

9th Standard English

Best Seller Summary

In 'Best Seller', O. Henry describes quite an interesting character, John A. Pescud, a travelling salesman for a plate-glass company. Pescud appears to be just the kind of character that is so commonly found in the best-sellers like "The Rose Lady and Trevelyan". He criticises 'bestsellers' as they are far removed from real life. Their heroes, scenes and characters produce a false world of romance and idealism. Ironically, John A. Pescud does exactly the same what he opposes and criticises in the best-sellers. He is another Trevelyan who tries to sell his romantic story and ultimately marries his 'princess' Jessie. The narrator's last words are quite meaningful. "Good-luck to you, Trevelyan and may you get the petunias for your princess!".

Narrator Meets John A. Pescud

One day last summer the narrator was travelling in a chair-car. He was going to Pittsburgh on business. His attention was drawn towards a bald-spotted head. He was John A. Pescud of Pittsburgh. He was a travelling salesman for a plate-glass company. The narrator had an old acquaintance with him and he had not seen him in two years. Suddenly the narrator saw him hurling one of the best-selling novels "The Rose Lady and Trevelyan" on to the floor. John was a small man with a wide smile. During their last meetings, they merely talked on local topics and departed. John was going to get off at Coketown.

Pescud's views on Best Sellers

John Pescud was quick to express his opinion on best sellers. He considered that they are far removed from reality. In best sellers often an American hero falls in love with a royal princess from Europe. She is travelling under an alias. The hero follows her to her father's kingdom or principality. All best-sellers are alike. But people in real life are different. They generally hunt up somebody in their 'own station'. A fellow usually picks out a girl who went to the same high-school. In "The Rose Lady and Trevelyan", the hero Trevelyan, scenes and characters are not consistent with reality and life.

Pescud's Meeting with Jessie

Pescud told the narrator that he was getting on well in life. He had had his salary raised twice since they met last time. He got a commission and bought real estate. He was on the line of 'General Prosperity'. Then he told the narrator about his marriage with Jessie. John told that he was going to Cincinnati about 18 months ago. He came across the 'finest looking girl'. She was the kind of girl who could be a life-partner. She was reading a book. She changed the car at Cincinnati and took a sleeper to Louisville. There she bought another ticket, went on through Frankfort and Lexington. He had a hard time keeping up with her. He contrived to keep out of her sight as much as he could. He never lost track of her. She got off at a station which was away down in Virginia. A tall old man, 'looking as proud as Julius Caesar', was there to meet her. He followed them. They went in a gate on top of the hill. Up there in the biggest grove, was a mansion as big as the Capitol at Washington. It looked like the Governor's mansion. However, John stayed at the Bay View House in the village. There he came to know that Colonel Allyn was "the

biggest man and of finest quality in Virginia". He lived in the big mansion. They were the oldest family in the state.

Pescud Meets Jessie

On the third day he caught the young lady walking in the front yard of her mansion. John told her that he was from Pittsburgh. Jessie told John A. Pescud that she was aware of all his activities and the way he followed her. John told her why he had come there and told her everything about himself. She smiled and blushed a little. She told that she never had any one talk like that to her before. Then, at last, a kind of proud, serious look came on her face. She turned and pointed a finger at the big house. The Allyn had lived there for a hundred years. They were a proud family. The mansion had 50 rooms. The ceiling in the ball-room were 28 feet high. Her father was lineal descendant of belted earls. She must not talk to him as he had not been introduced. She told John that her father would never allow their meeting. Hence, he should not try to meet her.

Pescud Meets, Jessie's, Father

The next morning at eleven sharp, John rang the doorbell. An old man of eighty showed up. Pescud gave his business card and told him that he wanted to see the Colonel. The Colonel Allyn came in 'For about nine seconds'. John was nervous but soon got his nerve back. He told the old man why he was there. He also told him how he followed his daughter from Cincinnati. He told him about his job, his salary and prospects and his little code of living. They talked for two hours. All he asked of was to give him a chance. The old man laughed and related many anecdotes and humorous occurrences. He also told

Pescud a fox hunting story. Two evenings later he got a chance to meet Jessie alone.

Pescud Gets Off at Capetown

Coketown had come. Pescud told the narrator that he married Jessie a year ago. He built a house in the East End. The belted man, the Colonel was also there. The narrator asked Pescud why he was getting off at such a place where he could not get good business. John A. Pescud told him that when they were coming from a little trip to Philadelphia, Jessie saw some petunia flowers in a pot in one of those windows in Coketown. So he thought he would drop off there for the night. He could dig up some of the cuttings or blossoms for her. John got down and the train moved forward. "Good luck to you, Trevelyan", said the narrator. "And may you get the petunias for your princess!"