard cold witness box and under the eyes of some scores of males proclaim my complicity with such things. If I had seen it my duty, I would have endeavored to conquer my feelings; but of course I took it all for granted that everything was too clear already. And my dear brother! I thought of him; and thought of every one, except myself. Could I do more, Russel Overshute?"

"Indeed, my dear madam, I do not see how. But I thought that something had occurred quite lately."

"Oh, yes, to be sure. It was only to-day. I meant to have told you that, first of all. I was grossly insulted. A peculiarly insolent proceeding on the part of poor Mrs. Sharp, it appears—or, perhaps, some one for her; for everybody says that she really now has no mind of her own. She did not write me one single line, although I had written politely to her; and she sent me a message—too bad to be repeated. No one would tell me what it was; which aggravates it to the last degree. I assure you I have not been so upset for years; or, at any rate, not since poor Grace was lost. And about that, unless I am much mistaken, that very low, selfish and plotting person knows a great deal more than we have ever dreamed. It would not surprise me in the least, especially after what happened to-day, to find Mrs. Sharp at the bottom of all of it. At any rate, she has aroused my suspicion by her contemptible insolence. And I am not a person to drop a thing."

"Why, what has she done?" asked Overshute.

"What she did was this. She sent me back, not even packed in nice white paper, not even sprinkled with eau de cologne, not even washed—what do you think of that?—but rolled up anyhow in brown paper, the same as a drayman would use for his taps—oh, Russel, would you ever believe it?"

"Certainly, it seems very impolite. But what was it she sent back to you?"

"Not even the article I expected! Not even that ingredient of costume which I had lent poor Grace, very nice and pretty ones—but an old grey pair of silken hose, disgraceful even to look at. It is true that they bear my initials; but I had discarded them long ago."

"What a strange thing!" cried Overshute, flushed with quick excitement. "How reckless we were at the inquest! We had made up our minds without evidence, on the mere faith of coincidence. And you—you have never taken the trouble to look into this point until now—and now, perhaps, quite by accident! We were told that you had recognized the stockings; and it turns out that you never even saw them. It is strange and almost wicked negligence."

"I have told you my motives. I can say no more," exclaimed Mrs. Fernitage, with her fine fresh color heightened by shame or anger. "Of course, I felt sure—who could fail to do so?—that the stockings found with my name on them must be the pair I had lent my niece. It seemed most absurd that I should have to see them. It is more than my nerves could bear; and the coroner was not so unmanly as to force me. Pray, did you go, and see everything, sir?"

"Mrs. Fernitage, I am the very last person who has any right to reproach you. I failed in my duty, far more than you in yours. In a man, of course, it was a thousand times worse. There is no excuse for me. I yielded to a poor, unmanly weakness. I wished to keep my memory of the poor dear, as I had seen her last. I should have considered that the poor frail body is not our true identity."

"Quite so, of course. And therefore, what was the use of your going to see it? No, no, you behaved very well, Russel Overshute; and so did I, if it comes to that."

"Let us settle that we both have done our best," said Russel very sadly; knowing how far from the truth it was. "And now you will tell me what made you send for those silk ingredients of costume so suddenly?"

"With pleasure, dear Russel. I sent for them, or at least for what I fully expected to be the ones, because an impertinent young woman, foolishly trusted with very good keys, gave me notice to go last evening. Of course she will fly, before I have a chance of finding out how much she has stolen—they all take very good care to do that; and knowing what the spirit of the age is—dress, dress, fad-lals, ribbons, heels in the air, and so on—I made up my mind to have a turnout to-day, and see how much they had left me. Five pair and a half of silk hose were missing, as well as a thousand more important things, and they all backed up one another. They stood me out to my face that I never had more than eight pair of Christchurch-Tom stockings—excuse me for being so coarse, my dear; whereas I had got the receipt for twelve pair from the man that sold

them. I happened to remember that I had lent my darling Grace pair No. 12, numbered, as all of them were, down-right. And so to confound those false-tongued hussies, I came over here in search of them. Finding that they were not here—for the lawyers, of course, steal everything—I was not going to be beaten so. I sent as polite a letter as, after her shameful rudeness, any lady could write, to Mrs. Luke Sharp—a poor lady who expected every halfpenny of my dear husband's savings. How far she deserves them you have seen to-day. And sooner would I burn myself, like a sooty widow, with all my goods evaporating, than ever leave a sixpence for her to clutch, after such behavior. Russel, you will remember this. You are my executor."

"My dear Mrs. Fernitage, I pray you in no way to be excited. We have not heard all of the story, and we know that servants who are of a faithful kind exaggerate slights to their masters. It was one of the Squire's old servants who went. Your own word, perhaps, have known better. But now, may I see the things Mrs. Sharp sent you?"

"You may. And you may take them, if you like. Or rather, I should say that I beg you to take them. They ought to be in your custody. Will you oblige me by taking them, Russel, and carefully inspecting them? For that of course, you must have daylight. Take them in the paper, just as they came, and keep them until I ask for them. They can be of no importance, because they are not what I lent to Grace. Except for my name on them, I am sure that I never could have remembered them. They were darned in the days when I was poor. How often I wish that I still was poor! They nobody wanted to put against me, and even to steal my stockings! Oh, Russel, do you think they have murdered my darling because she was to have my money?"

"No, I think nothing of the kind. I believe that our darling Grace is alive; and I believe it tenfold since I saw these things. I am not very old in the ways of the world; and my judgment has always been wrong throughout. But my faith is the same as the grand old Squire's, though forty years of life behind him. I firmly believe that, blindly as we ourselves have managed everything, all will be guided aright for us; and happiness, even in this world, come. Because, though we have done no great good, we have done harm to no one; and the Lord of Heaven knows it. Also, he knows that we trust in Him, so far as the trouble allows us. Very well; I will take these stockings home. You shall hear from me on Monday. I believe that our Grace is alive; and God will enable me to deliver her. Please Him, I will never leave off till then."

The young man looked so grand and strong, in his faith, and truth, and righteousness, that the elderly lady said no word, but let her eyes flow, and kissed him. He placed the stockings in an inner pocket, carelessly wrapped in their paper; and he rode home apace to please his mother; and having a cold on him from all his wettings, he perspired freely; and at every stretch of his galloping horse he was absorbing typhus fever.

CHAPTER XIV.

In April, when the sunny buds were showing forth their little frills; and birds that love to hop sideways and try the toleration of the sprays that they are picking at, were almost too busy to chirp, and hung as happily as possible upside down, shaking the flutter of young green leech; while at the same time pigs reared aloft little corkscrew tails, and scorning their nose rings, employed them as thimbles for making a punch in the broiery of turf; also when ducks and geese, and cocks and hens, and even the dogs were all, without knowing it, beginning to wag themselves as they walked or waddled, and to shine in the sun, and to look very large in their own eyes; neither was there any man who could ride a horse, without knowing how, at this young jump of the year and of life, Grace Oglander wanted to go for a walk.

She had not by any means been buried in the haunted Quarry; neither had she as yet required burial in any place. On the contrary, here she walked more blooming and lovely than even her custom was; and the spring sun, glistening upon the gold letters of her tombstone at Beckley, the same sun was pleasantly making and taking light in the fluctuations of her growing hair.

Her bright hair (which had been so cruelly cropped) instead of being the worse for the process, was waving and glowing again in vast multiplicity of vigor; like a specimen golden geranium shorn, to double the number of its facets; and the blue in the spring of her eyes was enough to dissatisfy the sun with his own sky. However, he showed no discontent, but filled the young wood with cheerful rays, and the open glades with merriment, and even the somber heart of laboring man with streaks of liveliness. For here were comforts that come in, without the eye considering them; and pleasures, which when thought of fly; and delicate delights that have no idea of being delightful.

Grace rambled on, as a school girl does when the hours of school are over. Every single fall or rise of nature's work was kind to her, and led her into various veins of inductive unphilosophy. The packing and storing of last year's leaves, as if exceeding precious, gathered together by the wind and land in some rich rustling corner; the fitting of these into one another wonderfully compact, as if

with the hammer of a goldbeater, or the unknown implement wherewith a hen packs her hatched eggshells; the stiff upstanding of fine young stuff, hazel, ash, and so on, tapering straight as a fishing rod, and knobbing out on either side with scarcely controllable bulges; over and above, and throughout all, and sensible of their largeness, the spreading quietude of great trees, just breathing their buds on the air again, but not in a hurry to rush into perils of leafiness—pleased with all these proofs of soft revival and tender movement, the fair maid almost forgot her own depression and perplexities.

Grace wandered at her own sweet will, within the limits of her own parole. She knew she was in seclusion here, by her father's command, for her own good; and much as she yearned, from time to time, to be at home, with all the many things she was so fond of, she was such a dutiful child, and so loving, that she put her own wishes by, and smiled and sighed instead of pouting. It could not be very long now, she was sure, until her father should come home, and call for her, as he had promised, and take her once more to beloved Beckley, after this mournful exile.

Full as she was of all these thoughts, and heeding her own ways but little, so long as she kept within the outer ring of fence allowed to her, she fell into a little stupid fright, as she called it afterwards; for which there was no one but herself to blame. Only yesterday that good Miss Patch (her governess and sweet guardian) had particularly begged her to be careful; because the times were now so bad, that lawless people went everywhere. Miss Patch herself had heard several noises she could not at all account for; and while she considered it quite a duty to trace up everything to its proper source, still there are times when it cannot be done; and then the right thing is to keep within sight or call of a highly respectable man.

This was exactly what Grace might have done, and would have done, but for the tempting day; for a truly respectable man had been near her, when first she began her little walk; a man whom she had beheld more than once, but always at a little distance; a tall, stout man, according to her distant ideas of him, always busy in a quiet way, and almost grudging the time to touch his broad brimmed hat without lifting his head, when he saw her in the wood-land. Grace had never asked him who he was, nor been within talking distance of him; at which she was almost surprised, when she thought how glad, as a rule, are all Oxfordshire workmen to have a good excuse for leaving off. However, she was far beyond him now, when she met another man who frightened her.

This was a fellow of dark complexion, dressed in a dirty fustian suit, and bearing on his shoulder a thick hedge-stake, from which hung a number of rabbit skins. His character might be excellent; but his appearance did not recommend him to the confidence of the public. Grace shrank aside, but his quick eyes had spied her; and, indeed, she almost feared, from his manner, that he had been on the watch for her. So she put the best face on it, and tried to pass him, without showing any misgivings.

But the rabbit man was not to be thus defrauded of his right to good society. With a quick, sharp turn he cast off the skins from his staff, and stretched that slimy implement across the way.

"Allow me to pass, if you please," said Grace, attempting to look very resolute; "these are our grounds. You are trespassing."

"Now, my purty young lady," said the rabbit man, coming so close that she could not fly; "you wouldn't be too hard, would you now? I see a great many young maids about—but what be they to compare with you?"

"I am sure that you do not mean any harm," replied Grace; "nobody does any harm to me; but every one is so kind to me. My father is so good to all who get into any trouble. I am not worth robbing, Mr. Rabbit man; honest as you are, no doubt. But I think I can find a shilling, for you to take home to your family."

(To be continued.)

As a Precaution.

The old story of the man who saw on the rail of the organ gallery in a little Western church a placard bearing the words, "Don't shoot the organist. He is doing the best he can," has lately been matched by another somewhat like it. A man recently returned from a mining region, where, on Sunday, he attended a service in the only church for miles around. As he entered, the strains of an organ, apparently in great distress, reached his ears, and when he was seated he looked up to discover who the player was. On the back of the parlor organ which stood on the platform was a neatly lettered square of pasteboard which read, "Come up and try it yourself!"

A Chance to Fall.

The Nebraska farmer with whom I was staying over night grew confidential enough during the evening to tell me that he was going to town next day and begin a suit for breach of promise for his daughter, laying damages at \$75,000.

"Aren't those figures rather high?" I queried.

"Yes, nebbe," he replied, "but you see I have an object. I begin big so as to have a chance to fall. If Sally can't get \$75,000 she is willing to take \$50 in cash and a second-hand bike."

Population of Japan.

The population of Japan increased from 33,110,792 in 1872 to 46,304,999 in 1893, and is increasing rapidly.

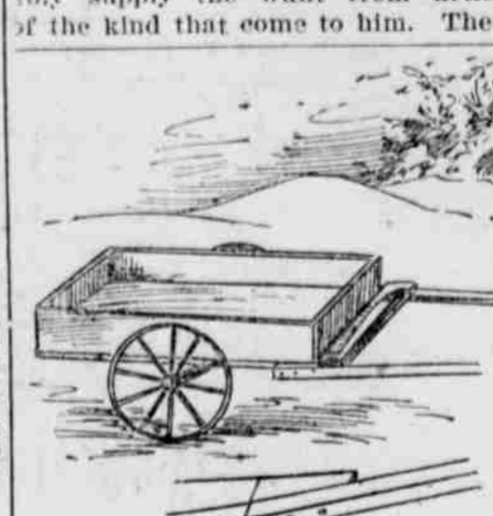
Nothing worries a proud woman like the pride of some other woman.

FARMS AND FARMERS



A Handy Garden Cart.

No one realizes how handy a small cart is on the farm until one has used it; the wheelbarrow is all right in its place, but there are times when the hand cart answers the purpose much better. The illustration shows how one of these carts may be made with a little lumber and any old wheels from a mower one may have. If there are no such wheels and shaft on the farm, the local blacksmith can probably supply the want from articles of the kind that come to him. The il-



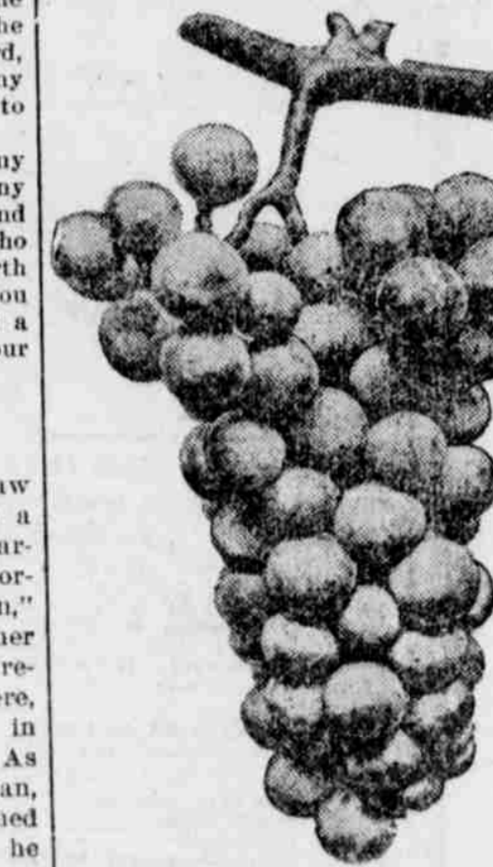
HANDY GARDEN CART.

Illustration shows plainly the mode of construction.

Have a box of convenient size, being careful not to make it too large, else it cannot be pulled except with considerable effort when filled. The width will, of course, depend upon the length of the axle. This may be made of any suitable material, if one cannot obtain a made pair, and if they are home constructed it will be easy to bring the outer ends nearer together by placing a two-inch block between the ends next to the box and the box. At the front end of the box a strip of board is placed, to which the single-tree is attached.

New Red Grape.

Although not yet tested in all grape-growing regions, the Regal shows promise wherever it has been grown. The vine is a most vigorous grower, strong and healthy and exceedingly productive. The quality of the berry is very good, though not of the best. The skin is a rich red, thin but very tough, and one of the chief characteristics of the variety is its long keeping qualities. As will be seen from the illustration, the bunch is compact, the berries of good size and uniform. A number of the State experiment stations have tested the variety and speak highly of it. If it does as well under general culture as it has on trial, it will



THE REGAL GRAPE.

be of distinct advantage as a market sort because of its color and its long-keeping qualities.—Indianapolis News.

Poultry Pickings.

Why don't you raise turkeys? The price is high and they are easy to raise, though some think it is difficult.

Special care must be taken in handling the eggs the first five days of incubation, when life is not firmly established.

Wyandottes have for the last few years taken a commanding position among the fanciers of this country, being of American origin and a great egg producer.

A great number of beginners who are just becoming interested in raising poultry, etc., do not know what breed to select. Try Barred Plymouth Rocks or Wyandottes.

The most necessary requirements in preparing fowls for the showrooms are the best possible shape, size and plumage that can be obtained, including clean and well-colored feet and legs.

The cause of fowls taking cold is allowing them to sleep where they are exposed to drafts and feeding them soft and sloppy foods.

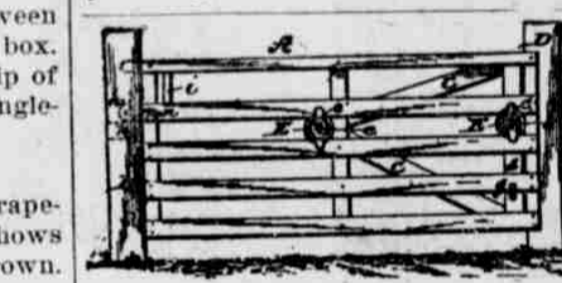
It requires capital to go into the poultry business on anything but a very small scale, and economizing on some things is the wrong thing to do.

Finding Age of Fowls.

A pullet will show rose-colored veins on the surface of the skin under the wings; there will also be long silky hairs growing there. After a year old these disappear, so, too, do the veins, and the skin shows white and veinless. The difference can be seen at a glance. Again, a pullet that has not laid, or has only just commenced to lay, will have the bones of the pelvis or basin almost touching. The bones gradually widen as the fowl continues laying, and at two years old are much further apart than they were at one year old. The third point of difference lies in the claws and shanks; in a young bird the skin of the claw is supple, and the scales thin and brilliant. The skin gets coarser and stronger and the scales harder as the bird grows, and the nail of the last toe, which does most of the work, when the bird scratches, gets much worn. There is also a difference in the eyelids. These acquire wrinkles as the bird gets older, and there is also a slightly shrivelled look on the face. This, with age, gets more and more pronounced. In the case of cocks, above and beyond these points of difference (except the bones of the pelvis widening), there are the spurs to judge by.—American Cultivator.

New Farm Gate.

Serious defects to be overcome in gates are strain and leverage weight which result in sagging. W. J. Slack of Fort Wayne, Ind., has invented a gate which it is claimed will largely remedy these defects. A triangular



NEW FARM GATE.

frame is hinged to the post, with two rollers attached, whereon gate panels is supported and freely operates. The cut shows gate in usual low position, closed, and so supported at front end that no leverage weight or strain can incur to either gate or post. This improvement may be used as a small single or large double sliding or swing gate.

No Cabbage Snake.

Recently an absurd fear has developed in the minds of some eaters of cabbages relative to the so-called "cabbage snake." The superstition is that the snake poisons the cabbages and so renders them unfit to eat. The existence of such a creature is denied by our scientists, but so prevalent is the belief that at least one experiment station has issued a circular denying the existence of the so-called snake. In some parts of the country a small whitish "eel-worm" has been found to infest cabbages. The larvae of this worm prey upon the common green cabbage worm, and hence are doubtless a benefit rather than a detriment to the cabbage-growing industry. Some of the more superstitious people in the South imagined that these worms poisoned the cabbages, and tests were made by scientific people to clear up the matter. Extracts were made from the worms and injected into the human system. These injections failed to produce the least effect. It is therefore considered that the character of the little worm has been cleared of the accusation.

Gathered from the Garden.

The best thing for the garden-brains.

Cut the black knot out of the plum and cherry trees.

A particular titbit of the San Jose scale is the currant.

Radishes are usually ready for use six weeks from sowing.

Bone meal and wood ashes in soil are great for sweet peas.

Probably no other small fruit will give more weight of crop for the space it occupies than the currant.

Don't trim the cherry trees. Wait till June, and then be handled.

To bleed the grapevines by cutting during March, April or May is bad management.

Cold frames are useful for forwarding lettuce and cabbage in spring early summer.

If the rhubarb is run out or more plants are wanted, it can be propagated by dividing the old roots. Each eye or bud when broken apart with root attached forms a plant.