

(Copyright secured. All rights reserved.)

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 XXXI.

THE COUNCIL OF THREE.

In reply to the question, "Did he know of one Fred Holman?" he regretted his ignorance on the subject; that as a consequence he could not furnish the intelligence desired; that nothing could afford him greater pleasure than to have done so; and were it necessary he would make it his business to ascertain where he resided. None knew better than he the dwelling of that man; but poverty had so sharpened his senses that it seemed as though he could smell the coming guinea a long way off.

On reaching the back of the house the first act was to run into the kitchen forming the stable of "Bones," and taking the wretched creature by the fore legs to make him walk erect around the room. Poverty had formed a powerful sympathy between the man and the brute. This act being common with the apothecary when a ray from the sunshine of hope flowed into his dark soul, the beast, either conscious of the joy of his master, or remembering that such conduct was always followed by a feed of corn, cheerfully submitted to the practice, and seemed himself to enjoy it.

Clara Chillington soon visited the home of her childhood's companion, and with the humility of a superior mind received the thousand thanks from the grateful hearts there. The noble mindedness of Fred Holman in the hour of his deepest adversity had not been forgotten by Clara. By means of that intuitive light with which women more frequently than men read the human character correctly, she had formed the opinion that such a person as he might be made a confidant. From her conversation with him she quickly found she had enlisted a faithful ally, ready to serve her in any manner for finding out the lost one.

Fred Holman was a man of the world, and knew the movements of Sir Harry far better than most persons. To him the baronet had always been a disgust; and his hatred of the doings of the man made him a willing agent to serve the daughter against the father. Moreover, Charles Freeman was an old school-fellow, and to serve him at the request of Clara he would dare a great deal. The interview, therefore, resulted in an appointment to meet at Samphire Cottage.

Reaching Samphire Cottage, Uncle Jacob stood ready to receive Clara. The old man had been impatiently watching for her arrival, and during the little delay had become so excited lest she should fail to be present, that in his indignation he threatened to pull the nose off old Betty with the tongs, did she dare to open the door again without being called. The cause of this threat against his servant was that she had entered the room for some trifling purpose just at the moment he thought he heard the rattling of carriage wheels in the distance, and had placed his ear against the window pane more readily to catch the sound. Being disturbed at such a time he became furious, and snatching the tongs from their resting-place pursued the old woman to the door. To say that Jacob Winter was afterward sorry for permitting this outburst of feeling, would only be to repeat what was characteristic of his everyday life. He was forever sinning and repenting; inflicting thoughtless injury on the feelings of persons, and making restitution. It was with great warmth of feeling he received his visitor, and scarcely had he done so when another rap was heard at the door. This time it was Fred Holman.

On seeing who entered the room, Uncle Jacob placed his spectacles on his nose and stood looking at the stranger with an odd mixture of curiosity and reverence. The old man's inquisitiveness was aroused to find out the character of Fred Holman, and his reverence toward him was excited as the fancies of a more satisfactory assurance that his *protégé* was living. Standing with his back to the fire, his left foot stretched forward, and his arms crossed, the old man gazed through his glasses in silence. Such conduct under other circumstances he would quickly have resented, but being advised beforehand of the old man's eccentricities, he feigned not to regard it.

Having satisfied himself with the appearance of Fred Holman, Uncle Jacob offered him his hand in true cordiality; and lavishing on him an amount of praise as the finder of the paper written by Charles Freeman, requested him to be seated.

The council of three sat in solemn debate. The subject for discussion was the whereabouts of Charles Freeman. That slip of paper told that he was alive; but what had become of him? where was he concealed? what was he

suffering? A multitude of crude theories were started by Uncle Jacob, and as many half-formed plans for finding him out, until his brain became confused by the number of his own thoughts, and the earnestness with which he leaped from one to the other, dragged his companions into the same vortex. Eagerness marked the spirit of that plotting trio. Clara and Uncle Jacob were prepared to advance any amount of money, and Fred Holman stood ready to make any attempt, or to dare any risk, that he might serve his friends. But what could they do in the matter? The half-formed plans of the old man were numerous, but from them all not one could be constructed that was practical, and for the reason that from their multitude they had become so entangled that to find a beginning, or an end, in any of them, was an impossibility. The three sat in long debate; but it quickly appeared both to Clara and Fred Holman that if anything were to be done, a clearer head than that of Jacob Winter must produce the plan.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SAILOR'S RETURN.

John Williams had lived upon the salt junk and hard tack of the British navy from his boyhood. In childhood he had left his mother, and a sister, that he might enter on board a man-o'-war. There he had received his nautical education; there he had stretched his inches into full-grown manhood; and there he remained until his keen eye as captain of the maintop failed him, and until Time had sprinkled his locks with grey, and had made a bo'sun of him.

Many years had passed since that brave sailor had visited his native place. His mother had been long dead, and the sister of his childhood love, and in this particular John Williams had never outgrown his childhood—had ceased to communicate with him. This silence was his only real sorrow, and frequently when standing on the maintop, and looking down on the deep blue waters as they rolled in ceaseless agitation far beneath him, would he enquire, "Has she forgotten me? Can it be true that years have swept me from her affection?" Had she ceased to love her brother, that she neglected to return an answer to his letters! Those letters should have been held sacred by her, for they were written amidst the bustle of ship life; frequently too in sight of the enemy, and when the "Good-bye, dear Polly," with which they always closed, might be the last he would ever record. Had she ceased to value those letters, not one of which had left his hand without being first moistened with the holy water which springs from the well of pure affection! In courage he was dauntless and brave; but as with all noble natures, he would never flinch nor blanch in the hour of danger, nor in facing the fiercest foe, thought it not unmanly to find the tear-drop floating in his eye at the remembrance of a much-loved sister. She had not forgotten him, and her neglect arose from the unhappy fact that she had ceased to regard herself. She was the mother of Mad Tom.

Being now discharged from active service, with his pay, his prize money, and his little pension, he sought the home of his childhood in the fond yet faint hope of finding traces of her he had not ceased to love.

What a change had come over everything! The old men seemed to be all gone, for he could find none; the youth of his boyhood had become old men, and even inanimate nature appeared to mock his efforts to recognize points of familiarity, having changed as though to keep pace with the advance of mankind. This disappointment produced disgust, and he felt that he would rather be in a place altogether strange to him, than live as a stranger in a place he had once called his home. While musing on the transitory nature of all things earthly, and on the fact that he had not yet met with a person he knew, there appeared approaching him an old man, rolling along with the gait of a sailor.

"Morning," curtly said the intruder on the reverie of John Williams, as he passed on.

"Good-morning, ship-mate," was the reply; and as he spoke a thought was struck from his brain that he remembered the face which had just passed him. Acting on this impression, he enquired, "Are ye out on a cruise this morning?"

This interrogation brought the old man to a stand, and he answered, "Well, ye see, I always takes a stretch off the first thing in the morning, as, in my opinion, it makes the rigging run better for the rest of the day."

"Just so; I daresay you've always cruised off this coast?"

"Not always; I've sailed more than once

around the world; but I'm out of commission now for long voyages."

"Was you launched from this port?"

"I was; I was run off the stocks into deep water when I was about ten years old."

"Did you happen to know old John Williams, the man-o'-war's man; him I mean as was laid up in ordinary after he had a fin shot away, and one of his skylights knocked out?"

"I should think I did. I remember as though it were but yesterday that his son Jack and I were playing with a daughter of the old man's, a good deal younger than either of us, and that to please the child we stood her on the top of a tar tub. Well, you see, while she was dancing and capering about there, what should happen but that the lid gives way and she fell inside. Of course, we fished her out as soon as we could, but such a curious sight as she was I never before saw, and I daresay shall never see again; but although it was an accident, when we got the girl once more on dry land we had to run for it to get away from the old man, who set every stitch of canvas he could lay on that he might overhaul us. He soon run alongside of Jack, and giving him a cut or two with a rope's end set sail again after me. It was a stern chase. I'd got my skysails set, and with the wind aloft was bowling along at the top of my speed. I should soon have run the old chap below the horizon, but on turning a corner I came stem on an old woman, and she and I fell sprawling together in the street. In this collision our rigging got foul, and before I could cut myself adrift the enemy was alongside. Lashing me fast amidstships, he took me at once into port. I tell ye, the old fellow made both Jack and me cry *pecari* for that job."

This incident of former years produced strong emotions in the heart of John Williams, and he immediately enquired,

"Are you Dick Backstay?"

"The same, my hearty; and what ship may you be?"

"I am the John Williams who was with you."

On hearing this assertion, the former hitched his trousers, turned his quid, cocked his hat a little on one side, and then drawing himself up to his full height, exclaimed:

"Never! Are you Jack Williams? I could only think of you as being a boy now. Give us your flipper, old fellow."

"But what about the girl, Dick; what has become of her?"

At this question Dick Backstay became serious; his tall form again contracted; his lips quivered and turned pale; and looking into the face of the companion of his boyhood, his heart became filled with deep emotion and he was silent. The manner and silence of his friend conveyed to the mind of John Williams the impression that all was not right with her he fondly sought for. Having recovered his self-command, he drew his companion toward a rock, and seating themselves he told out the mournful story of the mother of Mad Tom.

In the first gush of feeling flowing from a mind in agony, John Williams exclaimed:

"Sir Harry Chillington is a villain!"

"He is," replied the old man, glad enough to hear his voice uttering some kind of sound.

"He is a villain, and I'll be revenged."

"So would I," replied the other; and with an expression that seemed to tell he thought it to be only right to say so, did his companion hoping also that it would prove a successful palliative to the sorrow he had unintentionally inflicted on him.

"Oh, my poor, poor sister!" exclaimed John Williams, and as his soul returned from that state of torpidity into which the benumbing intelligence had cast it, the brave-hearted sailor buried his face in his hands to hide the tokens of his grief. For a moment his frame shook in deep convulsion, then raising his head, he continued, "Dick, the world has now become a blank to me; I have lost, shamefully lost, all that I had to live for. The star of my hope, faintly as it shone in the dim distance of imagination, is now set forever. I feel that my heart will burst from the fullness of feeling oppressing it. Ruined,—discarded,—dead. Oh! why did the shot of the enemy spare me to listen to such a story?"

"Don't say so, Jack, don't, there's a good fellow. You have struck on a sunken rock that wasn't marked in your chart, and it has shook you from stem to stern; but back your topsails, my hearty, heave out your kedge anchor, and pull with a will, and you'll come off again. When they told me the *Fairy Queen* was lost, I was shattered from bulwarks to keelson. I felt that it was no good for me to have been born if I couldn't be drowned in her along with the captain; but I got over it in time, and so will you."

The sentiment of this attempt at encouragement, rather than the manner of it, touched a chord of reflection in the stronger and better trained mind of John Williams, and nerved him to look more calmly at the intelligence he had so suddenly and unexpectedly received. Thought succeeded thought in the brain of the brave sailor, and at length a resolution was formed which once more raised his feelings, but the details of it he kept to himself. This only did he require of his friend, that he should keep his name a secret, and never let it appear that he was other than a stranger in the town.

To this proposal Dick Backstay readily agreed, and the two men became inseparable. Having now no one to live for but himself, the little John Williams possessed was gladly shared with the play-fellow of his boyhood; but receiving aid from a shipmate the latter was decidedly

opposed to, yet the other knew well how to share his means with him without inflicting on his independent spirit the feeling of obligation.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

OBTAINING A CLUE.

They who occupied the Chateau were Monsieur Du Boulay, Madame—the old woman—Monsieur Henri—a nephew—and Lisette. Monsieur himself was a Frenchman of the old school, tall, cadaverous, stiff, great in ruffles and cuffs, dressed chiefly in black, and he never appeared in the presence of strangers without wearing a dress sword. He was a social man to a certain extent; that is to say, although he seldom left the grounds of the Chateau, he was not so exclusive in his habits as to refuse to entertain visitors. The Frenchman had three sets of guests; the military men of the district, the local politicians, and the local philosophers. Possessing a superficial knowledge of the arts of war, of politics and of science, it was his delight to be thought military, a politician, and a *savant*.

How does Monsieur de Boulay manage to live? was a problem not to be readily solved, and afforded the scandal-mongers a rich opportunity for speculation. That Monsieur did live was certain; and as each one forming the different coteries procured an item in his expenditure from the business men with whom he dealt, it was found, when they were all collected and footed up, that his income far exceeded the needy condition he was generally, although privately, thought to occupy. Moreover, it was found that his quarterly accounts were always paid with great promptness, and that his creditors never had to send in a bill twice. This latter fact was more surprising than all, and most-stinging to many whose curiosity was excited about his affairs, as it stood as a reproach to those foremost in debating his circumstances.

It had been noticed by the coteries in Calais, that the circumstances of Monsieur had greatly improved since the old woman had lived at the Chateau. Who she was, and where she came from nobody among them could tell. They who visited the house, and such as did not visit, but had seen her elsewhere, were alike baffled in their conjectures; and in the wit which is sometimes born of anger, declared that from her appearance it was possible for her to be an antediluvian, who had either come out of the ark, or had escaped drowning during the flood by hiding in a hole. The doctor was a great man at the coteries, and on the subject of Madame at the Chateau, was thought to be an oracle. He had studied at the Ecole de Medicine at Paris, and from this fact was supposed to know everything. His opinion was, so he said, that she was immortal; that all the vital fluids had long since been absorbed by length of years, and that it was only by rubbing her person with a magical elixir, science had not yet been able to find out the nature of, that she retained the power of speech and of locomotion. Whether the doctor really believed his own statement, or whether he simply employed it as being a demand of the times, and to favor an idea of some of his best paying patients, whose morbid minds would not be satisfied unless something of the supernatural was mixed up in the matter, cannot be determined; but it is certain that this opinion went to confirm many of them in the belief that the "Black Art" was practised at the Chateau, and that the old woman was in some way associated with it.

The nephew of Monsieur, Henri, although he called the Chateau his home, did not always choose to make it his residence. He preferred living in Calais, and returning only when he had business with his uncle, or when his exchequer, seldom abundant, was depleted. Monsieur Henri was a young man of cunning and will, but also of such an amount of conceit, as when practised by a skillful hand, to neutralize them both, and to render him an easy dupe. The young Frenchman was exceedingly vain of his appearance, which so far as the bare outline of face and form was concerned was what might be termed passable; but there was a sinister cast in his aspect, which, in the esteem of the careful observer, would have at once condemned him.

The appearance of Henri was all he possessed. He was a poverty-stricken scion of a once wealthy and proud family; the wealth had long ago forsaken them, but unfortunately the pride remained. This misfortune, for such to him it was, created in his mind an abhorrence of honest labor, and forced him to try for a subsistence by exercising wit, or in his case, cunning. Never being initiated into the laws of honor, his sense of right and wrong remained very elastic. To him, that was right which gratified his passions, or that filled his purse the readiest way. With a mind thus loosely formed, it is not surprising that his conduct should become marked with other characters than such as reflected credit on himself, or on the memory of his ancestors.

When Lisette became engaged at the Chateau, the beauty of her person, and the grace which marked all her doings, increased yet further the mystery of the affairs of Monsieur in the esteem of the coteries. Who could she be, and why had she engaged herself there, when from her personal appearance and manner she might, did circumstances compel her to accept a menial situation, have obtained one far superior and far more lucrative? This secret admiration and astonishment at his servant became known to the Frenchman and afforded him abundant satisfac-