

**OSTENTATION AND
LIBERALITY. A TALE. IN
TWO VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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Ostentation and liberality. A tale. In two volumes, Vol. II by Arabella Argus

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ARABELLA ARGUS

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A TALE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.



BY ARABELLA ARGUS,

*Author of "The Juvenile Spectator;" "The Adventures
of a Donkey," &c.*



There is in Virtue sure a hidden charm,
To loose esteem, and Easy to disarm.
Duchess of Devonshire to Fenelon.



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1821.

OSTENTATION AND LIBERALITY.

A TALE.

MISS COLVILLE was unfortunate: Mrs. Wilton received the proposal with marked coldness; was excessively displeased that her daughter should have appointed a comparative stranger to interfere in her arrangements; and concluded by declaring the girl was the most altered creature in the world, or she never could have exposed *her* to such a solicitation.

Wounded as Miss Colville was by the language and *hauteur* of Mrs. Wilton, she did not suffer herself to be influenced by them to forget what she considered her duty. "I agree with you, ma'am," said she; "Miss Wilton's spirits, and I might add her dispositions, must have undergone a very considerable change before *I* could be *called* upon

to address you in her name. It is this very change that induces me to speak unreservedly. So far as *I* am concerned, it cannot be believed I am anxious for Miss Wilton's remaining in Mr. Austen's family; but I am fully persuaded such a request could never have come from your daughter, had she enjoyed the health and expectations usual at her age. She is ill—very ill. If you, ma'am, are not prepared to hear this, you may condemn my sincerity, but I stand acquitted to myself."

Leaving Mrs. Wilton, the governess completed her embassy by repairing to Mr. Austen. She imparted all that had passed between his visitors and herself.

Mr. Austen, with the anxiety of a parent, entered into the views of Caroline; and, though really alarmed for the health of his young relation, he gladly took comfort in that dawning of humility, which had led her to confide in one she had so recently appeared to overlook.

"I see a great deal of promise in

this," said he; "poor Caroline! I wish we had you to ourselves for a few months." He looked at Miss Colville with some curiosity.

"I almost wish such a thing could be, sir," said Miss Colville; "unfortunately, Miss Wilton made her appeal through an unaccredited channel. I cannot regret having complied with her request, though I may deplore the mistaken feelings of the party to whom I addressed myself."

"Mistaken feelings!" echoed Mr. Austen. Unhappy woman! she is, she has long been at war with herself. Alas! madam, no woman feels more acutely than Mrs. Wilton all the inutility of her plans as a mother. Like all those persons who mistake *ostentation* for *liberality*, she blindly imagined that having denied her daughters none of the advantages that money could procure, she had done all that was necessary. Her error now stands confest! But poor Caroline!—I must talk with Mrs. Wilton." Mr. Austen proceeded to the

library, purposing to depute Marian as his messenger to her mother. Here, however, he found Mrs. Wilton in a state of mind nearly allied to madness. Two or three notes, addressed to physicians of eminence, only wanted sealing. With eyes swollen, and a manner that sufficiently betrayed her anguish, she besought Mr. Austen not to confirm the cruel doubts of that horrible Miss Colville. "I never can forgive that woman," she added; "I am convinced she has alarmed the dear child, or she would not have frightened me as she did a few minutes since."

"Of whom are you speaking? who has alarmed you unnecessarily?" inquired Mr. Austen.

"Then you have not heard," said Mrs. Wilton, "that Caroline in one of her low fits, begged this Miss Colville to hint to me her dislike to our intended excursion? Not content with doing as she was required, this officious lady must suggest to me the very great weakness and debility of my daughter. You know my susceptibility: no

sooner had this harbinger of ill retired, than I hastened to Caroline, and implored her to describe all she felt. I am afraid my feelings led me too far; the dear child caught the infection; and for the first time declared herself unequal to the proposed journey: but, with her usual *liberality*, would not hear of Marian's being disappointed. Of course I have not made up my mind upon this point; but I have written to Dr. P. Dr. K. and Dr. W. I will not lose a moment; so I shall have nothing to reproach myself for?"

"If you except the alarm you may give Caroline, by allowing her to see your fears in the precautions you are adopting," observed Mr. Austen.

"I am the most unfortunate woman in existence," said Mrs. Wilton; "what am I to do? will you direct me?"

"I will assist you with my whole heart," replied Mr. Austen; "for, believe me, I am deeply interested in the health of your child, which I regret to perceive is so delicate. These notes,"