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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 XXXVIII.

## SENT FOR HOME.

When the temper of Monsieur had become sufficiently reduced to make his presence bearable, there appeared at the door of the chateau a youth, dressed as a peasant, who enquired for Lisette. From his appearance he seemed to be but half-witted. Monsieur was about to order him rudely away, when Lisette, who at that moment made her appearance, rushed toward him, exclaiming, "My brother! my brother!" Resting her head on his shoulder, she earnestly embraced him.

The joy of the youth on seeing his sister appeared to be boundless, and the frantic gestures he employed to express his delight, told that all the feeling it was possible for him to command had become excited. During this scene, Monsieur stood by in silence, steadily gazing in surprise at what he saw, and as the imbecile drew from his bosom a slip of crumpled paper, and gave it to Lisette, she offered it to him.

Will Monsieur be good enough to read what is written?" she enquired.

"Read it yourself," Lisette.

"Monsieur knows that were it possible I would gladly do it."

He took it from her hand, and glanced his eye cursorily over it. The uncouth characters, the misspelt words, the want of clearness of expression, and the coarse material on which they were written, alike indicated that it was the effort of some untrained mind. Not only was the attention of Monsieur arrested by the facts named, but the subject of the note also filled him with amazement. Repeatedly he read it, and, having done so, held it between his finger and thumb as one abstracted. Still holding it, with that look which appeared capable of piercing the primary rocks of the globe, he glanced from Lisette to her brother, as if to read were the matter a reality. But the countenance of the imbecile was in the repose of indifference, while that of the sister only indicated anxious expectation.

"It is a strange coincidence!" exclaimed Monsieur, in a half whisper.

"Will Monsieur be good enough to read?" enquired Lisette.

And Monsieur did read that the mother of Lisette was taken suddenly and seriously ill, and requested her to come home without delay. But a line by way of postscript added that Anthony might remain at the chateau during her absence, which, it was hoped, would not be long.

All things being in readiness, Lisette took her departure for Gravelines, under the pretence of the possibility of getting a ride in some of the fish carts which passed through her native village. On leaving the chateau, Anthony accompanied her as far as the gate, being followed close by Monsieur. Yet, watchful as was the latter, by means of a few slang terms, an important communication was made. The safe conduct home of his servant was no anxiety to her master; his care for her never extended to such a consideration, and, seeing her into the road, he walked back to the house in company with her brother.

By means of the communication made to her at parting, Lisette, when she had reached a few miles, turned off from the direct road, that she might find a parcel left for her by her pretended brother. That parcel contained a British midshipman's uniform, which Yellow Dick had procured for her. Donning this, Lisette appeared once more in male attire.

It was dark when Lisette entered Gravelines, and, seating herself on an embankment by the roadside, and just outside the town, she sank into a reverie on her future course.

While trying to resolve on what she should do, the sound of an approaching vehicle arrested her attention. The noise of the wheels as they grated over the stones aroused her, and she beheld a cart, laden with merchandise, and drawn by two horses. By the side of the vehicle were walking three men, one of whom she instantly recognized to be an English sailor. The companions of the sailor were Frenchmen, although one of them was capable of speaking a little English. From the tone of voice in which he spoke, it quickly became evident to her that the sailor was in anger, and as she listened to the altercation it became clear that the Frenchman was a coward. But there was that in the tone of his voice which startled her. She knew that voice, and she knew it to be that of Monsieur Henri.

A friend, and a foe appeared at the same moment; deliverance and bondage were approaching in company; success and disappointment were walking side by side; and how was it best to act under the circumstances? A vessel was bound for the land of her desire, and on

the generosity of an English sailor, let his occupation be ever so forbidding, she felt she could rely for aid in her extremity. But the Frenchman was in the way; she knew him, and he was well acquainted with the tone of her voice. How was it possible for her to act?

"Dare to be brave," she exclaimed, as she walked forward.

"Ship ahoy!" shouted the sailor.

"An Englishman," returned Lisette, in the roughest voice she could command.

"Where from?"

"From the prison at Arras."

"And where are you bound?"

"To England, if I can get the chance."

Matters being thus explained satisfactorily, the promise of a voyage across the channel was immediately given. The sum of ten guineas caused it to be quickly repeated, and the goods in the cart being the last of the cargo, the vessel soon set sail. On reaching the place, and seeing the merchandise safe in the possession of the smugglers, Monsieur Henri took his way off in silence, and without so much as seeing Lisette, who embarked immediately. In a few hours she was landed near the town of Deal.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

Arriving in England, Lisette, having thrown off her disguise, made her way to the Priory.

Placing herself against a tree, she stood looking toward the window of the apartment of Clara, whence issued a feeble stream of light. That sight cheered her heart; but could she have known the anguish of soul the occupant was just then enduring, tears of sympathy would have arisen to her eyes, and have coursed their way down her swarthy cheeks. Clara had been besieged for a considerable time previous by the attentions of a certain impecunious nobleman, named Lord Lushington, whom Sir Harry had met at Canterbury, and invited to visit the Priory. After his suit was dismissed, Lord Lushington left her with some mysterious words regarding the fate of Charles Freeman. This it was that so grieved Clara. To her fervid imagination the ambiguous expression was replete with truth, she saw Charles Freeman dead; and under this illusion she sobbed as though her heart would break.

It is no mere theory of the speculative moralist that the hour of direst distress is frequently the one which brings a full deliverance; it is the fact of human life. Could Lisette have known what was passing through the soul of Clara, she would have dared all opposition to relieve her; but she could not know; and in the happiness of her ignorance her heart beat in pulsations of pleasure as she stood watching the beams of light flowing forth from the window and scattering themselves among the surrounding darkness. While thus engaged, the sound of footsteps fell upon her ear. With the quickness of her race she listened; and her inquisitiveness was rewarded by hearing the conversation of two persons. One she knew to be Sir Harry, the other was a stranger to her. Still listening she caught the words:

"It must be done, my lord. I am determined, let the world say what it chooses, to place her beyond the power of marrying that wretched man."

"Sir Harry, I repeat it, your daughter is the victim of a false education."

"You think so."

"I am assured of it; and I have not the slightest doubt but when she knows her condition to be unalterable, she will readily submit to her fate, and ultimately become grateful for any severity now practised."

"And you will engage to do it?"

"This is my plan."

"You will have the best wishes of her father to aid you in the endeavour."

"And afterward her property, and ultimately the Priory estate; is it not so?"

"At my death."

"What is to be done while you live?"

"There is the home, and I shall be liberal."

"Four thousand pounds a year, Sir Harry."

"My lord, be moderate."

"I think myself to be quite moderate."

"I thought two thousand, my lord."

"Two thousand! What can I do with two thousand pounds a year?"

"I have done with less."

"But I cannot, nor do I mean to try. Unless I have a written document assigning to me the sum of four thousand pounds a year, I don't move any further in this matter."

"You will not require a document; I will pledge you my honour as security."

"I prefer the matter should be legally settled."

"Do you doubt my honour, my lord?"

"By no means; but a plain understanding prevents future disputes."

"My lord, I trusted to your honour."

"All persons do not transact business in the same way," coolly replied his lordship.

"You have me at an advantage in the matter of the thousand pounds."

This referred to a loan of that sum which Lord Lushington had got from Sir Harry.

"I did not place you there; it is one of the accidents which occur in playing the game of life."

"That will be three thousand for this year, you having received one."

"That must go to pay expenses, and four thousand must be paid down."

"You press heavily on me, my lord; and but that I would rather endure death than be defeated, I would not submit to it."

"The matter is still in your hands."

"I know it; but it seems the only way for me to be revenged."

"You conceived a shorter way."

"How?"

"By putting a bullet through the brain of your prisoner."

"Ugh! that's too ugly. Have you everything in readiness?"

"I have, Sir Harry. To-morrow evening late a person will be here from Folkestone, with a note written as though coming from some of her humble friends, requesting her to be at a certain point in the road by eight o'clock in the morning, to receive intelligence from Charles Freeman. But the information she receives will be of another kind, and a father's blessing will follow the removal. You know the rest."

"That's good!" exclaimed Sir Harry.

"And the document?"

"Must that be, my lord?"

"I don't move without that precious instrument; so you will be good enough to have it ready for me in the morning."

"Alas! my fate," sighed forth the baronet; "then I must at once away to get it drawn up."

"Good-night, Sir Harry," replied Lord Lushington as the baronet turned off into the darkness, leaving himself to walk slowly back to the Priory.

"That miserable old wretch," he soliloquized; "he wishes to avenge himself on that beautiful girl, and grudges to pay for it. What a pity such a daughter should have such a father. I regret she should be placed at such a disadvantage. She, beyond doubt, loves that fellow, whoever he is, and I wish she could have him; but my interest is on the other side, and I must become a villain to suit my needs. Yet I will act well toward her, and it may be that she will overcome the nonsense surrounding her. My coming to Canterbury was a lucky stroke, but I must guard against that would-be baronet, or he may deceive me now."

Indulging in this strain his lordship reached the Priory, and Lisette, now left alone, came forth from her hiding-place. "Good heavens!" she exclaimed; "and are we gypsies condemned by public opinion for treachery and deceit? Yet what I have now heard equals anything which could be framed by the bravest of our tribe. And this is the deceit that can be practised by those before whom any delinquent of our race would be judged and condemned for a trifling offence. Is there, as these house-dwellers believe, a day coming when justice shall be meted out to man by an impartial hand. If so, then woe be to such as these. But I must not remain. I have unexpectedly discovered their plot, and I must now use my knowledge against them. Whither shall I go? To the Priory? No. That would betray their scheme, and permit them to arrange another. They must place their plot in motion, and it must then fail, that their villainy may be publicly exposed. Shall I then away to Folkestone? The same. Oh my poor body! already wearied by the tedious walk, there is yet more to be done. But never mind; a willing heart shall make the severest labour light."

Finishing her little talk, Lisette was soon on the road. The way was long, and the night was dark, but the devoted girl pursued her course with cheerfulness. That she might reach the town of Folkestone, it was necessary she should pass the camp of her tribe. The tents and the waggons were in their old position; and the fires burning brightly were surrounded by the old women of the tribe cooking their evening meal. By the blaze of the fire-light Lisette saw her father sitting apart from his people, and heard the loud tones of her mother's voice. Her heart yearned to reveal herself to them, and to embrace them; but the success of her purpose depended on their ignorance of what had become of her. With a sigh, therefore, she passed on, without her presence being recognized. No, all within the camp were not in ignorance of her presence. An old dog, the playfellow of her childhood, caught the sound of the light tread of its young mistress, and raising its head, and uttering a low whine, started off in the direction to meet her. But the voice of Jethro recalled the animal which, faithful in obedience, returned, sacrificing its own pleasure to obey the will of its master. Throwing himself down at the feet of the gypsy, it looked up into his face in earnestness, but the man failed to read the mute language written on the countenance of the sagacious brute.

On reaching Folkestone, Lisette took her way directly to Samphire Cottage. Jacob Winter was in bed when she reached his residence, and as she persisted in knocking to gain admittance, the old man, unable to rest, at length put his head out of the window and enquired,

"Who's there?"

"A friend," replied Lisette.

"My friends don't come in the middle of the night."

"Necessity brings me to you."

"Stop a minute; I'll throw you out half a crown and a match, and then you can strike a light and look for it."

"I don't desire a half crown."

"Not enough, aye? I sha'n't give you any more."

"It isn't money I want."

"What then; who are you?"

"A woman."

"Bless my stars! You must have come to the wrong house. I have no women here."

"Sir, open the door and let me speak with you."

"You saucy jade, be off, or I'll drench you."

"I am from France; from Charles Freeman."

"Aye, what do you say?"

"I am from Charles Freeman."

"That dodge, aye, my lady? It won't do."

"Silence! I have news for you; earnest, important news."

"Are you deceiving me; is there a party of you wishing to break in and rob me? Mind you, I have firearms."

"I am a true woman; the friend of Clara Chillington and Charles Freeman."

"Wait a minute then and I'll be with you."

Still apprehensive lest the matter should be a plot of designing persons, the old man quickly appeared at the door, but in the most ludicrous guise. Putting on his dressing gown, without removing his night cap, he encased the toes of his bare feet in a pair of slippers, and sticking a pistol into the band of his outer garment, slung an old blunderbuss by a strap across his shoulder, while in one hand he held a candle, and in the other a cutlass. The sight of this veritable Crusoe brought a smile to the countenance of Lisette; his ludicrous appearance was too much for the gravity of her vivacious nature, and lifting her hands in astonishment she exclaimed,

"My good sir, pray disarm yourself and listen to me."

But Uncle Jacob was still doubtful, and started back as he saw her swarthy countenance.

"Sir," said Lisette, now in deep seriousness, "the business I am on admits of no delay."

"What is it then?" he inquired, still keeping the door ajar and peeping through.

"I came yesterday from France, from Charles Freeman. I have discovered where he is secreted; but to-night I came from the Priory, where a plot is formed for carrying off Clara."

Throwing down the cutlass, he opened the door and drawing Lisette into the house again locked it. Now tell me all about it, said the old man, as he drew his dressing gown around him. She then gave him the outline of her doings and discoveries. On hearing the condition of his protégé, his impulsive nature gave way, and he sobbed aloud.

"Poor boy! is this your fate? Chained and beaten as a maniac by a miserable frog-eating Frenchman. How can you be released? What can we do to help you?"

"Peace, sir," replied Lisette, "I have a plan for his release, but let us first think of Clara." Having detailed the plot as she had heard it, she waited for the old man to reply. Jumping from his seat, he looked at her and enquired,

"Am I in a dream; or is what I see and hear a reality? It seems impossible it can be true. My young friend discovered chained and suffering as though he were a madman, and Clara about to be carried off. Are you a living person, or is it all a delusion? If a deception I pray you to leave me, nor harrow up my feelings by detailing such horrors."

"My dear sir, it is no delusion; it is true, and I pray you to delay not, lest we should be too late."

Being at length convinced, he clasped the hand of Lisette and shook it with a cordiality arising from sincere gratitude. From what she had told him Uncle Jacob felt a boundless confidence in her wisdom, which was confirmed by detailing a plan she had formed during her night walk for saving Clara.

"Capital! that's capital!" exclaimed the old man when she had finished; and then going to the bottom of the stairs, he shouted for old Betty in the voice he had been accustomed to employ when issuing his commands on shipboard, during the raging of a typhoon in the Indian Ocean. Thinking the house to be on fire, or that something equally serious had happened, that servant came rushing downstairs in all possible haste.

"Betty," he continued, "I have a stranger come from France with good news,—well, I don't know if it is good news—but good news or bad news, it is news, and I wish you to get her some refreshment."

Grumbling about strangers and French people, she set to work to obey the wishes of her master, and finding the stranger to be young and weary, her womanly kindness quickly surrounded Lisette with every comfort. Leaving his visitor with old Betty, the old man dressed himself and went to arouse Dick Backstay.

"Shiver my timbers! Jacob Winters, if it ain't awfully beautiful," exclaimed the old man. "It is awful to think how Mister Charles is served by that French dog; but it is beautiful to have found him out. So they mean to take my lady off, do they? No, no, Sir Harry, Dick Backstay's got some strength left yet, and isn't afraid of nobody. Shall I call John Williams, Jacob?"

"Yes, do."

"John Williams, ahoy!" shouted Dick.