

MONA'S CHOICE.

BY MISS ALEXANDER.

"Well, dear, you may rest assured that the next prospect of your marriage is not brightened by the fact that you are a great comfort to know she was in a happy frame of mind."

"Oh, no, no. You are best, you know your dear friend as well, and she was so kind of you."

"It was not till considerably later after Waring and she had had arranged the details of the funeral, and all that appertained to it, that Mona was induced to see her affianced husband."

"Mona was ready enough to speak of her sorrow. She was gently grateful for his sympathy, but she could not sit beside him, her head on his shoulder, and his arm round her, nor did she permit a course of consolation commended by the wise, and would be brother and sister."

"Mona took out her jewelry, and for a fortnight was very unwell, so feverish, in fact, as to wander in her speech, and to cause her kind hosts a good deal of anxiety."

"Pondering these things, she grew so frightened at the stern aspect of the world she was going to face, for as she collected her faculties, she grew more and more averse to fulfill her engagement with Leslie Waring."

"Her resolution to break with him grew rapidly stronger almost before she was aware she had formed it. Then she began to see that she was enjoying Lady Mary's kind hospitality under false pretences."

"This brought a speedy, capricious reply. This brought a speedy, capricious reply. This brought a speedy, capricious reply."

"I have only this small portion and cannot see for the present."

"Mona was, indeed, thankful to have, so far, accomplished her purpose as to be under the roof of her only sympathetic friend, but her heart failed within her at the thought of the confusion she had to make."

"There now," said madame, placing a small table with a cup of tea and plate of bread and butter beside her young guest, "take that, and get warmed."

"I have no doubt of it," returned Mona, with a faint smile. "You describe what I myself to be exactly."

"I know you would be angry," said Mona sadly, "but I cannot help it. I cannot marry him, or any one. Life is too hard!"

"No, in truth I am not. There is not a man on the face of the earth at this moment I would wish to see married."

"Yes, you will, you must," cried and knelt beside her, while she clasped her arms round her waist. "I have no one in the world to turn to but you, Deb, and I cannot marry this man—I cannot, indeed!"

"I am not so sure of that. Now tell me, have you told Lady Mary?"

"I have only this small portion and cannot see for the present."

"It took some moments of waiting contentions before she recognized where she was. The sound of someone moving reminded her that she was sharing Mrs. Debrisy's room, and presently she came out fully dressed from a large dressing-screen, which converted one corner into a dressing-closet."

"And how did you sleep, dear?" "Oh, well; so well!" exclaimed Mona. "Well, stay where you are. I'll bring you a cup of coffee and a bit of toast, for I have a long, busy day before me."

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She held out her engagement-ring and earnestly his feelings were deeply moved.

"The first glimpse of her was deeply moved to-morrow his eye will be caught by some one of the many charming girls he meets, and he will be far happier than with one whose heart is dead, like mine."

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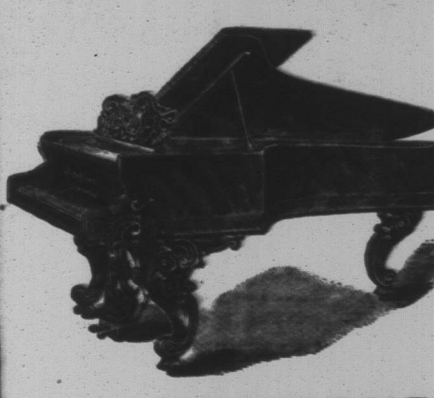
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