

**BEYOND COMPARE;
A STORY; IN THREE
VOLUMES; VOL. II**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649304134

Beyond compare; a story; in three volumes; vol. II by Charles Gibbon

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CHARLES GIBBON

**BEYOND COMPARE;
A STORY; IN THREE
VOLUMES; VOL. II**

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 JUTEDON," 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. II.

LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,

LIMITED,

St. Dunstan's House,

FETTER LANE, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1888.

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LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
STAMFORD STREET AND CHANCERY CROSS.

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BEYOND COMPARE.

CHAPTER I.

WAR DECLARED.

THERE are moments when the strongest nature is underved, and the sudden, unexpected touch of a child's hand will make it start with unreasoning and groundless fear of some invisible danger. Mental emotion of joy or grief is more potent than the best trained muscles. Joy has been known to kill; and grief, although it is never cited in a doctor's certificate of the causes of death, has a larger share in swelling the tables of mortality than epidemics of fever or smallpox.

There is a story of the singular fate of a Herculean officer of dragoons. He was stationed in an ancient cathedral city where he and his comrades were hospitably entertained by the wealthy inhabitants. Underneath the main floor of the cathedral there was a series of vaults, with a passage reaching from one end of the building to the other. At dinner one evening there was some conversation about superstitions, and the officer referred to laughed at the idea of any man in good health being affected by fear of the supernatural.

“Will you walk through the vaults of the cathedral alone at midnight and in the dark?” asked one of his comrades.

“Certainly, if you will hold a light at the opposite end to guide me.”

Wagers were laid on the result of the adventure. At midnight Hercules descended the steps leading to the vaults at one end of the building, and at the other end saw the light for which he was to steer. He had

a cane in his hand to enable him to feel his way like a blind man.

He gave a cheery "All right!" when he reached the floor, and his comrades hastened to the opposite end, where they were to receive him. After an interval they heard his heavy footsteps on the stone floor, and soon could dimly descry his figure at the foot of the stairs. Suddenly there was a groan and the sound of something falling on the ground. With lights the officers descended to the vaults, and at the foot of the stairs found their comrade lying dead. His sword was in his right hand instead of the cane with which he had started, and his military sash was caught on a nail in the wall.

The conjecture was that in the course of his passage he had experienced the superstitious feelings which he had ridiculed, and had drawn his sword for better self-assurance. When about to ascend the steps, his nerves by this time strung to the most sensitive degree of tension, his sash had been caught