

Making a Fortune

by Mark Twain

Samuel McF—— was a watchman in a bank. He was poor but honest, and his life was without reproach. The trouble with him was that he felt that he was not appreciated. His salary was only four dollars a week, and when he asked to have it raised the President, the Cashier, and the Board of Directors glared at him through their spectacles, and frowned on him, and told him to go out and stop his insolence; when he knew business was dull and the bank could not meet its expenses now, let alone lavish one dollar a week on such a miserable worm as Samuel McF——. And then Samuel McF—— felt depressed and sad, and the haughty scorn of the President and Cashier cut him to the soul. He would often into the side yard and bow his venerable twenty-four inch head, and weep gallons of tears over his insignificance, and pray that he might be made worthy of the Cashier's and President's polite attention.

One night a happy thought struck him; a gleam of light burst upon his soul, and gazing down the dim vista of years with his eyes all blinded with joyous tears he saw himself rich honored and respected. So Samuel McF—— fooled around with a jimmy, a monkey wrench, a cross cut saw, a cold chisel, a drill, and about half a ton of gun powder and nitro-glycerine, and all those things. Then in the dead of the night he went to the fire-proof safe, and, after working at it for a while, burst the door and brick into an immortal smash with such perfect success that there was not enough of that safe left to make a carpet tack. McF—— then proceeded to load up with coupons, greenbacks, currency, and specie, and to nail all the odd change that was lying anywhere, so that he pranced out of the bank with over one million dollars on him. He then retired to an unassuming residence out of town, and sent word to the detectives where he was.

A detective called on him one day with a soothing note from the Cashier. Mr. McF—— treated it with lofty scorn. Detectives called on him every day with humble notes from the President, Cashier and Board of Directors. At last the bank officers got up a magnificent supper, to which McF—— was invited. He came, and as the bank officers bowed down to the dust before him, he pondered over the bitter past, and his soul was filled with wild exultation. Before he drove away in his carriage that night it was all fixed that McF—— was to keep half a million of the money and to be unmolested if he returned the other half. He fulfilled his contract like an honest man, but refused with haughty disdain, the offer of the cashier to marry his daughter.

Mac is now honored and respected.—He moves in the best society, he browses around in purple and fine linen and other good clothes and enjoys himself first-rate. And often now he takes his infant son on his knee and tells him of his early life, and instills holy principles into the child's mind, and shows him how, by industry and perseverance, frugality and nitro-glycerine, monkey wrenches, cross cut saws and familiarity with the detective system, even the poor may rise to affluence and respectability.

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