

MR. DEAMISH SMITHERS' LOVE STORY.

BY E. W. THOMSON. AUTHOR OF "PETTERICK'S PERIL," "NOT YACIDENT," "VERY HARD UP," ETC.

"You don't wish to know Smither's Lily, I'm amazed at you! Not know Smither's Good Heavens, my dear child, he owns a silver mine—ten thousand square miles of pine—half a railroad—and—"

"No, it's not a distillery," cried Lily. "No, it's not a distillery, it's the biggest lager beer brewery in this world, I suppose," replied her father. "He's such a vulgar man—so awkward, papa, so utterly unson-of-a-bitch," said Lily, who wrote verses and had but recently emerged from the young-lady-moulding establishment.

"I don't," cried Mr. Deretel. "I ask you to treat him as a creditor, and let me tell you that creditors must be treated a deal lot better than equals. He's not a gentleman, of course—not of our class—but what of that? Don't I make a point of politeness to my grocer? don't I bow to my tailor?—by Jove he won't bow to me soon unless I can keep on Smither's soft side! Let me tell you that he has a blanket mortgage on every acre and every house I'm supposed to own and may foreclose when he chooses.

"There's another thing too, you must consider, Lil," he went on, "that comforts, luxuries even, and perfect freedom from annoyance are essential to your mother. Fancy, if we were forced, in her invalid state, to give up everything, literally turned out on the street—by Jove, what would become of her! I won't ask you to consider me, who have not the remotest idea of how to get money, except by borrowing, of course. I might take to organ grinding, perhaps. Oh! I say, you must really be polite to Smither's—attentive even. He's not a bad sort, either—he's a good-hearted fellow for a business man."

"What a lovely girl she is," groaned this plump swain of thirty-five, driving home one night from a quiet little dinner at the old Deretel mansion. "What lips—sealing-wax ain't redder. Eyes! I reckon there never were any eyes blue that way before, and her hair, the very colour of number one barley. Then, for shape she beats all, by thunder, and steps freer than my bay mare! And for feelings and language—heavenly—there ain't any finer words in poetry books, I guess. I love her—I'll bet anything I do—oh! oh! I love her. I can't get her out of my head, awake or asleep. I wish I wasn't such a course sample—but I'm getting this, thank God, I'm neglecting business—ought I'm going to pot—ought I ought! why ain't I been a ladies' man? Why didn't I learn how to dance and prance round and say nice things to 'em! Lord, if she'd only have me! I'd give up smoking entirely—ain't touched a cigar for a month anyhow, ever since she said she didn't like 'em. Wouldn't I be good to her?—just wouldn't I!—anything she wanted in this universal world she should have—there'd be some sense making money then. But what's the use—she's clean away out of reach like them stars—looks at me same way, too, kind of fine and high. Ough! I ain't of no account. I see that now, and me going along crowding the boys and roping in the collateral and thinking that was everything. But I'm going to ask her—I am—I am—I'm not going to give up without a try. Thunder! when a chap would just lie down in the mud if she'd say the word, and let her drive over him, surely he can't do much wrong in saying so."

Acting bravely on that conclusion Mr. Smither soon put his fate to the touch by placing his case formally before Mr. Deretel. That considerate parent indicated his consent with a dignified gravity which did not betray his elation at the prospect of a satisfactory end to his money troubles. But he made a mess of things at the end.

"Then I may have some hope that Miss Deretel will give me a hearing to-morrow," said Smither shivering with delight and fear. "Probably—probably—I hope so, I think so—you have my full consent at any rate and I will smooth the way. She may be surprised, you know, Smither's—quite possible, but she is not likely to ignore my views—then she knows of the mortgage, you see, Smither's."

"She does, eh? Hold on, hold on a bit; let me think." Smither was looking rather puzzled. "Look here, Deretel," he concluded in his best credit manner on going out, "I've just remembered an engagement that will keep me busy for two days at least; now I want you not to mention my proposition to Miss Deretel, not to hint it even, till Thursday."

Mr. Smither got through a great deal of work before he went to bed that night, consulted the engineer of his railway, saw his lawyer, and did much solid thinking over a map of the city. Very late he went to roost with his plan all out and dried.

up with this love. "Oh, Lily, Lily!" He actually blushed all over at her name, groaned worse than ever, covered his head with the blanket, got up after a while to look at the moon "like a first-class damed fool," he said to himself, and went back to the sofa, to wrestle with the pillows, to pounce around till morning with never a wink.

Next day Mr. Deretel received the most charming surprise of his life when Mr. Seisin, the eminent real estate lawyer, offered him one hundred thousand dollars more for his property near the railway than everybody had ever supposed it to be worth. Mr. Seisin refused to disclose his principal's name, or the purpose for which the land was required, undertook to manage its release from Smither's mortgage, smoothed away every difficulty, took a deed to himself in twenty-four hours had placed Mr. Deretel in a position to wipe out all his indebtedness to Smither and enjoy a comfortable income from houses remaining to him unincumbered.

Deretel promptly notified Smither of his intention to pay, and when Smither called at the old mansion on Thursday he found his debtor in a delightfully easy frame of mind. "Well, if you are still determined to have an answer from my daughter," he said, "I will not object, Smither, but really I think your wisest course will be to drop it."

"I love her and I want her to know it," said the much agitated but plucky suitor. "It's not likely, I know, that she'll consent to look at me favorably, but I've got to speak, I can't stand it any longer, by Heaven I can't. I don't ask for any more than her love to aspire. I want some sort of a show, that's all. I say," he cried, getting up and walking to and fro, "I suppose it ain't wrong to mention it—I'm an infernal rich fellow—you know I am—there's nothing in the world she should lack. She could live anywhere. If she liked I'd settle my affairs, I'd sell out the brewery, I'd go to live in Paris or among the Italians if they suited her notions. Don't, pshaw! money's no object—no, don't say anything about it, it might vex her—if she can't love me she won't look at me, and that's all there is to it."

"As you like," answered Mr. Deretel. "You may have surmised from my lawyer's communication that money is, as you say, no object—less of an object than recently, I mean. In fact I have been fortunate in some speculations—you may have heard how that property of mine near the railway has turned out. I always expected to realize well there."

"Yes, somebody mentioned it to me," Smither gasped. "I'm very glad, I'm sure. Still you'll give me the chance I ask with Miss Lily, won't you? I wasn't a very bad creditor, now you'll allow that, Deretel."

"Yes—yes—that's true enough, you're a good sort of fellow in your way, Smither—I don't say that I should bank at an alliance with you. But I'd like to spare your feelings; you've got no chance, I'm sure. However, I'll let you know to-morrow."

"To-morrow was a very black Friday for poor Smither. He learned that Miss Deretel entirely refused to listen to his proposal and begged that she might never hear of such a thing again. Though her father dusted a little sugar over the pill, that was its degree of bitterness.

"Lil," her parent had said, "I've got an absurd thing to tell you. Smither is dead in love with you, my dear. But I suppose you saw that."

"Oh, no, I wouldn't do that, Lil. The poor devil actually wants to present a declaration to you—wants you to marry him."

"Oh dear, Oh dear, how horrible!" "Well, now you must remember he's an awfully rich fellow, Lil. Disgustingly rich, I must say. And he'd make an immense settlement to you—couldn't think of anything he would deny you. He said he would brew no more if you lived, and that you might have a house in Paris. I wish I were a girl, that's all—you'll never have such another offer in point of worth, my dear. Why, he might reasonably propose to anybody; he might go over to England and marry an earl's daughter—that's a fact, you know."

the company for precisely what he had paid. That he had made Deretel a present of a hundred thousand so was plain clear to that excellent citizen. But why? He could not at first pretend to understand it except on one or two theories—that Smither was very fond of him, or had quite believed that Lily would accept him. As was his habit he opened his mind to his daughter, and, after answering all her questions, received a new surprise from her view of the matter.

"You must give back the money," she said, fairly crying with vexation. "What the deuce are you talking about Lil?" cried her alarmed father. "You must—Oh! don't you see? It's too awful. Don't you see that he meant to buy me? He has paid the price he valued me at, the purchase has not been delivered. How he must think of you; how he must gloat over the humiliation to which he has submitted me. You must give back the money."

"I'm not quite a fool," answered her father. "Catch me! I should like to see myself! Not a dollar! You're talking nonsense, Lil," and he went on to prove, very conclusively, that as Smither had concealed his purchase of the land, he could scarcely have intended to signify a purchase of the daughter. But Lily was inexorable; she scouted his new theory that Smither had been defeated in a deep scheme to take half a million out of the Railway Company; at last she declared that she would offend herself to her wicked, disagreeable, odious suitor as the only escape from the mortification of living in his insolent gift.

"You can if you like," said her father philosophically. "I'm sure he'd make a deuced good husband, and he's con-foundedly rich, you know, though I'm told he's been letting his business go to blazes lately. It's rather a good move of yours, Lil," and merely laughed at her withering look.

Next day Mr. Beamish Smithers was made almost delirious with joy when he saw the signature of the following letter, and, rushing through it, grasped at first nothing but the fact that Lily consented to become his wife.

DEAR HALL, Wednesday morning, DEAR SIR:—When you were good enough some months ago to make a certain proposition through my father, I was not aware that you had relieved his difficulties. Only yesterday facts were told me which leave no doubt that you paid a large sum of money, believing that I should be forced to give you my hand in return. I have implored my father to repay you, but in vain, and there is therefore no course by which I can save his honour except by becoming your wife. To come from the dreadful position of humiliation in which you have placed me, I have thus no option but to undergo the present humiliation of asking you to marry me whenever you may choose to complete your purchase.

Yours truly, LILY DERETEL.

When in his private office poor old Smither's first transports had subsided before the deadly cold understanding of the thing, his heart did almost break and, laying his forehead in his hands down on the desk before him, he cried for the first time since he had been licked at school.

But not for long; the sting of her words was too keen to suffer without an attempt to vindicate himself; he rose to the occasion, and this is what Miss Lily read in the evening, while her father looked on amusedly.

DEAR MISS DERETEL:—Your favor rec'd, and contents noted. I cannot allow you to misunderstand the matter referred to any longer. In the first place let me say that I lost no money in the purchase of land from your father, though it is true that I allowed him to receive the profit which I might perhaps have taken to myself had he been so disposed. Of that crime I was guilty simply because I wished that you should not have to think of me as a creditor powerful enough to ruin your father when he should present my proposition to you. It was presumptuous, I know, to suppose that you could love a man whose misfortune it is to have no cultivation or refinement, but it was my love I sought and not your hand only. You will not understand what a temptation to take you at your word was tearing at my heart now. For I love you, and if love and devotion could make you happy, I could make you happy—God help me; there is nothing in the world for me now. If I offered you, try to forgive me, but I could not suffer you to continue to regard me as a mean scoundrel. Exchange money for your hand! No; and I would pluck every dollar into the sea and jump in after it for one kind look from your eyes. Though it is impossible that you should love me, I feel that I am not so unworthy as to be fairly despised by you. DEAMISH SMITHERS.

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