

[Copyright secured. All rights reserved.]

CLARA CHILLINGTON;
OR,
THE PRIDE OF THE CLIFF.
A STORY OF ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.
BY
THE REVEREND JAMES LANGHORNE BOXER,
Rector of La Porte, Ind., U.S., and formerly co-Editor with Charles Dickens of *All the Year Round*,
EDITED BY THE
REV. WILLIAM SMITHETT, D.D., of Lindsay, Ont.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN UNWELCOME INTERRUPTION.

After the event just narrated, Charles Freeman felt that he had entered on a new state of life. He was happy in being the accepted suitor of Clara Chillington, and grateful in having twice saved her life.

Having taken the road leading to Folkestone by the beach, as he descended the cliff the golden glories of declining day fell on the sails of those white-winged messengers of commerce sailing for, and returning from, every clime. But the mind of Charles Freeman was too much engaged to regard surrounding beauty. To him, now, Sir Harry appeared appeased, and reconciled to the union of Clara with himself; his mother and Uncle Jacob were loading him with caresses and counsel, and the old man had just given utterance to a meaningless tirade, which always preceded his warmest approval of any act; he had received his bride from the hand of her father, and was about to plant a kiss on her beautiful brow, when a rugged voice, uttering the words, "Good afternoon, Mister Charles," dissipated his happy reverie.

To be thus fetched back from the land of day-dreams to common life, was received with a momentary ill grace, and a transient indignation was aroused against the intruder. Turning to vent on the intruder of his pleasure the chastisement he deserved, his eyes rested on that friend of his dead father, and his own friend, standing in an attitude of humility, as though pleading for forgiveness.

"Well, Dick," he replied, in a moment recovering his proper feeling at the sight of the old man, "I didn't see you."

"I desay not; you looked as though your head was full of stones. I can't think what you see in stones. Stones has bin stones ever since I was a boy, and I believe they'll always be so."

Charles smiled at the mistake committed by his humble friend on the cause of his abstractedness, as well as at the curious opinion he had expressed on the geological formation of stones, and he enquired:

"What brings you down here now?"

"I've come to haul my crab pots, but some hungry fish has bit the net and stolen the bait."

"I am sorry for that. What sort of a fish do you suppose it to be?"

"A dog-fish; the sea is full on 'em, and in my opinion they are fast euzzin to a shark."

"Dog-fish are certainly voracious creatures."

"They are hungry things, and I don't know of anything so hungry except the 'bull-rout,' and I can prove it to you."

"What is a 'bull-rout,' Dick?"

"I don't know what you'd call it in your fine lingo, but it's a fish that sometimes comes into the bay, and it is all jaws and stomach. I'll give you proof of what a hungry fish it is." To please the old man, Charles Freeman remained, and he continued: "The wind had blown hard for a week, and not a boat could put to sea; so long had it bin blowin' that all the bread was gone from the locker, and there was nothin' to look forward to the next day but hunger. Well, about midnight there came a lull in the gale, and my messmate says to me, 'Dick, what do you say to go and try; we may as well die at sea as ashore.' 'I don't know that,' says I, 'for when the breath is out of a man's body a whole levanter couldn't blow it in again.' I stopped a minute, and then I thought of the old woman, who hadn't a bit of bread to eat. This settled the matter. I couldn't stand that now, and so I says, 'I'll go, and chance everything, for if a man is born to be hung he'll never be drowned.' Well, we went aboard, and taking three reefs in our foresail dashed out of the harbour. As we were leavin', somebody on the pier shouted, 'There go two fools to be drowned,' and really it seemed like it. The sea was positively mad, and we were wet through to the skin in a jiffy. 'What do you think about it now?' says my companion. 'Think about it! why, we are out in it and must go on.' We did go on; and when we got to the fishin' ground we put the trawl overboard. The boat rolled awfully, and we had to keep baling out the water from her; but we stuck to it, for we had nothin' to eat aboard, nor yet at home. Well, after we'd dragged the trawl about a mile across the bay, we pulled it up, and there was nothin' to be seen in it but a great, ugly 'bull-rout.' When my companion seed what was up, he looked as miserable as a sithers-grinder upon the wind, and says: 'Dick, we have had all this trouble for nothin'. 'You hold your jaw a minute,' says I, and I took the thing by the tail and shook it, and there dropped from his mouth soles, and plaice, and a young turbot, altogether as much fish as fetched us thirty-five shillins when we got ashore. You see that fel-

lar was hungry, and he bolted all the fish in the trawl whole, without even bitin' 'em. But the most curious thing was that when we cut the fish open we found in him a pair of mittens, and the spout of a coffee pot."

"That was a wonderful fish, Dick. Here is a half-crown for you."

"Wonderful! and you'd sin wonderful things, too, if you hadn't spiced them out-riggers on to your jacket and had gone to sea. But I'm very much obliged to you; will you ride home in the boat?"

"No, I thank you."

"Mister Charles, I should like to speak a word with you before you go."

"What is it?"

"I beg your pardon, but I know that you've bin a privateer in, and that now you are on the look-out for as pretty a little craft as ever cut the water. I wish from my old heart you may capture her, and take her in tow as long as your timbers hold together; but you must keep your weather-eye open, for I understand that the gov'ment as lays claim to her is on the watch for you, and should he overhaul you he'll pour a broadside into you and try and sink you. My lady is as good as she is beautiful, and I do hope that you'll git her; but you must look out for squalls from Sir Harry. These old eyes shall sleep but little, Mister Charles." On uttering these words, the old man, without awaiting reply, pushed his boat from the shore, and with all his energy pulled away, praising his kind friend with every stroke of the oar.

This sudden interruption, and the unwelcome remarks made by Dick Backstay, broke the beautiful illusion which had before filled the mind of Charles Freeman, and gave to his thoughts a different and unhappy turn. To him the sky of his future appeared no longer serene; a cloud had arisen upon the line of the horizon, a breeze, the forerunner of an approaching storm, had passed him, and the tranquillity of his soul was again disturbed. The shadow of apprehension again settled on his mind, and the hope of ever commanding the hand of Clara sank within him. He pursued the remainder of his walk in sadness; and yet the thought that Clara loved him afforded him relief.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE JOLLY SAILOR.

Nestling in one of those delightful valleys, which characterize the scenery of the south-eastern coast of England, stood the "Jolly Sailor." The house wearing this sign was a rude dwelling, licensed for the sale of beer and spirituous liquors. The visitors to this place were mostly of that type of humanity whose rough habits, not to say ferocious disposition, excluded them from associating with such of mankind as laid the remotest claim to respectability.

The "Jolly Sailor" seemed a blot placed by some malevolent fiend upon the romantic scenery, bathed in the silvery rays of a young moon, and charmed with the murmur of the rippling wavelets as they fell in low cadence on the shore. The decline of a summer day had arrived; the droning insects hummed out their evening song, and the distant tinkling of the sheep-bell seemed as the signal given by the leader of the flock to warn his companions of the approach of the hour of rest. The sight and sounds of peaceful harmony claimed for our world a beauty and a bliss, and carried away the thoughtful mind to peaceful contemplation and delight. That den of thieves formed the hideous scar upon the beautiful face of nature, and from the dismal sty came forth in nauseating exhalations the fumes of burnt tobacco and the fetid evaporations of stale beer and liquor. That place being little more than a simple cottage, one room formed alike the kitchen and the parlour, and was the only one in which guests could be received. It was a horrid place, with its low ceiling, blackened with the smoke of years, on which were sketches of uncouth forms, the caricatures of visitors, and the initials of some aspirant to immortality, even in a pot-house. A plain deal table filled up one side of the room, on which stood two burning candles, placed in long iron candlesticks, terminating in a curiously-shaped carbonated wick which destroyed the light and reduced the apartment to semi-obscurity. The floor was strewn with broken tobacco pipes and glasses, which were being crunched beneath the feet of such as were assembled, while in the large, open fire-place smouldered a huge log of wood, which lay there as an apology for a fire, and around which, from mere habit, some of the company were gathered. The seats of that room were benches, securely fastened to the wall, lest at any time they should be employed for purposes far removed from the

original design of placing them there. These benches were now filled with rough men, drinking hard, and exercising such claims on the stores of the place as to threaten to exhaust them.

A vociferous discussion was that evening being conducted at the "Jolly Sailor." The subject under consideration was: "Did a certain Scotchman, a travelling retailer of dry goods, known as a packman, by name, Sandy Donald, deserve the fate supposed to have befallen him?"

Sandy Donald was a "canny chiel," desperately clannish, and a lover of good liquor, which he imbibed freely when he could obtain it for nothing. In common with other virtues, Donald laid claim to being exceedingly religious in his conversation, and more so when intoxicated. Under the influence of brandy, his faculty for polemics took the entire control of his tongue, while the pleasure with which he discussed metaphysical subtleties frequently aroused his combativeness, and led him to throw out his long arms, with his hands clubbed, in defence of his peculiar opinions.

The route travelled by Donald was extensive, part of it lying in the district of the "Jolly Sailor" and the Watch-house. The latter was the residence of the lieutenant in command of the coast-guard, and the frequent visits of the merchant to that place had created the suspicion lest he should be playing life's game with a double set of cards, and unfavourable to the interests of the neighbourhood.

Lieutenant Luff, or "Old Luff," as he was generally called, was a married man. Mrs. Luff possessed one weakness, which distinguished her in the district, and this was a love for showy dresses. Not that she was greatly to be blamed for indulging this little foible, as a different style would hardly have suited her rotund figure. Her husband, too, was sometimes astonished at her appearance, and secretly wondered whence those giveties of plumage were derived. But, although in the discharge of his duty that old officer was as brave as a lion, within the domestic circle, and by his own hearthstone, he was meekness itself. For certain reasons of his own, old Luff never interfered with his wife's rigging, and maintained only a silent wondering on the subject. Yet, had he displayed half the vigilance in this matter as he did on behalf of the revenue, he would have learned that Sandy Donald furnished the linen, and took payment for the same in instalments of two weeks.

For a person in that vicinity to go to the Watch-house, no matter under what circumstances, was to be placed at once under surveillance. When, therefore, it became known that the packman visited this place, and Donald himself was the betrayer, he having, when under the influence of a "bottle too much spirits," employed, to illustrate a metaphysical disquisition, the colour of a new dress he had sold to Mrs. Luff, a spy was set upon his proceedings. From that hour he was no longer free to roam over the hills of Kent, and, when he thought himself to be least observed, prying eyes were employed in watching his doings.

When visiting the town of Dover, Donald always made his home at an inn, wearing the sign of the Red Cow. This was his hostelry, and on the last night he was seen there his conduct was that of a man downcast and wretched. That night he drank deeply, and apparently that he might drive away the gloom resting in unbearable influence upon him. In the morning, also, he appeared sad, and, having taken his breakfast and discharged the account to the host, shouldered his pack and left the house to pursue his usual route. This was the last time he was seen alive, and the next report of him was that his body had been found at the foot of the cliff—dead.

This, then, became a case demanding a solution, and the district became excited over it. That the body had been found at the foot of the cliff it was easy to prove, but how did it get there? When the corpse of Donald was found, that almost inseparable article, his pack, was not in his company. This fact at first excited suspicion lest he had been robbed, and murdered by being pushed over the cliff. But this idea became quickly dissipated on finding the pack suspended among the brambles growing on the face of the cliff, at the foot of which the body had been found. Being disappointed in this conclusion, the popular mind then seized upon the thought of suicide. But in this, also, a difficulty presented itself, for the brambles, among which the pack was found, presented the appearance of a heavy body, as that of a man, having passed through them, and if Donald had contemplated suicide, would he have chosen for the purpose a place where the briars were likely to entangle him in his descent and to frustrate his design? Not being able to retain this latter conclusion, the public mind returned to the recollection of the bitter hatred that had existed toward him in some quarters, as well as from the newly-discovered fact that the appearance of the ground on the top of the cliff indicated that a fierce struggle had been going on there between two or more persons.

This was the condition of the general mind on the subject when, according to law, the Coroner of the district, and a "highly intelligent jury" were called in to settle the matter according to opinion, if not according to fact. These gentlemen examined witnesses, and talked upon the question until they became hungry and weary, and, being particularly conscientious to keep their verdict strictly within the limits of truth, arrived at the

following sensible conclusion: "That it is certain Sandy Donald is dead; but how he came by his death neither of us can tell; and if any one else can, it isn't likely they will say anything about it." This verdict, probably so truthful, satisfied the law, and appeased the popular mind in leaving any further consideration of the subject to private discussion.

Matters being left by the Coroner's jury in this shape, caused a debate to arise within the "Jolly Sailor," and more than one idea was there entertained. This difference of opinion divided the company into two parties—the suicidal and the murdered.

The debate was conducted fiercely, and without any other result than that of making enemies of persons who before were friends. So furious had it become as almost to reach the pitch of violence, when Jack Pegden, who was one of the party, exclaimed:

"I don't know how the packman came by his death, but this I know, it served him right, and I'm glad he's gone!"

"You speak feelingly, I should think," replied a tall fellow in the opposite corner.

"I do; I say that I'm glad; and if any fellow interferes with the trade of honest men, because there happens to be a law which says he mustn't do such wicked things, and gets their goods taken from them, he deserves to die."

"Honest! indeed. If smuggling is honest, where will you look for thieves?"

"I tell you that smuggling is honest, and the man who doubts it is the enemy of this neighbourhood."

"Then, I'm that man."

"In the belief, then, that you were doing right, you, too, would betray the doings of the trade? I tell you what it is, my hearty, the fellow who holds such high notions as you do is too good to live among us, and should be tarred and feathered and kicked out of the country."

"I would like to see the man who would do it."

"I could; and in two minutes; and if I had such a fellow as you aboard the *Naug*, I'd keel haul you from stem to stern!"

"You have too much slack in your jaw."

"Have I? You'd find that my words and deeds would go together."

"You'd Donald me, ay?"

This insinuation that he had murdered the packman aroused the smuggler to fury, and, leaping from the bench in the direction of the corner where his antagonist was sitting, he vociferated, "What do you mean by that, you villain?"

"Stop! stop, Jack!" shouted some of the party, who, seizing the smuggler by the arms, tried to draw him back to his seat.

"Let me go! I'll dash the fellow's skull in!"

"Nonsense!" was the reply; "he isn't worthy of notice."

On finding Jack Pegden to be overpowered by the kindness of his companions, the man in the corner more broadly intimated that the death of Sandy Donald, was effected by the smuggler skipper. On hearing it the man foamed at the restraint put upon him, and struggled to release himself. At length he so far succeeded as to get one hand free, and seizing a pint mug, dashed it into the corner where his accuser was sitting.

This act was a declaration of war. Sides were quickly taken, and very soon mugs and glasses, and other missiles equally dangerous, were flying in every direction. A row had now commenced, and shouting, swearing, and fighting, were going on in earnest, and with a deadly fury.

When the confusion within the Jolly Sailor had reached its climax, the door opened, and a beautiful child with flaxen hair, and blue eyes, made her appearance. At that instant a mug was thrown in the direction of the door, which struck the child upon the forehead, and uttering a shriek, she fell. In a moment silence prevailed, broken only by the sound of the questions, "who's child is she, and who threw the mug?"

"She is your little Sally, Jack Pegden," said the man who picked up the child.

"Never! Hand her here," exclaimed the smuggler skipper.

At sight of his child the wild man became tamed, and as he rested the bleeding infant on his knee, and gazed on her pale and apparently lifeless form, the springs of a better nature were touched in his rugged heart, and his emotion became convulsive.

In the *melee* which was useless to enquire who threw the article which had produced the accident; it was thrown, and the wounded child was the result.

Lying in the lap of that rough man, the fair and silent face of that seemingly lifeless child suggested the idea of her being an accusing angel, sent by Heaven to upbraid by her wounded, yet mute presence, the mad wickedness of the human race.

"She is coming round," was whispered by the man, and formed the only sound in that room, where, but a few minutes previous, the worst of human passions, had been roaring and rolling in the wildest rage. The child was fast recovering from the blow which had stunned her, and as she opened her eyes, and saw on whose lap she was lying, feebly whispered, "Kiss me, father."

The smuggler pressed to her fair cheek, the lips which had so lately formed a channel for the bitterest curses, and threats of the direst vengeance.

The blood which had ceased to flow from the forehead of the child, on her return to consciousness burst forth afresh. At the sight, the silence