

THE LION AND THE MOUSE.

By CHARLES KLEIN.

A Story of American Life Novelized From the Play by ARTHUR HORNBLow.

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"The public has long suspected much," replied Shirley. "That is why you are looked upon as a menace to the stability and honesty of our political and commercial life."

An angry answer rose to his lips, when the door opened and Mrs. Ryder entered.

"I've been looking for you, John," she said peevishly. "Mr. Bagley told me you were somewhere in the house. Senator Roberts is downstairs."

"He's come about Jefferson and his daughter, I suppose," muttered Ryder. "Well, I'll see him. Where is he?"

"In the library. Kate came with him. She's in my room."

They left Shirley to her writing, and when he had closed the door the financier turned to his wife and said impatiently:

"Now, what are we going to do about Jefferson and Kate? The senator insists on the matter of their marriage being settled one way or another. Where is Jefferson?"

"He came in about half an hour ago. He was upstairs to see me, and I thought he was looking for you," answered the wife.

"Well," replied Ryder determinedly, "he and I have got to understand each other. This can't go on. It shan't."

Mrs. Ryder put her hand on his arm and said pleadingly:

"Don't be impatient with the boy, John. Remember he is all we have. He is so unhappy. He wants to please us, but—"

"But he insists on pleasing himself," said Ryder completing the sentence.

"I'm afraid, John, that his liking for that Miss Rossmore is more serious than you realize."

The financier stamped his foot and replied angrily:

"Rossmore! That name seems to confront me at every turn—for years the father, now the daughter! I'm sorry, my dear, he went on more calmly, "that you seem inclined to listen to Jefferson. It only encourages him in his attitude toward me. Kate would make him an excellent wife, while what do we know about the other woman? Are you willing to sacrifice your son's future to a mere boyish whim?"

Mrs. Ryder sighed. "It's very hard," she said, "for a mother to know what to advise. Miss Green says—"

"What!" exclaimed her husband, "you have consulted Miss Green on the subject?"

"Yes," answered his wife, "I don't know how I came to tell her, but I did. I seem to tell her everything. I find her such a comfort, John. I haven't had an attack of nerves since that girl has been in the house."

"She is certainly a superior woman," admitted Ryder. "I wish she'd ward that Rossmore girl off. I wish she'd—"

He stopped abruptly as if not venturing to give expression to his thoughts, even to his wife. Then he said: "If she were Kate Roberts she wouldn't let Jeff slip through her fingers."

"I have often wished," went on Mrs. Ryder, "that Kate were more like Shirley Green. I don't think we would have any difficulty with Jeff then."

"Kate is the daughter of Senator Roberts, and if this marriage is broken off in any way without the senator's consent, he is in a position to injure my interests materially. If you see Jefferson, send him to me in the library. I'll go and keep Roberts in good humor until he comes."

He went downstairs, and Mrs. Ryder proceeded to her apartments, where she found Jefferson chatting with Kate. She at once delivered Ryder senior's message.

"Jeff, your father wants to see you in the library."

"Yes; I want to see him," answered the young man grimly, and after a few more badinage with Kate he went.

"Hello, Roberts," was Ryder's cheerful greeting. "What's brought you from Washington at a critical time like this? The Rossmore impeachment needs every friend we have."

"Just as if you didn't know," smiled the senator uneasily, "that I am here by appointment to meet you and your son?"

"To meet me and my son?" echoed Ryder, astonished.

The senator, perplexed and beginning to feel real alarm, showed the financier Jefferson's letter. Ryder read it, and he looked pleased.

"That's all right," he said, "if the lad asked you to meet us here it can mean only one thing—that at last he has made up his mind to this marriage."

"That's what I thought," replied the senator, breathing more freely. "I was sorry to leave Washington at such a time, but I'm a father, and Kate is more to me than the Rossmore impeachment. Besides, to see her married to your son Jefferson is one of the dearest wishes of my life."

"You can rest easy," said Ryder. "That is practically settled. Jefferson's sending for you proves that he is now ready to meet my wishes. He'll be here any minute. How is the Rossmore case progressing?"

"Not so well as it might," growled the senator. "There's a lot of scandal

sympathy for the judge. He's a pretty sick man by all accounts, and the newspapers seem to be taking his part. One or two of the western senators are talking corporate influence and trust legislation, but when it comes to a vote the matter will be settled on party lines."

"That means that Judge Rossmore will be removed?" demanded Ryder sternly.

"Yes, with five votes to spare," answered the senator.

"That's not enough," insisted Ryder. "There must be, at least twenty. Let there be no blunders, Roberts. The man is a menace to all the big commercial interests. This thing must go through."

The door opened, and Jefferson appeared. On seeing the senator talking with his father, he hesitated on the threshold.

"Come in, Jeff," said his father pleasantly. "You expected to see Senator Roberts, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir. How do you do, senator?" said the young man, advancing into the room.

"I got your letter, my boy, and here I am," said the senator, smiling affably. "I suppose we can guess what the business is, eh?"

"That he's going to marry Kate, of course," chimed in Ryder senior.

"Jeff, my lad, I'm glad you are beginning to see my way of looking at things. You're doing more to please me lately, and I appreciate it. You stayed at home when I asked you to, and now you've made up your mind regarding this marriage."

Jefferson let his father finish his speech, and then he said calmly:

"I think there must be some misapprehension as to the reason for my summoning Senator Roberts to New York. It had nothing to do with my marrying Miss Roberts, but to prevent her marriage with some one else."

"What!" exclaimed Ryder senior.

"Marriage with some one else?" echoed the senator. He thought he had not heard aright, yet at the same time he had grave misgivings. "What do you mean, sir?"

Taking from his pocket a copy of the letter he had picked up on the staircase, Jefferson held it out to the girl's father.

"Your daughter is preparing to run away with my father's secretary. Tomorrow would have been too late. That is why I summoned you. Read this."

The senator took the letter and as he read his face grew ashen and his hand trembled violently. At one blow all his ambitious projects for his daughter had been swept away. The inconsiderate act of a silly, thoughtless girl had spoiled the carefully laid plans of a lifetime. The only consolation which remained was that the calamity might have been still more serious. This timely warning had saved his family from perhaps an even greater scandal. He passed the letter in silence to Ryder senior.

The financier was a man of few words when the situation called for prompt action. After he had read the letter through there was an ominous silence. Then he rang a bell. The butler appeared.

"Tell Mr. Bagley I want him."

The man bowed and disappeared.

"Who the devil is this Bagley?" demanded the senator.

"English—blue blood—no money," was Ryder's laconic answer.

"That's the only kind we seem to get over here," growled the senator. "We furnish the money; they furnish the blood. Hang his blue blood! I don't want any in mine." Turning to Jefferson, he said: "Jefferson, whatever the motives that actuated you, I can only thank you for this warning. I think it would have broken my heart if my girl had gone away with that scoundrel. Of course, under the circumstances I must abandon all idea of your becoming my son-in-law. I release you from all obligations you may have felt yourself bound by."

Jefferson bowed and remained silent. Ryder senior eyed his son closely, an amused expression hovering on his face. After all, it was not so much he who had desired this match as Roberts, and as long as the senator was willing to withdraw he could make no objection. He wondered what part, if any, his son had played in bringing about this sensational denouement to a match which had been so distasteful to him, and it gratified his paternal vanity to think that Jefferson after all might be smarter than he had given him credit for.

At this juncture Mr. Bagley entered the room. He was a little taken aback on seeing the senator; but, like most men of his class, his self conceit made him confident of his ability to handle any emergency which might arise, and he had no reason to suspect that this hasty summons to the library had anything to do with his matrimonial plans.

"Did you ask for me, sir?" he demanded, addressing his employer.

"Yes, Mr. Bagley," replied Ryder, fixing the secretary with a look that filled the latter with misgivings. "What steamers leave tomorrow for England?"

"Tomorrow?" echoed Mr. Bagley.

"I said tomorrow," repeated Ryder, slightly raising his voice.

"Let me see," stammered the secretary. "There is the White Star, the North German-Lloyd, the Atlantic Transport—"

"Have you any preference?" inquired the financier.

"No, sir, none at all."

"Then you'll go on board one of the ships tonight," said Ryder. "Your things will be packed and sent to you before the steamer sails tomorrow."

The Hon. Fitzroy Bagley, third son of a British peer, did not understand even yet that he was discharged as one dismisses a housemaid caught kissing the policeman. He could not think what Mr. Ryder wanted him to go abroad for unless it were on some matter of business, and it was decidedly inconvenient for him to sail at this time.

"But, sir," he stammered, "I'm afraid—I'm afraid—"

"Yes," rejoined Ryder promptly, "I notice that your hand is shaking."

"I mean that I—"

"You mean that you have other engagements?" said Ryder sternly.

"Oh, no—no, but—"

"No engagement at 11 o'clock tomorrow morning?" insisted Ryder.

"With my daughter?" chimed in the senator.

Mr. Bagley now understood. He broke out in a cold perspiration, and he paled visibly. In the hope that the full extent of his plans were not known, he attempted to brazen it out.

"No, certainly not, under no circumstances," he said.

Ryder senior rang a bell.

"Perhaps she has an engagement with you. We'll ask her." To the butler, who entered, he said, "Tell Miss Roberts that her father would like to see her here."

The man disappeared, and the senator took a hand in cross examining the now thoroughly uncomfortable secretary.

"So you thought my daughter looked pale and that a little excursion to Buffalo would be a good thing for her? Well, it won't be a good thing for you, young man, I can assure you of that!"

The English aristocrat began to wilt. His assurance of manner quite deserted him, and he stammered painfully as he floundered about in excuses.

"Not with me—oh, dear, no," he said.

"You never proposed to run away with my daughter?" cried the irate father.

"Run away with her?" stammered Bagley.

"And marry her?" shouted the senator, shaking his fist at him.

"Oh, say, this is hardly fair, three against one, really, I'm awfully sorry, eh, what?"

The door opened, and Kate Roberts bounced in. She was smiling and full



"You never proposed to run away with my daughter?"

of animal spirits, but on seeing the stern face of her father and the pitiable picture presented by her faithful Fitz she was intelligent enough to immediately scent danger.

"Did you want to see me, father?" she inquired boldly.

"Yes, Kate," answered the senator gravely, "we have just been having a talk with Mr. Bagley, in which you were one of the subjects of conversation. Can you guess what it was?"

The girl looked from her father to Bagley and from him to the Ryders. Her aristocratic lover made a movement forward as if to exculpate himself, but he caught Ryder's eye and remained where he was.

"Well?" she said, with a nervous laugh.

"Is it true?" asked the senator, "that you were about to marry this man secretly?"

She cast down her eyes and answered: "I suppose you know everything."

"Have you anything to add?" asked her father sternly.

"No," said Kate, shaking her head. "It's true. We intended to run away, didn't we, Fitz?"

"Never mind about Mr. Bagley," thundered her father. "Haven't you a word of shame for this disgrace you have brought upon me?"

"Oh, papa, don't be so cross. Jefferson did not care for me. I couldn't be an old maid. Mr. Bagley has a lovely castle in England, and one day he'll sit in the house of lords. He'll explain everything to you."

"He'll explain nothing," rejoined the senator grimly. "Mr. Bagley returns to England tonight. He won't have time to explain anything."

"Returns to England?" echoed Kate, dismayed.

"Yes, and you go with me to Washington at once."

The senator turned to Ryder.

"Goodby, Ryder. The little domestic comedy is ended. I'm grateful it didn't turn out a drama. The next time I

pick out a son-in-law I hope I'll have better luck."

He shook hands with Jefferson and left the room, followed by his crest-fallen daughter.

Ryder, who had gone to write something at his desk, strode over to where Mr. Bagley was standing and handed him a check.

"Here, sir. This settles everything to date. Good day."

"But I—I—" stammered the secretary helplessly.

"Good day, sir."

Ryder turned his back on him and conversed with his son, while Mr. Bagley slowly and as if regretfully made his exit.

[Continued next week.]



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