

By
George Barr
McCutcheon

HOME AND FARM MAGAZINE SECTION SERIAL.

Copyright, 1913,
By Geo. Barr
McCutcheon.

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 story continues:

(Continued From Last Week.)

The Schmicks fairly glowed with joy! Afterwards Max informed me that the door was nearly six inches thick and often had withstood the assaults of huge battering rams, back in the dim past when occasion induced the primal baron to seek safety in the east wing, which, after all, appears to have been the real, simon pure fortress. The west wing was merely a setting for festal amenities and was by no means feudal in its aspect or appeal. Here, as I came to know, the old barons received their friends and feasted them and made merry with the flagon and the horn of plenty; here the humble title payer came to settle his dues with gold and silver instead of with blood; here the little barons and baronesses romped and rioted with childish glee, and here the barons grew fat and gross and soggy with laziness and prosperity, and here they died in stupid quiescence. On the other side of that grim, staunch old door they simply went to the other extreme in every particular. There they killed their captives, butchered their enemies, and sometimes died with the daggers of traitors in their shivering backs.

As we trudged back to the lower halls, defeated but none the less impressed by our failure to devastate our stronghold, I was struck by the awful barrenness of the surroundings. There suddenly came over me the shocking realization: the "contents" of the castle, as set forth rather vaguely in the bill of sale, were not what I had been led to consider them. It had not occurred to me at the time of the transaction to insist upon an inventory, and I had been too busy since the beginning of my tenancy to take more than a passing account of my belongings. In excusing myself for this rather careless oversight, I can only say that during daylight hours the castle was so completely stuffed with workmen and their queer utensils that I couldn't do much in the way of elimination, and by night it was so horribly black and lonesome about the place and the halls were so littered with tools and mops and timber that it was extremely hazardous to go prowling about, so I preferred to remain in my own quarters, which were quite comfortable and cosy in spite of the distance between points of convenience.

Still I was vaguely certain that many articles I had seen about the halls on my first and second visits were no longer in evidence. Two or three antique rugs, for instance, were missing from the main hall, and there was a lamentable suggestion of emptiness

at the lower end where we had stacked a quantity of rare old furniture in order to make room for the workmen.

"Herr Schmick," said I, abruptly halting my party in the center of the hall, "what has become of the rugs that were here last week, and where is that pile of furniture we had back yonder?"

Rudolph allowed the lantern to swing behind his huge legs, intentionally I believe, and I was compelled to relieve him of it in order that we might extract ourselves from his shadow. I have never seen such a colossal shadow as the one he cast.

Old Conrad was not slow in answering.

"The gentleman called day before yesterday, mein herr, and took much away. They will return tomorrow for the remainder."

"Gentlemen?" I gasped. "Remainder?"

"The gentlemen to whom the Herr Count sold the rugs and chairs and chests and—"

"What!" I roared. Even Poopendyke jumped at this sudden exhibition of wrath. "Do you mean to tell me that these things have been sold and carried away without my knowledge or consent? I'll have the law—"

Herr Poopendyke intervened. "They had bills of sale and orders for removal of property dated several weeks prior to your purchase, Mr. Smart. We had to let the articles go. You surely remember my speaking to you about it."

"I don't remember anything," I snapped, which was the truth. "Why—why, I bought everything that the castle contained. This is robbery! What the dickens do you mean by—"

Old Conrad held up his hands as if expecting to pacify me. I sputtered out the rest of the sentence, which really amounted to nothing.

"The Count has been selling off the lovely old pieces for the past six months, sir. Ach, what a sin! They have come here day after day, these furniture buyers, to take away the most priceless of our treasures, to sell them to the poor rich at twenty prices. I could weep over the sacrifices. I have wept, haven't I, Gretel? Eh, Rudolph? Buckets of tears have I shed, mein herr. Oceans of them. Time after time have I implored him to deny these rascally curio hunters, these blood-sucking—"

"But listen to me," I broke in. "Do you mean to say that articles have been taken away from the castle since I came into possession?"

"Many of them, sir. Always with proper credentials, believe me. Ach, what a spendthrift he is! And his poor wife! Ach, Gott, how she must suffer. Nearly all of the grand paintings, the tapestries that came from France and Italy hundreds of years ago, the wonderful old bedsteads and tables that were here when the castle was new—all gone! And for mere songs, mein herr, —the cheapest of songs! I—I—"

"Please don't weep now, Herr Schmick," I made haste to exclaim, seeing lachrymose symptoms in his bleared old eyes. Then I became firm once more. This knavery must cease, or I'd know the reason why. "The next man who comes here to cart away so much as a single piece is to be kicked out. Do you understand? These things belong to me. Kick him into the river. Or, better still, notify me and I'll do it. Why, if this goes on we'll soon be deprived of anything to sit on or sleep in or eat from! Lock the doors, Conrad, and don't admit any one without first consulting me. By Jove, I'd like to wring that rascal's neck. A Count! Umph!"

"Ach, he is of the noblest family in all the land," sighed old Gretel. "His grandfather was a fine man." I contrived to subdue my rage and disappointment and somewhat loudly returned to the topic from which we were drifting.

"As for those beastly padlocks, I shall have them filed off tomorrow. I give you warning, Conrad, if the keys are not forthcoming before noon tomorrow, I'll file 'em off, so help me."

"They are yours to destroy, mein herr, God knows," said he dismally. "It is a pity to destroy fine old padlocks—"

"Well, you wait and see," said I, grimly.

His face beamed once more. "Ach, I forgot to say that there are padlocks on the other side of the door, just as on this side. It will be of no use to destroy these. The door still could not be forced. Mein Gott! How thankful I am to have remembered it in time."

"Confound you, Schmick, I believe you actually want to keep me out of that part of the castle," I exploded. The four of them protested manfully, even Gretel.

"I have a plan, sir," said Britton. "Why not place a tall ladder in the courtyard and crawl in through one of the windows?"

"Splendid! That's what we'll do!" I cried enthusiastically. "And now let's go to bed! We will breakfast at eight, Mrs. Schmick. The early bird catches the worm, you know."

"Will you see the American ladies and gentlemen who are coming tomorrow to pick out the—"

"Yes, I'll see them," said I, compressing my lips. "Don't let me oversleep, Britton."

"I shan't, sir," said he.

Sleep evaded me for hours. What with the possible proximity of an undesirable famine neighbour, mysterious and elusive though she may prove to be, and the additional dread of dogs and babies, to say nothing of the amazing delinquencies to be laid to the late owner of the place, and the prospect of a visit from coarse and unfeeling barbarians on the morrow, it is really not surprising that I tossed about in my baronial bed, counting sheep backwards and forwards over hedges and fences until the vociferous cocks in the stable yard began to send up their clarion

howdy-dos to the sun. Strangely enough, with the first peep of day through the decrepit window shutters I fell into a sound sleep. Britton got nothing but grunts from me until half-past nine. At that hour he came into my room and delivered news that aroused me more effectually than all the alarm clocks or alarm cocks in the world could have done.

"Get up, sir, if you please," he repeated the third time. "The party of Americans is below, sir, rummaging about the place. They have ordered the workmen to stop work, sir, complaining of the beastly noise they make, and the dust and all that, sir. They have already selected half a dozen pieces and they have brought enough porters and carriers over in the boats to take the stuff away in—"

"Where is Poopendyke?" I cried, leaping out of bed. "I don't want to be shaved, Britton, and don't bother about the tub." He had filled my twentieth century portable tub, recently acquired, and was nervously creating a lather in my shaving mug.

"You look very rough, sir."

"So much the better."

"Mr. Poopendyke is in despair sir. He has tried to explain that nothing is for sale, but the gentlemen say they are onto his game. They go right on yanking things about and putting their own prices on them and reserving them. They are perfectly delighted, sir, to have found so many old things they really want for their new houses."

"I'll—I'll put a stop to all this," I grated seeing red for an instant.

(To be Continued Next Week.)

China imports wood pulp from Great Britain, Sweden, Norway and Germany.



FIVE ROOMS, \$337.00
We furnish any number of rooms and any design you need. Send for catalog.

COMMON SENSE AND A HAMMER

are all you need to build one of our attractively designed cottages or bungalows. Not portable. Absolutely permanent. Save carpenter expense, loss of material in cutting, and many other savings. You get the benefit. We cut every piece to fit, and furnish doors, windows, hardware, paint, nails, all lumber, and lath and plaster or wall board. A numbered diagram tells you how to put it together, without further expense.

Ready Built House Company
990 Broadway, Portland, Oregon.



WE ARE SO SURE
OF THE
QUALITY
OF

Gold Shield Coffee

That we ask you to give Gold Shield a trial, feeling that you will then insist on Gold Shield when buying coffee.

SCHWABACHER BROS.
& CO., Inc.

Importers and Roasters of Coffee
Seattle, Wash.

