

MONA MACLEAN

A NOVEL

BY
GRAHAM TRAVERS

Table of Contents

- CHAPTER I. IN THE GARDEN.
- CHAPTER II. THE LISTS.
- CHAPTER III. "ADOLESCENT INSANITY."
- CHAPTER IV. SIR DOUGLAS.
- CHAPTER V. "AN AGATE KNIFE-EDGE."
- CHAPTER VI. THE NÆRODAL.
- CHAPTER VII. A SON OF ANAK.
- CHAPTER VIII. BONS CAMARADES.
- CHAPTER IX. DORIS.
- CHAPTER X. BORROWNESS.
- CHAPTER XI. THE SHOP.
- CHAPTER XII. CASTLE MACLEAN.
- CHAPTER XIII. THE CHAPEL.
- CHAPTER XIV. REACTION.
- CHAPTER XV. THE BOTANISTS.
- CHAPTER XVI. "JOHN HOGG'S MACHINE."
- CHAPTER XVII. AUNTIE BELL.
- CHAPTER XVIII. A SILHOUETTE.
- CHAPTER XIX. "LEAVES OF GRASS."
- CHAPTER XX. ST RULES.
- CHAPTER XXI. THE FLYING SCOTCHMAN.

CHAPTER XXII. DR ALICE BATESON.
CHAPTER XXIII. A RENCONTRE.
CHAPTER XXIV. A CLINICAL REPORT.
CHAPTER XXV. A VOICE IN THE FOG.
CHAPTER XXVI. A CHAT BY THE FIRE.
CHAPTER XXVII. A NEOPHYTE.
CHAPTER XXVIII. THE COLONEL'S YARN.
CHAPTER XXIX. "YONDER SHINING LIGHT."
CHAPTER XXX. MR STUART'S TROUBLES.
CHAPTER XXXI. STRADIVARIUS.
CHAPTER XXXII. CHUMS.
CHAPTER XXXIII. CARBOLIC!
CHAPTER XXXIV. PALM-TREES AND PINES.
CHAPTER XXXV. WEEPING AND LAUGHTER.
CHAPTER XXXVI. NORTHERN MISTS.
CHAPTER XXXVII. THE ALGÆ AND FUNGI.
CHAPTER XXXVIII. THE BAZAAR.
CHAPTER XXXIX. THE BALL.
CHAPTER XL. A LOCUM TENENS.
CHAPTER XLI. A SINGED BUTTERFLY.
CHAPTER XLII. QUESTIONINGS.
CHAPTER XLIII. "MITHER!"
CHAPTER XLIV. A CRIMSON STREAK.
CHAPTER XLV. AN UNBELIEVER.

CHAPTER XLVI. FAREWELL TO BORROWNESS.
CHAPTER XLVII. THE DISSECTING-ROOM.
CHAPTER XLVIII. CONFIDENCES.
CHAPTER XLIX. THE INTERMEDIATE.
CHAPTER L. SUCCESS OR FAILURE?
CHAPTER LI. ANOTHER CHAT BY THE FIRE.
CHAPTER LII. OLD FRIENDS.
CHAPTER LIII. WAITING.
CHAPTER LIV. PRESENTATION DAY.
CHAPTER LV. LUCY TO THE RESCUE.
CHAPTER LVI. A LOST CHANCE.
CHAPTER LVII. HAVING IT OUT.
CHAPTER LVIII. "LOVE MAY GO HANG!"
CHAPTER LIX. AT LAST!
CHAPTER LX. ON THE RIVER.
CHAPTER LXI. A FIN-DE-SIÈCLE COURTSHIP.
CHAPTER LXII. IN ARCADIA.
CHAPTER LXIII. "VARIUM ET MUTABILE."
CHAPTER LXIV. PARTNERS.

CHAPTER I. IN THE GARDEN.

"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.

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."

"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.

Thank You for previewing this eBook

You can read the full version of this eBook in different formats:

- HTML (Free /Available to everyone)
- PDF / TXT (Available to V.I.P. members. Free Standard members can access up to 5 PDF/TXT eBooks per month each month)
- Epub & Mobipocket (Exclusive to V.I.P. members)

To download this full book, simply select the format you desire below

