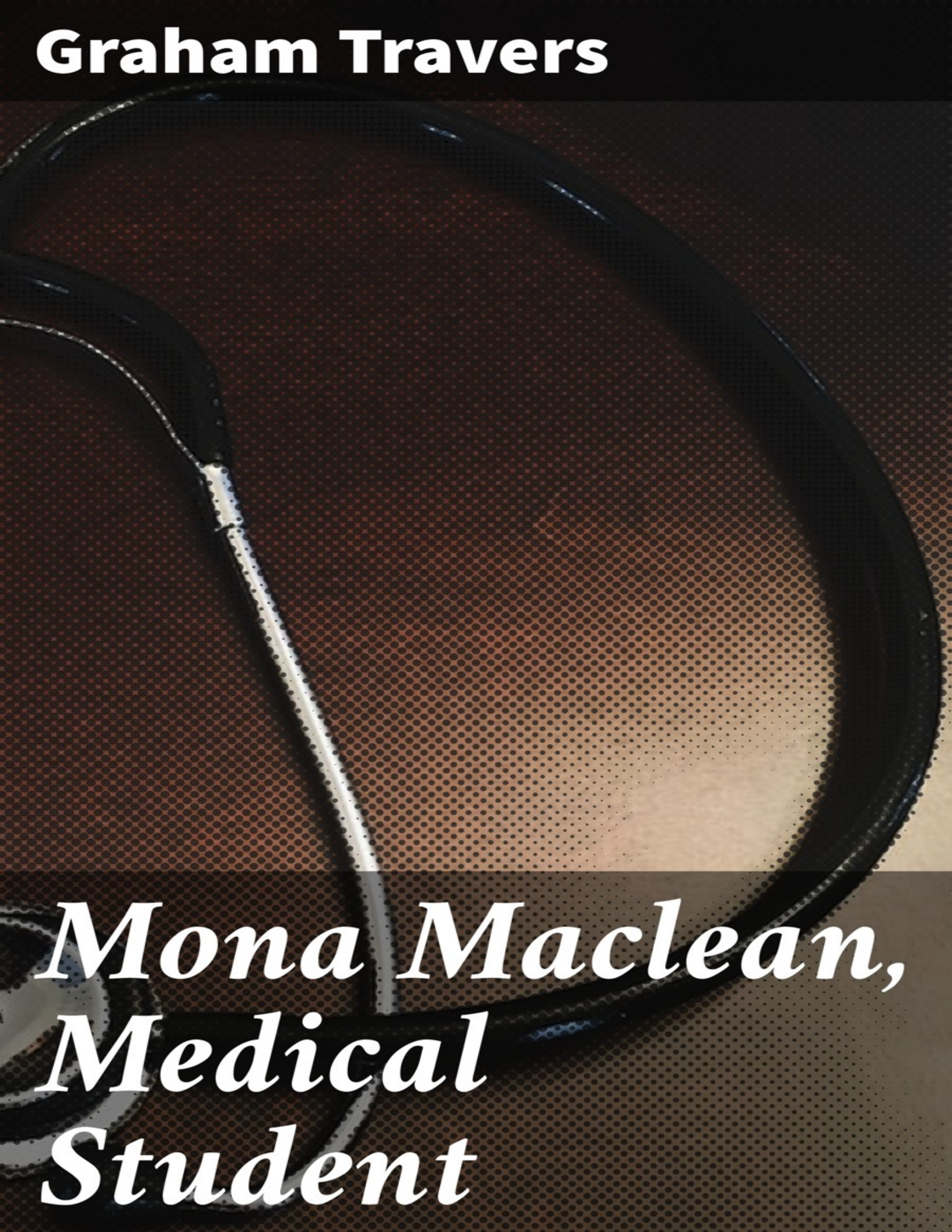




Graham Travers

*Mona Maclean,
Medical
Student*

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A Novel



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CHAPTER I.

IN THE GARDEN.

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"I wish I were dead!"

"H'm. You look like it."

There was no reply for a second or two. The first speaker was carefully extricating herself from the hammock in which she had been idly swinging under the shade of a smoke-begrimed lime-tree.

"No," she said at last, shaking out the folds of her dainty blue gown, "I flatter myself that I do not look like it. I have often told you, my dear Mona, that from the point of view of success in practice, the art of dressing one's hair is at least as important as the art of dissecting."

She gave an adjusting touch to her dark-red curls and drew herself to her full height, as though she were defying the severest critic to say that she did not live up to her principles. Presently her whole bearing collapsed, so to speak, into abject despair, half real, half assumed. "But I do wish I were dead, all the same," she said.

"Well, I don't see why you should make me wish it too. Why don't you go on with your book?"

"Go on with it! I like that! I never began. I have not turned a page for the last half-hour. That's all the credit I get for my self-repression! What time is it?"

"A quarter past twelve."

"Is that all? And the lists won't be up till two. When shall we start?"

"About three, if we are wise—when the crush is over."

"Thank you! I mean to be there when the clock strikes two. There won't be any crush. It's not like the Matric; and besides, every one has gone down. I am sure I wish I had! A telegram 'strikes home,' but the slow torture of wading through those lists——!"

She broke off abruptly, and Mona returned to her book, but before she had read half-a-dozen lines a parasol was inserted between her eyes and the page.

"It will be a treat, won't it?—wiring to the other students that everybody has passed but me!"

"Lucy, you are intolerable. Have you finished packing?"

"Practically."

"Do you mean to travel half the night in that gown?"

"Not being a millionaire like you, I do not. You little know the havoc this frock has to work yet. But I presume you would not have me walk down to Burlington House in my old serge?"

"Why not? You say everybody is out of town."

"Precisely. Therefore we, the exceptions, will be all the more *en évidence*. I don't mean to be taken for an 'advanced woman.' Some of the Barts. men will be there, and——"

But Mona was not listening. She had risen from the cushions on which she had been lounging, and was pacing up and down the grass.

"You know, Mona, you may say what you please, but you are rather white about the gills yourself, and you have no

cause to be."

Mona stopped and shot a level glance at her companion.

"Why not?" she said. "Because I have been ploughed once already, and so should be used to skinning like the eels?"

"Nonsense! How you contrived to fail once neither I nor any one else can pretend to explain, but certain it is that, with the best of will, you won't achieve the feat a second time. You will be in the Honours list, of course."

Mona shrugged her shoulders. "Possibly," she said quietly, "if I pass. But the question is, shall I pass?"

'Oh the little more, and how much it is!

And the little less, and what worlds away!'"

They were walking up and down together now.

"And even if you don't—it will be a disgrace to the examiners, of course, and a frightful fag, but beyond that I don't see that it matters. There is no one to care."

Mona's cheek flushed. She raised her eyebrows, and turned her head very slowly towards her companion, with a glance of enquiry.

"I mean," Lucy said hastily, "you are—that is to say, you are not a country clergyman's daughter like me. If I fail, it will be the talk of the parish. The grocer will condole with me over the counter, the postman will carry the news on his rounds, and the farmers will hear all about it when they come in to market next Wednesday. It will be awfully hard on the Pater; he——"

"From what I know of him, I think he will be able to hold up his head in spite of it."

They both laughed.

"By the way, that reminds me"—and Lucy produced a letter from her pocket—"he is awfully anxious that you should come to us for a few weeks this vacation. You have no idea what a conquest you have made in that quarter. In fact I have been shining with reflected lustre ever since he met you. He thinks there must be something in me after all, since I have had the sense to appreciate you."

"I wonder wherein the attraction between us lies," Mona said reflectively. "I suppose I am really less grave than I appear, and you on the whole are less of a flibbertigibbet than the world takes you to be. So we meet on something of a common ground. I see in you a side of my nature which in the ordinary course of events I don't find it easy to express, and possibly you see something of the same sort in me. Each of us relieves the other of the necessity——"

"Don't prose, please!" interrupted Lucy. "I never yet found the smallest difficulty in expressing myself, and—the saints be praised!—you are not always quite so dull as you are to-day. I suppose you won't come? What are tennis-parties and picnics to a Wandering Jew like you?"

"It is awfully kind of your father. I can't tell you how much I appreciate his goodness; but I am afraid I can't come."

"I thought so. Is it the North Pole or the wilds of Arabia this time?"

Mona laughed. "To tell the truth," she said, "I must have a day with my accounts and my bank-book before I stir from Grower Street."

"What! *you*, Cræsus?"

"The reproach is deserved, whether you meant it for one or not. I have been spending too much. What with extra laboratory work in winter, and coaching last term——"

"And all those pretty dresses."

"And all those pretty dresses," repeated Mona, with the air of one who is making a deliberate confession.

"And nice damp uncut volumes."

"Not too many of those," with a defiant little nod of self-defence.

"And divers charities."

"Nay, alas! My bank-book has not suffered much from them."

"And concert tickets, and gloves for impecunious friends, not to say a couple of excellent stalls from time to time——"

"Nonsense, Lucy! Considering how hard we have worked, I don't think you and I have been at all extravagant in our amusements. No, no, I ought to be able to afford all that. My father left me four hundred a year, more or less."

"Good heavens!" If Mona had added a cipher, the sum could scarcely have impressed her companion more.

"There! that is so like you schoolgirls——"

"Schoolgirls, indeed!"

"You have your allowance of thirty or forty pounds, and you flatter yourselves that you dress on it, travel on it, amuse yourselves on it, and surreptitiously feed on it. You never notice the countless things that come to you from your parents, as naturally as the air you breathe. You go with your mother to her cupboards and store closets, or with your father to town, and all the time you are absorbing money or money's worth. Then you get into debt; there is a

scene, a few tears, and your father's hand goes into his pocket, and you find yourself with your debts paid, and a pound or two to the good. I know all about it. Your allowance is the sheerest farce. Cut off all those chances and possibilities, banish the very conception of elasticity from your mind, before you judge of my income."

Lucy's eyes had been fixed on the ground. She raised them now, and said very slowly, with a trick of manner she had caught from her friend,—

"I don't think I ever heard such a one-sided statement in my life."

Mona laughed. "Every revolution and reformation the world has seen has been the fruit of a one-sided statement."

"I have already asked you not to prose. Besides, your good seed has fallen on stony ground for once. Please don't attempt to revolutionise or reform me!"

"My dear, if you indulge in the pedantry of quotation from ancient Jewish literature, pray show some familiarity with the matter of it. Although, as you remind me, I am not a country clergyman's daughter, you will allow me to remind you that the seed on the stony ground did spring up."

"Bother the seed on stony ground! You said your income was four hundred a year."

"More or less. This year it happens to be less, and I have a strong suspicion that I am in shallow water. If, as I fervently hope, my suspicion is incorrect, I mean to have a fortnight's walking in Skye. In any case, I have promised to spend a month on the east coast of Scotland with a cousin of my father's."

"I thought you had no cousins?"

"No more I have—to call cousins. I never saw this one, and I don't suppose I should ever have heard of her if she had not written to borrow twenty pounds from me a few years ago. She is quite comfortably off now, but she cannot get over her gratitude. I don't suppose she is exactly what you would call a lady. My grandfather was the successful man of the family in his generation, and my father was the same in the next; so it is my fault if cousin Rachel and I have not 'gone off on different lines.'"

"But why do you go to her?"

"I don't know. It is an old promise—in fact, she wants me to live with her altogether—and I am curious to see my 'ancestral towers.'"

"And have you no other relatives?"

Mona laughed. "My mother's sister has just come home from India with her husband, but we are just as far apart as when continents and oceans divided us. I don't think my mother and she quite hit it off. Besides, I can imagine her opinion of medical women, and I don't suppose she ever heard of blessed Bloomsbury."

"Wait a little," said Lucy. "When you are a famous physician——"

"I know—bowling along on C springs——"

"Drawn by a pair of prancing, high-stepping greys——"

"Leaning back on the luxurious cushions——"

"Wrapt to the ears in priceless sables——"

"My waiting-room crowded with patient Duchesses. Yes, of course, she will be sorry then. I suppose she will have an illness, some 'obscure internal lesion' which will puzzle all the London doctors. As a last resource she will apply to me. I

wave my wand. Hey, presto! she is cured! But you can't expect her to foresee all that. It would argue more than average intelligence, and besides, it would spoil the story."

CHAPTER II.

THE LISTS.

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There was no doubt about it. The lists were up.

As the girls passed through the bar from Vigo Street, they could see a little knot of men, silent and eager, gathered on the steps in front of the notice-case. Those who had secured a good position were leisurely entering sundry jottings in their note-books; those behind were straining their eyes, straining every muscle in their bodies, in the endeavour to ascertain the one all-important fact.

"I told you we should have waited," Mona said quietly, striving to make the most of a somewhat limited stock of breath.

"If you tell me the name of the person you are interested in, perhaps I can help you," said a tall man who was standing beside them.

"Oh, thank you," Mona smiled pleasantly. "We can wait. We—are interested in—in several people."

He stood aside to let them pass in front of him, and in a few minutes their turn came.

"Second Division!" ejaculated Lucy, in mingled relief and disgust, as she came to her own name. "Thank heaven even for that! Just let me take a note of the others. Now for the Honours list, and Mona Maclean!"

The Honours list was all too short, and a few seconds were sufficient to convince them——

"Oh!" burst involuntarily from Lucy's lips, as the truth forced itself upon her.

"Hush!" said Mona hastily, in a low voice. "It is all right. Come along."

She hurried Lucy down the steps, past the postoffice, and into Regent Street.

"You know, dear, there are those confounded telegrams to be sent off," said Lucy deprecatingly.

"Yes, yes, I know. There is no hurry. Let me think."

They strolled along in the bright sunshine, but Mona felt as cold as lead. She did not believe that she had failed. There must be some mistake. They had misspelt her name, perhaps, or possibly omitted it by accident. They would correct the mistake to-morrow. It could not be that she had really failed again. After all, was she sure that her name was not there?

"Lucy," she said at last, "do you mind going back with me to the University, and glancing over the lists again?"

"Yes, do. We must have made a mistake. It is simply ridiculous."

But in her heart of hearts she knew that they had not made a mistake.

The little crowd had almost dispersed when they returned, and there was nothing to prevent a quiet and thorough study of the lists.

"It is infamous," said Lucy, "simply infamous! Small credit it is to me to have passed when that is all the examiners know of their work!"

"Nonsense! It's all right. You know I had my weak subject. Come."

"Will you wait here while I send off the telegrams?"

"No, I will come with you."

They passed out of the heat and glare into the dusty little shop, and Mona leaned her elbow wearily on the counter. She had begun to believe it now, but not to realise it in the least. "How horribly I shall be suffering to-morrow!" she thought, with a shiver of dread.

"Weal and woe!" she said, smiling, as she read the telegrams Lucy had scribbled. "Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left."

"*Don't*," said Lucy, with a little stamp of her foot. For the moment she was suffering more than Mona.

They walked home in silence to the house in Gower Street.

"Come in to tea? No? Well, good-bye, dear. Take care of yourself. My love and duty to your father and mother. Write to me here."

She nodded brightly, opened the door with her latch-key, and entered the cool dark house.

Very slowly she dragged herself up to her pretty sitting-room, and shut the door. She winced as her eye fell on the old familiar sights—Quain, and Foster, and Mitchell Bruce, the Leitz under its glass shade, and the box of what she was pleased to dub 'ivory toys.' Then her eye fell on her own reflection in the draped mirror, and she walked straight up to the white, strong, sensitive face.

"Who cares?" she said defiantly. "Not you nor I! What does it matter? *Ay de mi!* What does anything mean? What is success or failure after all?"

From which soliloquy you will be able to form a pretty definite idea of my heroine's age.

CHAPTER III.

"**ADOLESCENT INSANITY.**"

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"Rather than go through all that strain again," said Mona the next morning, "I would throw up the whole thing and emigrate."

She was leaning back on the pillows, her hair all tumbled into curls after a restless night, her hands playing absently with the lace on her morning wrapper. "Why doesn't the coffee come?"

As she spoke, the maid came in with a tempting little tray. Mona was a lodger worth having.

"You look ill, miss," said the girl.

"No. Only a headache. I am not going out this morning. Bring the hot water in half an hour."

"What do people do when they emigrate?" she went on, when the maid had gone. "They start off with tin pots and pans, but what do they do when they arrive? I wonder what sort of farmer I should make? There must be plenty of good old yeoman blood in my veins. 'Two men I honour and no third'—but the feminine of digging and delving, I suppose, is baking and mending. Heigh-ho! this can scarcely be checkmate at my time of life, but it looks uncommonly like it."

An hour later she was deep in her accounts; the table before her littered with manuscript books and disjointed

scraps of addition and subtraction. The furrow on her brow gradually deepened.

"Shallow water!" she said at last, very slowly, raising her head and folding her arms as she spoke; "shallow water was a euphemism. It seems to me, my dear Lucy, that your friend is on the rocks."

She sat for a long time in silence, and then ran her eye quickly over a pile of unanswered letters. She extracted one, leaned back in her chair, and looked at the envelope critically.

"Not strictly what one would call a gentlewoman's letter," she said; "in fact, a sneering outsider might be tempted to use the word illiterate. Well, what then?"

She took out the enclosure and read it through very carefully. She had tossed it aside thoughtlessly enough when it had found her, a fortnight before, in all the excitement of the examination; but now the utterances of the Delphic oracle could not have been studied with closer attention.

"MY DEAR COUSIN,—Yours safely to hand this morning, and very glad I was to get it. I am afraid you will find us dull company here after London, but we will do our best."

("H'm," said Mona. "That means tea-parties—cookies and shortbread—a flower-show or two in the grounds of the Towers, no doubt,—possibly even a *soirée* in the chapel. Wild excitement!")

"Nobody here knows anything about your meaning to be a doctor, and what we don't know does us no harm. They would think it a queer kind of notion in these parts, as you

know I do myself, and keep hoping you will find some nice gentleman——"

("Gentleman!" groaned Mona.)

"——who will put the idea out of your head. My niece, who has been living with me for years, has just sailed for America to be married. You are almost the only friend I have now in the country, and I wish you could see your way to staying with me till you get married yourself. It would do no harm to save your own money a bit; your company would be gain enough to me. I must look out for some one at once, and it would make a great difference in my life to have you. Blood's thicker than water, you know."

("That I don't," said Mona. "My dear woman, any chance advertiser in to-day's paper would probably suit you better than I. It is as bad as adopting a foundling.")

"Write me a line when to expect you.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"RACHEL SIMPSON."

Mona folded the letter thoughtfully, and returned it to its envelope. Then she rose from her writing-table, threw herself into a rocking-chair, and clasped her hands behind her head.

Many a perplexing problem had been solved to the rhythm of that pleasant motion, but to-day the physical exercise was insufficient. She got up impatiently and paced the room. From time to time she stopped at the window, and gazed half absently at the luggage-laden hansoms hurrying to and from the stations.

"Shooting, and fishing, and sketching, and climbing," she thought to herself. "Why am I so out of it all? If there was a corner of the earth to which I really cared to go, I would undertake to raise the money, but there is not a wish in my heart. I scarcely even wish I had passed my examination."

She returned at last to the writing-table, took pen and paper, and wrote hastily without stopping to think. She was in the mood in which people rush at decisions which may make or mar a life.

"MY DEAR COUSIN RACHEL,—I was very busy and preoccupied when your letter reached me, or it would have been answered before now.

"I don't wonder that you see no need for women doctors—living as you do in a healthy country village, where I suppose no one is ever ill unless from old age, a fever, or a broken leg. Perhaps if you saw something of hospital work here, you would think differently; but we can discuss that question when we meet. Whether I personally am qualified for the life I have chosen, is a quite separate question. About that, no doubt, there might be two unprejudiced opinions. I have not been very successful of late, although I am convinced that I have done good work; and I have been spending more money than I ought to have done. For these reasons, and for others which it is not so easy to put into words, I am anxious to escape for a time from the noise and bustle and excitement of London. I should like to be in some country place where I could think, and read, and live quietly, and if possible be of some little use to somebody. You are kind enough—not knowing what an unamiable, self-centred

person I am—to offer me a home with you for an indefinite period; so, if you really care to purchase 'a pig in a poke,' I will come to you for six months. By the end of that time you will have discovered most of my faults, and will have found some one who would suit you a great deal better. I will pay you whatever you consider the equivalent of my board, and if I can be of use to you in any way I shall be only too glad.

"Believe me always
"Your affectionate cousin,
"MONA MACLEAN."

Lunch was on the table before she had finished writing. She lifted the cover and looked at the nicely cooked dish with irrepressible disgust, then helped herself, and—fell a-dreaming.

"Mona, my dear, this will never do," she said, rousing herself with an effort. "Checkmate or no checkmate, I can't have you fading away like a lovely flower. What is the use of this *Niersteiner* if it does not make you eat? *Hörst du wohl?*" She made a heroic attempt if not a very successful one, and then proceeded to read over critically the letter she had just written.

She shrugged her shoulders as she closed the envelope.

"Adolescent insanity!" she exclaimed cynically. "Well, why not? Some of us are adolescent, I suppose, and most of us are insane."

She put on her hat and strolled down towards Oxford Street to post the letter. It suited her mood to drop it into the letter-box with her own hands, and besides, she was rarely so depressed as not to be amused by the shop-

windows. To-day, however, as she wandered aimlessly on, the gay shows in Regent Street fell upon eyes that saw not. "If I had only passed," she said, "how happy I should be!"

She turned wearily homewards, and was met in the hall by the maid.

"If you please, miss, two ladies called while you were out. They were in a carriage, and they left this card."

Mona went up-stairs as she read it.

"Lady Munro" was the name on the card; an address in Gloucester Place, Portman Square, was scrawled in the corner; and on the back in pencil—

"So sorry to miss you. You must dine with us without fail on Friday at eight. No refusal."

A pleased smile crossed Mona's face.

"She is spoiling the story," she said. Then the smile was chased away by a frown.

"If only the story had not spoiled itself!"

And then she bethought herself of the letter she had posted.

CHAPTER IV.

SIR DOUGLAS.

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When Friday evening came, Mona took a curious pleasure in making the very most of herself.

She knew, as well as any outsider could have told her, that her present depression and apathy were but the measure of the passionate enthusiasm with which she had lived the life of her choice; and yet it was inevitable that for the time she should look at life wholly on the shadowed side. Past and future seemed alike gloomy and forbidding—"Grau, grau, gleichgültig grau"—and the eager, unconscious protest of youth against such a destiny, took the form of a resolution to enjoy to the utmost this glimpse of brightness and colour. She would forget all but the present; new surroundings should find her for the moment a new being.

When she reached Gloucester Place, Lady Munro and her daughter were alone in the drawing-room.

Lady Munro was one of those people who make a marked impress on their material surroundings. The rooms in which she lived quickly became, as it were, a part of herself, which her friends could not fail to recognise as such.

Eastern rugs and draperies clothed the conventional London sitting-room; luxuriant, tropical-looking plants were grouped in corners, great sensuous roses lolled in Indian

bowls, and a few rich quaint lamps cast a mellow glow across the twilight of the room.

"Why, Mona, can it really be you?" Lady Munro rose from her lounge, and kissed her niece affectionately on both cheeks. For a moment Mona could scarcely find words. She was keenly susceptible at all times to the beauty of luxury, and the very atmosphere of this room called up with irresistible force forgotten memories of childhood. The touch of this gracious woman's lips, the sound of her voice, the soft *frou-frou* of her gown, all gave Mona a sense of exquisite physical pleasure. Lady Munro was not, strictly speaking, a beautiful woman; but a subtle grace, a subtle fascination, a subtle perfume were part of her very being. She was worshipped by all the men who knew her, but the most cynical of her husband's friends could not deny that she was no whit less charming in her intercourse with her own sex than she was with them. She was not brilliant; she was not fast; she was simply herself.

"This is my daughter Evelyn," she said; and she laid her hand on a sweet, quiet, overgrown English schoolgirl—one of those curious chrysalis beings whom a few months of Anglo-Indian society transform from a child into a finished woman of the world.

"I expect my husband every moment. He is longing to meet you."

Evelyn slowly raised her blue eyes, looked quietly at her mother for a moment, and let them fall again without the smallest change of expression. In fact, Lady Munro's remark was a graceful modification of the truth. Sir Douglas Munro was nothing if not a man of the world. He knew the points of

a wine, and he knew the points of a horse; but above all he flattered himself that he knew the points of a woman. He had made a study of them all his life, and he believed, perhaps rightly, that he could read them like an open book. "Sweet seventeen" was at a cruel disadvantage in his hands, if indeed he exerted himself to speak to her at all. The genus *Medical Woman* was not as yet included in his collection, but he had heard of it, and had classified it in his own mind as a useful but uninteresting hybrid, which could not strictly be called a woman at all. In the sense, therefore, in which a lukewarm entomologist "longs to meet" the rare but ugly beetle which he believes will complete his cabinet, Sir Douglas Munro was "longing" to make the acquaintance of Mona Maclean.

The new beetle certainly took him by surprise when he came in a minute later.

"Mona!" he replied to his wife's introduction; "Mona Maclean—the doctor?"

Mona laughed as she rose, and took his proffered hand.

"Far from it," she said. "In the vacation I try to forget that I am even the makings of one."

She looked almost handsome as she stood there in the soft light of the room. Lady Munro forgot that her niece was a medical student, and experienced a distinct sense of pride and proprietorship. No ordinary *modiste*, she felt sure, had arranged those folds of soft grey crape, and the dash of glowing crimson geraniums on the shoulder was the touch of an artist.

"Mona is the image of her mother," she said.

"Ye-e-s," said Sir Douglas, availing himself of his wife's relationship to look at Mona very frankly. "She reminds me a good deal of what you were at her age."

"Nonsense!" said Mona hastily. "Remember I am not used to flattery."

"To receiving or to paying it?"

"To neither;" and she turned a look of very honest and almost childlike admiration on her aunt.

Sir Douglas looked pleased, although he himself had long ceased to pay his wife compliments.

"There's a great deal of your father in your face, too," he said. "You have got his mouth. Ah, he was a good fellow! I could tell you many a story of our Indian life—a man in a thousand!"

"You could tell me nothing I should more dearly like to hear," said Mona, with eager interest.

"Ah, well—some day, some day."

A native servant announced dinner, and Sir Douglas gave Mona his arm.

"What! another scene from the 'Arabian Nights'?" she said as they entered the dining-room. "It is clear that a very wonderful genius presides over your household."

"You are going to have an Indian dinner, too," said Lady Munro. "Nubboo makes all the *entrées* and soups and sauces. He is worth half-a-dozen English servants."

Mona looked up at the dark bearded face under the voluminous white turban, but she could not tell whether Nubboo had heard the remark. All the philosophy of Buddh might lie behind those sad impenetrable eyes, or he might be thinking merely of the *entrées*; it was impossible to say. If

the whole occasion had not seemed to her, as she said, a bit out of the 'Arabian Nights,' she would have thought it sacrilege that a man with such a face should be employed in so trivial an occupation as waiting at table.

"When I look at Nubboo I can almost believe myself a baby again," she said. "He seems like a bit of my dream-world."

The feeblest ghost of a smile flitted across the man's face, as he moved noiselessly from place to place.

"It must be a dream-world," laughed her aunt. "You cannot remember much of that!"

"I don't;" and Mona sighed.

Lady Munro and Mona kept the ball going between them during dinner. Evelyn only spoke now and then, to tone down one of her mother's most piquant and highly coloured remarks; and she did this with a hidden sense of humour which never rose to the surface in her face. Sir Douglas spoke as much as courtesy absolutely demanded, but no more. The new beetle was evidently perplexing him profoundly.

Lady Munro's feeling for her niece was one of mingled pride, affection, disgust, and fear—disgust for the life-work she had chosen, fear of her supposed "cleverness." Lady Munro despised learned women, but she was not at all willing that they should despise her. She exerted herself to talk well, but even Mona's evident admiration could not put her quite at her ease.

"How is it we have seen so little of you, Mona?" she said, when they had left Sir Douglas to his wine. "Where were you when we were last at home?"

"In Germany, I suppose. I went there for three years after I left school."

"To study music?"

"Both music and painting in a small way."

"You wonderful girl! Then you are a musician?"

"*Gott bewahre!*" burst from Mona involuntarily. "My musical friends thought me a Turner, and my artistic friends thought me a Rubinstein; from which you may gather the truth, that I had no real gift for either."

"So you say! I expect you are an 'Admirable Crichton.'"

"If that be a euphemism for 'Jack-of-all-trades and master of none,' I suppose I am—alas!"

"And does Homer never nod? Do you never amuse yourself like other girls?"

"I am afraid I must not allow you to call me a girl I believe you have my grandmother's Family Bible. Yes, indeed, Homer nods a great deal more than is consistent with his lofty calling. I am an epicure in frivolling."

"In what?"

"Forgive my school slang! It means that I indulge quite freely enough in concerts, theatres, and in picture-galleries—not to say shop-windows."

"You don't mean to say that *you* care for shop-windows?" and again Lady Munro's glance rested with satisfaction on Mona's pretty gown, although she was half afraid her niece was laughing at her.

"Oh, don't I? You little know!"

"Pictures, I suppose, and old china and furniture and that sort of thing," said Lady Munro, treading cautiously.

"Yes, I like all those, but I like pretty bonnets too, and tea-gowns and laces and note-paper and—every kind of arrant frivolity and bagatelle. But they must be pretty, you know. I am not caught with absolute chaff."

"You don't care about fashion, you mean."

Mona drew down her brows in deep thought. Clearly she was talking honestly. Then she shook her head with a light laugh.

"I am getting into deep water," she said. "I am afraid I do care about fashion, fashion *quâ* fashion, fashion pure and simple."

"Not if it is ugly?" questioned Evelyn gravely.

"Not if it is ugly, surely; but I question if it often is ugly in the hands of the artists among dressmakers. It is just as unfair to judge of a fashion as it issues from the hands of a mere seamstress, as it is to judge of an air from its rendering on a barrel-organ or a penny trumpet."

Lady Munro laughed. "I shall tell my husband that," she said. "Douglas"—as he entered the room—"you have no idea of the heresies Mona has been confessing. She cares as much about new gowns and bonnets as anybody."

Sir Douglas looked at Mona very gravely. Either he had not heard the remark, or he was striving to adapt it to his mental sketch of her character.

He seated himself on the sofa beside her, and turned towards her as though he meant to exclude his wife and daughter from the conversation.

"Have you seriously taken up the study of medicine?" he asked.

"Now for it!" thought Mona.