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A Fool and His Money

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS INSTALLMENTS.

In the opening installments of "A Fool and His Money," Geo. Barr McCutcheon's charming novel, serial rights for which have been specially obtained for the Home and Farm Magazine Section, we learn of John Belamy Smart, the young man who is telling the story. He has just written his first novel, and at the same time has fallen heir to an immense fortune left him by his uncle. He is 35 years of age. After a visit to London, Smart takes a trip on the River Danube. After finding an old world town, he discovers an ancient castle, which he purchases from its owner, the Count. With his secretary, Poopendyke, he takes possession of the immense structure, which is supposed to be tenanted only by the caretaker and his family, the Schmicks. To Smart's amazement, the first night, he hears the cry of a baby. Looking out at a balcony one night Smart sees the white figure of a woman silhouetted. He immediately begins a hunt for Schmick, the caretaker, to solve the mystery of who the woman may be. With the Schmicks he endeavors to break down a heavily barred door into that section of the castle, but fails. The tion of the castle, but fails. Smart learns that souvenir hunters from New York are demanding to buy the castle heirlooms. The story continues.

"And the ladies, sir! There are three of them, all from New York City, and they keep on saying they are completely ravished, sir—with joy, I take it. Our great sideboard in the dining-room is to go to Mrs. Riley-Werkheimer, and the hall-seat that the first Baron used to throw his armour on when he came in from—"

"Great snakes!" I roared. "They haven't moved it, have they? It will fall to pieces!"

"No, sir. They are piling sconces and candelabra and andirons on it, regardless of what Mr. Poopendyke says. You'd better hurry, sir. Here is your collar and necktie—"

"I don't want 'em. Where the dickens are my trousers?"

His face fell. "Being pressed, sir, God forgive me!"

"Get out another pair, confound you, Britton. What are we coming to?"

He began rummaging in the huge clothespress, all the while regaling me with news from the regions below.

"Mr. Poopendyke has gone up to his room, sir, with his typewriter. The young lady insisted on having it. She squealed with joy at seeing an antique typewriter and he—he had to run away with it, 'pon my soul he did, sir."

I couldn't help laughing.

"And your gold clubs, Mr. Smart. The young gentleman of the party is perfectly carried away with them. He says they're the real thing, the genuine sixteenth century article. They are a bit rusted, you'll remember. I left him out in the courtyard trying your brassie and mid-iron, sir, endeavoring to loft potatoes over the south wall. I succeeded in hiding the balls, sir. Just as I started upstairs I heard one of the new window panes in the banquet hall smash, sir, so I take it he must have sliced his drive a bit."

"Who let these people in?" I demanded in smothered tones from the depths of a sweater I was getting into in order to gain time by omitting a collar.

"They came in with the plumbers, sir, at half-past eight. Old man Schmick tried to keep them out, but they said they didn't understand German and walked right by, leaving their donkeys in the roadway outside."

"Couldn't Rudolph and Max stop them?" I cried, as my head emerged.

"They were still in bed, sir. I think they're at breakfast now."

"Good lord!" I groaned, looking at my watch. "Nine-thirty! What sort of a rest cure am I conducting here?"

We hurried downstairs so fast that I lost one of my bedroom slippers. It went clattering on ahead of us, making a shameful racket on the bar stones, but Britton caught it up in time to save it from the clutches of the curio-vandals. My workmen were lolling about the place, smoking vile pipes and talking in guttural whispers. All operations appeared to have ceased in my establishment at the command of the far from idle rich. Two portly gentlemen in fedoras were standing in the middle of the great hall, discussing the merits of a dingy old spinet that had been carried out of the music room by two lusty porters from the hotel. From somewhere in the direction of the room where the porcelains and earthenware were stored came the shrill, excited voices of women. The aged Schmicks were sitting side by side on a window ledge, with the rigid reticence of wax figures.

As I came up, I heard one of the strangers say to the other:

"Well, if you don't want it, I'll take it. My wife says it can be made into a writing desk with a little—"

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," said I confronting them. "Will you be good enough to explain this intrusion?"

They stared at me as if I were a servant asking for higher wages. The speaker, a fat man with a bristly mustache and a red necktie, drew himself up haughtily.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded, fixing me with a glare.

I knew at once that he was the kind of an American I have come to hate with a zest that knows no moderation; the kind that makes one ashamed of the national melting pot. I glared back at him.

"I happen to be the owner of this place, and you'll oblige me by clearing out."

"What's that? Here, here, none of that sort of talk, my friend. We're here to look over your stuff, and we mean business, but you won't get anywhere by talking like—"

"There is nothing for sale here," I said shortly. "And you've got a lot of nerve to come bolting into a private house—"

"Say," said the second man, advancing with a most insulting scowl, "we'll understand each other right off the reel, my friend. All you've got to do is to answer us when we ask for prices. Now, bear that in mind, and don't try any of your high-and-mighty tactics on us."

"Just remember that you're a junk-dealer and we'll get along splendidly," said the other, in a tone meant to crush me. "What do you ask for this thing?" tapping the dusty spinet with his walking-stick.

It suddenly occurred to me that the situation was humorous.

"You will have to produce your references, gentlemen, before I can discuss anything with you," I said, after swallowing very hard. (It must have been my pride.)

They stared. "Good Lord!" gasped the bristly one, blinking his eyes. "Don't you know who this gentleman is? You—you appear to be an American. You must know Mr. Riley-Werkheimer of New York."

"I regret to stay that I have never heard of Mr. Riley-Werkheimer. I did not know that Mrs. Riley-Werkheimer's husband was living. And may I ask who you are?"

"Oh, I am also a nobody," said he, with a wink at his purple-jowled companion. "I am only poor old Rocksworth, the president of the—"

"Oh, don't say anything more, Mr. Rocksworth," I cried. "I have heard of you. This fine old spinet? Well, it has been reduced in price. Ten thousand dollars, Mr. Rocksworth."

"Ten thousand nothing! I'll take it at seventy-five dollars. And now let's talk about this here hall-seat. My wife thinks it's a fake. What is its history, and what sort of guarantee can you—"

"A fake!" I cried in dismay. "My

dear Mr. Rocksworth, that is the very hall-seat that Pontius Pilate sat in when waiting for an audience with the first of the great Teutonic barons. The treaty between the Romans and the Teutons was signed on that table over there—the one you have so judiciously selected, I perceive. Of course, you know that this was the Saxon seat of government. Charlemagne lived here with all his court?"

They tried not to look impressed, but rather overdid it.

"That's the sort of a story you fellows always put up, you skinflints from Boston. I'll bet my head you are from Boston," said Mr. Rocksworth shrewdly.

"I couldn't afford to have you lose your head, Mr. Rocksworth, so I shan't take you on," said I merrily.

"Don't get fresh now," said he stiffly.

Mr. Riley-Werkheimer walked past me to take a closer look at the seat, almost treading on my toes rather than to give an inch to me.

"How can you prove that it's the genuine article?" he demanded curtly. "You have my word for it, sir," I said quietly.

"Pish tush!" said he.

Mr. Rocksworth turned in the direction of the banquet hall.

"Carrie!" he shouted. "Come here a minute, will you?"

"Don't shout like that, Orson," came back from the porcelain closet. "You almost made me drop this thing."

"Well, drop it, and come on. This is important."

I wiped the moisture from my brow and respectfully put my clenched fists into my pockets.

A minute later, three females appeared on the scene, all of them dust-

ing their hands and curling their noses in disgust.

"I never saw such a dirty place," said the foremost, a large lady who couldn't, by any circumstance of fate, have been anybody's wife but Rocksworth's. "It's filthy! What do you want?"

"I've bought this thing here for seventy-five. You said I couldn't get it for a nickle under a thousand. And say, this man tells me the hall seat here belonged to Pontius Pilate in—"

"Pardon me," I interrupted, "I merely said that he sat in it. I am not trying to deceive you, sir."

(Continued Next Week.)

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