

**DEB CLINTON, THE
SMUGGLER'S
DAUGHTER**

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Deb Clinton, the Smuggler's Daughter by Mrs. F. Vidal

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MRS. F. VIDAL

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BY
MRS. F. VIDAL,
AUTHOR OF "TALES FOR THE BUSH," "ESTHER MERLE," ETC.



EDITED BY
J. ERSKINE CLARKE, M.A.
EDITOR OF "THE PARISH MAGAZINE," "GOOD STORIES," AND "THE
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CHAPTER I.

MASSSES of grey cloud hurried onwards, and curtained over the western sky, blotting out the soft red glow; while long lines of white waves, and the sound of the sea, rising from moment to moment, gave warning to seafaring people of a coming storm.

A cottage, much out of repair, stood at the outskirts of a long, straggling village, composed of one steep street, and two or three narrow lanes with detached cottages, leading to the old church on the hill. This fishing village was called Abbeyland; but the cottage of which we speak stood quite

away, on a small piece of ground where the shore was level. It stood near a little stream between two high cliffs; where this stream fell into the sea, there was a cove, generally covered thickly with seaweed, which at certain times was carted away to the interior to be used on the land.

Within sight of the cottage, on the highest point of the most distant cliff, there was a stone wall, inclosing a group of buildings, all low and substantial, called the Coastguard Station.

The cottage was almost on the beach, and it was not unusual in a high tide for the waves to dash over the courtyard wall. Some people wondered how any one could live in such a lonely and desolate spot, and, to judge from the troubled and anxious looks which a woman cast around her each time that she came and stood at the door, one might believe that *she* at least did not approve of it. Her head and shoulders were muffled in an old thick shawl; from its folds came a feeble, cracked, and fretful voice,—

“ Deb! Deb! Deborah!—Deborah Clinton!”
Then, as there was no answer, in a lower and more querulous tone,—“ Dear sakes! what can have come to the lass now? But she’s like the rest, and I’m left deserted and cared for no more than

if I was the seaweed cast on the shore!—Aye, the only one that ever did care, and always spoke pretty and looked pretty too, lies as food for the worms, and the grass and weeds grow over her! And there's a storm blowing up, and they'll be home in a trice, and not a spark of fire or a morsel of victuals ready to stop their angry, noisy throats! Deb! Deb! where are you hiding? The fire is out, and the wind cuts so cold over my poor, stiff limbs, like a knife."

Just in time to catch the last few words, a slight figure came from the beach and followed the first speaker into the cottage. Then in a measured, cold way, she began to rekindle the fire.

"What can have taken you away so long, Deb? I believe you don't care if I want any thing or no. You wouldn't care if you was to come in and find me stiff and stark. You've no feelings! Well, well, those who have no feelings can't feel like those who have."

"What is it you're wanting, mother?" asked Deborah, stopping in her work for a moment and facing round on the woman, who was now crouching down in a miserable elbow-chair, and drawing her shawl still closer over her head.

The hard, cold tone of the daughter caused the

mother's fretful talk to cease; she wiped away a tear and shivered.

"Oh, I don't want anything particular, but there'll be father and Bob back here directly. And you know what a hurry they'll be in, with no fire and no supper ready."

"Where's the supper to come from?" asked Deborah, in the same voice; and again trying to coax a little blaze round a kettle.

"Aye, where indeed? That's what I say, and have said for this hour past. If they don't bring any money they can't expect meat. But you and I know they will expect it, and there'll be a dreadful row again if you don't be quick and get something for them. And—and, Deb, I can't bear it! I'm too ill and too old, to bear it any more! If there's brawl and noise to-night, it will be the death of me. But who cares for that?" and, burying her face in her hands, she broke into a wailing cry, and rocked herself to and fro.

Deborah rose from her stooping position, glanced round the room, then out of the window, all broken and stuffed with rags as it was. There was a look of hard indifference on the girl's pale, thin face, not quite pleasant, yet the features were clear cut and well formed. She wore a blue

cotton gown, fitting closely, and unrelieved by any bit of white in the shape of collar or frill, but a once bright-coloured handkerchief was carelessly tied round her neck; a rusty black apron and ragged boots were hardly consistent with the richness and beauty of the dark hair, plaited carefully and twisted tastefully round her head. A pair of coral earrings completed her costume, in which there was evident poverty, but no sign of neglect.

At last her efforts were successful, and a cheerful blaze sprang up, and soon set the kettle singing, giving an air of something like comfort, even to the dreary kitchen.

"Mother," said the girl, with a slight stamp of her foot, and knitting her brows, "I do wish you would not keep on fretting. It's enough to turn one to stone; and what good does it do?"

"Well, not much, Deb, but I can't help it—I can't. I'm so weak and low."

"There, there. The water boils, and you'll get your tea, now."

"Is there a bit of pork in the cask, Deb? Do look! and make haste and put it in the pot, or father will be in his tantrums again. Oh, me! it makes my poor bones clatter, it do, just to think of it. Deb," she added, when her daughter re-