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### A FOOL AND HIS MONEY

(Continued from page 3.)

about him in a dazed, bewildered manner.

At that moment Popenkyde came running down the stairs, attracted by



the loud voices. He was followed closely by three or four wide eyed glaziers who were working on the second floor.

"In the name of heaven, sir!" "I've bruised my knuckles horribly," was all that I said. I seemed to be in a sort of a daze myself. I had never knocked a man down before in my life. Tarnowsky struggled to his feet and faced me, quivering with rage. I was dumfounded to see that he was not covered with blood. But he was of a light, yellowish green. I could scarcely believe my eyes.

"You shall pay for this!" he cried. The tears rushed to his eyes. "Coward, beast, to strike a defenseless man!"

His hand went swiftly to his breast pocket, and an instant later a small revolver flashed into view. It was then that I did another strange and incomprehensible thing. With the utmost coolness I stepped forward and wrested it from his hand. I say strange and incomprehensible for the reason that he was pointing it directly at my breast and yet I had not the slightest sensation of fear. He could have shot me like a dog. I never even thought of that.

"None of that!" I cried sharply. "Now, will you be good enough to get out of this house and stay out?"

"My seconds will call on you!"

"And they will receive just what you have received. If you or any of your friends presume to trespass on the privacy of these grounds of mine I'll kick the whole lot of you into the Danube. Hawkes, either show or lead Count Tarnowsky to the gates. As for you, Mr. Schwartzmuller, I shall expose!"

But the last word in restorations had departed.

### CHAPTER XVII.

#### I Am Forced into Being a Hero.

SITTING alone in my study late in the afternoon smoking a solitary pipe of peace, I remembered Mr. Bangs, the lawyer, the man with the top button off. What had become of him? His presence or, more accurately, his absence suddenly loomed up before me as the forerunner of an unwelcome invasion of my preserves. He was no doubt a sort of advance agent for the Titus family and its immediate ramifications. Just as I was on the point of starting out to make inquiries concerning him there came to my ears the sound of tapping on the back of Red Ludwig's portrait.

I rushed over and rapped resoundingly upon Ludwig's pudgy knee. The next instant there was a click, and then the secret door swung open, revealing the eager, concerned face of my neighbor.

"What has happened?" she cried. I lifted her out of the frame. Her gaze fell upon the bandaged fist.

"Mr. Bangs spoke of a pistol. Don't tell me that he—he shot you?"

I held up my swollen hand rather proudly. It smelled vilely of arnica.

"This wound was self-inflicted, my dear countess," I said, thrilled by her expression of concern. "I had the exquisite pleasure—and pain—of knocking your former husband down."

"Oh, splendid!" she cried, her eyes gleaming with excitement. "Mr. Bangs was rather hazy about it, and he would not let me risk telephoning you knocked Maris down?"

"Emphatically," said I. She mused. "I think it is the first time it has ever happened to him. How—how did he like it?"

"It appeared to prostrate him." She smiled understandingly. "I am glad you did it, Mr. Smart."

"If I remember correctly, you once said that he had struck you, countess."

Her face flushed. "Yes, on three separate occasions he struck me in the face with his open hand. I testified to that effect at the trial. Every one seemed to look upon it as a joke. He swore that they were—were love pats."

"I hope his lack of discrimination will not lead him to believe that I was delivering a love pat," said I grimly.

"Now tell me everything that happened," she said, seating herself in my big armchair. Her feet failed to touch the floor.

When I came to that part of the story where I accused Tarnowsky of duplicity in connection with the frescoes she betrayed intense excitement.

"Of course it was all a bluff on my part," I explained.

"But you were nearer the truth than

you thought," she said, compressing her lips. After a moment she went on: "Count Hobendahl sold the originals over three years ago. I was here with Maris at the time of the transaction and when the paintings were removed. Maris acted as an intermediary in the deal. Hobendahl received \$200,000 for the paintings, but they were worth it. I have reason to believe that Maris had a fourth of the amount for his commission. So, you see, you were right in your surmise.

"The infernal rascal! Where are the originals, countess?"

"They are in my father's villa at Newport," she said. "I intended speaking of this to you before, but I was afraid your pride would be hurt. Of course I should have spoken if it came to the point where you really considered having those forgeries restored."

"He will challenge you," she went on nervously. "He has fought three duels. He is not a physical coward." Her dark eyes were full of dread.

I hesitated. "Would you be vitally interested in the outcome of such an affair?" I asked. "I mean on Rosemary's account. He—he is her father, you see. It would mean—"

A slow flush mounted to her brow. "That is precisely what I was thinking, Mr. Smart. It would be—unspeakably dreadful."

I stood over her. My heart was pounding heavily. She must have seen the peril that lay in my eyes, for she suddenly slipped out of the chair and faced me, the flush dying in her cheek, leaving it as pale as ivory.

"You must not say anything more, Mr. Smart," she said gently.

A bitter smile came to my lips, and I drew back with a sickening sense of realization. There was nothing more to be said. But I now thoroughly understood one thing—I was in love with her!

I was something of a philosopher. I submit that my attitude at the time of my defeat at the hands of the jeweler's clerk proves the point conclusively. Quite before I knew it I was myself again, a steady, self-reliant person who could make the best of a situation, who could take his medicine like a man.

She was speaking of the buttonless lawyer, Mr. Bangs. "He is waiting to see you this evening, Mr. Smart, to discuss ways and means of getting my mother and brothers into the castle without discovery by the spies who are undoubtedly watching their every move."

I drew in another long, deep breath. "It seems to me that the thing cannot be done. The risk is tremendous. Why not head her off?"

"Head her off? You do not know my mother, Mr. Smart. She has made up her mind that her place is here with me, and there isn't anything in the world that can—head her off, as you say."

"But surely you see the danger?"

"I do. I have tried to stop her. Mr. Bangs has tried to stop her. So has father. But she is coming. We must arrange something."

I was pacing the floor in front of her. She had resumed her place in the chair.

"My deepest regret, countess, lies in the fact that our little visits will be well, at an end. Our delightful little suppers and—"

"Oh, but think of the comfort it will be to you—not having me on your mind all of the time! I shall not be lonesome; I shall not be afraid; I shall not be forever annoying you with selfish demands upon your good nature. You will have time to write without interruption. It will be for the best."

"No," said I positively. "They were jolly parties, and I shall miss them."

She looked away quickly. "And if all goes well I shall soon be safely on my way to America. Then you will be rid of me completely."

I was startled. "You mean that there is a plan afoot to—smuggle you out of the country?"

"Yes. And I fear I shall have to trouble you again when it comes to that. You must help me, Mr. Smart."

I nodded slowly. Help her to get away? I hadn't thought of that lately. The prospect left me rather cold and sick.

"I'll do all that I can, countess." She smiled faintly, but I was certain that I detected a challenge in her unkind challenge—in her eyes. "You will come to see me in New York, of course."

I shook my head. "I am afraid we are counting our chickens before they're hatched. One or the other of us may be in jail for the next few years."

"Heavens!"

"But I'll come to see you in New York if you'll let me," I cried, trying to repair the damage I had done. "I was jesting when I spoke of jail."

Her brow was puckered in thought. "It has just occurred to me, my dear friend, that even if I do get safely away you will be left here to face the consequences. When it becomes known that you sheltered me the authorities may make it extremely uncomfortable for you."

"I'm not worrying about that."

"Just the same, it is something to worry about," she said seriously. "Now, here is what I have had in mind for a long time. Why don't you come with me when I leave? That will be the safest plan."

"You are not in earnest!"

"Assuredly. The plan is something like this: I am to be taken by slow stages overland to a small Mediterranean port. One of a half dozen American yachts now cruising the sea will be ready to pick me up. Doesn't it seem simple?"

"It seems simple enough," said I. "But there are a lot of 'ifs' between here and the little port you hope to reach. It will not be an easy matter

(Continued Next Week)

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