

**ONE
SUMMER'S DAY**

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One Summer's Day by H. V. Esmond

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BY
H. V. ESMOND
AUTHOR OF "WHEN WE WERE TWENTY-ONE."

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ONE SUMMER'S DAY.

Produced at the Comedy Theatre, London, 16th September, 1897.

CHARACTERS.

MAJOR DICK RUDYARD.....Charles Hawtrey
PHIL MARSDEN.....Cosmo Stuart
THEODORE BENDYSHE.....Henry Kemble
ROBERT HODDESSEN.....Ernest Hendrie
TOM, *his Nephew*.....Kenneth Douglas
SETH, *a Gipsy*.....Lyston Lyle
THE URCHIN.....J. Bottomley
IRENE, *Hoddesden's Niece*.....Lettice Fairfax
MAVSIE, *his Ward*.....Eva Moore
MRS. THEODORE BENDYSHE.....Mrs. Charles Calvert
BESS, *a Gipsy*.....Lydia Rachel
CHIARA, ** a Gipsy*.....Constance Collier

* Clara, Italian Chiara (Ka-3/78).

ONE SUMMER'S DAY.

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A corner of an island on the Thames on a bright summer's day. At back, the river, and all round trees and bushes. Overhanging the water are willow trees, and in the foreground are two roughly made haystacks, the one R. about three feet high and four feet in diameter at base; the one L. four feet high. The whole scene fresh and green and cheerful, the birds singing in the trees.*

BESS, *an old gipsy, is sitting against the smaller haystack, crooning softly to herself and plaiting a basket from a bundle of osiers. After a pause SETH lounges on from R., chewing a straw. He is a handsome gipsy, his face somewhat sullen, age about thirty-five.*

BESS. (L.; *hardly looking at him*) Well, I've been waiting here for near an hour.

SETH. (*suddenly*) She ain't back yet.

BESS. What's she up to?

SETH. (*chewing the straw*) That's our business.

BESS. I'm no talker.

SETH. (*coming down*) She's gone to Windsor—for a purpose.

BESS. What's the game?

SETH. (R. C.) Quids—and lots of 'em, likely.

BESS. Wot's it worth?

SETH. Maybe a 'undred—maybe more.

BESS. (*chuckling*) Maybe less.

SETH. Maybe. We'll chance it. She knows wot she's about.

BESS. Well, out with it—wot's the game?

SETH. (*crosses L.*) Ye can't spoil it if I tells ye—so I'll tell ye. (*BESS laughs harshly, and after a pause SETH lounges across and leans against the other haystack, bending over the old woman and talking softly*) You remember when her husband chucked her and went with his regiment to India?

BESS. I wonder he kept her so long. Lord! she was a holy terror in those days.

SETH. (*drily*) Ah—that ain't of no account. He took the kid wiv him.

BESS. And glad she was to get rid of it.

SETH. Ah—then the letter coming from that Captain Rudyard, saying her husband was dead of fever.

BESS. Aye—and the kid too, and sending her fifty quid.

SETH. (*bending down, says quickly*) It wasn't true.

BESS. (*startled*) What! her man not dead?

SETH. Oh, yes—he went right enough—but the kid's alive.

BESS. Mercy!

SETH. Chiara has found out that Captain Rudyard has got a kid—seven years old—that he keeps at the Windsor school—a kid he's awful fond of—and as he ain't married, Chiara thinks—

BESS. Thinks it's hers?

SETH. Yes.

BESS. Well, but she don't want the brat?

SETH. (*scornfully*) Not much; but if the Captain wants to keep it for hisself, we thinks it will suit him to pay a little something for the loan.

BESS. But where is this Rudyard?

SETH. 'Ere—stayin' off the High Street. He's in with the people from the Laurels—sweet on one of the gals there—we've been trying to find him for near a year now, and we've run up against him at last. She's kept out of his way till we're sure of our game—an' if it's all right—my gentleman will have to pay for keeping a loving mother from her child. (*goes back C.*)

BESS. Serve him right, the unnatural villain, turning an honest woman's child into a gentleman—make 'im pay.

SETH. (*C.*) Ah!

BESS. An' what's she gone to Windsor for?

SETH. To cast her eye over the blessed kid. (*crosses R. C.*)

BESS. How'd she know it?

SETH. (L. C.) Remember that time she swiped it over the eye? That mark'll be good enough for her.

BESS. Oh, ah!

SETH. Is that the half-hour striking?

BESS. Yes.

SETH. She ought to be— (a distant whistle heard)
That's her. (makes a quick move, is about to go when
BESS stops him)

BESS. (stopping him) Bad luck comes fast enough—
better wait—better wait.

SETH. (slightly up L. C.) It's good luck that's coming
coming our way now—why, she's made over six quid out
of the young fool from the Laurels, and the old painter
there, Bendyshe, has offered 'er ten quid to sit for 'er
picture.

BESS. She's a one-er—and no mistake. (CHIARA,
the gipsy, is seen coming quickly through the bushes
from R. She is a beautiful woman of about thirty, dark-
haired, heavy-eyed, a face of strongly-marked passions.
She is picturesquely dressed in the mixed costume of the
tribe, and walks with a graceful swing, her hands on
her hips, all her white teeth shining as she smiles.
SETH goes eagerly to meet her)

SETH. Well?

CHIARA. (smiling at him) Well, my handsome Seth?

SETH. Out with it. (CHIARA looks over her shoulder
at BESS. Impatiently) All right—she knows. Is it the
kid?

CHIARA. (carelessly) Yes, I knew my mark. Who
says good don't come from evil? If I hadn't lost my
temper that night, we should ha' lost a fortune to-day.

SETH. What'll it be worth, do ye think?

CHIARA. Who knows?

SETH. We'll make my gentleman pay—and pay hand-
some.

CHIARA. I've been there—didn't see him. He's com-
ing over here this afternoon—a picnic with the folk from
the Laurels. I'll tackle him then.

SETH. You can't have it out before all the lot.

CHIARA. No, but I can meet him—look at him—re-
mind him I'm alive—and then—we'll talk seriously to-
gether a little later on. Lord! how like his father that kid
is. (flings herself down on the ground R.) And how

the sight of him brought back old times—those Oxford days—those stuffy rooms—me married—respectable. I wore a veil once.—Ah, ha! fancy me in a veil—what a fool I felt. Then, a mother—me—more respectable. Phew! Sick of it all! You turn up again, and then our bolt together. Ah, ha! what a time, the free fresh air—the—ah, well! What a fool I was to make Jack marry me.

BESS. Well, it didn't last long, dearie.

CHIARA. Who cares? (*suddenly*) Has the fool boy been here?

SETH. Ain't seen him. (*back L. C.*)

CHIARA. I promised to meet him here at twelve.

SETH. (*coming definitely to business*) Now, what about this Captain Rudyard? (*standing over L. C. of CHIARA*)

CHIARA. (*lazily*) What about him? Leave him to me—he's my affair. We'll get the money we want, and then we'll go north, my Soth! (*BESS gets up, moving off*)

CHIARA. (*watching her as she goes*) Moving on?

BESS. Yes, moving on.

SETH. (*fiercely*) Tell us what you mean to do with Rudyard and this kid?

CHIARA. (*lazily*) Shan't, so don't worry. Don't know as I shall do anything—depends how I feel.

SETH. (*going to her angrily*) Look ye here!

CHIARA. (*smiling at his rage*) Don't bully me, it doesn't pay. (*crawls to L. haystack*)

BESS. (*L. of her*) Tell him what you mean to do, dearie—black eyes ain't beautiful, and you're a-goin' to sit for your portrait, as I hear. (*exit L. still crooning an old dirge to herself*)

SETH. (*standing over CHIARA and talking angrily*) I'll tell you what you've got to do: you goes to Captain Rudyard, and says—" 'Ere, you've stole my child and you've got to take the consequences."

CHIARA. (*still smiling lazily at him*) Which is—

SETH. Which is—you pays me fifty quid a year for the loan of 'im, or I hands you over to the law.

CHIARA. (*to herself, smiling*) He is a wise man, is my handsome Seth. (*he makes an angry gesture, she stops him with a quick movement*)

CHIARA. Hush! Here comes the city man! (*after*)

a slight pause, the URCHIN strolls on R.—he is a chubby, brown-faced, curly-haired little street Arab—his legs are bare, his trousers rolled up to the knee, tattered and many sizes too large for him, the waist being almost under his armpits. Over his shoulder he carries a fishing rod fashioned out of a switch of willow; in the other hand is a large bottle swinging by a piece of string, the receptacle for the fish he hopes to catch. He nods to SETH and turning to CHIARA looks at her with a disapproving eye. Smiling at him) Well, city man!

URCHIN. (*R. C. sternly*) Don't you haddress me; I'm disgustercated wiv yer.

CHIARA. (*pathetically*) Ah! How can we of the wilds hope to please you of the great town?

URCHIN. (*somewhat mollified*) I admits the 'andicap—but, Guv'nor, you mayn't be awcer on it—but yore missis's carrying-on's is enough to—to demoralize this yer wum! (*holds up worm admiringly, preparatory to baiting his hook*)

SETH. (*laughing at CHIARA, then to URCHIN*) I've been at work—my eyes have been shut. What have you seen, city man?

URCHIN. (*to SETH with dignity*) 'Tain't for me to come atween man and wife, but yesterday there was a young torf, bless yer, a kid—orl collar and himpidence. 'E flirted round yer missis, he guv her a quid, an' she guv him a kiss.

SETH. (*laughing*) Well, city man, wot's wrong wi' that? She guv me the quid, and she guv the young torf his kiss back agin.

URCHIN. (*fishing desperately*) So long as you don't mind. 'Ow about the chap I calls 'Oppin' tub—Mr. Bendyshe, a-staying at the Laurels? I sees 'im give 'er a fiver to buy a shawl.

CHIARA. He says he's a great artist—he calls me Cleopatra.

URCHIN. (*scornfully*) Cleopatra—pickles! (*goes to bank and fishes R. C.*)

CHIARA. (*lying back, smiling lazily, her eyes half closed*) He is a great artist—he is going to paint my face and make me immortal forever. I am to meet him this afternoon and he will commence. See, city man, how we live on the wisdom of fools.

SETH. You meets 'im agin to-day? (*rises; down C.*)