

HER FATHER'S NAME.

A NOVEL.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ

1877.

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HER FATHER'S NAME.

CHAPTER I.

The Misses Lillietrip.

HER conversation with the housekeeper cost Leona several sleepless nights and speculative days. She had arrived at that scene in the life drama she had sworn to play out by herself, when half the actors were upon the stage, and the plot was commencing to unfold itself; and yet the chattering and commotion about her were so great she could neither hear nor understand the meaning of what passed before her. Her thoughts were in inextricable confusion, and from day to day she could not decide what steps to take next. One fact was very apparent—that Mr. Evans' interest was awakened in her. Not only did he show it in the way Mrs. Raymond had pointed out—by gazing earnestly at the young Spaniard, whenever he imagined he was unobserved—as though he was trying to discover what it was in Leona that attracted him, or to con-

nect his fancy with some link of the past—but he attempted to prove it by more substantial methods. He appeared almost jealous of the partiality which Leona evinced for Lucilla, and seized every opportunity of securing her company for himself. He used to ask her to join him in his morning walks, when he would draw out from her, as much as possible, the history of her past life—where she had been reared, how educated, and of whom her family consisted. These questions Leona would parry to the best of her ability; and such as she was compelled to answer, she did as though she were indeed the person she represented herself to be. Then her host would take her with him into the City, and introduce her to the various members of the firm, by whom she was at first received (as she had been by Mrs. Evans' guests) with shrugs of the shoulders and looks of incredulity. But, being presented to the gentleman who conducted the Spanish correspondence of the great house, and proving herself a proficient in reading, writing, and speaking that language in all its ramifications and branches, she rose immensely in the estimation of her companions, and ceased to be mentioned with expressions of contempt. Did no pang of remorse assail Leona Lacoste at this period, for the deception she had practised on those who had re-

ceived her with such unmitigated kindness and perfect trust?

Not the slightest!

She had but one object in view. She looked upon her mission as sacred, and considered nothing underhand or dishonourable that was necessary to forward the project she had pledged herself before high heaven to carry out—the clearance of her dead father's reputation from obloquy and reproach. She never stopped to consider if she had any right to accept the benefits showered on her in another name. Her eyes were steadfastly fixed upon one point, and she would have gone through fire and water to attain it. She had taken a cordial distaste to Mr. Evans, which no kindness on his part could mitigate. She disliked his company, she revolted at the interest he evinced for her, she shrank inwardly from the touch of his hand, or the sound of his voice. She regarded the luxury with which he and his family were surrounded as the price of her father's blood. She saw them revelling in everything they could desire, without a thought, apparently, of him who had forfeited his share of the good things of this life, to go forth and die an exile in the wilderness, branded with the infamy of a crime of which he was completely innocent, and which yet must have been committed by—— whom?