

CRIPPS, THE CARRIER

BY
R. D. BLACKMORE

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

CHAPTER XXIII.—(Continued.)

Maon Miss Patch (with her dress tucked up and her spectacles at their brightest) marched towards the carriage, where Grace must be waiting for her. The sloping of the sunset threw her shadow, and the ring-doves in the wood were cooling. The peace and the beauty touched even her heart; and the hushing of the winds of evening in the nestling of the wood, appeared the ruffled mind to that simplicity of childhood, where God and good are one.

But just as she was shaking hands benevolently with Mrs. Sharp, before getting into the carriage, back rode Mr. Sharp at full gallop, and without any ceremony shouted, "Where's the girl?"

"Miss Oglender! Why, I thought she was here!" Hannah Patch answered, with a little gasp.

"And I thought she was coming with you," cried Mrs. Sharp, "as well as my dear boy, Christopher."

"I let her go to meet him as you arranged," Miss Patch exclaimed decisively; "I had nothing to do with her after that."

"Is it possible that the boy has rogued me?" As Mr. Sharp said these few words, his face took a color never seen before, even by his loving wife. The color was a livid purple, and it made his sparkling eyes look pale.

"They must be at the cottage," Mrs. Sharp suggested; "let me go to look for the naughty young couple."

The lawyer had his reasons for preventing this, as well as for keeping himself where he was; and therefore at a sign from him, Miss Patch turned back, and set off with all haste for the cottage. No sooner had she turned the cor-

ner, than she would have no eyes any more; but Dobbin had received a great many comforts from the little hands spread out to him; and he stopped and sniffed, and lifted up his nose that it might be stroked, and even possibly regaled with a bunch of white-blossomed clover.

"Oh, Cripps, good Cripps, you dear old Cripps," Grace Oglender cried with great tears in her eyes, "you never have forgotten me, Zachary Cripps? They say that I am dead and buried. It isn't true, not a word of it. Dear Cripps, I am as sound alive as you are. Only I have been shamefully treated. Do let me get up in your cart, good Cripps, and my father will thank you for ever."

"But Missy, poor Missy," Cripps stammered out, drawing on his heart for every word, "you was buried on the seventh day of January, in the year of our Lord 1838; three pickaxes was broken over digging of your grave, by reason of the frosty weather; and all of us come to your funeral. I've go back, Miss, that's a dear. The churchyard to Beckley is a comfortable place, and this here wood no place for a Christian."

"But Cripps, dear Cripps, do try to let me speak. They might have broken thirty pickaxes, but I had nothing at all to do with it. May I get up? Oh, may I get up? It is the only chance of saving me. I hear a horse tearing through the wood! Oh, dear, clever Cripps, you will repent it for the rest of all your life. Even Dobbin is sharper than you are."

"You blessed old humbug," cried a stern young voice, as Kit Sharp rushed forward, "there is no time for your heavy brain to work. You shall have the young lady, dead or alive. Pardon me, Grace—

life the old horse rebelled and flung on at full speed.

"He knoweth best, miss; he knoweth best," cried Zachary, while Grace clung to him; "he hath a divination of his own, if he doth'n't kick the cart to tatters. But never would I turn tail on a single man—who is you chap riding after us?"

"Oh, Cripps, it is that dreadful man," whispered Grace, with her teeth jerking into her tongue, "who has kept me in prison, and perhaps killed my father. Oh, Dobbin, sweet Dobbin, try one more gallop, and you shall have clover forever."

Poor Dobbin responded with his best endeavor; but, alas! his old feet, and his legs, and his breath were not as in the palmy days; and a long shuffling trot, with a canter for a change, were the utmost he could compass. He wagged his grey tail, in brief expostulation, conveying that he could go no faster.

"Now for it," said Cripps, as the foe overhauled them. "I never was afraid of one man yet; and I don't mane to begin at this time of life. Missy, go down into the body of the cart. Her rideeth aisyly enough by now; and cover these up with the bucking baskets. Cripps will take thee to thy father, little 'un. Never fear, my deary!"

She obeyed him by jumping back into the cart—but as for hiding in a basket, Grace had a little too much of her father's spirit. The weather was so fine that no tilt was on; she sat on the rail there, and faced her bitter foe.

"That child is my ward," shouted Mr. Sharp, riding up to the side of Cripps; while his eyes passed on from Grace's; "give her up to me this moment, fellow. I can take her by law of the land, and I will."

"Liar Sharp," answered Master Cripps, desiring to address him professionally, "this here young lady belongeth to her father; and no man else shall have her. Any reasoning thou hast to come down with, us will hearken, as we goes along; if so be that thou keepest to a civil tongue. But high words never bate me down one penny; and never shall do so, while the Lord is with me."

"Hark you, Cripps," replied Mr. Sharp, putting his lips to the Carrier's ear; and whispering so that Grace could only guess at enormous sums of money "down the rail, and no man the wiser!"

"But," said the Carrier, grinning gently; "now Liar Sharp hath outwitted himself. What Liar would offer such a sight of money for what were his own by the lai of the land?"

"You cursed fool, will you die?" cried Sharp, drawing and cocking a great horse pistol; "your blood be on your own head—then yield."

Cripps, with great presence of mind, made believe for a moment to surrender, till Mr. Sharp lowered his weapon, and came up to stop the cart, and to take out Grace. In a moment, the Carrier, with a wonderful stroke, learned from long whip wielding, fetched down his new lash on the eyeball of the young and ticklish horse of the lawyer. Mad with pain and rage, the horse stood up as straight as a soldier drilling, and balanced on the turn to fall back, break his spine and crush his rider. Luke Sharp in his peril slipped off, and the cart wheel comfortably crunched over his left foot. His pistol bullet whizzed through a tall old tree. He stood on one foot and swore horribly.

"Gee wugg, Dobbin," said Cripps, in a cheerful, but not by any means excited, vein; "us needn't gallop any more now, I reckon. The Liar hath put his foot in it. Plaize now, Miss Grace, come and sit to front again."

"We shall have you yet, you old clod," Mr. Sharp in his rage yelled after him; "oh, I'll pay you out for this trick. You aren't come to the corner yet?"

"Ho, ho!" shouted Cripps; "Liar Sharp, my duty to you! You don't catch me goin' to the corner, sir, if some of the firm be a waitin' for me there."

With these words he gaily struck off to the right, through a by-lane, unknown, but just passable, where the sound of his wheels was no longer heard, and the mossy boughs closed over him. Grace clung to his arm; and glory and gladness filled the simple heart of Cripps.

Meanwhile Mr. Sharp, who had stuck to his bridle, limped to his horse, but could not mount. Then he drew forth the other pistol from the near holster, and cocked it and leveled it at Cripps; but thanks to brave Dobbin, now the distance was too great, and he kept the charge for nobler use.

(To be continued.)

For Another's Need.

No Japanese in the struggle before Port Arthur ever showed more generosity and courage than did an obscure Japanese woman far from the scenes of war.

When Miss Helen Keller was at the exposition in St. Louis, she visited the Japanese tea house, and for a few minutes shook hands with some of the waitresses, little olive-colored women who spoke almost no English, but expressed their interest and intelligence without words.

Many weeks after Miss Keller had returned to Boston she heard from an official of the exposition that one of the Japanese waitresses had gone to a St. Louis physician and asked to have one of her eyes taken out and given to Miss Keller. When she was told that such a gift was impossible, she wept in bitter disappointment.

Too Late for the Colt.

Confidence Dan (at the St. Legs)—Is Mr. Harube, of Hicks Corners, stopping here?

Hotel Clerk—Yes, sir.

Confidence Dan—Where can I find him?

Hotel Clerk—There he is over at the counter, paying his bill.

Confidence Dan—Curse the luck!

Foiled again!—Cleveland Leader.

FUNERAL OF A PRINCESS.

Road Made for the Procession and Temple Built in Korea.

The Crown Princess of Korea had been dead a month before her funeral took place. During the interval a road was made seven miles out of the city and a temple was built to hold the body, says the London Graphic. At the procession left the palace gates some of the mourners, according to ancient custom, tried to stop the coffin by pushing back the bearers, who in their turn steadily drove forward. The idea of this is to show regret at the passing of the body, while the inexorable power of death, overcoming all opposition, holds its way.

During this commotion the priest on each end of the platform holding the bier urged the bearers with a long pole, the end of which was painted red. In accordance with ancient custom the pole was dipped in a pot of red paint and those bearers who neglected their work received a dab of red on their white garments, and at the end of the day those bearing the marks were punished.

Funerals in Korea are always supposed to take place at night and so keep up this supposition men carrying long gauze lanterns on small poles run by the side of the coffin and line the route at the start. Curious and wonderful are the ancient costumes which make their appearance on such occasions. Their beauty is not shown to advantage by their wearers, as they are the poorest of horsemen. Even holding on to the saddle with both hands is not a sufficient guarantee of safety, but they must have two grooms to walk by the head of their tiny mounts to prevent accidents.

In the procession, which takes the whole day to pass, are chairs containing figures of devils. Great paper horses, hideous in appearance, accompany the coffins, presumably that the deceased may have a mount in the other land. There are two coffins, the one in this instance contained the body of the princess, the other being intended to deceive the evil spirits. At the graveside, in a covered temple, the women of the palace in ancient costumes howl and moan the night through, their wailing rising above all other sounds.

The princess' funeral as a whole appeared more like a page from the "Arabian Nights" than anything else. Notwithstanding the empty coffers of the Korean ministry the sum of something like one million yen was expended on this funeral.

A WOMAN'S WIT.

A good illustration of the quick wit of a woman appears in the following incident of the old coaching days of the far West. The man of the tale does not show off in the best of lights, and did not deserve his reward. The catch was on its way over a lonely road, and carried among its passengers a lady going to join her husband and a man traveling by himself.

"I have one thousand dollars in my pocketbook," confided the lone traveler to the lady, "and I feel very uneasy. Would you mind concealing it in your dress? If we are held up they are less likely to search you."

The lady consented, and hid the roll of bills. Toward evening the shout of "Throw up your hands!" brought the coach to a standstill, and four men, masked and on horseback, demanded, at the point of the pistol, that all money should be immediately given up. The lone traveler passed over all his remaining cash, consisting of a few dollars, and was congratulating himself on his escape, when, to his horror, he heard the lady say:

"I have a thousand dollars here, but I suppose I must give them up," and without further hesitation she handed over the precious pile of greenbacks.

The robbers rode off in high good humor, but as soon as they were gone the traveler let loose his wrath. He abused the lady in no measured terms, and hardly stopped short of calling her a coward. The accused said little, but when the end of the journey was reached, she invited the angry man to her house.

"I shall have to accept," he said, sulkily, "I haven't a cent in the world through your stupidity."

As he was dressing for dinner that night his host came to his room.

"Here are the thousand dollars," he said, "which my wife ventured to borrow. You see, she had twenty thousand dollars hid in her gown, and she thought if she gave up your thousand it would save further search. Thank you for the loan, which saved me a heavy loss."

No Humor Th re.

Dumley—He's all broken out and looks quite badly. Do you think anything serious—

Dr. Wise—No, I believe it's merely a hereditary humor—

Dumley—Impossible! He's an Englishman.—Philadelphia Press.

Every automobile owner should take lessons in physical culture, in order to be able to fight farmers.

KEEPS THE LOAF MOIST.

A Plate Arranged to Fit Over the Cut End.

There is no field of inventive activity that is so thoroughly worked as that pertaining to the household, and particularly to the culinary department. A week never passes but some observant man or woman does not hit upon some kind of device for lightening labor in this department of the household or avoiding waste and economizing materials. One of the most original that has appeared for some time is a protecting plate to exclude air from the cut surface of



PREVENTS BREAD FROM DRYING.

the bread loaf. Everyone is familiar with the phenomena of bread drying out and becoming stale when exposed to air, particularly observed at the end of a cut loaf. The crust forms a natural covering, which prevents rapid loss of moisture, so that if the end of the loaf is protected the bread will keep in good condition for a much longer period than if left exposed. The device referred to consists of a flat plate of a contour conforming to the usual loaf shape, and attached to it are two arms, provided with points, adapted to penetrate the crust surface and hold the plate in position. These arms are quite elastic, so that they can readily be sprung to allow the loaf cover to be removed.

Still Unruffled.

Uncle Rufus was one of the calmest and most equable of mortals. Nobody had even seen him excited or impatient. But there came a time that tried him. The furnace in the basement of his house was working badly. He had been experimenting with a new variety of coal, in which there was a considerable proportion of "slack," and it did not seem to be burning. He threw open the door of the furnace, thrust the end of a long poker deep into the smoldering mass, and stirred it up vigorously.

The result was startling. A fierce burst of flame and smoke came forth, not only enveloping Uncle Rufus, but blowing out the flue caps in the rooms above and filling the house with soot and ashes.

In the midst of the excitement Uncle Rufus came up from the basement with his usual slow and regular step. His face was black with grime, his eyebrows and eyelashes were stung to a crisp and what was left of his hair and beard was a sight to behold.

He went to a mirror and took a good look at himself.

"Wal," he said, slowly, and deliberately, "I was needing a shave 'n' a hair cut, anyway."

The Conductor Scored.

Some time ago several traveling men were sitting together in a car on a train which daily makes a round trip over a certain division of the Boston & Maine Railroad. One of the number, the Boston Herald says, had not only monopolized the conversation, but from time to time had poked fun at the quiet conductor.

As the train approached the Haverhill station, the traveling man turned to the conductor, who stood near by, and shouted boisterously:

"Say, George, what made them locate the station so far away from the village?"

"I don't know," the conductor gravely replied, "unless they thought it would be more convenient to have it down here near the railroad."

One Request.

"Our society," said the prison visitor, "is anxious to help you. Is there anything you'd like us to secure for you?"

"Well," replied the convict, "I would like to have permission to invent, fly machine and use it."—Philadelphia Ledger.

His Order.

"What did that health food manufacturer order for breakfast?" asked the restaurant proprietor.

"Ham and eggs, French fried potatoes, strawberries and coffee," answered the waiter.—Detroit Tribune.

There Was the Evidence.

"Jombart is a man of strong faith, whatever else you may say of him."

"How do you guess it?"

"Just heard him order Hamburg steak."—Atlanta Constitution.



DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THEM, FROM A THICK BUSH, SPRANG A BEAUTIFUL GIRL.

ner, than Joe Smith, the tall gypsy, emerged from the wood with long strides into the road and beckoned to Mr. Sharp urgently. The lawyer was with him in a moment, and almost struck him in his fury at what he heard.

"How could you allow it? You great tinkering fool! Run to the corner where the two lanes meet. Take George with you. I will ride straight down the road. No, stop, cut the traces of those two horses! You jump on one, and Black George on the other, and off for the corner at full gallop. You ought to be there before the cart. I will ride straight for that rotten old jolter. Zounds, is one man to beat five of us?" Waiting for no answer, he struck spurs into his horse and, stooping over the withers, dashed into a tangled alley, which seemed to lead towards the timber track.

No wonder Mr. Sharp was in such a rage, for what had happened was exactly this—only much of it happened with more speed than words.

Cripps, the Carrier, had been put up by several friends and relations to bring things directly to a point, instead of letting them go on, in a way which was neither one thing nor the other. Hence it was that Hardenow, gazing betwixt the two feather-edged boards, beheld—just before he lost his wits—the honored vehicle of Cripps, with empty washing basket standing, on its welcome homeward road, to discharge the fair Etty at her brother's gate. Tickuss was away upon Mr. Sharp's business.

Therefore the Carrier kissed his sister in the soft gleam of the sunset clouds and touched up Dobbin with a tickle of the whip, and that excellent nag gave a little grunt at fortune and resignedly set off. Alas, when he grunted at a light day's work, how little did he guess that unparalleled exertions parted him out from his stable for the night.

For while Master Cripps, with an equable mind, was jogging it gently on the silent way, and was balancing in his mind the respective charms of his three admirers, Mary Hookham, Mealy Hiss and Sally Brown of the "Golden Cross," and sadly concluding that he must make up his mind to one of the three ere long—suddenly he beheld a thing which frightened him more than a dozen wives. Directly in front of them, from a thick bush, sprang a beautiful girl into the middle of the lane, and spread out her hand to stop them. If the evening light had been a little paler, or even the moon had been behind her, a ghost she must have been then, and for ever. Cripps

no help for it. Now, thick-headed bumpkin, put one arm round her, and off at full gallop. If you give her up I will hang you by the neck to the tail of your broken rattletrap."

"Oh, Cripps, dear Cripps, I assure you on my honor," said Grace, as tossed up by her lover, she sat in the seat of Esther. "I have never been dead any more than you have. I can't tell you now—oh, drive on, drive if you have a spark of manhood in you."

A horse and horseman came out of the wood, about fifty yards behind them, and Grace would have fallen headlong, but for the half-reluctant arm of Cripps, as Dobbin with a jump set off full gallop over rut and rock, with a blow on his back from the fist of Kit, like the tumble of a chimney pot.

Then Christopher Sharp, after one sad look at Grace Oglender's flying figure, turned round to confront his father.

"What means all this?" cried the lawyer fiercely, being obliged to rein up his horse unless he would trample Kit under foot.

"It means this," answered his son, with firm gaze, and strong grasp of his bridle; "that you have made a great mistake, sir—that you must give up your plan altogether—that the poor young lady who has been so deceived—"

"Let go my bridle, will you? Am I to stop here—to be baffled by you? Idiot, let go my bridle!"

"Father, you shall not—for your own sake, you shall not. I may be an idiot, but I will not be a blackguard—"

"If by the time I have counted three your hand is on my bridle, I will knock you down and ride over you."

Their eyes met in furious conflict of will, the elder man's glaring with the blaze of an opal, the younger one's steady with a deep brown glow.

"Strike me dead, if you choose," said Kit, as his father raised his arm, with the loaded whip swinging, and counted, "One, two, three"—then the crashing blow fell on the naked temple; and it was not needed twice.

Dashing the howls into his horse, the lawyer, without even looking round, rode madly after Zachary. Dobbin had won a good start by this time, and was round the corner, doing great wonders for his time of life—tossing the tubs, and the baskets, and Grace, and even the sturdy Carrier, like fritters in a pan, while the cart leaped and plunged, and the spokes of the wheels went round too fast to be counted. Cripps tugged at Dobbin with all his might; but for the first time in his