

**A KNAVE AND A FOOL:
A NOVEL. IN THREE
VOLUMES. VOL. II**

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A Knave and a Fool: A Novel. In Three Volumes. Vol. II by Jessie Krikorian

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JESSIE KRIKORIAN

**A KNAVE AND A FOOL:
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A KNAVE AND A FOOL.

A NOVEL.

BY

JESSIE KRIKORIAN,

AUTHOR OF "SPOKEN IN ANGER," ETC., ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

TINSLEY BROTHERS,
CATHERINE STREET, STRAND,
LONDON.

1883.

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A KNAVE AND A FOOL.

CHAPTER I.

“ And all the maiden empire of her mind,
Lay like a map before me, and I saw,
There, where I hoped myself to reign as king,
There, where that day I crowned myself as king,
There in my realm, and even on my throne, *another!* ”

LAWYER BORRODAILE was very busy; the little man felt that he had his four puppets well in hand, and he meant them only to move as he pulled the wires. Stalwart

Colonel Walrond would have been very much astonished had he known that he was puppet number one, and warranted only to move at Borrodaile's pleasure. Our stately Bernice scarcely looked like an automaton, the suppressed power lurking round her tender little mouth surely gave the lie to any such insinuation—yet she was puppet number two. Old Ghauntly and John Borrodaile completed the quartette, but I am sadly afraid the last-named worthies were perfectly conscious of their moral degradation.

A perfect Mephistopheles was our little Stephen; he found John poor, and he made him rich—in the world's eyes at least that judges only by the outward seeming. He altered his appearance so

successfully that even old Jeal was for several hours deceived by his short, black beard, the dark hair completely altering the expression of his face; and finally, he offered him a Marguerite, fair as she who wrought Faust's ruin.

Stephen showed himself possessed of some romance too when he re-christened John. Anthony St Clare was the name he chose; and Anthony St Clare, with his pleasant manner and handsome face, soon became one of the lions of Walrond. It was an accepted fact that the young ladies, one and all, set their caps at him; from the doctor's daughter—a damsel neither young nor passing fair, down to little Miss Stuart who earned a scanty living by training such music as abode in

the youthful Walrondites. And many a rosy-checked village lass dreamed dreams of the debonair, chatty stranger; for no maiden, however humble her station, but has a secret *chateau en Espagne* wherein the fairy prince who wedded with his scullery-maid lives right royally. Lady Grace pronounced him charming; and Lord Elmsden, himself, rather slow of speech, was quite taken by this young man's rattling versatile fund of small talk; Marjorie flirted with him in her prettiest manner, and as for old Ghauntly he was perfectly cringing in his hospitality.

John's nature, essentially careless and selfish, drifted into the new life without thought of the past. Anyone who was with him might lead and rule this easy-

going young man ; while under poor Bet's influence he had been perfectly sincere in his wish to act honourably by her, but now, surrounded by new faces and new pursuits, the dark, fond, peasant face faded from his memory. It was not that he fell in love with Bernice ; had she been portionless he would never have given her a single thought ; and an irritating feeling of inferiority made him somewhat uneasy under the scrutiny of those clear dark eyes ; yet she was very gracious to him.

"Devilish pleasant to you, John," Stephen said.

"Pleasant !" John answered. "Then you would call a statue pleasant ; that girl sees through me, old man—"

"Don't be a fool ; how can she see

through you, as you call it? a country minx who has been taught to think herself a goddess! A little of the reality of life would do her an immense amount of good;" and Stephen's eyes gleamed, savagely.

But the village, noticing this friendship between Bernice and the stranger, fancied they had discovered the chain that bound him to Walrond, and a whisper arose, and spread quickly into a many-tongued report, that Anthony St Clare and Miss Ghauntly were engaged.

Bernice was not "engaged," and, as usually is the case when one's neighbours kindly arrange our affairs, was the last to hear of her new honours; thus she was perfectly unconscious of the unnecessary