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MATRIMONIAL SPECULATIONS.*

No. II.

THE MISS KINGS.

BY MRS. MOODIE.

CHAPTER IV.

I fain would qualify my daring suit,
By making love its object and reward.—
I cannot do it. The dishonest word
Sticks in my throat, and nature gives the lie
To my profession.

Miss Liddy and Miss Polly King, had just mixed for themselves a drop of comfort, preparatory to their retiring to bed. Miss Lydia was reposing herself in the old leather high-backed chair which had witnessed the death scene of her brother. A lean tom-cat was lying upon the thread-bare rug at her feet; and the little black tea kettle was drumming lazily upon the small fire.

"A leetle—a very leetle, more brandy, Polly," she said, sipping from the large tumbler, the contents of which were strong enough to have satisfied a boatswain; "you are so stingy,—surely you can afford that!"

Miss Polly was standing before an old cupboard, with her broad back to her sister, the better to conceal the fact, that she was conveying some of the contents of the black bottle, which she was returning to the case, down her own throat. Almost choking in her haste to swallow the delicious draught, she croaked out:

"I gave you as much as I gave myself; but you are so greedy you are never satisfied. If you get any more you will go tipsy to bed!"

At this moment a modest rap at the door made both ladies start, and Polly hastily closed the cupboard, and looked the door.

"Was that at our door, sister?"

"I think so."

"Gracious! who can be wanting us at this hour of the night!"

"It may be a thief coming to rob the house."

"Lord, sister! I forgot to pass the bolt. Quick! do not let them in."

But John Andrews, who was very impatient and not valiant, had grown tired of rapping; and opening the outer door, he knocked gently at the door of the room in which they were—

"Are either of the Miss Kings at home?"

"What do you want with the Miss Kings?" demanded Polly, putting her back against the door.

"I want to speak to them upon very particular business."

"Then you may come to-morrow. The Miss Kings transact no business with men at night."

"Do not be alarmed ladies; I am a friend and neighbor—John Andrews, at your service. Open the door, and allow me five minutes private conversation."

"We owe him for the last brandy, Polly," whispered Miss Lydia; "he is a very civil, handsome man; you had better let him in."

"This is no hour for paying up accounts," returned Polly. "I bought an old tea tray at his sale, this morning, and as he leaves the town to-morrow, he most likely wants the money. I hope he has brought a receipt along with him, for I will not find him pen and ink and paper, upon his own business, I can tell him."

Then carefully unclosing the door, she admitted the unwelcome intruder, observing as she did so:

"You need not have been in such a hurry for your money, Mr. Andrews; we should not have run away."

"Bless me, ladies," cried John, glancing has-

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