

**COTTAGE LIFE: OR  
TALES AT DAME  
BARBARA'S TEA-TABLE**

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Cottage Life: Or Tales at Dame Barbara's Tea-Table by Clara de Chatelain

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# COTTAGE LIFE,

OR

TALES AT DAME BARBARA'S TEA-TABLE.

BY

MADAME DE CHATELAIN.

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ILLUSTRATED WITH SIX COLOURED PICTURES.

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## DAME BARBARA'S TEA-TABLE.

I SHALL never forget the pleasant hours I spent at the tea-table of the venerable lady whose name is given as the title of this little book. Dame Barbara was the living chronicle of the place she inhabited, a small village on the northern frontier of England, where begin the almost insensible gradations from Scotch to English,—like as water assumes a brackish taste near the sea,—the inhabitants having mostly Scotch names, and speaking with an unmistakeable accent. The good dame knew the humble histories of all her neighbours, both of this and the two preceding generations, but not a word of scandal, I verily believe, ever passed her lips; and having an education far superior to those around her, there was all the charm of a living book in her conversation, and delighted was I to turn over its pages as often as opportunity permitted. I think I still see her in her slate-coloured gown and close cap, her mild, cheerful countenance beaming with goodness, as she answered my numerous questions, which I hoped would lead to some interesting narrative.

One afternoon when she was in a particularly talkative mood

(for at times she seemed not to like any reference to her own past life) I ventured to ask her how it happened that she had acquired a degree of instruction that placed her so much above her neighbours?

"I will tell you," said she, shaking the crumbs from her apron, and taking up her knitting: "not because I am proud of my learning, but because my story may serve as a useful warning to those who put faith in silly prophecies."

She then proceeded to unfold her simple tale; which, as well as all the following ones, I shall give as nearly in her own words as memory serves me.

"I was born in a village a good many miles from hence, and having had the misfortune to lose my mother at my birth, and my father dying soon after, I was left to the care of my maternal grandmother, who was a farmer's widow, in easy circumstances. My grandmother doated upon me. I no sooner began to speak than she fancied I was the cleverest child that had ever lived, and she would repeat my prattle to all her friends, calling upon them to admire my precocious wit. Had her foolish weakness stopped at this, I should have only run the risk of growing up vainer and sillier than other girls of my age; but, unfortunately, she had so taken hold of the notion, that I was born to some grand destiny, that, during a journey to Edinburgh, whither she once in her life was obliged to go on business, nothing would serve