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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 XVII.

A FORMAL DECLARATION.

When Charles Freeman discovered that Clara seriously loved him, it became a matter for grave thought how far he should encourage such affection. It is true that he also loved, but he had not so far lost his soul in affection as to reduce the strength of his reason. He, therefore, knew that to encourage even a speaking intercourse with Clara would, in the esteem of some persons, be sufficient in itself to expose him to the scandal of being a fortune hunter.

This thought wounded his pride, for although his patrimony was not large, it was equal to his desires, and the thought of obtaining a wife for her wealth, his soul revolted against. Never before had he been discontented with his lot, nor annoyed with the arrangement of society, but now his heart rebelled, and it demanded all his moral force to restrain his feelings.

Had Charles Freeman moved in the same social circle, he would have at once avowed his affections, and solicited of Sir Harry the hand of his daughter in marriage, but to do so in the position society placed him, he knew would be to subject himself to contempt, if not to insult and abuse.

The dogma of a peculiar destiny for individuals, be it right or wrong, was not conceived without an apparent cause. The incidents forming the so-called accidents of life are frequently but too lightly thought of, and are permitted to pass on without the care of bestowing on them a transient thought, yet in many instances they appear as an irresistible stream, carrying persons forward without any exercise of volition toward a position they never indulged the hope of attaining.

The act was only common for Clara on that fine afternoon to indulge in equestrian exercise. She was a good horse-woman; her strength of character gave her that command over a horse the more timid do not possess. It was likewise perfectly natural that in the month of May she should choose to ride down a green lane leading from the Priory, and made inviting by the wild flowers of the season. Clara might have chosen another and smoother road.

The doings of Clara were natural, nor were those of Charles Freeman otherwise, for, having pursued his customary walk, it was but a common act for him to ascend the steps cut in the face of the cliff that he might take his homeward walk by another route. Yet this conduct of them both was bringing them into the presence of one another, but without knowing it. Yet that they should meet on that occasion another incident was required, for, naturally, Charles Freeman would reach the top of the cliff and leave the place long before Clara would reach the spot. But the link which was to form an event of importance in their history appeared in the person of a disbanded soldier, attended by his dog.

The day being warm and the soldier weary from his long march toward his native village, had seated himself on a heap of stones which lay by the wayside. The soldier's dog, being also weary, followed the example of his master. This was the condition of the soldier and his dog when Clara's attention was arrested by the whistling of a goldfinch, as it leaped from spray to spray of the prickly hedge which marked the boundary of the road. Only a groom was in attendance on Clara. The horse she was at that time riding was as free from vice and timidity as it was possible for such a creature to be, and as though a horse had never been other than proper in its behaviour. But as she drew nigh to the end of the lane where the disbanded soldier was still resting, the cur at his master's feet, aroused by the tramping of horse-hoofs on the road, began to yelp and bark at the top of his voice. The barking of the cur startled the horse, and regardless of the exertion made by its fair rider, dashed off at a furious speed.

In vain it was that Clara tried to stop the course of the frightened racer, and it was an equally vain attempt on the part of the groom to try to overtake her. The creature disdained every effort to check its race or to capture it, and the closer the proximity of the attendant, the faster the horse flew. The clatter of the hoofs of the horse in pursuit did but stimulate the runaway to renewed exertion.

The danger attending this wild ride of Clara was not so imminent did the horse but keep the road. She was a good horse-woman, and could easily retain her seat until it had exhausted its strength in the unnatural race it was running. But should it take to the turf which skirted the edge of the cliff, and was separated only from the road by a low embankment, the chance of her life being saved was not worth a moment's thought. Blinded by fear, or from the excitement of racing, it was then more than probable

that the creature might swerve from the straight line, and plunge with its fair rider into the depths below.

Such an accident had occurred on that part of the road Clara was now riding, and this fact being known to her, retaining her presence of mind, she tried by gentle words to soothe the disturbed feelings of the creature, and by means of a tight rein to keep its head from turning toward the cliff.

Clara had now ridden two miles at the highest speed the horse could command, and in the hope that the strength of the creature would soon become exhausted, the feeling of danger was losing its hold upon her mind, indeed, she considered the danger to be past. But that horse, when excited, possessed an obstinate will of its own, so that the very means she employed to prevent an accident seemed suddenly to increase the danger, for, regardless of all restraint, the beast leaped the embankment, and sped along the cliff with increased rapidity.

On seeing the danger to which his mistress was now exposed, the groom, who had been following as fast as possible, shrieked with horror, and, reining up his horse, sat paralyzed from very fear. Every muscle in the man's body was fixed rigidly from apprehension, and he gazed on the flying racer with the vacant stare of a hopeless idiot, or with the meaningless look of a dead man. The horse, still running at the top of his speed, and with foaming mouth and flanks smoking, appeared as fresh as when it started on its mad race. Mentally Clara now prayed for deliverance, and turned her beautiful countenance, so pale and troubled from a sense of the danger which threatened her, toward the blue dome of heaven, imploring aid from the Preserver of men.

Ignorant of what was passing on the top of the cliff, Charles Freeman lingered in his walk, nor did it quicken his pace that at the instant a beautiful frigate in full sail appeared rounding the South Foreland, and standing in close to the land. As the gallant vessel pursued her way, dancing over the wavelets, she laid her broadside to the cliff, and exposed her beautiful form from her topmast to her hull. For a moment, as he stood looking at her, the wish arose in his mind that he had followed the calling of a sailor. From his father he inherited the love of a seafaring life, but subdued the passion that he might remain ashore. To him, therefore, the frigate appeared an object of great beauty, and anxiously he watched her course, until a jutting crag on the face of the cliff shut her out from view. Being desirous to see again the gallant frigate, he mounted the steps cut in the side of the precipice, and had once more caught sight of her when the dull thud of horse-hoofs running upon the grass fell on his ear. The sound startled him, and he exclaimed:

"It is impossible that any person can be so mad as to venture to ride on the narrow strip of grass which separates the road from this fearful abyss!" Urged by the curiosity excited by his own suggestion, he hurried to the top of the cliff, and had scarcely raised his head above the level, when the fearful sight burst upon him. But a short distance from him Clara was dashing along pale and trembling on the back of a runaway horse. Her light form, which appeared but as the weight of a feather to that mad creature, had lost its equilibrium, and was swaying to and fro as though its next motion would appear in being jerked from the saddle over the side of the cliff. Her long, light hair, which had broken loose, was now flying in streamers behind her back, while the vacant expression of her countenance told that consciousness was fast leaving her.

Horror filled the soul of Charles Freeman at what he saw, but how could he act? What could be done under the circumstances to arrest the creature? All that man could dare he was willing to risk to save her life, although the attempt should destroy his own. But there was no time to do anything, for the horse was upon him, and to attempt to seize the bridle might cause the brute to start aside, and dashing over the cliff destroy them both, or what he most feared, jerk Clara from her seat to immediate destruction.

Without appearing to regard the presence of the man the horse came rushing on, and it was not until within twenty yards of him that the creature saw him. But immediately it beheld him the horse stopped,—then turned,—darted,—took a leap,—and falling short, fell on its side on the embankment.

The life of Clara was saved. The concussion produced by the falling of the horse threw her from her seat to the grass, while the brute being now wearied by his long and frightful run, lay motionless where he fell. To pick up the unconscious Clara was the work of an instant, and then Charles Freeman shouted for

aid to some labourers at work in a distant field. These coming, and procuring for him water from a spring close by, that he might apply it as a restorative, they proceeded to lift the horse, which beyond trembling from the excitement of his mad race, was without injury.

Bending over the prostrate and senseless form of Clara, Charles Freeman laved her face with the cooling water. The refreshing application soon produced signs of returning consciousness; the palor of her cheek soon yielded to renewed circulation; the bloom of her youth began to return; her lips quivered, and losing the paleness of suspended animation again assumed their coral aspect; her body became slightly convulsed; opening her eyes she looked wildly around, and then resting them on him who still bent over her, she whispered, "Where am I? How came I here?"

Being now sufficiently restored to permit her to converse, it became a matter of consideration how she should return to the Priory. But just then the groom, who had in some measure recovered from his fright, came to the place where Clara was, and Charles Freeman, who now took upon himself to direct matters, immediately despatched him to obtain a carriage and a servant, while one of the labourers led home the weary horse.

Matters being thus arranged, the two were left alone on the border line of eternity. The sun shone brilliantly on the waters of the English Channel, and their sheen lighted up the vast expanse with cheerfulness and beauty, the chalk cliffs being illuminated from the same cause stood out as pale barriers to the mighty Atlantic; the growing crops in the adjacent fields nodded their heads to the passing breeze as though in reverent thankfulness to Heaven; the wild thyme rendered the air fragrant with its delicious perfume; all nature appeared as being thankful for the escape from death of Lady Chillington; and that celestial warbler, the sky lark, as he mounted into the blue ether, seemed to be pouring out a song of gratitude at the very gate of heaven that a human being had been snatched from the jaws of destruction. An awkward silence followed the departure of the men, which was quickly removed by the overflowing thankfulness of Clara. Mutual explanations being given as to the causes leading them to meet the second time in the face of danger, Clara continued,

"My dear sir, how can I ever show my appreciation of the services circumstances have enlisted from you toward myself?"

"Clara," Charles Freeman made answer, now for the first time employing such a familiarity, "My thankfulness is that I could render you the least assistance, although I am distressed that you should again be exposed to danger."

This freedom of expression filled the soul of Clara with delight; it seemed to throw down the barrier of reserve over which her innocent heart would have long before leaped in an avowal of affection, had not modesty forbade it. But now that he himself had cast it to the ground, the way for more familiar intercourse seemed open, and the incidents which led to their acquaintance were recited with religious reverence. To them both it appeared that having twice saved the life of Clara, these events should be construed into the fact that it was the will of Heaven that Charles Freeman should become the guardian of the heiress of the Priory. This conclusion led to a declaration of reciprocal affection. But it was no sooner done than the latter felt that he had placed himself in a false position. The thought of the accident of his birth entered his mind, and he felt that he was deceiving himself and raising an illusion in the soul of her he loved. That he should ever obtain in marriage the hand of Clara Chillington seemed to him an impossibility, and at this thought the shadow of sorrow passed across his countenance. He was willing to endure to the death for her happiness, but that barrier of class, that fiction of society, which he knew to be magnified into such proportions and strength by Sir Harry, precluded the hope that he could ever call her his own. This change of aspect was quickly observed by Clara, who permitting her hand to be taken in his, looked into his face with loving blue eyes, and in the innocence of her nature inquired of him the cause.

With a manly frankness he told her his apprehensions, and the guiltiness he felt in encouraging an idea which could never be realized. In silence she heard the recital of his doubts and distress, and when he had finished she smiled and replied.

"What is the worth of rank and title to me? But for the false notion of title I should have had a father to love me, and a living mother as my counsellor and friend. All the sorrow I have ever known can be traced to that one word 'TITLE.'"

This expression of feeling on the matter of social distinction removed in part the shadow from his countenance, and raising her hand he pressed it to his lips. Again they vowed a mutual, ardent and undying love.

The carriage having now arrived, although it brought with it plenty of assistance, and among the rest, old Alice, yet it was thought necessary, from the weak and excited state of Clara, that Charles Freeman should accompany the party to the Priory. This would truly be bringing him to tread on forbidden ground, and might possibly be bearding the lion in his den; but his courage was equal to any emergency that might arise, especially as a declaration of affection had been made between Clara and himself.

On reaching the Priory, Charles Freeman delivered up his charge in safety, and then bade

an adieu to her he loved. In vain did Clara urge upon him the use of the carriage; he had more than one reason for refusing her kind offer, honourable in themselves, but such as her guileless heart could not know, and he therefore walked home by the way he had come.

(To be continued.)

THE GLEANER.

PARIS ladies are agitating for woman suffrage.

THE Prince of Wales and a select company have left on a cruise in the Prince's yacht *Formosa*.

LAST year 117,914 emigrants left the Mersey. This is an increase of 46,762 over 1875.

DEAN STANLEY says it has been determined to erect the monument to the late Prince Louis Napoleon in Westminster Abbey.

EXPERTS estimate the losses of farmers in the United Kingdom during 1879 at from £100,600,000 to £150,000,000.

DR. COLENSO characterises as diabolical the blowing up of caves where Secocoeni's women and children had taken refuge.

VIRGINIA has 676 coloured schools taught by 415 coloured teachers. The male teacher's salary averages \$30 a month, the female's \$24.

THE Madrid Catholic papers have resolved not to report cases of suicide, their belief being that such reports suggest the commission of the act.

THE Duke of Connaught will continue to hold the command of the 1st Battalion of the Rifle Brigade until the summer, when he will join the staff of the army.

LITERARY.

MR. RUSKIN is to lecture at the Royal Institution, London, on St. Patrick's Day, when his subject will be "A Caution to Snakes."

Bell's Life in London has just changed hands, and this old paper is now the property of two well-known sporting journalists.

MR. TOM TAYLOR thinks of resigning his editorship of *Punch*, owing to the pressure of other work. It is possible that Mr. Burnand will succeed him.

THE undertaking to establish a London publishing company on the business of Chapman & Hall has succeeded, and one of the first books that the new house will publish is a life of the late Mr. Deane, editor of the *Times* of London, which has been prepared by his brother-in-law, Sir George Deane. It is announced to contain many interesting letters from Lord Palmerston.

BRELOQUES POUR DAMES.

THE wise man telleth his love, but the foolish man willeth it in a letter.

A SEALSKIN saccue is very good in a house where girls are all of nearly one size.

"WANTED—A plain cook," reads an advertisement. Wonder whose wife put that in the paper.

THIS world without woman—lovely woman—would be like a blank sheet of paper—not even ruled.

"So yes kays nothin' but dry goods here!" "Yes, ma'am." "Then where will I be aither goin' for watered silk?"

THE young lady who can peel a potato in five seconds is as useful as the young woman who speaks five languages and as ornamental.

MANY a man who has been a negligent husband decorates his dead wife's grave with flowers. Why not take the bouquet home beforehand?

CARE drives the nails in our coffins, but what man can feel jolly when his wife dally hands him a list of neighbours who have got twice as many bonnets as she has, and their husbands not earning half his salary.

THERE'S a great difference between house-keeping and boarding out," said Mr. Youngusband: "for when I boarded out I had to wait sometimes half an hour for my dinner, but now I have it just when I can get it."

"SHALL a husband keep his wife informed of his business affairs?" asks an innocent. There is no necessity. She will find out five times as much as he knows himself, without the least trouble.

"WHAT is home without a wife?" asks the *Yonkers Gazette*. It is the dining-room to the parlour, the coal-bin in the kitchen, the clean shirt in hiding, a depot for soiled clothes, a trying place for divorced stockings, a smoking furnace, a private pandemonium, a cavern of profane rumblings, a lunatic asylum. More.

A WESTERN artist has applied for a divorce from his wife, one of his grievances being that she sent a broken frying-pan to an art show, where some of his pictures were on exhibition, with a request that the hanging committee would give it a position as "an example of the way in which the talented Mr. — provided for his family's necessities."

A LITTLE girl being asked on the first day of school how she liked her new teacher, replied: "I do not like her; she is just as saury to me as my mother."

She was my idyl when I wooed,
My idol when I won;
My ideal when, in after years,
Ways idle she had none.

THEY are having a warm time just now in Kansas Sunday-schools, and the question under discussion is whether the boy who has fairly won the prize Bible by learning three thousand eight hundred and sixty-seven verses in three montas can be ruled off the track for putting furniture tacks and a wad of shoe-maker's wax in the superintendent's chair?

Take her up tenderly,
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young and so fair;
Handle her carefully—
Talk to her prayerfully—
She's cross as a bear.

Father is Getting Well.

My daughters say, "How much better father is since he used Hop Bitters!" He is getting well after his long suffering from a disease declared incurable, and we are so glad that he used your Bitters.—A lady of Rochester, N. Y.