

THE LION AND THE MOUSE.

By CHARLES KLEIN.

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

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"I have tried honorably and failed. You have tried honorably and failed. Isn't the sting of impotent failure enough to meet without striving against a hopeless love?" He approached her and said softly: "I love you, Shirley—don't drive me to desperation. Must I be punished because you have failed? It's unfair. The sins of the fathers should not be visited upon the children."

"But they are—it's the law," said Shirley, with resignation.

"The law?" he echoed.

"Yes, the law," insisted the girl; "man's law, not God's, the same unjust law that punishes my father—man's law which is put into the hands of the powerful of the earth to strike at the weak."

She sank into a chair and, covering up her face, wept bitterly. Between her sobs she cried brokenly:

"I believed in the power of love to soften your father's heart. I believed that with God's help I could bring him to see the truth. I believed that truth and love would make him see the light, but it hasn't. I stayed on and on, hoping against hope until the time has gone by and it's too late to save him—too late! What can I do now? My going to Washington is a forlorn hope, a last, miserable, forlorn hope, and in this hour, the darkest of all, you ask me to think of myself—my love, your love, your happiness, your future, my future! Ah, wouldn't it be sublime selfishness?"

Jefferson knelt down beside the chair and, taking her hand in his, tried to reason with her and comfort her.

"Listen, Shirley," he said; "do not do something you will surely regret. You are punishing me not only because I have failed, but because you have failed too. It seems to me that if you believed it possible to accomplish so much, if you had so much faith—that you have lost your faith rather quickly. I believed in nothing, I had no faith, and yet I have not lost hope."

She shook her head and gently withdrew her hand.

"It is useless to insist, Jefferson. Until my father is cleared of this stain on his lives—yours and mine—must he stand?"

Some one coughed, and, startled, they both looked up. Mr. Ryder had entered the room unobserved and stood watching them. Shirley immediately rose to her feet indignantly, resenting this intrusion on her privacy after she had declined to receive the financier. Yet, she reflected quickly, how could she prevent it? He was at home, free to come and go as he pleased, but she was not compelled to remain in the same room with him. She picked up the few things that lay about and, with a contemptuous toss of her head, retreated into the inner apartment, leaving father and son alone together.

"Hum," grunted Ryder senior. "I rather thought I should find you here, but I didn't quite expect to find you on your knees—dragging our pride in the mud."

"That's where our pride ought to be," retorted Jefferson savagely. He felt in the humor to say anything, no matter what the consequences.

"So she has refused you again, eh?" said Ryder senior, with a grin.

"Yes," rejoined Jefferson, with growing irritation. "She objects to my family. I don't blame her."

The financier smiled grimly as he answered:

"Your family in general—me in particular, eh? I gleaned that much when I came in." He looked toward the door of the room in which Shirley had taken refuge, and, as if talking to himself, he added: "A curious girl with an inverted point of view; sees everything different to others. I want to see her before she goes."

He walked over to the door and raised his hand as if he were about to knock. Then he stopped as if he had changed his mind, and, turning toward his son, he demanded:

"Do you mean to say that she has done with you?"

"Yes," answered Jefferson bitterly.

"Finally?"

"Yes, finally—forever!"

"Does she mean it?" asked Ryder senior skeptically.

"Yes; she will not listen to me while her father is still in peril."

There was an expression of half amusement, half admiration, on the financier's face as he again turned toward the door.

"It's like her, just like her," he muttered.

He knocked boldly at the door.

"Who's there?" cried Shirley from within.

"It is I—Mr. Ryder. I wish to speak to you."

"I must beg you to excuse me," came the answer. "I cannot see you."

Jefferson interferred.

"Why do you want to add to the girl's misery? Don't you think she has suffered enough?"

"Do you know what she has done?" said Ryder, with pretended indignation.

"She has insulted me grossly. I never was so humiliated in my life. She has returned the check I sent her last night in payment for her work on my biography. I mean to make her see that money. It's hers. She needs it. Her father's a beggar. She must

take it back. It's only flaunting her contempt for me in my face, and I won't permit it."

"I don't think her object in refusing that money was to flaunt contempt in your face or in any way humiliate you," answered Jefferson. "She feels she has been sailing under false colors and desires to make some reparation."

"And so she sends me back my money, feeling that will pacify me, perhaps repair the injury she has done me, perhaps buy me into entering into her plan of helping her father, but it won't. It only increases my determination to see her and her"—Suddenly changing the topic, he asked, "When do you leave us?"

"Now—at once—that is, I—don't know," answered Jefferson, embarrassed. "The fact is my faculties are numbed. I seem to have lost my power of thinking. Father," he exclaimed, "you see what a wreck you have made of our lives!"

"Now, don't moralize," replied his father testily, "as if your own selfishness in desiring to possess that girl wasn't the mainspring of all your actions." Waving his son out of the room, he added: "Now, leave me alone with her for a few moments. Perhaps I can make her listen to reason."

Jefferson stared at his father as if he feared he were out of his mind.

"What do you mean? Are you?"—he ejaculated.

"Go—go; leave her to me," commanded the financier. "Slam the door when you go out, and she'll think we're both gone. Then come up again presently." The stratagem succeeded admirably. Jefferson gave the door a vigorous pull, and John Ryder stood quiet, waiting for the girl to emerge from sanctuary. He did not have to wait long. The door soon opened, and Shirley came out slowly. She had her hat on



and was drawing on her gloves, for through her window she had caught a glimpse of the cab standing at the curb. She started on seeing Ryder standing there motionless, and she would have retreated had he not intercepted her.

"I wish to speak to you, Miss—Rosemore," he began.

"I have nothing to say," answered Shirley frigidly.

"Why did you do this?" he asked, holding out the check.

"Because I do not want your money," she replied, with hauteur.

"It was yours. You earned it," he said.

"No, I came here hoping to influence you to help my father. The work I did was part of the plan. It happened to fall my way. I took it as a means to get to your heart."

"But it is yours. Please take it. It will be useful."

"No," she said scornfully. "I can't tell you how low I should fall in my own estimation if I took your money. Money," she added, with ringing contempt, "why, that's all there is to you! It's your god! Shall I make your god my god? No, thank you, Mr. Ryder!"

"Am I as bad as that?" he asked wistfully.

"You are as bad as that!" she answered decisively.

"So bad that I contaminate even good money?" He spoke lightly, but she noticed that he winced.

"Money itself is nothing," replied the girl. "It's the spirit that gives it, the spirit that receives it, the spirit that earns it, the spirit that spends it. Money helps to create happiness. It also creates misery. It's an engine of destruction when not properly used. It destroys individuals as it does nations. It has destroyed you, for it has warped your soul."

"Go on," he laughed bitterly. "I like to hear you."

"No, you don't, Mr. Ryder; no you don't, for deep down in your heart you know that I am speaking the truth. Money and the power it gives you has dried up the wellsprings of your heart."

He affected to be highly amused at her words, but behind the mask of callous indifference the man suffered. Her words seared him as with a red-hot iron. She went on:

"In the barbaric ages they fought for possession, but they fought openly. The feudal barons fought for what they stole, but it was a fair fight. They didn't strike in the dark. At least they gave a man a chance for his life. But when you modern barons of industry don't like legislation you destroy it, when you don't like your judges you remove them, when a competitor outbids you you squeeze him out of commercial existence! You have no hearts, you are machines, and you are cowards, for you fight unfairly."

"It is not true; it is not true," he protested.

"It is true," she insisted hotly. "A few hours ago in cold blood you doomed my father to what is certain death because you decided it was a political necessity. In other words, he interfered with your personal interests—your financial interests—you, with so many millions you can't count them!" Scornfully she added: "Come out into the light—fight in the open! At least let him know who his enemy is!"

"Stop! Stop! Not another word!" he cried impatiently. "You have diagnosed the disease. What of the remedy? Are you prepared to reconstruct human nature?"

Confronting each other, their eyes met, and he regarded her without resentment, almost with tenderness. He felt strangely drawn toward this woman who had defied and accused him and made him see the world in a new light.

"I don't deny," he admitted reluctantly, "that things seem to be as you describe them, but it is part of the process of evolution."

"No," she protested; "it is the work of God!"

"It is evolution!" he insisted.

"Ah, that's it," she retorted; "you evolve new ideas, new schemes, new tricks—you all worship different gods—gods of your own making."

He was about to reply when there was a commotion at the door, and Theresa entered, followed by a manservant to carry down the trunk.

"The cab is downstairs, miss," said the maid.

Ryder waved them away imperiously. He had something further to say which he did not care for servants to hear. Theresa and the man precipitately withdrew, not understanding, but obeying with alacrity a master who never brooked delay in the execution of his orders. Shirley, indignant, looked to him for an explanation.

"You don't need them," he exclaimed, with a quiet smile in which was a shade of embarrassment. "I—I came here to tell you that I— He stopped as if unable to find words, while Shirley gazed at him in utter astonishment.

"Ah," he went on finally, "you have made it very hard for me to speak." Again he paused and then with an effort he said slowly: "An hour ago I had Senator Roberts on the long distance telephone, and I'm going to Washington. It's all right about your father. The matter will be dropped. You've beaten me, I acknowledge it. You're the first living soul who ever has beaten John Burkett Ryder."

Shirley started forward with a cry of mingled joy and surprise. Could she believe her ears? Was it possible that the dreaded Colossus had capitulated and that she had saved her father? Had the forces of right and justice prevailed after all? Her face transfigured, radiant, she exclaimed breathlessly:

"What, Mr. Ryder, you mean that you are going to help my father?"

[Continued next week.]

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