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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 XLIX.

## THE SAILOR'S FUNERAL.

Scarcely had the long-delayed daylight of a winter morning appeared, when Uncle Jacob called upon Charles Freeman, anxious to relate the discovery he had made. Having aroused him from his bed, he called him the most idle fellow in the world, and that to teach him the habit of early rising he should be under the necessity of paying the fire brigade to exercise the engine in his bed-room. Indulging himself in this assumed indignation, he then related to him all the story. He was surprised at what he heard, and taking the hand of his old friend he warmly congratulated him.

"But how shall we make it known to her?" enquired Jacob Winter.

"Leave that with me, sir."

"By no means, young man. On you may rest the duty of making the fact known; but I shall go with you."

"I will attend to it the first thing."

"Very good, Charles," but when do you mean to commence, for at the rate you are going now your first thing will not commence until the day closes."

"When do you wish me to go?"

"I have ordered a coach to be here in an hour."

Charles Freeman hastened to prepare for going with his eccentric friend, while Jacob Winter paced to and fro, watch in hand, indulging in a thousand speculations on the possibility of the coach being a minute too late.

"True to the minute," said the old man, as the coach drove up to the door; "that rascal knows my habits and expects half a crown for being punctual. Well, I would rather give him a crown than he should be a minute behind time. Now then, Charles, jump in." But at that minute John Williams appeared, hat in hand, and requested the favour of speaking with the gentleman. The mission of the man-o-war's man was a sad one. He came from Dick Backstay to say that he was seriously ill. Charles Freeman felt annoyed that he should just then have to attend on Uncle Jacob.

"Tell him I will come to him immediately on my return; and go to my physician and request him as a personal favour shown to myself, that he will attend him directly."

"And I trust that you mean to attend on me directly; for unless you wish me to kick the sides of this coach out, you will not remain another minute," said Uncle Jacob, who while playing in nervous excitement with the window of the coach, in pulling it up and down, had caught this latter sentence.

"Be good enough to do as I wish you," said Charles Freeman to the sailor, who bowing his thanks withdrew.

"Now then, coachman, neck or nothing!" shouted Uncle Jacob, and responding to the demand the coach started in earnest. The two sat *vis-à-vis* as the carriage rolled away, and for a few minutes neither of them spoke, being absorbed by their own reflections. At length Charles Freeman addressed himself to the old man.

"How strangely mingled are the incidents of human life, joy and sorrow stand side by side, and seldom does one move, but the other quickly follows. To balance the human mind and keep us alike from presumption and despondency, the affairs of life appear so mixed."

"I'll take it neat, thank you," replied Uncle Jacob, who, as the word "mixed" fell upon his ear, abstracted with his own affairs, fancied himself at that moment in Samphire Cottage with his sister, who was requesting him to take a glass of grog, and wishing to have a little "neat," led to this egregious blunder. "I beg your pardon," said he, catching the mistake he had made as soon as the words fell from his lips; "I blush for my abstractedness."

As the coach moved on toward the Priory, the two again relapsed into silence. They were now drawing nigh to the place, and it was not yet eleven o'clock.

"We shall be early visitors," said Charles Freeman.

"And shall be hardly welcome," was the reply. "I might have waited two hours later, but an hour, when in a hurry, is an age with me."

"We must make the best of it."

The coach drew up at the door, and entering the house the visitors were received by old Alice, who bade them welcome, and requested them to wait a few minutes while she made "my lady" acquainted with their presence.

"Why didn't you tell her that she was my sister?" said Uncle Jacob, almost petulantly.

"My dear sir," said Charles, "You would not have me deal so abruptly in the matter."

"Abruptly! Didn't you come here for the purpose of telling her; and now you have let the opportunity pass away. I cannot understand you landsmen at all."

Charles would have replied, but at that moment Clara entered the room, and with a smile of welcome expressed her grateful sense of their kindly sympathy in visiting her thus early.

The sight of the beautiful heiress almost drove from Uncle Jacob the purpose of his visit.

"Clara," said Charles Freeman, "the old adage, that we know not what a day may bring forth, appears likely to maintain its character for being true."

"Pray explain yourself."

"We have seen many strange things of late; but what I am about to relate is not less strange than those which have preceded it."

"I am impatient to know."

"It is this then. Uncle Jacob has found a relative."

"Impossible!" replied Clara, in genuine surprise.

"It is true; a sister."

A sister?"

"Yes, Clara; a sister in the person of your good old friend, Alice."

"Are you jesting?"

"Upon my word it is true!" exclaimed Uncle Jacob.

Charles then related all that he knew of the matter; and on hearing, Clara withdrew to speak with Alice on the subject. The proof she laid before her was in part convincing, and as one in a dream she permitted herself to be conducted into the presence of Uncle Jacob. It was now the old man's turn to speak, and advancing to meet Alice, and holding out his left hand, he said,

"Alice, you had a brother; he sailed from England when a very little child on board the *Two Brothers*, on a voyage to the East Indies. That brother of yours had lost a portion of the little finger of his left hand. Do you know this hand?"

"Stay!" said Alice; "what you say is true, my memory brings it all to me now; but before I can be fully satisfied that you are not mistaken, I have another test I must apply."

"Name it!" exclaimed Uncle Jacob, now nearly distracted.

"I remember as though it were but yesterday, that in playing with my brother, I let fall a knife which cut him a deep wound on the wrist of the hand before injured. I recollect well my sorrow at that occurrence, for although accidentally done, I could never forgive myself. Show me the mark of that wound and I ask no further proof."

"It is here!" he exclaimed, baring his wrist, and in a moment brother and sister were locked in each other's embrace.

Nothing would satisfy Jacob Winter but his sister must accompany him to Samphire Cottage for the day. For although contented that she should remain at the Priory for a time, he was determined that she should spend that day with him. The desire of Alice to see again the benefactress of her childhood supported this resolve; and Clara, ever forgetful of her own comfort in the happiness of others, readily consented.

Having obtained the consent of Clara, Uncle Jacob conducted his sister to the coach in triumph. Only one thing marred his happiness, and it was that he could not re-enter the town with a flag flying from the roof of the carriage; but the desire for hoisting a flag was soon gratified, for scarcely had he alighted before a string of bunting was seen flying from the mast in his little garden. The old man would have set the church bells ringing had not Charles Freeman dissuaded him from doing so; but strate his joy at finding a sister, he dealt liberally of food to the poor, and gave five hundred pounds as a benefaction to the old town.

As soon as Charles Freeman could escape from Uncle Jacob he directed his steps toward the dwelling of Dick Backstay. On reaching the cottage, where his presence was anxiously looked for, he was both surprised and grieved at the condition of his old friend. He was ill, seriously ill, and but little hope could be entertained of his recovery. He lay on his rude little bed, not in pain, but in a benumbed condition, which while it deprived his physical energies of their power to act, left his intellect as lucid as ever. He appeared as one dropping gently from this mortal life without the least distraction. On seeing his friend enter the room his countenance became radiant with pleasure; he smiled feebly, and stretching out his hand bade him a hearty welcome.

"Mister Charles," said the old man, "I am being piped aloft; I can hear the bosun's whistle, and I cannot remain below."

"Not yet, I hope, Dick," replied Charles Freeman with deep emotion.

"Yes, I am under orders for sailing, and I have my papers signed by a good conscience."

"I am pleased that you are happy in the prospect of dying, but I am sorry that you must so soon leave us."

"Don't fret, Mister Charles; the cap'n, your father, has long since been into port, and I dare say has been looking for me, and when he sees me enter the harbour with flying colours, I do think that he will be there to bid me welcome. I don't know much, but I do believe the cap'n will be glad to see me enter the port, and that he will take notice of me for old acquaintance sake."

This simple faith of the old sailor moved the soul of Charles Freeman, and he remained silent. But Dick Backstay felt that time was short with him, and he continued,

"Mister Charles, you have been good to me ever since you could remember me, and never but once grieved me. I thought I should never get over that; it disappointed all my expectations for your future. Still, it is all for the best. I was for many years sorry that I was not drowned with your father in the *Fairy Queen*, but had that been I could not have served you in the little I have ever done. Everything is for the best, Charles. And now that I am about to leave you, will you accept a little token of the love of my old heart for you. It is not worth much, but it will remind you of me when I am placed under hatches. This is it," and taking a Spanish dollar which he had perforated and worn around his neck for many years, he passed it to Charles Freeman. "That dollar once belonged to your father; he gave it to me, and for his sake I have worn it. The reason why the captain gave it to me, was this: Being under orders to call at the island of Ceylon, on our voyage out, the captain went ashore, and as it was my duty I followed him. Passing along the streets we met a number of black fellows, drunk from drinking arrack. As we hove in sight they were quarrelling among themselves, and what was the reason for it I cannot say, but on seeing us cruising along one of the rascals dashed toward your father, having in his hand an open knife. I was just astern of the captain carrying his parcel, when I saw the fellow rushing toward him. In an instant I was to the front and with a blow of my fist sent the darkey reeling to the earth. That saved the captain's life; but in doing so the knife of the black fellow touched me on my chest. The captain was full of thanks for his deliverance, and lending me his handkerchief I held it to the wound until it left off bleeding. Your father didn't forget my conduct when we reached the ship, and among other things he gave me was that dollar for a keepsake. On receiving that treasure, in a jiffy I put a hole through it, and slinging it around my neck I have worn it ever since, letting it rest upon the scar. Having told you how I came by it, you will now keep it in remembrance of the captain and myself."

"How is it I never heard of this until now?"

"Your father never named it at home lest it should frighten your mother, and make her more nervous; and he gave me strict orders never to mention the event. I have obeyed the captain's orders, and but that I am going on a long cruise, I should not have named it now."

"And in all your privations have you never been tempted to part with it?"

"Never, Mister Charles; and had I been dying of starvation I shouldn't have let it go."

Promising to retain the relic as a remembrance of his old friend, Charles Freeman arose to depart; but the old sailor stopped him, saying,

"Mister Charles, there is one thing I should like before I die, but I'm afraid to ask, for it seems too great a favour. Yet, were it possible, I know that she would do it."

"I should like once more to see 'my lady.' I am afraid it is foolish of me, and perhaps wrong to wish such a thing, and especially so soon after the funeral of Sir Harry; but you don't know how good she has been to me."

Charles Freeman loved Dick Backstay, and was resolved, if possible, to gratify his desire. In this he was successful; and waiting until evening he came from the Priory in company with Clara. It was Christmas Eve, and as they rode along thoughts of the past crowded on her mind. Three years had rolled away since in her own little room she had listened to the "Waits" performing in front of the Priory, at a time when her spirit was overwhelmed with anxiety, and her heart saddened by the dread of Sir Harry, on account of her affection for him she loved. Now the scene was changed, and she was riding with him free from all apprehension.

On reaching the cottage, and ascending to the little bedroom, they beheld the old seaman lying pale and thin, on the borders of death. He saw them enter the room, and a tear, mute herald of the joyous feeling which had now entered his soul, rolled down his weather-beaten cheek. He beckoned them to approach him; and lying on the border line of that state of existence where all human distinction is dropped, he spoke with the freedom of familiarity.

"My lady, you are too good in gratifying the desire of an old man. Yet I longed to see you once more before I slipped my cable. I am going to my home, and to my rest. I have striven to do my duty, though I have often failed, yet I trust that the will to do right will not pass by disregarded by Him, who when on earth was the sailor's friend. I am going from earth; but you will remain behind in happiness. Your worst days are over. The spring-time of your life has been stormy, but it will end in a happy

future. My lady, I shall soon cease to be a poor man; I shall soon be free, and such being the case permit me to employ the freedom of that equality I shall soon possess." On uttering this latter sentence, the old sailor raised himself slightly, and taking the hands of Clara and Charles Freeman in his own, looking upward, he exclaimed, "Good-bye friends: may Heaven reward you!" "Amen!" both of them responded; and the strength of their emotions prevented any further expression.

This last effort had exhausted the remaining strength of the old seaman, and he fell back on his rude little bed as though in a stupor. A deep silence now pervaded that little room, and not a word was spoken. The fire burnt dimly, and a rush candle, fixed in an iron candlestick, shared the space of a small round table with the Bible, a prayer-book, a doctor's bottle, and a teacup, and cast forth its feeble light from one corner around the apartment. The little room was the abode of poverty, but now also of tranquility and joy. On one side of that poor bed on which was lying the dying sailor, stood Clara and Charles Freeman, and on the other John Williams and a hired nurse. While Uncle Jacob, who had crept into the house unobserved, stood gazing on the scene, with simply his face showing through the half-open doorway. Not a sound was heard in that room save the occasional falling of a cinder from the grate, and the monotonous ticking of an old Dutch clock. All was wrapped in silence—a silence it was becoming too painful to endure; but when that quiet had become insupportable, the sound of human voices without fell on the ears of the watchers. The "Waits" were in the street, and as there came again from their lips the words—

To you in David's town this day,  
Is born of David's line.  
A saviour—

they floated into the room, and were recognized by the old sailor. On hearing them he raised his hand, and from the corner of his closed eyes the shining tear-drops stole forth and ran down his furrowed cheek. The charm of silence was now broken, and Clara and Charles withdrew. As they were leaving the room, she whispered,

"Oh, that such a death had been Sir Harry's!"

"They who would die happy must live virtuously," replied Charles Freeman, and the two passed on.

The next morning the Union Jack hoisted at half-mast in the garden of Samphire Cottage, told that Dick Backstay had departed from earth. Jacob Winter loved the old sailor for his affection toward his favourite, and it was simply a feeling of jealousy which led them to annoy one another.

The remains of the dead are kept unburied a long time in England. A week had passed away since the death of Dick Backstay, and during that time Uncle Jacob had been busily employed in preparing for the interment of his rival. He insisted on taking personal charge of the funeral; and by means of bribes, persuasions, and the promise of a good dinner, had got up a procession for his humble friend. Charles Freeman strongly objected that one, although faithful and good, who had spent his life in obscurity, should have any display made on such an occasion; but he might as well have tried to bind the north wind. It is true Dick Backstay was respected by all who sailed from the port of Folkestone, and this to some extent relieved the extravagance of the scene.

On the day of the funeral, precisely at the hour of two o'clock in the afternoon, the knell from the old gray tower raised its mournful voice. At the sound the procession was formed, and the *cortege* proceeded to the place of graves. First in the procession was the coffin covered with the Union Jack, and borne on the shoulders of seamen. Afterward followed Charles Freeman and Uncle Jacob as chief mourners, and after them a long line of sailors from all nations. Slowly the procession wound its way to the churchyard, and when the service was ended, Uncle Jacob exclaimed aloud, "So let the nobility of virtue be honoured of mankind!"

The darkness of night as it settled down on the surrounding scene, found the tomb of that humble, yet faithful man, a rugged mound of barren earth; but the morning beheld it covered with choice and beautiful flowers. During the silent hours of night, lighted only by the star lamps in the vast concave above her, Lisette, alone, had visited the poor man's grave, and while weeping tears of regret for the loss the little circle gathered by circumstances had sustained, scattered with her own hands these relievers of the gloom of death.

As the funeral of Dick Backstay was passing the Folkestone Arms, a post chaise left that inn, having for its only occupant a man of gentlemanly aspect, but with a countenance pale and sorrowful, as though the result of a serious illness. Instantly the quick eye of Fred Holman recognized him as being Lord Lushington, and there flashed on his mind the conviction that it was he whom he had shot on the night of the return of Clara from Samphire Cottage. Being wounded, he had been taken to the inn, and now somewhat restored to his former health, was leaving the town a sadder, if not a wiser man.

## CHAPTER L.

## THE LAST SCENE.

Christmas had passed with its festivities, and such a season Uncle Jacob had never before seen. His bounty to the poor was boundless,