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# 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 XLVI.

## CAUGHT AT LAST.

The Board of Revenue at length determined on the capture of the *Nancy* at any cost, and to effect this a sloop of war was stationed in the channel with strict orders not to let her escape. After the encounter with old Luff, Jack Pegden had remained in Calais until his health had become fully restored. This kept His Majesty's ship beating up and down in the offing, until her officers and crew became enraged from very weariness. It appeared to them as though the smuggler having heard of the look-out kept for him, was afraid to put to sea. This conclusion was wrong; and on the very night that mysterious vessel crossed the bows of the *Speedwell*, those on board the sloop of war *The Ranger*, had the mortification of hearing that the smuggler had again eluded the watch and landed her goods.

The news that the *Speedwell* had left the port of Folkestone, and who they were forming her crew, quickly spread through the town, and raised an earnest enquiry as to her destination and the design of her voyage. None knew whither she had gone; and as in all kindred cases, when conjecture has to take the place of actual knowledge, numerous speculations were set afloat. One man only of those who heard these reports guessed the cause of her departure, and that man was Sir Harry Chillington. Scarcely did he appear in the town; yet there were not wanting those who for purposes of their own kept him informed on what was passing. Every fresh scrap of news was conveyed to him by these parasites, on whom the proscription of public opinion failed to produce an effect. It required but little time for the baronet to draw a conclusion from what he had heard, and become indignant; neither was his wrath appeased in reflecting on his own helplessness to interrupt any attempt made against himself. That Jacob Winter and friends were gone to try to effect the release of Charles Freeman, he had no doubt; and what could be done to prevent it? Anything money could do he was willing should be tried to frustrate their plan; but supposing he was already released and on the way to England, could not criminal proceedings be instituted? This latter thought made him tremble. Furious in speech, fearful in revenge when it did not immediately inculcate himself, he was at heart a coward. He was tenacious of his life, and dreaded every incident which might place it in jeopardy; but for what reason he was so anxious to remain in this life, unless it was to avoid a worse, was not easy to define.

Being disturbed by the thought of the possibility of being arraigned as a criminal, he examined closely every link in the chain of evidence which might be brought against him. "It is impossible if what I conjecture be true, and that wretched plebeian should ever return, that I can ever become accused of having spirited him away." This expression was employed by the baronet as he strode up and down the floor of his library. There he had received the intelligence, and there he walked cogitating the matter. "But how did his whereabouts become known to his friends? Who has played the part of traitor in this matter? Not Jethro, certainly; he is too intimately mixed up in the affair; nor does he know where he is. Can it be that beautiful daughter of his? That she hates me, I know; and can it be that she has taken this method to be revenged on me for what she terms annoyances? Pshaw! It cannot be she. Yet where is she gone; and why might it not be she?"

Thus speaking with himself, and vacillating on the subject as to who could betray him, Sir Harry stood in a deep reverie. At length a thought flashed to his mind, and quitting the Priory he started for the gypsy encampment. Jethro was in camp when the baronet made his appearance.

"Good morning, Sir Harry," said Jethro, as he saw him approaching. But without regarding the salutation he enquired,

"Where is your daughter?"

"Would that I knew, Sir Harry."

"Come, Jethro, no nonsense. I paid you well for that little job, and you are playing a double game."

"What do you mean?" enquired the gypsy, jumping to his feet, and confronting the baronet.

"I mean this; that yourself and your daughter are playing me false in the matter of sending that worthless wretch across the water."

"Sir Harry Chillington," replied Jethro, cold from indignation, "I will suffer no man, rich or poor, lightly to accuse me of such an act. I am not particular in what I engage to do against you house-dwellers, as I consider you all to be natural enemies of our race, against whom it is

fair for me to make war without any consideration; but once I have engaged to act in any matter, I am bound by the laws of faithfulness to abide firm by my agreement. I have honour and distinction to maintain as the head of my tribe as well as any of you; and if you think I have played you false, I am willing to settle it with you after the fashion of your own people. Do not disdain me because I am a gypsy. I am a prince among my own people; and as a man I am worthy of yourself."

"Tush! Rubbish! but where is your daughter?"

"Why do you enquire? I have more than once suspected that you know better where she is than I do; I have tried every means to detect you, and had I found you guilty I should have made short work of you."

"Cease your anger, man, and listen to me."

Sir Harry then told Jethro of the departure of the *Speedwell*, of those forming her crew, and the conclusion he had arrived at on the subject. On hearing this the gypsy became thoughtful; while with the quickness of light there flashed on his memory the recollection of the doings of Mad Tom on the morning they found the earring. "Can it be," he thought, "that in a fit of disgust for my conduct in this matter she has left me to proceed to France, and having effected his release, will bring him back as a swift witness against me? She can never be so foolish. Yet I know her spirit, and I know that she would support her idea of what is right at any sacrifice."

While thinking in this manner, Jethro stood kicking a fire-brand with the toe of his heavy boot.

"What are you thinking of, Jethro?"

"I am thinking we had better at once start to see if Jack Pegden is at home."

"Agreed," was the reply; and the next minute the baronet and gypsy were walking toward the smuggler's home.

To decide which was the better man of the two as they walked along, would form a curious study. They were both villains of the deepest dye; but one had method in his villainy, and thought it right to avenge the insults offered to his people; while the other was a villain that he might carry out his wretched caprice, or indulge his brutal passions. Yet the man who could associate with gypsies and smugglers to carry out his vile purposes, entertained a murderous objection to an educated, noble, and pure-minded young man becoming allied to him in marrying his daughter, because he was not of titled birth.

On reaching the house of the skipper they found him at home. He was remaining ashore to arrange with the merchant contrabandists for another voyage, and during his stay his vessel had been run into a place of secrecy. After such a salutation as vulgar persons on terms of freest familiarity indulge in, Sir Harry enquired,

"Have you recently carried a passenger across the water?"

"Why?" was the answer returned, with that suspicion which ever lurks in the mind of such as practice evil.

"I have my reason for enquiring."

"And I have my reason for demanding an explanation from you before returning an answer."

The baronet felt the rebuke, and belched forth his wrath in oaths and curses. Two such natures meeting in opposition, could only result in an explosion with perilous consequences. Confronting each other with fury written on their countenances, and both encased in obstinacy, there appeared no chance, so far as they were concerned, that the object for which they had met would be obtained. Jack Pegden, with the desire which is felt by an ignorant person to make a temporary superiority felt in meeting with one of a higher grade in social life at an advantage, was determined to let the baronet see that he was as good as himself, and required nothing from him; while Sir Harry, who considered all beneath him in the social scale but inferior beings, made to follow his caprice, resolutely defied the smuggler. In this manner the business on hand came to a dead lock, and it would have remained so, had not Jethro, trained to conceal his feelings, come to the relief.

"Jack," said the gypsy, "have you taken my daughter to France?"

The sound of this fresh voice broke the spell; it was a sound with which there was nothing unpleasant associated in the smuggler's mind, and it commanded his attention.

"I have not, Jethro," was the answer produced.

"Nor any one disguised who might have been her?"

"No."

"Are you certain?"

"Stay! before the fight with old Luff, in which, to tell the truth, I came off but indifferently, I carried over a young fellow who said he had escaped from prison."

"About what date was that?"

Comparing the time when the princess left her home with that mentioned by the smuggler, there remained but little doubt she was working against their design. Jethro felt confounded before this evidence, and wondered why she was doing it. That she would carelessly expose herself to danger he had not thought; and that she had not considered the matter he would not believe. Again he asserted his ignorance of the matter, and held himself in readiness to defend his position. Having told Jack Pegden of the departure of the *Speedwell*, the consideration of what was to be done under the circumstances engaged their attention.

"There is only one thing to be done," said Sir Harry; "Jack must go across at once and put Monsieur on his guard; he must then try to discover the princess and bring her back; and then, if possible, get the *Speedwell* arrested as a privateer."

"Well advised," said Jethro.

"A good stroke of business, truly," answered the smuggler; "the proposals are modest. First, put Monsieur on his guard; quite a useless undertaking, I assure you, gentlemen; for he is too crafty not to sleep with one eye open. Next to discover the princess and to bring her back. A pretty task, this, and one which might land me in limbo as a spy. And last, to betray the *Speedwell* as a privateer, and to get her captured. These things seem to you, gentlemen, as easy as kissing your hand, and because they appear so easy, permit me to advise that you undertake the work yourselves."

"Nonsense, Jack," replied the gypsy; "none but yourself can do it."

"Sweet flatterer, honey will not make me run."

"What will then?"

"Oh, nothing but 'palm oil,' I assure you."

"What do you mean?" enquired the baronet.

"Sir Harry can scarcely require to be told," replied the gypsy.

"I suppose it to be a slang term for money. Curse the money; nobody cares to move a finger without money. This affair will ruin me. What will take you across and upset the plot to release the wretched being?"

"I can only promise to try what I can do in the matter."

"For how much?"

"Fifty guineas down, and another if I succeed."

"It would cost me less for the funeral of my silly girl, than this constant drain upon my purse."

A silence followed these ominous words, for both the smuggler and the gypsy felt themselves to be immaculate in the presence of such a monster.

"Take the fifty guineas," said Sir Harry, sullenly, for he knew that it would be useless to haggle with the smuggler.

"And your note for the other, should I succeed?"

"Take my honour for it."

"Ha, ha, ha!" burst forth the smuggler in a loud laugh; and as he did so he reached a tobacco pipe from the chimney-corner and began to fill it. "Your honour isn't worth that," he replied, as he snapped the pipe asunder.

Knowing that the smuggler had him at an advantage, he clutched convulsively the stump of the pen, and in a moment transferred the desired document to the skipper.

Having settled the business, the baronet took the road to Canterbury.

The next night saw the *Nancy* cutting the water on her voyage to France. The smuggler had gone about three miles of her passage, when a signal from the shore gave warning that something extraordinary was taking place. A fire was burning on the cliff; and leaping and dancing the flickering flame cast a fitful light across the angry waters.

Other eyes than those on board the *Nancy* saw the fire; and on seeing it, the lieutenant in command of the *Ranger* ordered the helm to be put down, an extra look-out to be kept, and taking a reef in his mainsail, started his vessel away with her head bearing west nor-west.

"Keep a good look-out," was the order given. Pursuing her course in the darkness, she seemed a phantom ship, impelled by either pleasure or fury toward increasing night. The *Nancy* was also pushing forward; and both ships were approaching each other, hidden in secrecy beneath the veil of gloom.

"A sail on the larboard bow!" shouted the look-out man on board the *Ranger*, and in an instant every eye was turned toward that quarter. Gazing over the bulwarks, the strange vessel was seen dashing over the waves under the guidance of a skipper pilot.

"It is the *Nancy*," said the lieutenant; "we have come directly across her course. Hail her," and in a moment the sound of, "Ship ahoy!" was floating toward the smuggler. The voice from the *Ranger* met with no response, and shifting her course the *Nancy* held on her way.

All hands on board both vessels were now excited, recognizing it to be a government ship which hailed them, Jack himself took the helm of the *Nancy*.

Under the extra pressure of canvas the *Ranger* reeled for a minute, and then rushed forward with the water nearly on her deck. This increase of speed brought her nearer to the run-

away. Both vessels were now doing their best, but the *Ranger* was the swifter sailor. Having come nearer to the smuggler, another gun was fired as a signal for him to heave to. But the same silence prevailed.

The next order given was to man the guns and to load with grape shot. This being done, and the helm of the *Ranger* being placed hard a-starboard, her head was brought to the wind, and a volley was poured into the smuggler.

It required no more to bring the *Nancy* to: she had run her race, and her helm being let go, she came round with the wind, and threw herself right across the bows of the *Ranger*. The call for quarter now arose, and on boarding her the cause for her coming round so suddenly appeared in her steersman, Jack Pegden, having fallen to the deck shot through the head.

The race of that wild, daring fellow, who had from childhood defied the laws of his country, had been finished suddenly. It was the death he had expected. He never spoke after he fell; and there were no last words to convey to fond hearts at home. He died as he had lived, defying alike the laws of God and man. The ship was taken up the Thames and confiscated; the crew banished, or sent aboard of man-o'-war.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

## THE ESCAPE.

Lisette had succeeded in rescuing her prisoner from his dungeon. It was now ten o'clock; one hour more and the party would be free. The darkness of the night rendered the fugitives safe from all observers; and particularly as they had reached the point where they were to descend the cliff which was a considerable distance from the public road. At this place they lingered, watching the lights reflected from the points of the English shore, and anticipating the pleasure of being shortly there. While waiting the sound of the tocsin fell upon their ears.

"Why are they ringing that bell?" enquired Charles Freeman.

"It is the sound of alarm," returned Lisette.

"And we had better make our way down here," said Anthony.

"I cannot descend this place, my child. I am certain I cannot," said Madame.

"You must," replied Lisette sternly. "What can we do with you here?"

"Leave me behind; it was foolish of me to attempt to escape."

"Leave you here; and should we be sought for betray ourselves?"

"I have looked toward the land I love, now let me die."

"See yonder," said Anthony, cutting short the talk of Madame; "here comes a party from the town with lights."

"Let me die! Let me die!" exclaimed Madame.

"You must live this time against your will," replied Anthony.

"Here, take hold, s'r," and responding to the command, Charles Freeman and he carried her down the cliff.

"They are coming," said Lisette, as the noise of a number of persons was heard on the cliff; "should they find us we are lost."

"They must not find us," replied Anthony; "follow me, and carrying the old woman, he quickly secreted the party beneath the rock where he himself had hidden."

At this moment those on the cliff stopped at the place of descent, and from their manner it appeared as though they had found something to interest them.

"Have any of you dropped any article?" enquired Charles Freeman, and simultaneously with this enquiry Madame exclaimed:

"I have lost my shawl!"

"That has betrayed us. See, they are holding something up to the light, and are searching around the place." By the light of the lanterns and torches carried by the party, their doings became revealed to the fugitives on the beach.

"I fear we are ruined," said Lisette, bitterly. "They fancy they have found traces of some one they are in search of."

"They will now proceed with caution," replied Anthony; and in an instant every light was extinguished.

The sound of persons ascending the cliff was now distinctly heard.

"They are coming; look to your pistols, friends," said Charles Freeman.

"And what use are they in the presence of so many?"

"I will sell my life dear at any rate."

"Oh! dear," sighed Madame; "it is all my fault."

Lisette stood as a statue, her eyes fixed on the cliff; but all her power of invention was taxed in vain to devise a plan for their escape; and in that moment of agony her soul flew forth for aid to a source beyond herself, and she exclaimed,

"O God, save us!"

The Frenchmen were now upon the beach, and were descending to the water's edge. Lisette drew Madame to her, now almost dead from fright. At that moment the sound of a distant clock rang out the hour of eleven.

"We are saved!" exclaimed Lisette; and as the whistle fell on her ear, the boat from the *Speedwell* grated on the beach.

"Quick, aboard!" was the order; and while Charles Freeman took Madame in his arms, the gypsy carried Lisette. It was the work of a moment, and the boat was pushed off.

The passengers from the *Speedwell*, on land-