

OUR STORY TELLER



THREE CROWS INN.

There is always a class of fools in this world who know a person's own business better than the person does himself. One of these told me quite recently that instead of writing about picturesque places in the Tyrol, Spain, and the North of Siberia, I should look up some of the lovely spots in England itself. Instead of answering the fool according to his folly, as I should have done, I said:

"If your remarks mean anything, they indicate that you know some such spot that is worth visiting. Tell me where it is and I will go there."

Surprised that, much pleased at being treated kindly, instead of being assailed, as he should have been, said that of all places on earth the Three Crows Inn at Stuttering-Bodley was the quaintest and most charming. It was two or three hundred years old, and things in the village of Stuttering-Bodley were now just about where they were in Queen Elizabeth's time. The place was about two and a half hours from London by a fast train north to a particular place, then you change trains and get on a doddering little railway that finally lands you in Stuttering-Bodley.

Suffice it to say that I reached the little station of Stuttering-Bodley at about a quarter to the evening, and it was then, remarkably dark and getting darker every minute. Nobody else got off the train, and as I saw the last carriage about, chatting at me with his lantern light, there crept over me a feeling that I had made a mistake. There was a hopelessly barren look about the railway station that chilled the bones. The night was cold and the rain was falling steadily. I had noticed before the daylight evidently sensed that the whole country through which the train was running was flooded and the place around about was dijorably flat, whereas my idea of a picturesque spot includes hills.

I said to the surprised station-master when I gave up my ticket:

"Where is the village?"

"Which village, sir?" he answered.

"Which I did not know there were two."

"Yes," he said. "There are two. There is Stuttering-Bodley in the south and Gambleg-Warrington in the north."

"Then the station, I take it, is in neither of them?"

"Oh, bless you, no, sir," said the station-master. "Stuttering-Bodley is three miles in the south and Gambleg-Warrington is four miles to the north."

"Well," said I in dismay. "If I had been endeavoring this evening I could have hit either place a little closer than that. I understand that the villages are not child's play, and have been here since Elizabeth's time?"

"I admitted that this was true, and that the railway, taken as a whole, was newer than either of the places."

"Does the Three Crows Tavern?" I asked. "Ever send a bus here to meet the trains?"

"Oh, bless you, no, sir," said the station-master.

"Is there any place near by where I could hire a conveyance?"

"You could get a cart," he answered, "at Gambleg-Warrington."

I suspected the station-master was poking fun at me, though he said this quite seriously. It was not to be supposed that a man would walk four miles there and then drive four miles back in order to be carried three miles.

"Are there any turns in the road?" said I, "between here and Stuttering-Bodley?"

"Oh, no, sir," answered the station-master. "You keep straight on. You can't miss your way, sir."

When a man in England says that, you may know that it is a particularly difficult road to find.

I sloped along the muddy highway, carrying a handbag. The night got darker and darker, still I could see on each side of the road that the fields were flooded, and now the rain began to pour down with savage steadiness, as if it had got me and knew it.

After tramping in this hopeless fashion for what I took to be about two miles, the road turned to the left. Directly before me rose a large castellated porter's lodge, with an archway underneath. I found a little girl standing underneath the archway, apparently hoping that the rain would cease. I said to her:

"I suppose the road to the left leads to Stuttering-Bodley?"

"Oh, no, sir," she replied. "The road through the park leads to the village and to the castle."

"Oh, there's a castle there?" said I. She seemed surprised that I did not know this.

"Is it a ruin?" I asked; "or does anybody live in it?"

"The Marquis of Bodley lives there," she answered. "This is his park lodge."

"Are you sure?" I persisted, "that this road does not lead to the castle only, and not to the village?"

"Oh, the castle is in the village," said the little girl.

Then it turned out that she herself was going to Stuttering-Bodley to deliver evening papers there, that had come on the same train by which I had arrived, and seeing from my conversation that I was to be trusted, she kindly volunteered to show me to the Three Crows Inn, where she had to hand in a paper. I gladly accepted her company and we set out across the park in the pouring rain, and she chatted all the way, telling me the number of standards she had passed in the public school and giving me in general the gossip of the neighborhood. She told me first that the road was perfectly straight and plain, and that no one could mistake it, but before we had gone a quarter of a mile it branched off in three directions, and then a little farther it branched again. She did not appear to think that there was anything here to confuse a person, as she told me quite simply that if a person were going to Stuttering-Bodley he would naturally take the road to Stuttering-Bodley and not any of the others, which each led to different villages, whose names I have forgotten. Anyhow, I thanked my stars, which at that moment were obscured by the rain, that I had the little girl as comrade, for I knew that, left to my own devices, I would be at that moment a homeless and hopeless wanderer in the middle of England.

I had been walking a little way in ad-vance, and came to a sudden stop by running into an iron gate across the roadway. The little girl was sorry she had not mentioned the gate, but she thought everybody knew it was there, because it had been here since she could remember.

The gate led us out of the park into the main highway, and gave us the choice of something like five roads, but the little girl trotted along with her papers under her cloak, and we crossed a bridge to the right of which was a roaring waterfall.

In the forest through which the road now wandered it was as if we were walking in some dark cavern. About the middle of the woods the road again branched in three or four directions, which was a habit it had, and finally emerging from the forest I saw on an elevation a blaze of light, as if it were a window of some cathedral.

"That," said she, in answer to my question, "is the castle. The village is over here to the right."

We accordingly turned from the road that led to the castle, and climbing a steep hill where the highway was again overgrown by giant oaks, I saw with delight some low, box, diamond-shaped windows gleaming red and hospitably in the inky blackness around. It seemed to me I had walked as much as ten miles. My overcoat was soaked through with rain, and when I moved my head the water splattered down in rivulets from the brim of my felt hat. After running into a hedge and falling over a sleeping pig, the little lass led me to the front door of the Three Crows Inn, whose ancient sign creaked above the porch.

I ried the door but it was locked. I smote upon the outer panels with my stick and finally heard bolts withdrawn and the door was opened a few inches.

"What do you want?" said a voice from within.

"Many things," I answered, pushing the door wide open, and stepping into a stone paved hall with timbered roof above it forming a low ceiling. There was an old clock facing me, and an ancient table of black oak standing in the middle of the square apartment. A very large and handsome servant girl stood looking at me in wonder, apparently because I had so rudely forced my way in.

"It is not a night," I said by way of apology, "to keep a man standing out of doors."

I threw off my overcoat, doffed my hat and laid them with my stick and the handbag on the oaken table.

"Now, Jane," I said, "I want a nice large room, in which you are to put a large fire, and that as speedily as possible. Take my overcoat and have it dried, and tell the landlady that I want something to eat as quick as possible, and that I don't object to a bottle of wine if it is of the right sort."

The girl looked at me in amazement.

"We have no room, sir," she said.

"No room?" I cried aghast.

"No, sir. We have only two rooms and they are both taken by lodgers. They have been here seven months, sir."

The appalling nature of this disclosure left me for the moment speechless, which is most unusual with me.

"Then, where is the nearest hotel?" I asked.

"Seven miles away, sir. At Gambleg-Warrington."

In the silence that ensued I heard the rain roaring down and falling like a cataract from the eaves of the house.

"Then what am I to do?" I asked, in tones of despair.

"I don't know, sir," said the girl.

"Isn't there any place in the village where I could get rooms until to-morrow?"

"No, sir."

"You need not stand there holding the door," I cried at last, a sudden surge of anger coming over me. "Close it! Tell the landlord or the landlady to come here and talk to me. I'm not going to be treated in this fashion. This country gives certain privileges to public houses, and in return the public houses have certain duties to perform towards the traveler. Send in the landlord."

"There is no landlord, sir," said the girl.

"Then send the landlady."

The girl departed and I heard a whispered conference in another room. She came in again presently and said:

"The landlady says, sir, that there is no room in the house, that you can't stay here, and that you can't have anything to eat."

"You tell the landlady to come into the hall and speak to me. Otherwise I shall have to go in and see her."

The landlady, who had evidently been listening, came out with a frown on her face.

"Are you aware, madam," I said, "that the law compels you to keep a room for a traveler and send him food to furnish him with food if he is alone and willing to pay for it?"

"The law doesn't compel us, sir," said the landlady, with severity. "You have been told that our rooms are full and that should have been enough."

"Oh, but it isn't enough. If you fill your rooms with lodgers you ought to keep a spare room for a traveler, and as I am the only traveler who has come here to-night, I demand a room and I demand my dinner. Otherwise I shall complain to the authorities and you will lose your license."

The landlady was quite undisturbed by this threat. She answered me with chilling composure.

"This is a temperance house. We have no license, and we need none."

"This was a knockdown blow. There was nothing more to be said.

"And to you mean," I continued, "that I have to walk back to that accursed station in this rain and through the mud?"

"You can do as you please, sir," said the landlady, who was evidently offended at my manner of storming the inn.

"Yes," I replied; "I had not thought of that. After all, this is a free country, is it not? But surely get me something to eat?"

"Perhaps we can," said the landlady. "If you ask for it civilly."

"Madam," I replied, with deference, "was it not that the floor-ware made of stone, and that my trousers are so soaked that I fear they would come apart at the knees, I would kneel down and implore you for something to eat?"

The landlady tossed her head and left the room.

I got some bread and butter and cold water, as if I had not had enough of the latter before I came, and was going to have further supply of it after I had left. Then I put on my water-bogged hat and overcoat, and shook the mud of the place off my feet.

The rain still poured, and the night was blacker than the Three Crows themselves.

I tramped that weary way back to the station, and considered myself lucky in getting the last train that took me to a less picturesque but more comfortable town—Free Press.

ALL ABOUT THE FARM

SUBJECTS INTERESTING TO RURAL READERS.

Largest of the English Breeds of Long-Wooled Sheep—Conventional Way of Marketing Apples and Potatoes—How to Load Logs—Farm Notes.

Lincoln Long-Wooled Sheep.

The largest of the English breeds of long-wooled sheep is the Lincoln, of which a typical group is shown in the accompanying illustration, taken from Farm and Home. The Lincoln sheep of to-day are, in common with many other English breeds, highly improved animals and much of the improvement is due directly to the efforts of Backwell. A century and more ago the sheep which were kept upon the bench land of Lincolnshire were long-legged, flat-sided and long, with a light, uneven fleece, and so slow of growth that it was not until after the third shearing that they attained full maturity. But they were hardy, vigorous and prolific, with large frames and abundant milk.

When Backwell created the improved Leicester by skillful breeding, it was the signal for general improvement among the English breeds of middle and long-wooled sheep. The New Leicester were crossed upon the Lincolns, which were greatly improved by the cross. As now bred, it is not uncommon for them to weigh 200 pounds at a year old and double that weight at 2 years, while there are authentic records of shewings which attained a weight of 300 pounds at 18 months. The wool is long, silky and lustrous, in an even, compact fleece. The average weight of the fleece of full-grown ewes and wethers is from ten to fourteen pounds, but

Apple and Potato Crotches.

One of the most successful potato growers in the United States harvests all his potatoes into bushel crates, piling them upon a two-horse wagon until fully loaded, when they are drawn directly from the field to market or to the railroad to be loaded upon the cars, or to the mill to be stored for a later market. The advantage in the use of such crates is obvious. They afford a receptacle into which potatoes can be picked from the ground and be carried to the cart and as the crate is set into the cart and an empty crate taken, there is no handling of the tubers, as when they are several times into and out of baskets in getting them from the field to their destination. The same advantage has been more force in the case of gathering apples, which should be gathered as late as possible to preserve the highest quality of the fruit. Of course, a large number of crates is required where one's potato field or orchard is extensive, but well-made crates, once provided will last almost a lifetime, and become better and better appreciated the longer they are used.

Absorptive Power of Soils.

The greater prevalence of droughts in the country grows older is partly owing to the fact that soils long cultivated do not hold water as they do when full of vegetable matter. This is especially true where the soil is heavy and has at some time been worked while wet. It often requires years of cultivation with winter freezing and thawing to fully break up the clods made by plowing when the ground is saturated with water. The plow, presses, harrows, etc., do not pulverize the soil so well as they do when the soil is dry. If they are harrowed while wet, the clay sticks to the harrow and but little good is done. If the soil is undrained these clods remain for years, as the saturated soil freezes solid at the surface and thus prevents the deep freezing needed for pulverization. Fall plowing is beneficial for land in this condition.—American Cultivator.

For Loading Logs.

Arrange two stout timbers, one with one end of each on the ground and the other on the sled or wagon, as shown in the illustration. Double a 1 1/2-inch rope of suitable length. Loop the mid-

Household Hints.

The true science of sweeping the most untidy room is to do it with a stout parrot broom and raise not so much as "a sneeze of dust." No matter whether a carpet or matting or a nice woolen mat is the floor covering, the work can be accomplished with absolute neatness and dispatch by laying a band of well-dampened sawdust along one side of the floor and sweeping this over and over clear across the apartment. The sawdust quickly flees up every nook and bit of lint which the room seeks stirring before it has time to float off into the air and so protects furniture and the sweeper as well. Such a process can be carried on in a sick room without the least inconvenience, and in this event, or where nurseries or school rooms are cleaned, it is wise to sprinkle a little disinfectant in the sawdust. When the work is done carefully gather it all in a dustpan and toss it into the kitchen fire, burning it between meals.—New York Sun.

To Prepare Light Rolls.

A quick way of preparing light rolls for breakfast is to take a pan of butter's rolls, even if they are two or three days old will not matter, and sprinkle them well with cold water. Put them in a deep pan in the oven and turn another pan over them, so that they will steam for a few moments. They, perhaps, then remove the pan and let the rolls steam a few minutes longer, if the rolls are very thick. Just before removing, butter the tops and let them crisp a little. If the oven seems to cook the rolls too fast, put a paper over the rolls, and they will steam without browning. This is an excellent way, also, of freshening up a loaf of stale bread. Steam the loaf over a pan of boiling water for ten minutes, and then put it in a moderate oven for half an hour with a paper over it.

Baked Apples.

Choose good-sized, fair apples of a tart and juicy kind. Wash and scrub clean. Put them in a shallow earthen dish with water to cover the bottom of the dish; this should be renewed as necessary. Put them in a slow oven, which may increase in warmth as they cook, until they are thoroughly done in an hour. White sugar sifted over them when taken from the oven improves their appearance. For many persons cranin is a pleasant addition. The skin and core should be carefully separated and not eaten. Five or six apples, remove the cores and fill the cavities with sugar. Place in a buttered or oiled shallow dish and add sugar to cover the bottom. A paper may be tied over the top to prevent burning; they should be baked in a moderate oven.

Medicinal Value of Onions.

Onions are an excellent remedy for catarrhs and coughs. For this purpose they are chosen very large, set in a bowl, and stewed in a covered pan with a little sugar candy; they should be left to stew slowly for a hour, then strain and bottle the juice, cork the bottle tightly, and keep them in a temperate and dry room. A teaspoonful of the preserve every two hours will be found very efficacious for bad colds.

To Use the Left-Overs.

To utilize cold poultry, cut the squares in two as you would a cold biscuit, and toast on a griddle.

Stale biscuits can be cut in three slices each, and browned in the oven for crispies, which are delicious for breakfast.

Stale chickens which have old can be made fresh by putting them on a tin in the oven and shaking them often until they heat through.

Bits of cold turkey or chicken cut from the bones, washed fine, and warmed in a little gravy, is very nice when served on slices of toast.

Soak for two hours about a pint of broad crumbs in milk enough to cover the bread; then beat the yolks of two eggs, add sugar to sweeten, the ground rind and juice of a lemon, two table-spoonfuls of desiccated coconut, bake an hour in a slow oven. After it is done, beat the whites of the two eggs and sweeten, frost the pudding and return it to the oven to slightly brown the frosting. Serve warm.

Household Hints.

A sprinkling of sulphur wherever red ants appear will disperse them.

Stains of apples, peaches and pears on linen will often yield to a bath of kerosene. Soak for six hours.

A wine glass full of strong borax water in a pint of starch will make collars and cuffs glossy and stiff.

When you give sick people raw oysters cut off the tough part and give them only the "juice." It is digestible and palatable. Never season highly for a sick person.

A woman who ought to know says that egg shells burned to a dark brown in the oven and crushed quite fine will keep all kinds of bugs away when sprinkled on pantry shelves.

There is really a use for old lemon skins. After squeezing free from juice they are used to clean old brass and copper. Rub them with soap and then dip in fine ashes or polish. Rub dry with a woolen cloth or a piece of chambray.

A carpet may be cleaned by wiping it off with a sponge wet in water to which a tablespoonful of turpentine has been added. This should be done about once a month, after the carpet has been thoroughly swept, and it will keep it bright and fresh-looking.



HOUSEHOLD HINTS



TYPICAL LINCOLN LONG-WOOLED SHEEP.



APPLE AND POTATO CRATE.



HOW TO LOAD A LOG.