

**A SUNBEAM'S
INFLUENCE; OR,
EIGHT YEARS AFTER**

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A sunbeam's influence; or, Eight years after by Mrs. Clifford-Butler .

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MRS. CLIFFORD-BUTLER .

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THE ACCIDENT.

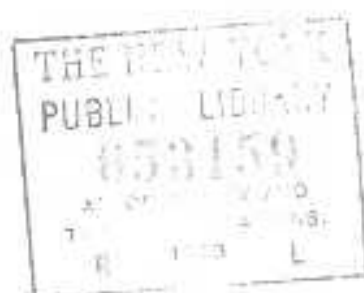
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A
SUNBEAM'S INFLUENCE;
OR,
EIGHT YEARS AFTER.

BY THE
HON. MRS CLIFFORD-BUTLER,
Author of "A Tale of Two Old Songs."

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I. S. M.



MOY WM
CLEON
YRABLU

TO
MY DEAR LITTLE DAUGHTER

This Story is Dedicated.

*MAY SHE, LIKE ITS HEROINE,
HAVE EVER A WOMAN'S HAPPIEST GIFT,
"A SUNBEAM'S INFLUENCE"
OVER THOSE SHE LOVES.*



CHAPTER I.

“I AM glad to find you up, and able to enjoy this fine evening. It seems like the first step towards recovery.”

And Major Campbell leant over the sofa upon which his wife's worn slender figure was resting, well-pleased to note on her cheek the first faint flush of returning health. “We shall soon have you out of town, and in the fresh country breezes, I trust, if you get on without drawbacks. Has Mary been reading to you since I went out?”

“No; she was very kind in offering to do so, but I was a little tired after my grand toilet, and have been resting and half dozing for some time,” and the sweet pale face brightened into a smile, as Mrs Campbell smoothed the soft folds of her white dressing-gown.

“And dreaming about the child, I have no

doubt. Are you missing her very sadly, poor bereaved mother?"

"No, indeed—at least I mean I have no right to do so. Your sister has been so kind in doing everything for me; but still my thoughts will wander after my little Elsie, and I find myself guessing and wondering what she may be doing."

"Dear little woman! But that it were a doubtful compliment in this hot weather, I should say that we have lost our household sunbeam. At any rate she will be safe and well cared for where she is: that is one comfort."

"Yes; Ina loves her almost as if she were her own child, and Roger is one of the kindest people living. I am sure they will be good to her, will they not, Archie?"

"Of course they will. In a very few days she will be fully established as Roger's pet, and the children's shadow, and Ina's right hand."

"But won't that be usurping Florence's privileges? I hope nothing will ever create jealousy between the two girls, they have been such close and dear friends for several years."

“No fear; Elsie is too unselfish and simple, Florence too high-minded, for any feeling so contemptible as petty jealousy. Be content about the child, dear Elinor, I am convinced she is both safe and happy.” And Mrs Campbell tried to believe the same, as, with a smile of patient weariness, she lay back on her pillow, striving with closed eyes to picture to herself the slight form of her darling wandering amongst the green trees and summer blossoms to which she, good unselfish mother, had been so anxious to send her. Could those loving eyes have penetrated through a distance of some hundred and thirty miles, they would, just at that particular moment, have discerned, under the shade of a large walnut-tree, the small fairy figure of a girl of sixteen, with flowing chestnut hair that gave her the appearance of being still younger. Very young and slight and childish she looked, and yet there was something of womanhood already dawning in her clear broad forehead, and in the soft eyes, now so intently fixed upon her book.

Suddenly she lifted them with a smile of