

**THE CONVERSION OF
CLARIBEL
APPELL. MYRHAA; OR
THE SKETCH OF A LIFE**

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The Conversion of Claribel Appell. Myrhaa; Or the Sketch of a Life by Mrs. Alfred Young

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MRS. ALFRED YOUNG

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OF
CLARIBEL APPELL.

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OR
THE SKETCH OF A LIFE.

By Mrs. ALFRED YOUNG.

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1863.

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CHAPTER I.

It was a house that had seen many centuries, and built of solid oak, which here and there broke athwart and across the walls in fantastic devices; the interstices being filled up with plaster and cement. The doors and windows were odd ones, put in by different people at different times, to suit their own notions of repairs. One window bore the noble Norman arch, another had tiny diamond panes, and opened lattice fashion. The south drawing room windows were modern. Summer was the season in which this old place luxuriated, when all the numerous trees in which it was buried were in a perfect wealth of foliage, of every varied shade of green; and the purple gorgeous leaved beech tree, which seemed to cast a faint halo on the pale face of a young girl, of

some eighteen summers, reading beneath. She appeared to be reading every line with entranced delight, a delight never known beyond the unsophisticated charm of youth.

She came to the end with a sigh, and softly uttered to herself: "I cannot live until to-morrow without another book—I'll see if dinner is ready, and go to the town afterwards for Nicholas Nickleby." She sauntered into the low roofed hall of the ancient mansion, which even at their early dinner hour of one o'clock was dim, from the chastened light admitted through the diamond paned windows. Some matting was placed on the stone floor, and one end of a massive black oak table was covered with a soiled table-cloth. Preparation for a humble repast was laid on the table by a red armed serving woman; but the young lady had a separate cover to herself, containing a sweetbread. An elderly lady, of a worn sad aspect, sat at the foot of the table, an aged gentleman, who looked like her father, sat on the other side, and the chair at the head of the dreary table was vacant.

"Your papa, Claribel," said the lady, "will not like our dining in the hall, when he returns from abroad."

There was suddenly a clattering at the

casement, and a dark face peeped in. He must have been a tall man to look in at that window.

"How papa always takes us by surprise," exclaimed Claribel, rather fretfully.

"Run out my love," said the lady: "do, my precious, and meet him."

But the tall man entered the low browed hall. "Well, I have given you a shock," said he, and he laughed loudly.

Claribel kissed him, and the lady said: "We thought, Colonel Appell, you were at Wisbaden."

"So I was, a few days ago; and how goes it old fox?" continued the Colonel, giving a huge slap to the old gentleman's back.

"Won't you take something warm, Colonel Appell?" asked the old fox, rather breathless after that poke in the back.

But nothing seemed to "warm" the spirits of those three, who apparently, beheld the sudden appearance of the Colonel with awe and tremor.

Claribel presently succeeded in slipping away from the hall, and proceeded to the old fashioned chamber, her bed room. Here she arrayed herself in a fantastic bonnet, trimmed with moss-rose buds, and a gaudy China crape shawl, which had been her mother's. Her figure looked antique in a

costume not suited to her eighteen years, but which happened to be in keeping with the ancient room, its strange furniture, the black oaken floor, and the mighty beam which upheld the low ceiling. Claribel went out at the south drawing-room window, a room never used, for Colonel Appell never received any visitors, or allowed his daughter to visit. The afternoon sun shone out of an azure sky, as Claribel walked on until she reached the sea, a sea reflecting the richest blue, a sea dotted here and there with white-sailed, stately yachts; and in the distance reposed the foliage covered hills of the opposite shore, giving character to the scene. As she moved farther towards the town, she came upon the solitude of the black and jagged rocks, and sat a few moments watching the long trail of smoke of a steamer in the offing. A step disturbed her, but it was only a fisherman, bearing a basket of pretty silvery looking denizens of the deep. Claribel scrambled farther down the steep path leading to the precipices below. There was a cavern under the cliff, and the sea was washing in in soft waves, and breaking forth into sportive foam on the numerous and fantastic rocks around. Claribel got down on a platform of black and slippery stone, and

gazed up at the scarred and singular cliffs, which were layer upon layer of red and crumbling earth and rock, some hundred feet above the sea, and had the appearance of being burnt. It was a magnificent scene and solitary, save for the musical plash of the water, or the distant scream of a white winged sea-gull; but as Claribel proceeded on her way she heard voices, and she stopped, for she was of a shy nature, and she hoped the speakers would move on. There appeared to be three people, two ladies and a gentleman, and one was saying: "It is faith alone can save us; 'Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved,' and as it says in the 10th of Romans, 'If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.'"

"And we must *do* something, too," said the gentleman: "there is a very dim idea about works, now I am convinced, Miss L., that works are necessary to salvation."

"Our good works can never save us, Sir George," said Miss L.; "'though we give our bodies to be burned, and though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor,'—as you will see in the 13th chap. 1st Cor., 'all availeth nothing without charity; ' charity