

**BEYOND COMPARE.  
A STORY. IN THREE  
VOLUMES. VOL. I**

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Beyond compare. A story. In three volumes. Vol. I by Charles Gibbon

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**CHARLES GIBBON**

**BEYOND COMPARE.  
A STORY. IN THREE  
VOLUMES. VOL. I**



# BEYOND COMPARE

*A STORY.*

BY

CHARLES GIBBON,

AUTHOR OF

"ROBIN GRAY," "QUEEN OF THE MEADOW," "THE GOLDEN SHAFT,"

"BY MEAD AND STREAM," "A PRINCESS OF JUTLAND," 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. I.

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## CONTENTS OF VOL. I.

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CHAPTER	PAGE
I. SUNSHINE ... ..	1
II. "IN A DAY OR TWO" ... ..	12
III. CLOUDS ... ..	28
IV. SUSPECTED ... ..	47
V. STUNG TO THE QUICK ... ..	63
VI. SLANDER ... ..	79
VII. CROSS-EXAMINED ... ..	89
VIII. "IS SHE MAD?" ... ..	106
IX. THE WARNING ... ..	123
X. OLD CHUMS ... ..	136
XI. A QUEER BARGAIN ... ..	147
XII. BERTA ... ..	162
XIII. THROUGH DARK TO DAWN ... ..	174
XIV. THE PUZZLE ... ..	187
XV. MEDITATIONS ... ..	200
XVI. THE DUELLISTS ... ..	211
XVII. "IS IT THE WORST?" .. ..	224
XVIII. OPENING THE CAMPAIGN ... ..	238
XIX. A REPULSE ... ..	250





# BEYOND COMPARE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### SUNSHINE.

SHE sat on a ridge of shingle which stretched along the shore like a broad blue ribbon decorating the yellow sand. A market basket lay beside her ; and whilst the light breeze gently waved the brim of her straw hat, her dark blue eyes gazed up from under it at a man who stood close by, leaning on a servicable staff. He was looking thoughtfully seaward, and, the sun being high but behind them, his shadow lay black and short before him.

There was scarcely any wind. The sea

was calm, and the low murmur it was making as it kissed the sandy shore suggested the soothing lullaby of wooing sirens, and gave no hint of its terrible powers of destruction. It seemed so gentle and its voice so sweet that there was a sense of Sabbath quietude around the only two occupants of the beach. Far out, over the rippling wavelets, ships and steamers, fishing smacks, and yachts glided lazily up and down the roads. Occasionally the clear blue of sea and sky was crossed by a black, comet-like tail of smoke from a steamer ; but that soon faded away, leaving the space clear and bright again.

There was a long reach of low-lying shore, with gently rising sandbanks, which guarded the land from the inroads of the ocean in its angry moods. The land, far as the eye could reach, was a gigantic chess-board of flat meadows which had once been marshes. They were now covered with luxuriant pasture, and in the sunlight buttercups and daisies sparkled like jewels amidst the bright

green grass. The landscape was studded with windmills and church towers, and cosy-looking farm-houses helped them to break the monotony of the level plains.

With the sun high in the meridian, making everything bright, whilst its heat was mellowed by the light sea-breeze, there was an atmosphere of blissful peace and rest over land and sea. It seemed as if all the turmoil of the world and the bitter struggle for life were far removed from the dwellers in and around the drowsy hamlet of Sandybeach. There was no sign of toil, no sign of hurry or worry, in the village or on the shore; everybody and everything seemed to be reposing, although it was little past mid-day.

The man and girl on the beach had been silent for a time, as if enjoying the sense of perfect rest, and afraid to break the spell. The girl was the first to speak.

“What are you thinking about, Elwin? You look as if something troubled you.”

He turned to her instantly, a smile on his