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GRACE LEE BY JULIA KAVANAGH.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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GRACE LEE.

A TALE.

BY

JULIA KAVANAGH,

AUTHOR OF "NATHALIE;" "DAISY BURNS;" &C.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BERNHARD TAUCHENITZ

1855.



# GRACE LEE.

## VOL. II.

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### CHAPTER I.

A STORM had broken over the head of Grace Lee. It had come to her like a dark cloud on a summer's day. She sat alone and happy by the open window, breathing the pure mountain air that gathered sweetness and fragrance as it passed over her pleasant garden. Stars glittered in the azure heavens; and all on earth beneath seemed happiness and peace.

Phoebe entered the room bringing in the lamp and a letter; Grace recognized the writing of Gerald. "A quiet and friendly epistle, as usual," she thought, breaking the seal. The Epistle was as follows: —

"MY DEAR MISS LEE, — With much pain I heard of your severe illness." And how does he know I have been ill, thought Grace; perhaps the rest will show. She resumed: "I trust you are now fully recovered. I fear, however, the climate of Wales does not agree with you, and Lily says your health is best in Italy. I need not add, that wherever you may choose to

direct your wanderings I shall be most happy to accompany you. A convent will, of course, be the most suitable; indeed the only proper place of residence. And now, my dear friend, allow me to avail myself of the privileges the word implies, to allude, believe me I do so with the greatest reluctance, to a most painful subject. You have trusted, and you have been deceived, — betrayed the world says, — but surely I need not tell you how little its judgments should be regarded. Let me, however, entreat you, for the sake of your fair name, to act with prudence; or if, as I fear, your generous temper scorns prudence, let me appeal to pride. Remember that he who knew not how to appreciate a noble woman, cannot be worthy her resentment. You are as much above him in nature and gifts, as you were once in position and fortune. Would you had remembered this, and never condescended to bestow on so worthless an object this great and undeserved honour. But I must not say more on so delicate a subject. Too much, I fear, I have already said. Yet at the risk of offending you, I must again urge the absolute necessity of leaving England for a while; in absence, you will find the best — the only cure. Thus you may recover the peace you have lost; thus the world will forget its slanders and its calumnies. By the time you return, public opinion will, I trust, have done you ample justice; but even should this desirable result never be

attained, should the world, where you have reigned so long, persist in wronging to the end, what it once so justly extolled and admired, believe, my dear friend, that there is one whose opinion of you cannot change, on whose regard and friendship you may ever rely. Yours, truly,

GERALD LEE."

"P. S. Lily sends her best love, and so does, she says, your little namesake; both are well."

"Has Mr. Gerald Lee lost his senses?" thought Grace, as after a second reading this letter still gave her the same meaning. "To leave England — hide in a convent — recover the peace I have lost — return when public opinion does me justice! Mr. Lee is mad!" She rose and walked up and down the room in unconscious haughtiness and scorn. Nature had made her proud; religion and will had so subdued the feeling, that of all sins it was that she least fell into; but one strong emotion, like a rapid current, bore her at once beyond all fictitious barriers, — one moment of forgetfulness undid the work of years. At once she sat down and wrote off to Mr. Lee, requesting to know his meaning. The reply has come; again Grace Lee sits alone reading a letter from Gerald Lee; and this time, more than the first, she thinks she is dreaming — well she may, for it tells a tale of disgrace and shame, a story of which she is heroine,