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# CLARA CHILLINGTON; OR, THE PRIDE OF THE CLIFF.

A STORY OF ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO.

BY

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## CHAPTER XL.

## THE RESCUE.

The grounds of the Priory were shrouded in darkness. Another day had passed, and another night had settled down upon hill and dale, upon landscape and ocean. But few lights were burning within that residence, and all save the one in the room of Clara threw forth a feeble effort, as though those on whom they shone were preparing to retire for the night. That boudoir had now become the place of tears; there her anxious heart expressed itself in sighs, and her sorrowful spirit mourned for him whom, from insinuation, she feared was dead.

The little clock on the mantel-piece rang out from its silver bell the hour of ten. The gentle tones aroused the attention of Clara, and at the same moment she heard the barking of the yard dogs. This was quickly followed by a loud ringing of the door-bell in the servants' hall, and as the noise reached her, she started in surprise. Lord Lushington had left the Priory. In a few minutes old Alice appeared, bearing a note, written in uncouth characters, and signed with the name of Dick Backstay. The purport of the note was that intelligence had been received from Charles Freeman, and that, as the messenger must leave again by nine o'clock the next morning, if Clara would come to a point in the road alone, or in company, he would be present, with his friend, to give her information on the matter. A postscript added, "Please do not be later than eight o'clock."

About the time Lord Lushington left Canterbury on his way to the Priory, Jacob Winter and his men, in company with Lisette, left the cottage of Dick Backstay. To keep out the chilly air, the old man, after padding himself with innumerable under garments, put on a thick coat, and, over that, an overcoat, while a red nightcap, retained for special service, was put on beneath his hat, leaving a portion of it to come down over his eyebrows to keep off the rheumatism.

Before the day dawned Clara arose and prepared to respond to the note of the previous evening, and at the hour appointed left the Priory alone. She was too well known and too much respected to dread going forth without an attendant. With heart elated by hope she pursued her walk, watching every bend in the road in the hope of meeting the messenger, and in the magnifying power of the fog forming an approaching person from the veriest trifles. But no one appeared, and in her anxiety she became apprehensive lest she should be disappointed. Still advancing, she drew forth the note and again read it. The hour was distinctly written, and that time had passed, and yet they had not arrived. Seeing a short distance from her a recess which might shelter her from the raw air of the morning, she directed her steps toward it; but scarcely had moved to seek the shelter afforded by the secluded nook, when she saw a man coming, enwrapped in thick clothing, as though to protect him from the chilly blast.

"He comes at last; but how is it he comes alone?" Believing the person to be the messenger, as she spoke she turned to meet him; but, judge of her surprise, when she found it to be Lord Lushington. In an instant the thought of treachery flashed on her mind, and for the moment paralyzed all her energy. Recovering, she sought to retrace her steps, but before she could move his lordship placed himself in front of her.

"Clara," he said, "you have come to receive intelligence of one devoted to you, and accept my assurance that I am the person."

"My lord," she replied, "how dare you meet me in this manner?"

"Simply because I came for the purpose," was the cool reply.

Casting a look of the utmost scorn upon him, Clara again tried to escape; but still standing before her, his lordship continued: "You will have the goodness to come with me; this is no time for delay, and it will be useless to create confusion. I have your father's command to convey you to Canterbury, and there everything is in readiness to make us man and wife."

"Do I dream, my lord?"

"By no means," he replied, with the coolness of the villain he had become; "at least I imagine not; and should you do so, your dreams should be pleasant when marriage is so near."

"Marriage! Impossible. Neither yourself nor Sir Harry shall force me to marry contrary to my will."

"I sincerely regret that your wishes are not favourable to our determination."

"Nor ever will be."

"Then the matter must be done without your consent. Sir Harry desires it, and that is

enough. Now, with your permission, we will move toward the carriage in waiting to receive us."

"Lord Lushington, are you here to mock me; have you forgotten the respect due to a lady, as to seek me out in this lonely situation for the purpose of adding to the sorrow already filling my soul?"

"By no means; I came here for the purpose of relieving the anguish of your heart in sharing with you your sorrows and my joys. Will you have the goodness to accompany me to the carriage, as time is precious?"

"Never!"

"Clara, your opposition is useless. In obedience to the wishes of your father, and with the happy concurrence of my own heart, I have agreed to take you this morning to be my lawful wife."

"And you have inveigled me to this place for such a purpose?"

"It is simply a little ruse."

"Have you no respect for the feelings of a woman, you who have sisters of your own?"

"I respect them exceedingly."

"Then, I pray you to desist from your annoyance of myself, and permit me to return."

"Clara, must I again entreat of you to accompany me peaceably, or I shall be under the painful necessity of employing severe measures."

"What! am I to be forced to submit to the cruelty of Sir Harry and yourself?"

"Unless you are prepared to accompany me, it will become my painful duty to act thus."

"I never will; and I dare you to place a finger on my person."

"Don't let us have a scene, Clara."

"It is a matter of indifference with me; consent to go with you I never will, and I dare you to molest me. Lord Lushington, your position in life and your education should teach you to respect the feelings of a lady."

"They do, my innocent; but, unfortunately, my pocket is in opposition to them."

"Am I then to be sold? O, merciful Father! help me for the sake of my dead mother."

"I am afraid you pray too late."

"Leave me; touch me not; rather shall yonder sea be my grave than I will follow you."

Turning, as she spoke, to make another attempt to escape, her enemy clasped her round the waist, and, giving a signal to his companions, they rushed to his aid. The shock of the touch of Lord Lushington aroused Clara to a temporary resistance, but, being quickly overcome, she fainted.

"That's good," said his lordship, as he saw the beautiful heiress of the Priory being borne to the chaise in a state of unconsciousness; "before she recovers her senses we shall be far on the road." Placing Clara within the coach, and entering it himself, he gave quick orders to start. The command was politic, and the driver was willing to obey; but, before he could obey, a severe blow had knocked him off the back of the horse he was riding. "Curse that stupid fellow! why doesn't he move?" enquired his lordship; but, before he could receive a reply, the chaise was surrounded by the posse of Uncle Jacob.

"Give it them! Don't spare the rascals!" bawled the old man; and as he shouted, he stood over the fallen postboy with stick upraised, ready again to smite him should he move hand or foot. It was the blow of Uncle Jacob which felled him to the earth, who, as he stood there in the disguise he had assumed, appeared more as a person who had come to the spot for the purpose of making mirth than with any more serious design. The shouting of Jacob Winter aroused those within the carriage, and, as one of them jumped forth, a blow from Dick Backstay brought him senseless to the ground. In an instant Lord Lushington and Fred Holman were grappling with each other.

"Met at last!" hissed Fred Holman. "Every dog has his day."

On seeing who had seized him, his lordship became furious.

"No quarter!" hoarsely whispered the former.

"Curse you! This time I'll murder you," replied his lordship; but a well-directed blow brought him to the earth. Raising himself on one hand he quickly drew forth a pistol and fired. At the report, Fred Holman leaped upward; the ball had just grazed his cheek, and in an instant he grasped him by the throat. Together they wrestled, but, by a skilful movement, his lordship was again thrown, and, kneeling on him, his opponent said:

"Your villainy has brought you to this. I have long waited for revenge. It was you who robbed me and reduced me to beggary, you fawning hypocrite! I have you now in my grasp and I'll avenge myself."

The danger to which he was exposed gave increased strength to Lord Lushington, and in the struggle he released one of his hands and drew forth another pistol; but, before he could fire it, Fred Holman knocked it away, and with the former one inflicted a blow which stunned him.

Hearing the sound of firearms, Uncle Jacob, having bound the postboy hand and foot, rushed to the place of strife, and, seeing how matters stood, exclaimed:

"Don't destroy life, my boy!"

"He deserves to die," replied Fred Holman.

"And so he will, if you'll give him time."

"But now, this instant, and by my hand."

"He isn't worth the trouble of killing. Come, lay hold of him;" and, drawing Fred Holman aside, he had the unconscious nobleman conveyed to the carriage.

The party of Uncle Jacob coming so suddenly and unexpectedly on those they considered their enemies for the sake of Clara, had quickly made themselves masters of the field. Having overcome their opponents, Dick Backstay wished to know what was to become of them.

"I'll tell you," said John Williams; and, suiting the action to the word, calling on the old sailor to lend him a hand, he had them quickly lashed together in pairs, and in such a manner as to render them helpless to assist each other.

"What is to be done now?" enquired Dick.

"Pop 'em through the gangway, batten down the hatches, and send 'em adrift."

This resolve, delivered in nautical phraseology, was soon adopted; and, the four being placed within the chaise, the window-blinds were drawn up and secured by means of a piece of wood placed between them and the frame, and the prisoners were left in darkness. The plan of attack had been to knock down all they could, and, having stunned them, to bind them with cords carried for the purpose. This being worked out, enabled John Williams so readily to tie them.

"A pleasant voyage to ye, my hearties!" said Dick Backstay, as he closed the shutters on the prisoners; "I can't tell where you'll make the land."

Having thus secured the party, John Williams ordered his messmate aloft to the roof of the coach, while he himself mounted the back of the horse. Being thus placed, one on the roof of the carriage and the other on horseback, the two sailors, waving their hats to their friends, drove away. The spirit of mischief being now lively in their minds, having driven for some time they entered a wood, and, backing into a pond to the depth of the carriage floor, they cut the horses adrift, letting them go where imagination led them, and leaving the prisoners to draw their consolation from whatever source they could.

But where was Clara? Having revived, she was conducted by Lisette along the cliff. Sitting behind a tree, which sheltered them from the cold wind, the latter was trying to calm her perturbed feelings. The thought of what had occurred had excited her beyond control, and, leaning her beautiful head on the shoulder of the not less beautiful gypsy, she sobbed as though her heart would break.

"My lady, forbear to weep," said Lisette, in that clear, ringing voice of hers; "your sorrows are great, but you are surrounded by friends."

"Who are you? Have I not seen you before?" enquired Clara, when her emotion would permit her to speak.

"I am a gypsy, my lady."

"A gypsy!" exclaimed Clara, in horror; "shall I never escape dangers until the grave covers me?"

"Pardon me, my lady, but I would be your friend?"

"A gypsy my friend? Impossible! I fear that much of my sorrow arises from that class."

"It is true; and I mourn that I have ever been numbered among your enemies; but I have since done all I could to repair the fault." Lisette then told of her treacherous act which lured Charles Freeman into captivity. As she related the fact, Clara started from her side, and, looking into her face, as the tears chased each other afresh down her cheeks, she exclaimed:

"Cruel, cruel girl! What injury had I done you that you should seek to retaliate? or does the love of money consume all humanity from a gypsy's heart?"

"Reproach me, my lady, I deserve it. Rather than be a party to such an act, I ought to have submitted to every indignity—to banishment from our tribe, and to death itself. I weep bitter tears for the part I took against one so beautiful and good. Pardon me, my lady!" and falling on her knees Lisette wept and pleaded for forgiveness.

The sight of such unfeigned sorrow touched the heart of Clara, and she enquired:

"Did you, of your own free will, plot for my distress?"

"Oh! no, my lady; I loathed myself while engaged in it, and when it was over I left our tribe in disgust."

"And where have you since been?"

"In France. But will my lady forgive me?"

"In France! for what purpose?"

"That I might, if possible, repair the injury I had unwillingly inflicted. I went there that I might find Charles Freeman, and I have succeeded."

"Do I hear aright? are you again deceiving me?"

"Far be it from me to deceive you again. Forgive the past, and you will find Lisette your friend."

Receiving the promise of forgiveness, she then told how she acted from the time she had left England until she returned. The narrative of how much she had endured to repair the injury inflicted under the influence of dread, revealed her noble soul to Clara. Such a nature was twin to her own, and, taking the gypsy by the hand, the two girls stood looking on each other, equally beautiful, equally good at heart, separated by the accident of birth, and differing only as the result of association.

"Lisette," said Clara, "I mourn your past conduct, but I forgive you, and receive you as a friend. Tell me, now, is it possible to effect the release of the prisoner?"

"It is not only possible, it shall be done. Having your forgiveness, I am now prepared to dare anything for you."

"Lisette, you will force me to love you as a sister."

"Only say that one so good and beautiful as my lady can respect me as a servant, and I will be willing to go even unto death itself for your sake!"

"You have my love."

"Thanks, my good lady;" and taking the fair hand of Clara she pressed it to her lips.

"What plan shall you pursue for his deliverance?"

"I have a plan; only have patience."

At this moment Uncle Jacob and Fred Holman appeared. Grateful for her deliverance, Clara shook the hand of her old friend in the fervour of gratitude.

"You must not thank me; you must thank that girl there."

"What, Lisette?"

"I don't know her name." Uncle Jacob then related how she had discovered the plot, and how she had acted.

"My dear, dear friend!" exclaimed Clara; "my more than sister," and, laying her head on the shoulder of the gypsy, she kissed her beautiful cheek, and wept.

"I think I've caught cold in my eyes through being about at night," said Uncle Jacob, as he looked on the affecting scene and mopped his face with his handkerchief.

Having escorted Clara to within sight of the Priory, they bade her farewell, and the three returned again to Folkestone. Lisette dared not show herself to her people, lest her plan should be frustrated by them.

Clara kept the doings of the morning a secret. It was her wish that they should be. Sir Harry quickly discovered the failure of Lord Lushington, and bewailed the loss of his thousand pounds; but he felt confident that Charles Freeman was secure, and this, to some extent, appeased him. The baronet was now seldom at the Priory.

## CHAPTER XLI.

## BROTHER ANTHONY'S DOINGS.

"It is truly astonishing how the intellect of the idiot can be made to expand under the pressure of circumstances," said Monsieur Du Boulay to madame, looking very wise, and as though, in his pretension to be a philosopher, he had made a discovery; "Anthony, although in some things a complete imbecile, performs the simple task allotted to him with surprising cleverness."

"He knows that his bread depends upon it, Monsieur."

"Madame, you are always so practical in your conclusions. It destroys the beauty of philosophic contemplation to have argued as the cause of such extraordinary development of intellect in one so thoroughly imbecile, a motive so gross. The reasoning powers of that poor boy being confined within such a narrow chamber in his cranium, can only shoot forth its corruscations in scintillations struck from his brain by the force of surrounding circumstances. This teaches us that the lucid interval attending the weakest intellect could be prolonged, did we but know the most proper means to employ, and the most proper moment for employing them."

"I know nothing of the nonsense you speak of; I simply know that one-half of such as make out they cannot understand, that they may escape work, are generally blessed with a lucid moment for finding out the hour of meal time."

"Madame, your respectable associations should have afforded you loftier conceptions."

"Respectable? Monsieur!"

"I repeat the term."

"The society of smugglers, and—worse."

"Have you not at the chateau the privilege of mixing with the best society the district affords?"

"Are the persons who visit here the best in the locality?"

"Are they not?"

"Monsieur can tell. It is many years since I passed the boundary of the chateau."

"Nor do you wish to."

"You would be afraid to permit me to indulge my wishes."

"Your residence here saves you from being annoyed by the world beyond."

"It is the money which keeps me here, Monsieur."

"Peace—peace; one portion of mankind must fall that the other may vault into position."

"It would have been well had I died long ago."

"So others have thought, Madame; but I greatly differ from them in my opinion."

"It is to your interest to do so."

"Precisely so; and I wish for you, should I die before night, that you may follow me before morning."