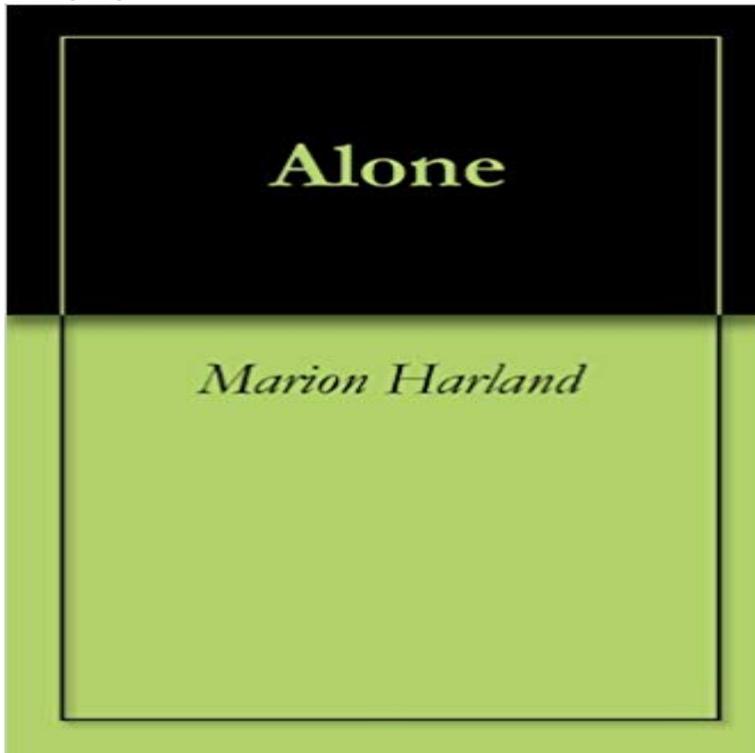


Alone



This volume was published in 1856. Very few women and even fewer men still remember Mary Virginia Hawes Terhune, alias Marion Harland. She was, however, a Virginia Presbyterian woman who, as a very young woman, helped shape the lives of American women, indeed, women of the world, long before Martha Stewart of recent notoriety. She did this as a storyteller and especially with her household advice, which she shared with other women around the globe. She was a biblical Martha as well as a Mary. Mary Virginia was born 175 years ago in Amelia County, Va., daughter of Samuel Hawes, a migrant to the South from Massachusetts, and Judith Anna Smith, daughter of well-to-do planters. She received a first rate classical education from tutors, and at a Presbyterian girls seminary in Richmond where The Hawes family attended the Second Presbyterian Church and listened to the preaching of the noted Moses Drury Hog. Precocious from the beginning, she began to write and publish stories for a denominational journal. At the age of twenty- four she published a novel entitled Alone under the pseudonym, Marion Harland, by which she became known and we shall employ here. In Alone, her heroine starts out as an orphan, grows to maturity, marries and becomes a woman, according to the storyteller. As a matter of fact, Harland did not like her book being labeled a novel. It was, in fact, a story, autobiographical and very religious. Her namesake, heroine Ida Ross, grows up and stands up to her own problems and those of others because of her Christian convictions. With the help of Jesus Christ she finds solutions for the trouble of other women --- the most putdown daughters, sisters, wives, mothers - everyday common women some of whom are good-looking, not so good- looking, well off and not-so-well off, some who were lucky and some who even had bad

tempers. Harland depicted Christian women as strong domestic goddesses, and religious guardians of husbands and children. Through her characters, Harland showed the women could be a strong force for good in local communities and in the larger republic. Idas devout preaching by example not only influenced women, but converted recalcitrant men, thus making the entire environment in which they lived one of Christian love and respect. The rays of a womans halo, she claimed, could reach beyond the home into the wider world. Although Alone was mostly sweetness and light with no real villains, the author did include for didactic purposes references to a duel which took place in Richmond during the 1840s between two newspaper editors over the issue of slavery. Harland uses the death scene to condemn this sin against Gods gift of life, and also includes in her presentation of this historical drama an eleventh hour conversion experience. Harlands Alone made her reputation. During the rest of her life she was anything but alone. But she lived up to her namesake as a Mary. She continued her writing of stories and novels and emerged as a New Star of the South. She saw herself as an all-American author. And she became a true household word, like todays Martha.

..... Marion Harlands novels are mostly antebellum plantation romances, her stories featured heroines who were exemplary domestic women, never independent but always capable. Forgotten today by all but a handful of womens domestic and literary historians, Marion Harland (1830-1922) was one of the best known American women in the nineteenth century. She was the author of some 75 works of fiction and domestic advice, hundreds of magazine articles and short stories, and a series of syndicated newspaper advice columns. It is not extravagant to say that Marion Harland was, for many readers, the Julia Child, Danielle Steel, and Dear Abby of her day.

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