

CRIPPS, THE CARRIER

BY

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CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued.)

He rode back quietly along the track, over which he had chased the Carrier's cart; and his foot was now in such anguish, that the whole of his wonderful self-command was needed to keep him silent. He set his hard lips, and his rigid nose was drawn as pale as parchment, and the fire of his eyes died into the dullness of universal rancor. No hard-hearted man can find his joy in the sweet soft works of Nature, any more than the naked flint nurses flowers. The beauty of the young May twilight flowing through the woven wood, and harboring, like a blue bloom, here and there, in bays of verdure; while upward all the great trees reared their domes once more in summer roofage, and stopped out the heavens; while in among them, flitting refuge, birds filled the world with melody, and all the bustling rustle of the well-earned night was settling down—through all of these rode Mr. Sharp, and hated every one of them.

Presently his horse gave a little turn of the head, but was too cowed down to shy again; and a tall woman darkly clad was standing by the timber track with one hand up to catch his eyes.

"You here, Cinnaminta!" cried the lawyer with surprise. "I have no time now. What do you want with me?"

"I want you to see the work of your hand—your only child, dead by your own blow."

Struck with cold horror, he could not speak. But he reeled in the saddle, with his hand on his heart, and stared at Cinnaminta.

"It is true," she said softly; "come here and see it. Even for you, Luke Sharp, I never could have wished a sight like this. You have ruined my life; you have made my people thieves; the loss of my children lies on you. But to see your only son murdered by yourself is too bad even for such as you."

"I never meant it—I never meant it—God is my witness that I never did. I thought his head was a great deal thicker."

Sneering as he was, he meant no jest now. He simply spoke the earnest truth. In his passion he had struck men before, and knocked them down, with no great harm; he forgot his own fury in this one blow, and the weight of his heavily loaded whip. Then he touched his horse gently, having had too much of rage, and allowed him to take his own choice of way.

The rising of the moon, to assuage the earth of all the long sun fever, the spread of dewy light, and quivering of the nerves of shadow, and then the soft, unfeared beauty of the dim tranquility, coming over Luke Sharp's road, or sitting on his face, what differences could they make to its white despair? He hated light, he loathed the shade, he scorned the meekness of the dapple, and he cursed the darkness.

Out of sight of the road, and yet within a level course of it, there lay to his knowledge a deep and quiet and seldom traveled forest pool. This had long been in his mind, and coming to the footpath now, he drew his bridle towards it.

To the verge of this water Luke Sharp rode, with his horse prepared for anything. He swept with his keen eyes all the length of liquid darkness ebbing into blackness in the distance. And he spoke his last words—"This will do."

Then he drove his horse into the margin of the pool, till the water was up to the girths, and the broad beams of the moon shone over them. Here he drew both feet from the stirrup irons, and sat on his saddle sideways, sluing his crushed and burning foot, and watching the water drip from it. And then he carefully pulled from the holster the pistol that still was loaded, took care that the flint and the priming were right, and turning his horse that he might escape, while the man fell into deep water, steadfastly gazed at the moon, and laid the muzzle to his temple, justly careful that it should be the temple and the vein which tallied with that upon which he had struck his son.

A blaze lit up the forest pool, and a roar shook the fall of ivy; a heavy splash added to the treasures of the deep, and a little flotilla of white stuff began to sail about on the black water, in the commotion made by man and horse.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Although the solid Cripps might now be supposed by other people to have baffled all his enemies, in his own mind there was no sense of triumph, but much of wonder. The first thing he did when all danger was past, and Robbin was peddling his old tune—"three-happenings and tuppence, three-happenings and tuppence; a good horse knows what his shoes are worth"—was to tie up Grace in a pair of sacks. He thumped them well on the foot-board first, to shake all the mealiness out of them; and then, with permission, he spread one over the delicate shoulders, and the other in front, across the trembling heart and throat. Then, by some hereditary art, he fastened them together, so that the night air could not creep between.

"Cripps, you are too good," said Grace. "But now, miss, not another word you say. Inside of them sacks you go to sleep. Scratched you be to that extreme in getting out of Satan's den, that tallow candles dropped in water is what I must see to. None on 'em knows it, no, not one on 'em. Man or horse, it cometh all the same. It taketh a man to do it, though."

"I should like to see a horse do it,"

said Grace; and her sleepy smile passed into sleep. Eager as she was to be in her father's arms, the excitement and the exertion and the unwanted shakings, and passage through the air began to tell their usual tale.

This was the very thing the crafty Carrier longed to bring about. It left him time to consider how to meet two difficulties. The first was to get her through Beckley without any uproar of the natives; the second, to place her in her father's arms without dangerous emotion. The former point he compassed well, by taking advantage of the many lanes and outs of the leisurely lanes of Beckley, so that he drew up at the back door of the Barton, without a single sapient villager being one bit the wiser.

The young lady by this time was wide awake, and stirred with such violent throbbings of heart, at the view of divine and desirable Beckley sleeping in the moonlight, and at the breath of her own home-door, and haunt of her darling father's steps, that Cripps had to hold her down by her sacks, and wished that he could strap or so. "Do 'ee zit still, miss; do 'ee zit still," he kept on saying, till he was afraid of being rude.

"You are a tyrant, Cripps; a perfect tyrant. Because you have picked me up, and been so good, have you any right to keep me from my father?"

"Them reasonings," said Cripps in a decided tone, "is good; but comes to nothing. Either you do as I begs of you, missy, or I turns Dobbin's head, and back you go. It is for the Squire's sake I spake so harsh to 'ee. Supposin' you was to kill him, missy, what would you say arterwards?"

"Oh, is he so dreadfully ill as that? I will do everything exactly as you tell me."

"Then get down very softly, miss, and run and hide in that old doorway, quite out of the moonshine, and stay there till I come to fetch 'ee."

Still covered with the sacks, the maiden did as she was told; while the Carrier, with ungainly skill, and needless cautions to his horse, descended. Then he walked into the Squire's kitchen, with whip in hand, as usual, as if he were come to deliver goods.

"Mary Hookham," said Cripps, coming over and laying his hand on her shoulder. "Cripps hath a-brought home to this old ancient mansion the very most valuable case of goods as ever were inside it. Better than the crown as the young Queen hath for ten months now preparing."

"Alive?" asked Mary, shrinking back towards the fire, for his metaphor might mean coffin.

"Now, there you go down again—there you go down," answered Cripps, who enjoyed the situation, and desired to make the most of it. "I thought you was all intellect—but better perhaps without too much. Put it to yourself now, Mary, whether I should look like this if I had only brought remains."

"Oh, where is he? Where is he? Wherever can her be?" cried Mary, forgetting all her fine education, in strong vernacular excitement.

"Her be where I knows to find her again," answered Zacchary, with a steady face. It was not for any one to run in and strike a light betwixt him and his own work. "Her might be to Abingdon, or to Banbury. Proper time come, I can vetch her forrard."

"Oh, I thought you had got her in the house, Master Cripps. How disappointing you do grow, to be sure! I suppose it is the way of all men."

Mary shed a tear, and Master Cripps went closer, to be sure of it. He was pleased at the sign, but he went on with his business.

"You deserve to know everything. Now can 'ee shut the doors, without a chance of anybody breaking in?"

Mary and the cook, with a glance at one another, fastened all the doors of the large, low kitchen, except the one leading to the lane itself.

"You bide just as you be," said Cripps, "and I'll show 'ee something worth looking at."

He ran to the place where Grace was hiding, in the chill and the heat of impatience, and he took the coarse sacks from her shoulders, as if her sackcloth time was done at last. Then he led her to the warmth and light, and she hung behind afraid of them. That strange but uncommon shyness of one's own familiar home—when long unseen—came over her, and she felt, for the moment, almost afraid of her own beloved father. But Cripps made her come, and both Mary Hookham and the fat cook cried, "Oh, my! My good!" and ran up and kissed her, and held her hands, while she stood pale and mute, with large blue eyes brimful of tears, and lips that wavered between smile and sob.

"You promised to bide by my directions," the Carrier cried reproachfully; "if 'ee don't, I can't answer for nort of it. Now sit you down, miss, by back kitchen door, to come or go either way, according as is ordered. Now, Mary, please to go and say that Cripps hath come to see his Worship, about a little mistake he hath made."

Mr. Oglander never refused to see any who came to visit him. His simple, straightforward mind compelled him to go through with everything as it turned up, whether it were of his own business or any other person's. Therefore he said, "Show Cripps in here."

Cripps was in no hurry to be shown in. He felt that he had a ticklish job to carry through, and he might drop the

handles, if himself were touched amiss. And he thought that he could get on much better with a clever woman there to help him.

"Please, your worship," he began, coming in, with his finger to his forehead, and his stiff knee sticking out. "don't 'ee run away now, Mary, that's a dear; you knows all the way-bills, and his Worship will allow of you."

"Why, Cripps," Mr. Oglander exclaimed, "you are making a very great fuss to-night; and you look as if you had been run over. Even if it is half a crown, Cripps, you are come to prove against me—put it down. I will not dispute it. I know that you would rather wrong yourself than me." The old gentleman was tired, and he did not want to talk.

"Of course, of course," said Zacchary, "but the point is a different thing; and Mary, speak up, and say you know it is."

"Yes, sir, I do assure you now," said Mary; "the point is altogether quite a different sort of thing."

"Then why can't you come to it?" cried the Squire; "is it that you want to marry one another?"

Mary's face blushed to a fine young color, and Cripps made a nod at her, as if he meant to think of it, but must leave that for another evening.

"I never could abide such stuff," muttered Mary, "as if all the world was a-made of wives and husbands."

"Now, your Worship," said Cripps, "will 'ee please to hearken, without your own opinion before has heard what there be to say? Nayther of us drameth of doing you the wrong to take away Mary, while you be wanting of her. You ought to have known us better, Squire. And as for poor Mary, I ain't said a word to back up her hopes of a' haxing me yet. Now, Miss Mary, have I?"

"No, that you never haven't, Master Cripps! And it may come too late, if it ever do come."

"Well, well," continued Mr. Cripps, without much terror at the way she turned her back; "trilly, your Worship, it was you who throwed us out. Reckoning of my times is a hard thing for me; and a hundred and four times a year is too much for the discretion of a horse a'most."

"Very well, Cripps," said the Squire in despair; "every one knows that you must have your time. Not a word will I speak again until I have your leave."

"I calls it onhandsome of your Worship to say that, being so contrary of my best karaktaristicks. Your Worship maneth all things for the best, I am persuaded; but speaking thus you drives me into a perspiration, the same as used to be a sweat when I was young and forced to it. Now doth your Worship know that all things cometh in a round, like a sound cart wheel, to all such folks as trusts the Lord?"

"I know that you have such a theory, Cripps. You beat the whole village in theology."

"And the learned scholar in Oxford, your Worship, he were quite doubled up about the tribe of Levi. But for all of their stuff, the Lord still goeth on, making His rounds to His own right time; and now His time hath come for you, Squire."

"Do try to speak out, Cripps; and tell me what excites you so."

"Mary, his Worship is beginning to look white. Fetch in the pepper castor, and the gallon of vinegar as I delivered last Wednesday."

"No, Mary, no. I want nothing of the kind. Tell him—beg him—just to speak out what he means."

"Can 'ee trust in the word of the Lord, your Worship?" asked Cripps, advancing bravely. "Can 'ee do that now, without no disrespect to 'ee?"

"In two minutes more you'll drive me mad, between you," the old Squire shouted, as he rose and spread his arms. "In the name of God, what is it? Is it of my daughter?"

"Yes, yes, father, dearest; who else could it be in the whole of the world?" a clear voice cried, as a timid form grew clear. "They would go on all the night, but I could not wait a moment. Daddy, I am sure that you won't be frightened. You can't have too much of your own Grace, can you? Don't let it go to your heart, my darling. Grace will rub it for you. There, let me put my head just as I used; and then you will be certain, won't you?"

She laid her head upon her father's breast, while Mary caught hold of the Carrier's sleeve, and led him away to the passage. Then the old man's weak and trembling fingers strayed among his daughter's hair, and he could not speak, or smile, or weep.

"There, you will be better directly, darling," she whispered, looking up with streaming eyes, as she felt him tremble exceedingly, and her quick hands eased him of the little brooch (containing her mother's hair and her own), which fastened his quivering shirt frill; "you wanted me to come back, didn't you? But not in such a hurry, darling—not in such a hurry. Father dear, why ever don't you kiss me?"

"If you did not run away, dear—say you did not run away."

"Daddy, you cannot be so ill minded, so very wicked to your only child."

The old man took his child's hand in his own, and soothed her down, and drew her down, until they were kneeling at the table side by side; then they put up their hands to thank God for one another, and did it not with lips, but with heart and soul.

(To be continued.)

Careless Papa.

Woodby Tooke—Grace, are you certain that your father is whistling out there in the yard just because he's in a good humor?

Gracey Cooke—I don't know—why do you ask?

Woodby Tooke—Well, it's approaching the hour when I usually go home, you know, and—well, I wish he wouldn't whistle so loud—he'll arouse that blamed dog the first thing you know.—Cleveland Leader.

THE BOOMING CANNON

RECITALS OF CAMP AND BATTLE INCIDENTS.

Survivors of the Rebellion Relate Many Amusing and Startling Incidents of Marches, Camp Life, Foraging Experiences and Battle Scenes.

"Soon after we left Atlanta on the march to the sea," said Captain Fowler, "we captured two guns of a battery that had been taken from us a few weeks before. The whole outfit of guns and caissons, cannoneers, drivers, and horses was turned over to me, and as just at that time I could not put my hands on artillerymen or drivers to take charge, I kept the captured men in their places and sent them forward under guard. For all that day Sherman's army had on the march a section of a battery manned by men in gray.

"The prisoners accepted the situation cheerfully and talked jocularly about doing duty in Sherman's army. In the evening they went into camp in regulation order, and when I came up I found my own men accepting as gifts the cedar canteens and other parts of the equipment of the rebels that struck their fancy. I called a halt on this and informed my men that they could buy or trade for the possessions of the prisoners, but they could not levy on them. Every rebel carried a curious little keg of cedar wood instead of a canteen, and most of them were eager to trade their little kegs for our tin canteens and most of my men were as eager to trade canteens for kegs.

"For an hour or more there was lively trading, the rebel artillerymen receiving many things they wanted and my own company of horse artillery coming into possession of many curiosities. The next morning the prisoners took their places with other prisoners and I lost sight of them. We were well toward Savannah when, as I was riding by the column of men captured on the march, I was surprised by a cheer. This came from my detachment of rebel artillerymen, who remembered me as associated with their first and only day's service in Sherman's army."

"Do you remember," said the Sergeant, "Captain Lucius H. Drury, of the Old Badger, or Third Wisconsin Battery? Just previous to the battle of Chickamauga he was General Van Cleve's chief of artillery, and when Crittenden, commanding the Twenty-first corps, ordered General Van Cleve to make a reconnaissance from Gordon's Mills toward Lafayette, to feel the enemy, but not to bring on an engagement, Drury managed the artillery part of the program. This was September 13, 1863, and we soon 'felt the enemy.' As our regiment emerged from the woods in about the center of our line a rebel battery opened on us, and we were soon flat on the ground to escape the shot and shell.

"I was not satisfied with the situation and was looking for a hole or a depression in the ground, when Major Drury, chief of artillery, and Captain John J. McCook, now of New York, rode past our line and proceeded quite a distance to the front. Drury was seeking a position for his artillery and Captain McCook was to report the situation in front to corps headquarters. As they rode forward they were fired on by the rebel sharpshooters and one of the first shots struck Drury just above the belt plate and passed straight through his body to the spine. He said to McCook: 'The blanked rebels have pinked me, but don't let them have the satisfaction of knowing it.'

"Captain McCook knew that with such a wound the Major could not retain consciousness long. As they were in close range of the enemy McCook grasped Drury's sword belt with one hand to keep the Major from rattling off his horse, and taken the bridle rein with the other hand guided both horses into the woods for cover. McCook kept himself all the time between the Major and the enemy, and by zigzagging among the trees escaped the bullets fired at him. Reaching a sheltered spot McCook dismounted and assisted the Major off his horse. The latter lost consciousness almost as soon as he was placed upon the ground, and the stretcher bearers brought him through our line. The wound was then pronounced mortal, but the bullet was removed and the Major was in the saddle again in four weeks and was in active service to the close of the war."

"I heard," said the Doctor, "a very simple, pathetic little story the other day about a soldier passing through the lines under fire. Comrade Bradish, who related the incident, said that one of the men of his regiment who had been captured escaped from the rebels directly in front and ran at full speed toward the lines of his own regiment. The rebels opened a furious fire on the escaping prisoner, and no one expected him to come out of such a rain of bullets alive. But he came on and on in spite of the bullets, and at last leaped over the works of his

own company, to be received with cheers.

"He did not stop, however, as the men expected, but ran on to where the flag was placed, and, dropping exhausted, caught the edge of the flag in his hand and kissed it again and again. He was so wrought up by his tremendous experience that he could not speak, could not reason, but, as he said afterward, instinct led him to the flag, which never seemed to him so radiant and precious as when he fixed his eyes upon it as he raced with the enemy's bullets. He had no sense of comradeship in his distraughtness, but saw only the flag and went to it. Other soldiers overwhelmed in battle, wounded, and dazed, have felt, I know, the same wild desire to reach the flag."—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Fistuffs on the Picket-Line.

"The funniest thing that ever occurred in my experience," said an old officer, "took place in the summer of '64 on the picket-line in front of the Tenth Corps.

"I had not been promoted then, and was out on the line as a Sergeant. The firing was so sharp and heavy that we would have called it a battle two years before. The pickets on our extreme right at Bernuda Hundred were so close to each other that the line was only relieved of nights, and we kept quiet about it, too, for at the least noise the Johnnies would fire at the sound; so that each man would crawl out to his station and drop into a little pit, while the man he relieved would crawl back as cautiously to safety.

"One mighty hot day, some time in July, it seemed that all the boys on each side drew so heavily on their canteens that they ran out of water and along in the afternoon everybody seemed to be thirsty as blazes. The lines were not over forty yards apart but just between us and the rebels a little branch ran down toward the James River, and the water looked mighty tempting. After a while one of our boys sang out to the man across the creek: 'Johnny, give me a drink!' Johnny yelled back: 'All right; come after it.' That raised a laugh along both lines, but in a minute our man sang out: 'Blamed if I won't do it if you won't shoot!' 'Flirt your shirt, then, and come ahead.' 'Honest?' 'Yes, indeed, and we'll all fill our canteens.'

The proposition took, and in spite of the yelling of the officers on each line, pretty nearly every bayonet on each side showed up something white and in less than ten minutes nearly every man, Yank and Johnny, was filling his canteen. Then came the usual trading of coffee, tobacco, and news papers, and then some good-natured chaffing.

"Much later than any of his rebel comrades, a long-legged, thin, red-headed and freckled Johnny came down the bank, and a 'smart Aleck' of the One Hundredth New York sang out: 'Hello, Tar Heel, why didn't you come sooner?' Johnny walked straight up to him and drawled out: 'Say, how'd you know, stranger, that I'm from No'th K'liny?' 'Well,' said Mr. Smarty, 'you look more like a razor back than anything I've seen this side of New Berne.' Tar Heel smacked him square in the mouth, and before the laugh quieted both went at it hot and heavy, give and take. Our man was a pretty healthy fellow with plenty of ability to take care of himself, but in about ten minutes, while all hands formed a ring, Tar Heel had licked him till he hollered. While the fight was going on the Johnnies kept betting all the tobacco they had against our tobacco and sugar, and when the affair was over told us that their man was known all through the division as a lively fighter, although he didn't look it 'by a blamed sight!'

"Both men cleaned off in the branch, and while they were still shaking hands one of our shells burst close by, and in two minutes all the men were back in their burrows and as anxious to shoot the stuffing out of each other as they had been friendly just before."

Return of the Battle Flags.

The graceful action of a Republican Congress in returning to the Southern States the Confederate flags is doing more to obliterate any lingering feeling of harshness that may have existed between the veterans of the contending armies than any measure passed since the surrender of the Confederate forces.

Of the one hundred and ninety-eight captured flags that have been identified, sixty-three belong to Virginia, thirty-one to North Carolina, twenty-four to Georgia, fourteen to Alabama, five to Arkansas, seven to Florida, one to Kentucky, eight to Louisiana, eighteen to Mississippi, two to Missouri, fourteen to South Carolina, seven to Tennessee, and four to Texas.

There are a number of other flags in the possession of the government that cannot be identified as belonging to any State. It has been suggested that these be turned over to the U. C. V. Association to be displayed at their annual reunions, when most of them, doubtless, would be identified by some of the attending veterans.—Confederate Veteran.