

HOME INFLUENCE;

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178

A TALE
FOR
MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS.

BY
GRACE AGUILAR.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. II.

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CONTENTS

O F V O L U M E I I.

		Page
CHAPTER I.	Suspicion—A Parting, a Double Grief.—Innocence Proved — Wrong done and Evil confirmed by Doubt	1
— II.	Advance and Retrospect	25
— III.	A Letter, and its Consequences	48
— IV.	A Summons and a Loss	68
— V.	The Broken Desk	88
— VI.	The Culprit and the Judge	114
— VII.	The Sentence, and its Execution	136
— VIII.	The Light Glimmers	162
— IX.	The Struggle	178
— X.	Illness and Remorse	195
— XI.	Mistaken Impressions eradicated	212
— XII.	The Loss of the Syren	229
— XIII.	Forebodings	241
— XIV.	Forgiveness	257
— XV.	The Rich and the Poor	272
— XVI.	A Home Scene and a Parting	289
— XVII.	The Birthday Gift	309

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CHAPTER I.

Suspicion. — A Parting. — A Double Grief. — Innocence Proved. — Wrong Done and Evil Confirmed by Doubt.

LADY HELEN'S ball took place; and Caroline had so conquered herself, that she could listen to Percy's flowing account of its delight with actual cheerfulness. It was so associated with self-reproach, that she could scarcely think of it without pain; but she was so convinced of her folly in permitting such a very little thing so to affect her temper as to cause all the misery she had endured, that she had resolved to punish herself, not only by listening to Percy, but by herself inquiring the details. She was a girl of really a strong mind, and once convinced of error, once released from the fell dominion of temper, she did not care what pain she endured, or what difficulty she encountered, so that she could but convince her mother how truly she regretted, and tried to atone for past misconduct. It was very easy, as Mrs. Hamilton had told her, to regain lost time in her studies, but not quite so easy to check the cross word or unkind thought, and to break from the

black cloud that still at times would envelope her. But she did not give way, constantly even making opportunities for self-denial, and doing little kindnesses for Ellen, though she was too truthful to profess an affection which as yet she could not feel.

Early the following week Mr. Grahame came over to Oakwood with a petition. Annie having taken cold at the party, had been obliged to enact the invalid, much against her inclination, and so entreated her mother to invite Caroline to spend a few days with her; and, to her astonishment, her cold harsh father volunteered to go himself for her. Hr. Hamilton at once acceded; his wife hesitated; but she went at once to Caroline, who chanced to be reading alone in the schoolroom, for it was the time of recreation, and told her. For a moment her countenance was actually radiant with delight, the next it was clouded over.

"You would like it very much, but you are afraid I shall not permit you to go: is that the meaning of your change of countenance?" asked her mother, half smiling.

"I feel afraid of myself, mamma; for I fear I am always more ill-tempered and proud after any such pleasure as going to Moorlands would be."

"Would you rather not go, then?"

"I cannot say quite that, mamma; I should like it very much, if I could but be sure of myself afterwards."

"Did you ever feel such a doubt of yourself before, Caroline, when going to stay with Annie?"

"No, mamma, I seem to have thought a great deal more the last few days, and not to feel half so sure of myself."

"Then I think there is less danger for you, that is, of course, if you are willing to risk the temptation of Lady Helen's too kind consideration and lavish praises, which make mine so very tame."

"Oh, mamma, pray do not say so," interrupted Caroline, very eagerly. "Indeed, I would rather hear you speak and see you smile as you do now, than listen to all that Lady Helen is so kind as to say. I know I did like it very much, and that it did sometimes make me fancy when I came home, that you were almost cold. But indeed, indeed, I hope I am learning to know you better."

"I hope so too, dearest. But Mr. Grahame is waiting for you; and, by-the-by, begged me to ask you for some lines you promised to copy out for a print in Lady Helen's album. You may do just as you like about going, because you are quite old and wise enough to decide for yourself. Ill-temper always brings such suffering with it, that if pleasure must recall it, you will be wiser not to go; but if you can resist it, if you think you can return to your quiet daily routine as forbearing and gentle and happy as you are now, go, my love, and enjoy yourself as much as you can."

"I will try and remember all you said about prayer, when we think we are most secure, dear mamma," answered Caroline, in a very earnest and somewhat lowered voice. "I know, whenever I have been to