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### A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

By **GEORGE BARR M'UTCHEON**,  
Author of "Graustark,"  
"Truxton King," Etc.

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(Continued from page 3.)

ible at a glance. A trim, stood in the small gallery which, the top of the turret, just above and to the right of us. She held in her arms the pink hooded, pink coated Rosemary, made snug against the chill winds of her lofty parade ground.

Catching the nurse's eye, she signaled for her to bring the child down to us. Rosemary took to me at once. A most embarrassing thing happened. On seeing me she held out her chubby arms and shouted "da-da" at the top of her infantile lungs.

I flushed, and the countess shrieked with laughter. It wouldn't have been so bad if the nurse had known her place. If there is one thing in this world that I hate with fervor it is an ill-mannered, poorly trained servant. A grinning nursemaid is the worst of all.

"Ha, ha!" I laughed bravely. "She—she evidently thinks I look like the count. He is very handsome, you say."

"Oh, that isn't it!" cried the countess, taking Rosemary in her arms and directing me to a spot on her rosy cheek. "Kiss right there, Mr. Smart. There! Wasn't it a nice kiss, honey bunch? If you are a very, very nice little girl the kind gentleman will kiss you on the other cheek some day. She calls every man she meets da da," explained the radiant young mother.

"Oh," said I, rather crestfallen.

"Would you like to hold her, Mr. Smart? She's such a darling to hold."

"No—no, thank you," I cried, backing off.

"Oh, you will come to it, never fear," she said gaily as she restored Rosemary to the nurse's arms. "Won't he, Blake?"

"He will, my lady," said Blake with conviction. I noticed this time that Blake's smile wasn't half bad.

At dinner that evening I asked Poopendyke point blank if he could call to mind a marriage in New York society that might fit the principals in this puzzling case.

"I'm sorry, sir, but—but I can't do it. I promised her this morning I wouldn't let it be dragged out of me with redhot tongs."

#### CHAPTER X.

**I** Receive Visitors.

THE east wing of the castle was as still as a mouse on the day my house party arrived. Grim old doors took on new padlocks, keyholes were carefully stopped up, creaking doors were calked, and yet I trembled. My secret seemed to be safely planted, but what would the harvest be?

Elsie Hazzard presented me to her friends, and with lordly generosity I presented the castle to them.

There was a Russian baron whom for brevity's sake I'll call Umovitch. There was a Viennese gentleman of twenty-six or eight, I heard, but who looked forty. His name was Pless. He was a plain mister. The more I saw of him the first afternoon the more I wondered at George Hazzard's carelessness. Then there were two very bright and charming Americans, the Billy Smiths. He was connected with the American embassy at Vienna, and I liked him from the start. The baron was in the Russian embassy and was really a very nice boy.

"And this Mr. Pless, who is he?" I asked.

Elsie was looking at the rakish young man with a pouting expression in her tender blue eyes.

"Poor fellow!" she sighed. "He is in great trouble, John. We hoped that if we got him off here where it is quiet he might be able to forget. Oh, but I am not supposed to tell you a word of the story! We are all sworn to secrecy."

"Women," said Billy impressively. "Then it's easily patched," said I. "Like cures like."

"You don't understand, John," said Elsie gravely. "He was married to a beautiful—"

"Now, Elsie, you're telling," cautioned Betty Billy—Mrs. Billy Smith.

"Well," said Elsie doggedly, "I'm determined to tell this much. His name isn't Pless. His wife got a divorce from him, and now she has taken their child and run off with it, and they can't find what's the matter?"

My eyes were almost popping from my head.

"Is—is he a count?" I cried, so loudly that they all said "Sh!" and shot apprehensive glances toward the pseudo Mr. Pless.

"Goodness!" said Elsie in alarm. "Don't shout, John."

Billy Smith regarded me speculatively. "I daresay Mr. Smart has read all about the affair in the newspapers."

"I haven't seen anything about it in the papers," said I, trying to recover my self-possession which had sustained a most tremendous shock.

"Thank heaven!" cried Elsie devoutly.



"Poor fellow!" she sighed.

realized that it was a most unseemly hour for calling on a young, beautiful and unprotected lady, but the exigencies of the moment lent moral support to my invasion.

The countess' French maid peered out at me.

"Tell your mistress that I must see her at once."

"Madame is not at home, m'sieur," said the young woman.

"Not at home?" I gasped. "Where is she?"

"Madame has gone to bed."

"Oh!" I said blinking. "Then she is at home. Present my compliments and ask her to get up. Something very exasperating has happened."

"Madame has requested me to inform m'sieur that she knows the count is here and will you be so good as to call tomorrow morning."

"What! She knows he's here? Who brought the information?"

"The bountiful Max, m'sieur. He brings it with dejeuner, again with dinner and but now with the hot water, m'sieur."

"Oh, I see," said I profoundly. "In that case I—shan't disturb her."

Very stiffly and ceremoniously I advised caution for the next twelve hours and left.

Now it may occur to you that any self-respecting gentleman in possession of a castle and a grain of common sense would have set about to find out the true names of the guests beneath his roof. But it so happens that I rather enjoyed the mystery. The situ-

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ation was unique, the comedy most exhilarating. Of course there was a tragic side to the whole matter, but, now that I was in for it, why minimize the novelty by adopting arbitrary measures? Somewhat glibly I decided that it would be good fun to keep myself in the dark as long as possible.

When I reached the room where my guests were assembled I found Mr. Pless and the Baron Fmoritch engaged in an acrimonious dispute over a question of bridge etiquette. The former had resented a sharp criticism coming from the latter, and they were waging a verbal battle in what I took to be five or six different tongues, none of which appeared to bear the slightest relationship to the English language. Suddenly Mr. Pless threw his cards down and left the table without a word of apology to the two ladies, who looked more hurt than appalled.

He said he was going to bed, but I noticed that he took himself off in the direction of the moonlit loggia. We were still discussing his defection in subdued tones—with the exception of the irate baron—when he re-entered the room.

"Are there real spirits in your castle, Mr. Smart, or have you flesh and blood mediums here who roam about in white night dresses to study the moods of the moon from the dizziest ramparts?"

I started. What indiscretion had the countess been up to?

"I don't quite understand you, Mr. Pless," I said, with a politely blank stare.

"My dear countess," said I the next morning, "while I am willing to admit that all you say is true, there still remains the unhappy fact that you were very near to upsetting everything last night. Mr. Pless saw you quite plainly. The moon was very full, you'll remember. Fortunately he was too far away from your window to recognize you. Think how easy it might be—"

"But I've told you twice that I held my hand over Pless's nose, and he just couldn't bark, Mr. Smart. You are really most unreasonable about it. The dog had to have a breath of fresh air."

"Why not send him up to the top of the tower and let him run around on the roof?"

"Oh, there's no use talking about it any longer!" she said wearily. "It is all over, and no real harm was done. I am awfully sorry if they made it uncomfortable for you."

"And now will you be good enough to tell me who I am?" she asked after a few minutes. "That is, who am I supposed to be?"

"Oh," said I uneasily, "you are really nobody! You are Britton's wife."

"What! Does Britton know it?"

"Yes," said I, with a wry smile. "He took a mean advantage of me in the presence of George Hazzard not an hour ago and asked for a raise in wages on account of his wife's illness. It seems that you are an invalid."

(Continued Next Week)

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