

# **CLARA; OR, THE CHILDREN'S TOKEN**

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Clara; or, The children's token by Margaret L. Langford

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BY

MARGARET L. LANGFORD

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## CLARA; OR, THE CHILDREN'S TOKEN.



### CHAPTER I.

I PURPOSE giving you, my young readers, some account of a very sweet little girl. I hope that when you hear her history, you may try to imitate her bright example. You may not have such trials or temptations to contend with as little Clara had, for, alas! she was not blessed with godly parents. They cared only for the things of this world, how they might best enjoy its fleeting pleasures, without a thought about their souls, or the double trust imposed upon them—the souls of others. True, Mrs. Graham heard her little girls *repeat their catechism every Sunday morning, just to*

satisfy herself that she was doing her duty ; she went to church regularly, and put a liberal donation in the poor-box. With this she rested content. In the still hours of night, however, conscience would sometimes reproach her with bitter truths, and then she would determine, before her eyes should close, that she would 'lead a different life.' She did not say she would 'try,' as ought to have been the language of a true penitent. But when the night was past, and morning once more broke, all Mrs. Graham's resolves vanished with the darkness, and the business and pleasures of the day once more became all-engrossing. Her husband, I am sorry to say, was not a whit less worldly-minded than herself ; and these were the parents who had the guidance of four young creatures needing to be instructed and guided. Not that Mr. and Mrs. Graham did not dearly love their children. They indulged them in every possible way, neglecting nothing that might tend to their temporal welfare. Little Clara was six years of age ; she had one sister *three or four years older* than herself, and two brothers — *one a tiny fellow of three*, and the other a baby in



arms. Clara was a very pretty child. She had long golden hair, that seemed to catch every sunbeam ; large blue eyes, full of sweetness ; a small cherub mouth, made for smiles ; and a skin as fair as a lily. She was tall for her years, and not over strong. Agnes, her sister, was pretty too, but she had dark eyes and raven hair, while a certain air of conceit was easily detected in her whole bearing. Agnes resembled her mother very much, and Mrs. Graham, who was a vain woman herself, felt prouder of her than of Clara. Little Arty was like both his sisters, while Baby was a great fair fellow, the pet of the whole household. The Grahams lived in a large house in a very pretty part of England. There were charming walks and drives all about, and many green fields and lanes close by, where in the summer time Agnes and Clara would go to gather cowslips and primroses, or the sweet violet and wood-anemone ; or later, for the scarlet berries which peeped out so temptingly from the hedgerows. There was a fine lawn in front of the house, and the children had a pretty pony, named Snowflake, upon which they

rode about every day by turns. Then they had a dog, named Carlo, a couple of rabbits, and some tame pigeons ; so that they did not want for amusement. But when they all went to town for the winter, the pets were left behind, and the little girls had to content themselves with the brick walls and noisy streets of the metropolis. But there was plenty to amuse here. Many novel and strange sights to be witnessed, and wonderful and pretty things to be seen in the shop windows. And then, when the snow and ice came, there were the delightful skating parties, and the drives in the sleigh. Nothing could be more pleasant than to feel yourself skimming over the frozen ground, listening to the merry tinkling of the bells—all well wrapped up from the cold, and conscious only of the blueness of the sky, and the brightness of the sun. Mrs. Graham was very fond of going to parties of an evening, and Agnes was taken out with her long before she was old enough. Clara was considered to be still too young to go to parties ; and indeed she was far happier at home sleeping in her little bed. Dear child ! It was well for her that this was so. Her

young mind early opened to receive the good seed, and before she was six years old, she had become one of the lambs of Christ's fold. She read that sweet history of One who lived long ago ; of His love for little children, and of that bright world above—of its glories and unknown joys,—and how none but the good could enter there. Young as she was, all this made a deep impression upon little Clara's mind. She felt she was not one of Christ's lambs, and could not help thinking how happy she would be if she were one. But how to become one of this fold? She was perplexed. She had never been taught to seek that help from God without which we are nothing. She knew not that it is by prayer we obtain the clean heart, the right mind. One day she asked her mother how she could become one of Jesus' lambs ; but was dismissed with commands not to talk of such old-fashioned subjects, and she did not again venture to put the question. But little Clara thought over it night and day. She dreamed sometimes that she was held in the arms of the Good Shepherd, or taken up to heaven by bright angels. One morning a lady called at the