

**BEYOND COMPARE;
A STORY; IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. III**

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Beyond compare; A Story; In three Volumes, Vol. III by Charles Gibbon

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CHARLES GIBBON

**BEYOND COMPARE;
A STORY; IN THREE
VOLUMES, VOL. III**

BEYOND COMPARE

A STORY.

BY

CHARLES GIBBON,

AUTHOR OF

"ROBIN GRAY," "QUEEN OF THE MEADOW," "THE GOLDEN SHAF,"
"BY MEAD AND STREAM," "A PRINCESS OF JUTEDON," ETC.

"A child of humble birth, and fair,
And noble, too, beyond compare:
A holy sweetness in her eyes,
Inspired by love that never dies."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. IN THE GLOOM	1
II. A BAD CASE	19
III. ROGUE AGAINST ROGUE	35
IV. IS SHE TRUE?	52
V. PARTING	65
VI. FACE TO FACE	78
VII. TRIUMPH	87
VIII. A FALSE MOVE	101
IX. ROGER PUZZLED	110
X. STRANGE NEWS	124
XI. UNSATISFACTORY INQUIRIES	138
XII. THE SEARCH	153
XIII. DISCOVERIES	162
XIV. BAD NEWS	172
XV. "THIS IS A SORRY SIGHT"	180
XVI. THE HAUNTED MAN	197
XVII. THE INQUEST	210
XVIII. A DAY OF SURPRISES	224
XIX. WEDDING BELLS	240

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. BEYOND COMPARE.



CHAPTER I.

IN THE GLOOM.

IT was quite dark when Elwin wakened from the semi-trance into which he had fallen, and for a brief space he could not make out where he was; but as his outstretched hand touched the lathe and some of his tools, he understood. Then came back to him the memory of all that had passed, and of how he came to be there.

Few have not experienced the unpleasant sensation of awakening on a cold winter morning, feeling insufficiently rested, and desirous of going to sleep again for just

another half-hour. As the full sense of the bitterness of the cup he had to drain returned to him, Elwin wished that he might never have been roused from that blissful unconsciousness of the world and its cares in which he had lain for some hours—how many he could not guess.

Then he felt angry with himself for being so weak as to entertain such a wish. This was the worst of cowardice. A man should face his sorrows and difficulties as a brave soldier faces the enemy, and force his way through them to victory, or die fighting for it. He should not, like the idiotic ostrich, bury his head in the sand, and think that by so doing he could escape the simoon. No; a man should go boldly forward to encounter the worst that fate may have in store for him, and, by stoutly fighting, earn the chance at least of conquering.

This would have been his course had he had to think of himself alone; but he was tied hand and foot. Were he to dare Pres-

ton to do his worst, to let himself be arrested and brought to trial, it was not he who would stand in the dock. His mother would confess everything to secure his release, and she would take his place. Thus he would be the unnatural cause of the degradation which would kill her, whilst, by remaining silent, by submitting to Preston's strange demand, he could save her from it. He could not attempt to clear himself, even for Berta's sake, at such a cost. Her act had been the result of a maniacal impulse inspired by the sense of her brother's cruelty and injustice. She had repented as soon as she was restored to her right mind, and had repudiated the act. She was now paying a terrible penalty for having yielded to the temptation to perpetrate it.

He must help her to bear the remorse which had overtaken and prostrated her; and to do that he must rouse himself from the lethargy into which he had fallen. He must work, and work hard; in that way he would

find his solace and reward. Given physical strength, earnest work of hand or head is the unfailing panacea for all misfortunes. The men toiling hard at the pumps of a vessel which has sprung a leak in a stormy sea, feel none of the agonies which are endured by the poor creature who crouches down in a corner and "gives in," abandoning hope before the last effort has been made.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, a soft light was stealing in through the window, touching various objects on the walls with a silvery sheen, and making a bright streamlet across the floor. He looked up and saw the moon floating in a clear lake, which was flecked with what might be likened to large glistening fish-scales. There was something in the stillness of the hour, combined with the soft light of the moon, which soothed him and seemed to bid him hope.

He lit his lamp and looked at his watch. Ten o'clock. He was surprised that no one had come with a message from his mother,

nine o'clock being the usual hour for shutting up all places and retiring for the night. He had often been late in his workshop; but as he could pass from it to his room without disturbing any one, it did not matter, and it was not known at what hour he retired when he was busy with some new design. He intended to force himself to work of some kind to-night, since sleep seemed to be out of the question; if it should overtake him he would gladly welcome it.

First, however, he must see how the invalid progressed, and whether or not he was wanted. As he entered his room Mrs. Dabb appeared at the lobby door with a comforting smile on her broad face.

"She be goin' on pretty, and have had a beauty sleep," said the good woman, still deeming it necessary to speak in a whisper, although far out of the patient's hearing. "She have taken beef-tea and physic, and be like a lamb again. She say you are not to be disturbed on no account; but I thought