

**THE MERMAN AND
THE FIGURE-HEAD: A
CHRISTMAS STORY**

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The Merman and the Figure-Head: A Christmas Story by Clara F. Guernsey

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CLARA F. GUERNSEY

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THE FIGURE-HEAD: A
CHRISTMAS STORY**

THE MERMAN.



"He gazed at the wooden creature with all his heart in his eyes."

Frontispiece.

Page 60.

THE
MERMAN



AND

THE FIGURE-HEAD. 72

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

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NEW YORK, N. Y.
By CLARA F. GUERNSEY,

AUTHOR OF "THE SILVER CUP," "A MERE PIECE OF MISCHIEF," etc.

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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THE MERMAN
AND
THE FIGURE-HEAD.

CHAPTER I.

THE SEA-NYMPH.

"I may be wrong, but I think it a pity
For a movable doll to be made so pretty."

Doll Poems.

I SHALL call her the Sea-nymph," said
Master Isaac Torrey.

"Umph!" said his clerk, Ichabod
Sterns, looking over his spectacles at his master.

"And why not The Sea-nymph, pray?" de-
manded Master Torrey. "Why, I say, should I
not call my fine new brig The Sea-nymph if it
pleases my fancy?"

8 *The Merman and the Figure-Head.*

"Fancy!" said Ichabod Sterns, putting his head on one side. "Fancy! Umph!"

Now this was most exasperating conduct on Ichabod's part, and as such Master Torrey felt it.

"Yes, if it pleases my fancy," he repeated, defiantly. "What right have you, Ichabod Sterns, to object to that, I should like to know? If I chose to name her after the whole choir of all the nymphs that ever swam in the sea—Panope and Melite, Arethusia, Leucothea, Thetis, Cymodoce—what have you to say against it? Isn't she to swim the seas and make her living out of the winds and waves? And what can you object to 'The Sea-nymph?' I'd like to hear. But it's your nature to object, Ichabod Sterns. I've no doubt that you came objecting into the world, and I've no doubt that when your time comes you'll object to dying. It would be just like you."

"And death will mind my objections no more than you, Master Torrey," said the old clerk, smiling rather grimly as Master Torrey ceased his pacing up and down the room and flung himself into a chair.

"But what *is* your objection to the name?" asked the merchant, calming down a little.

"Did I object?" said Ichabod Sterns.

"Didn't you? You were bristling all over with objections from the toe of your shoe to the top of your wig." Ichabod involuntarily put up his hand to his wig. "Why isn't it a good name for a ship?"

"Nay, I know naught against it, Master Torrey, only it is a heathenish kind of name for a ship that is to sail out of our decent Christian town of Salem."

"Heathenish! Let me tell you, Master Ichabod, that this world owes a vast deal to the heathen—more than she does to some Christians I could name."

Now this awful speech was enough to make the very pig tails of many of Master Torrey's acquaintance stand on end with horror and surprise. But Ichabod was used to his master's ways, so he did not jump out of his chair, but only looked to the door to be sure that no one had overheard the terrible statement, for had such been the case there is no telling what might have come to pass.