

CRIPPS, THE CARRIER

BY

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

CHAPTER XXII.—(Continued.)

"So you may, my dear boy, and welcome now. This will lift you altogether beyond it. Your dear father may consider it his duty to continue the office, and so on. But you will be a country gentleman, Kit, with horses, and dogs, and Manton guns, and a pack of hounds, and a long brouche, and hot-house grapes. And I will come and live with you, my darling; or at least make our country house of it, and show you how to manage things. For the whole world will be trying to cheat you, Kit; you are too good-natured, and grand in your ways! You must try to be a little sharper, darling, with that mind of money."

"Must I? But suppose that I won't have it?"

"Sometimes I believe you think it manly to provoke your mother. The money ought to have been ours, Kit; mine by heritage and justice; at least a year and a half ago. Now I hope that you see things in their proper light."

"Well, I dare say I do," he answered, with a little turn of sulkiness, such as he often got when people could not understand him; "mother, you will allow me to have my own opinion, as you have yours."

"You will believe, I trust, exactly as your parents wish. They have seen so much more of the world than you have, they are far better judges of right and wrong; and their only desire is your highest interest. You will break your poor mother's heart, dear Kit, if you do anything foolish now."

Mr. Sharp did not come home to their early dinner at half-past one o'clock; indeed, his wife did not expect him much; and his son was delighted not to see him. Kit sat heavily, but took his food as usual. The condition of his mind might be very sad indeed; but his body was not to be driven thereby to neglect the duties of its own department. He helped his dear mother to some loin of mutton; and when she only played with it, and her knife and fork were trembling, he was angered, and his eyes sought hers; and she tried to look at him and smile, but made a wretched job of it. Christopher reserved his opinion about this; but it did not help in any way to impair his resolution.

"At seven o'clock all must be ready," said Mr. Sharp, towards the close of a hurried conversation with Miss Patch, Grace Oglander being sent out of the way, according to established signal, "there is no time to lose, and no ladies' tricks of unpunctuality, if you please. We must have daylight for these horrid forest roads, and time it so as to get into the London road about half-past eight. We must be in London by two in the morning; the horses and all that will be forthcoming. Kit rides outside, and I follow on horseback. Hannah, why do you hesitate?"

"Because I cannot—I cannot go away, without having seen that Jesuit priest in the pig-net wallowing. It is such a grand providential work. Luke, I beg you, I implore you—I can pack up everything in an hour—do not rob me of a sight like that."

"Hannah, are you mad? You have never been allowed to go near that place, and you never shall."

"Well, you know best; but it does seem very cruel. But suppose that the child should refuse to come with us—we have no letters now, nor any other ministrations."

"We have no time now for such trumpery; we must carry things now with a much higher hand. Everything hangs upon the next few hours; and by this time to-morrow night all shall be safe; Kit and the girl gone for their honeymoon, and you sitting under the most furious dustman that ever thumped a cushion."

"Oh, Luke, how can you speak as if you really had no reverence?"

"Because there is no time for such stuff now. We have the strength, and we must use it. Just go and get ready. I must ride to meet my people. The girl, I suppose, is with Kit by this time. What a pair they will be!"

"I am sure they will be a very pretty pair—so far as poor sinful exterior goes—and, what is of a thousandfold more importance, their worldly means will be the means of grace to hundreds of our poor fellow creatures."

"Now, Hannah, no time for that. Get ready. And mind that there must be no feminine weakness, if circumstances should compel us to employ a little compulsion."

He went to the place where his horse was tied, and there he found a man with a message for him, which he just stopped to hear.

"As loovin' as a pair o' toortle doves," Black George had been set to watch Kit and Grace, during their private interview, lest any precaution should be overlooked.

"Right! Here's a guinea for you, my man. Now you know what to do till I come back—to stay where you are, and keep a sharp lookout. Can the fool in the net do without any water? Very well, after dark, give him some food, bandage his eyes, and walk him to and fro, and let him go in Banbury."

"All right, governor. A rare bait he shall have of it, with a little swim in the canal, to cleanse 'un."

"No hardship, no cruelty!" cried Mr. Sharp, with his finger to his forehead, as he rode away; "only a little wise discipline to lead him into closer attention to his own affairs."

Black George looked after his master with a grin of admiration. "He sticketh at nort," said George to himself, as he began to fill a grumpy pipe; "he sticketh at nort, no more than I would. And with all that house and lands to back 'un! Most folk with money got no pluck left, for thinking of others as owneth the same." With these words he sat down to watch the house, according to his orders.

Grace Oglander came down the winding, wooded path, with her heavy pit-patting at every step, because she was ordered to meet somebody. An idea of that kind did not please her. A pride, or a prim, she would never wish to be; and a little bit of flirting had been a great relief, and a pleasant change in her loneliness. But to bring matters to so stern a point, and have to say what she meant to say, in as few words as possible, and then walk off—these strong measures were not to her liking, because she was a most kind-hearted girl, and had much good will towards Christopher. Kit, on the other hand, came along fast, with a resolute brow and firm, heavy stride. He had made up his mind to be wretched for life, if the heart upon which he had set his own should refuse to throb responsively. But whatever his fate might be, he would tread the highest path of generosity, chivalry and honor.

And now they met in a gentle place, roofed with leaves, and floored with moss, and decorated with bluebells. The chill of the earth was gone by and forgotten, and the power of the sky came back again; stately tree, and graceful bush, and brown depths of tangled prickliness—everything having green life in it—was spreading its green, and proud of it. Under this roof, and in these halls of bright young verdure, the youth and the maid came face to face blittingly. Grace, as bright as a rose, and flushing with true tint of wild rose, drew back and bowed, and then perceiving serious hurt of Christopher, kindly offered a warm, white hand—a delicious touch for any one. Kit laid hold of this and kept it, though with constant fear of doing more than was established, and trying to look firm and overpowering, led the fair young woman to a trunk of fallen oak.

Here they both sat down; and Grace was not so far as she could wish from yielding to a little kind of trembling which arose in her. She glanced at Kit sideways whenever she felt that he could not be looking at her; and she kept her wise eyes mainly downward whenever they seemed to be wanted—not that she could not look up and speak, only that she would rather wait until there was no other help for it; and, as for that, she felt no fear, being sure that he was afraid of her. Kit, on the other hand, was full of fear, and did all he could in the craftiest manner to make his love look up at him. He could not tell how she might take his tale; but he knew by instinct that his eyes would help him where his tongue might fail. At last he said:

"No, will you promise faithfully not to be angry with me?"

"Oh, yes, oh, yes—to be sure," said Grace; "why should I be angry?"

"Because I can't help it—I give you my honor. I have tried very hard, but I cannot help it."

"Then who could be angry with you, unless it was something very wicked?"

"It is not very wicked, it is very good—too good for me, a great deal, I am afraid."

"There cannot be many things too good for you; you are simple and brave and gentle."

"But this is too good for me, ever so much, because it is your own dear self."

Grace was afraid that this was coming; and now she lifted her soft blue eyes and looked at him quite tenderly, and yet so directly and clearly, that he knew in a moment what she had for him—pity, and trust, and liking; but of heart's love not one atom.

"I know what you mean," he whispered sadly, with his bright young face cast down. "I cannot think what can have made me such a fool. Only please to tell me one thing. Has there been any chap in front of me?"

"How can I tell what you mean?" asked Grace; but her color showed that she could guess.

"I must not ask you if it is, of course."

"I think that I had better go. Only, as I cannot ever meet you any more, I must try to tell you that I like you very much, and never shall forget what I owe you; and I hope you will very soon recover from this—this little disappointment; and my dear father, as soon as we return to England—for I must go to fetch him—"

"Grace—oh, let me call you 'Grace' once or twice, it can't matter here in the middle of the wood—Grace, I was so taken up with myself, and full of my miserable folly, which of course I ought to have known better—"

"I must not stop to hear any more. There is my hand—yes, of course you may kiss it, after all that you have done for me."

"I am going to do a great deal more for you," cried Kit, quite carried away with the yielding kindness of lovely fingers. "For your sake I am going to injure and disgrace my own father. It is my father who has kept you here; and tonight he is going to carry you off. Miss Patch is only a tool of his. Your own father knows not a word about it. He believes you to be dead and buried. Your tombstone is set up at Beckley, and your father goes and cries over it."

"But his letters—his letters from De-

merara? Oh my head swims round! Let me hold by this tree for a moment!"

Kit threw his arm round her delicate waist to save her from falling; and away crept George, who had lurked behind a young birch tree too far off to hear their words.

"You must rouse up your courage," said Kit, with a yearning gaze at his sweet burden, yet taking no advantage of her. "Rouse up your courage, and I will do my best to save you from myself. It is very hard—it is cruelly cruel, and nobody will thank me."

"His letters from Demerara?" cried Grace, having scarcely heard a word he said. "How could he have written them? You must be wrong."

"Of such letters I have never heard. I suppose they must have been forgeries. I give you my word that your father has been the whole of the time at Beckley, and a great deal too ill to go from home."

"Too ill!—my father? Yes, of course—of course! How could he help being ill without me? And he thinks I am dead! Oh! he thinks that I am dead! I wonder that he could dare to be alive. But let me try to think a little."

She tottered back to the old stump of the tree, and sat down there, and burst forth into an extraordinary gush of weeping; more sad and pitiful tears had never watered an innocent face before.

"Let me cry!—let me cry!" was her only answer, when the young man clumsily tried to comfort.

Kit got up and strode about; his indignation at her deep, low sobs, and her brilliant cheeks like a river's bed, and her rich hair dabbled like drifted corn, and about all the violent pain which made her lay both hands to her heart and squeeze—his wrath made him long to knock down people entitled to his love and reverence. He knew that her heart was quite full of her father in all his long desolation, and was making a row of pictures of him in deepening tribulation; but a girl might go on like that for ever; a man must take the lead of her.

"If you please, Miss Oglander," he said, going up and lifting both her hands, and making her look at him, "you have scarcely five minutes to make up your mind whether you wish to save your father, or to be carried away from him."

Grace in confusion and fear looked up. All about herself she had forgotten; she had even forgotten that Kit was near; she was only pondering slowly now—as the mind at most critical moments does—some straw of a trifle that blew across.

"Do you care to have your father's life?" asked Kit, rather sternly, not seeing in the least the condition of her mind, but wondering at it. "If you do, you must come with me, this moment, down the hill, down the hill, as fast as ever you can. I know a place where they can never find us. We must hide there till dark, and then I will take you to Beckley."

But the young lady's nerves would not act at command. The shock and surprise had been too severe. All she could do was to gaze at Kit, with soft, imploring eyes, that tried to beg pardon for her helplessness.

"If we stay here another minute, you are lost!" cried Kit, as he heard the sound of carriage wheels near the cottage, on the rise above them. "One question only—will you trust me?"

She moved her pale lips to say "yes," and faintly lifted one hand to him. Kit waited for no other sign, but caught her in his sturdy arms and bore her down the hill as fast as he could go without scratching her snow-white face, or tearing the arm which hung on his shoulder.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Meanwhile Mr. Sharp had his forces ready, and was waiting for Grace and Christopher. Cinnamon's good Uncle Kershoe (who spent half of his useful time in stealing horses, and the other half in disguising and disposing of them), although he might not have desired to show himself so long before the moonlight, yet, true to honor, here he was, blinking beneath a three-cornered hat, like a grandly respectable coachman. The carriage was stopped in a shady place, quite out of sight from the windows. In picturesque attitudes of tobaccoizing three fine fellows might now be seen, it wit, Black George, Joe Smith and that substantial householder, Tickuss Cripps. In the chaise sat a lady of comfortable aspect, though fidgeting now with fat, well-gloved hands. Mrs. Sharp had begged not to have to stop at home and wonder what might be doing with her own Kit; and the case being now one of neck or nothing, her husband had let her come, foreseeing that she might be of use with Grace Oglander.

Mr. Sharp rode back to the cottage. Right well he knew what a time ladies take to put their clothes upon them; and the more grow the years of their practice in the art, the longer grow the hours needful. Still he thought Miss Patch had been quite long enough. But what could he say, when he saw her at her window, with the looking glass sturdily set back upon the drawers, lifting her hands in short prayer, as genuine a prayer as was ever tried. She was praying for a blessing on this new adventure, and that all might lead up to the glory of the Kingdom; she besought to be relieved at last from her wearying instrumentality. Mr. Sharp still had some little faith left, and he did not scoff at his sister's prayer, as a man of low nature might have done.

Nevertheless he struck up with his whip at the ivy round her bedroom window, to impress the need of brevity; and the lady, though shocked at the suggestion of curtailment, did curtail immediately. In less than five minutes she was busy at the doorway, seeing to the exit of everything; and presently, with very pious precision, she gave Mrs. Margery Daw half a crown, and a tract which some friend should read to her, after rubbing her glands with a rind of bacon and a worn-out pocket handkerchief.

(To be continued.)

No woman knows the secret of being able to keep a secret.

CURIOS DINNER PARTIES.

Epicures of Eccentricity Who Search for Novelty.

Ordinary methods of dining do not suit everybody, even when the costliest luxury is employed. Epicures of an eccentric turn of mind in search of novelty have recourse to strange arrangements, according to the Toledo Blade.

During the recent season at Dinard, the Breton watering place, a very novel dinner was given by two distinguished visitors, the vicomte and vicomtesse de Saussine. The idea was to make the dining room as much like a real garden as possible, and, with this object in view, real green turf was laid over the whole of the floor and daisies and other flowers were planted in it. In the center of the "lawn" there was a rockery, with a fountain playing and a live rabbit was gamboling near it. The guests attended in flowing draperies, wearing garlands of roses upon them, and they took their seats on cushions on the grass while their food was served to them on wooden dishes, which were laid on campstools in place of tables. Fruit and wine were scattered in profusion on the grass and, in order to obviate all difficulties of passing the salt cellar around a huge loaf of bread, hollowed out and filled with salt was suspended from the ceiling and this was swung around from one guest to another as required.

Somewhat similar in conception was another very curious dinner party given a few months ago in New York by a well-known leader of American society—Mrs. Arthur B. Proal. This was a "farmyard" dinner. One of the largest rooms in a leading restaurant was transformed for the occasion into something that looked very much indeed like a farmyard. Around the walls were scenes representing fields and pastures and the floor was strewn with agricultural implements of all kinds, as if the farmhands had only just left the place.

Pigs and lambs were roaming about, rabbits stopped munching carrots to skip away frightened as the guests entered the hall and at the same moment a representation of a rising sun appeared on the horizon, a rooster standing on a wooden box saluted it in his usual manner. Chickens, ducks and geese immediately began to straighten their feathers and run about.

Dinner was served in the inside of a huge egg, which was placed in the center of the landscape, reaching from the floor almost to the ceiling, and which had been most skillfully fashioned by a decorative carpenter. The table inside was a perfect oval. It was hollowed in the center and within the hollow part were floral decorations which represented the white and yellow parts of the egg. The yolk was made of daffodils and jonquills and the outer fringe of white was made up of lilies and candytuft and such flowers as one might see on a country hedge.

This dinner was really arranged as a sort of rival in eccentricity to one which was given at the same time by another famous New York hostess, Mrs. C. K. G. Billings, which came to be known as the "horseback" dinner. All the guests were bidden to attend on horseback and they trotted into the dining room without dismounting and there took dinner from tables which were just saddle high. While the guests partook of their soups and entrees the horses munched oats at the mangers which had been provided for them. All the guests on this occasion, numbering thirty-five, were ladies.

Hens' Rights.

There is a story of an old New Hampshire doctor who, on taking out a wagon that had not been used for some time, found that a hen was sitting in it. He merely "harnessed up" without disturbing her, and he and his biddy made a series of calls. The Boston Herald offers this true story of the town of Amesbury, which owns a small fire apparatus:

Outside the fire limits is a small community that, on petition, received an appropriation for the purchase of a "hand-tub." It was installed in an abandoned blacksmith shop, where it remained for two years, used only for decorative purposes in street parades. Last summer a stroke of lightning started a small fire in a farmhouse near by. The volunteer department rallied at once, but when the arrived at the engine-house, the foreman stood at the door.

"Don't touch her, boys!" cried he. "I've got two hens settin' in the box. Let 'em use buckets."

They agreed, and the hens were allowed to pursue their incubating ways.

Hopeless.

"Hair needs trimming badly, sir." "Yes, that's about the way you'd trim it." "Better let me cut it?" "No, it's all right." "Comes down over your coat collar." "Yes, I'm going to have the coat collar cut down."—Cleveland Leader.

When you give a compliment, do not give it grudgingly?

SIMPLER FOOD NOWADAYS.

A Miller Tells of the Changes in the American Table.

"I believe people's tastes in foods are becoming more simple," said J. T. Mueller, secretary of the Fraternity of Operative Millers' Association, to the Kansas City Star. "They don't load up with beefsteak and hot cakes nowadays at breakfast, as they formerly did. Even the workmen—manual labor, I mean—have learned to get along on lighter foods, from which they obtain just as much nourishment. Diets are simpler now. Of course the popularity of these foods, 'chop feed,' some people call them, and the large number put on the market, has resulted in the production of some that are dark in color, which gives opportunity for adulteration. A bad quality of wheat is used in these dark stuffs."

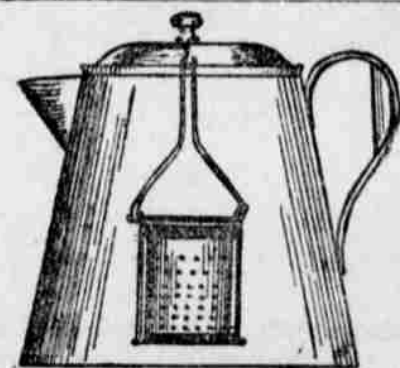
"You don't see much genuine buckwheat nowadays. Did you ever think of that? This is because it is grown in so few sections of the country; the supply is so small that it is necessarily mixed with wheat flour. This doesn't injure it, however, if the addition is pure and good. The bleaching of flour doesn't improve it. The tests show, too, that it doesn't injure it. The new process dries the flour as age would not do, but does it in less time. Flour two or three months old is whiter than when you first grind it."

"There are many kinds of flour now, standard grades, patents, bakers' whole wheat flour, gluten flour. Master bakers are taught in these times to understand their work. They go to laboratories and schools instead of learning by an apprenticeship. They learn all there is to know about flour and baking, with the result that they can produce a loaf of bread so cheaply that no housewife can compete with them. If a woman values her time, her health, her looks, she won't bake bread in these times. If she purs even a small price on these she'll find that the loaf she bakes costs more than if she paid a nickel for it at the bakery. That's not advertising; it's a fact. People are not baking, nowadays; they're buying their bread, pies and cakes. It's cheaper."

AN AMERICAN COFFEE POT.

A Container for the Berry Attached to the Lid.

While most civilized nations have their characteristic coffee pots, the American has adopted them all. In some instances he has endeavored to combine the good points of each into a single machine, but coffeemaking in this country appears to be a matter of individual taste, and what suits one individual does not please another, so that the American house-furnishing store offers a wide selection in coffee pots. There is a distinct tendency evident in all the improved designs to provide some means for removing the



AN AMERICAN COFFEE POT.

coffee at a predetermined point in the operation. Percolators, coffee bags and steamers are variations of this type. The illustration shows a novel means of attaining the same end. A cage consisting of a perforated receptacle is suspended from a hook attached to the cover of the pot. This has the advantage of permitting the coffee grounds to be removed conveniently and without danger of scalding the hands. The metallic perforated cage is more conveniently cleaned than the coffee bag, which it is designed to replace. Of course, the pot can be used for tea as well as coffee, the cage taking the place of the familiar tea ball, the use of which avoids the extraction of the tannic acid compounds upon standing, which gives to tea the well-known bitter taste.

The Rating He Received.

"I hear your wife gave you a good rating last night," remarked the sporting citizen.

"Yes, she gave me a good rating," admitted the convivial citizen. "Such a good rating, in fact, that it's a pity I can't use her as a reference instead of Bradstreet's."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Pretty Sure of That.

"He's bought quite a lot of that stock, I believe. Do you think he'll realize anything from that deal?"

"I think he'll realize what a chump he was."—Philadelphia Ledger.

Back to His Native Land.

Mr. Geering—Where is that French chauffeur that you had last summer? Mr. Sparker—He went back to Ireland.—Puck.

A man's epitaph is about as much benefit to him as a last year's snowball.

Lots of men are honest because they make more money by being so.