

**LEISURE HOUR SERIES.
- NO. 105; MAID,
WIFE, OR WIDOW?**

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Leisure Hour Series. - No. 105; Maid, Wife, or Widow? by Mrs. Alexander

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MRS. ALEXANDER

**LEISURE HOUR SERIES.
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BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

(Leisure Hour Series.)

THE WOOING O'T.
WHICH SHALL IT BE?
RALPH WILTON'S WEIRD.
HER DEAREST FOE.
THE HERITAGE OF LANGDALE.
MAID, WIFE, OR WIDOW?

LEISURE HOUR SERIES.—No. 105

MAID, WIFE, OR WIDOW?

BY

MRS. ALEXANDER

AUTHOR OF "THE WOOING O'T," ETC.



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AUTHOR'S EDITION.

PART I.

MAID, WIFE, OR WIDOW ?



CHAPTER I.

A WIDE river, rolling swift and smooth through a fine landscape ; on the right, undulating, richly-wooded heights, the advanced guard of a mountain range in the background ; on the left, green, softly-rounded uplands, which in England would be called "downs," furrowed at intervals by small shallow ravines, and sprinkled with dwellings — some of the better sort — each with its surrounding of trees and cultivation.

Away up the river, where it emerged from the hills, stood a lofty mass of rock, crowned by a gray Schloss, and at its foot clustered the houses of a small town, the capital of the district. By the riverside, at the *embouchure* of one of the ravines just mentioned, the mixed timber and brick built cottages of a village were gathered; and beyond, the dry stony road led on uphill to a residence of some pretension, plentifully shaded by beech and sweet linden trees, opening on a well-tended garden, and surrounded by the fields, yards, and belongings of a "Gut" or farm. All slept tranquilly in the golden haze of early autumn's noontide heat. The bees hummed as contentedly, the myriads of the insect-world flitted and danced as merrily, as if no such curse as war dark-