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SYNOPSIS

Mr. Blithers, multimillionaire, discusses with his wife the possibilities of marrying off his daughter, Maud Applegate, to the Prince of Graustark, who is visiting Mr. and Mrs. Truxton King in America in anticipation of getting some one to take up the loan Russia holds. A Mr. Scoville is attentive to Maud.

Mr. Blithers discusses the Russian loan and gently hints at $20,000,000 his daughter will get when she marries the right man.

Bankers suddenly refuse to handle the loan. Count Quinnox and King arrange a meeting with Blithers. King suspects him of blocking the deal.

Blithers promises to consider the loan. His wife prepares a ball for the Prince and Maud, who suddenly balks at the affair and doesn't attend.

Meeting the prince out for a stroll, Blithers chats on matrimony. Robin says he is not for sale, but agrees to meet Maud when he learns she is opposed to her parents' wishes.

Maud again evades the prince, who reports he must leave for Graustark at once. Maud writes she is off for Europe on the Jupiter with an aged companion. Her father schemes to get them both on the same ship.

The prince as Mr. Schmidt sails on the Jupiter. Blithers buys $20,000,000 of Graustark bonds. A young lady disputes Robin's right to a table and deck chair.

He learns she is Miss Guile of New York, and her aged companion Mrs. Gaston. He soon becomes better acquainted with Miss Guile.

Her given name is Bedelia, she tells him. She tells Mrs. Gaston that she suspects he is the Prince of Graustark.

Mrs. Gaston changes her manner toward him. Hobbs discovers Miss Guile's baggage is marked with a B. In Paris she is met by a young man.

Gourou, Robin's police chief, concludes that the B on the baggage means Blithers. Miss Blithers denies her engagement to the prince. Bedelia sends Robin a note.

She invites him for a drive to St. Cloud. He intimates she is Miss Blithers, but she resents it. While at lunch they are told some one is spying on them.

They flee and are arrested for speeding, Miss Guile just escaping revealing her true identity to the judge. She tells Robin she will go to Switzerland.

Mr. Blithers sails for Paris. He instructs his agents to kidnap Maud, but she is not to be located.

At Interlaken Mrs. Gaston tells Robin he has a chance to win Bedelia, who says she is going to Graustark.

Miss Guile gets letters from her angry father, her disappointed lover and another saying detectives were still on her trail. She disappears.

Mr. Blithers arrives in Graustark. He sees Robin reach home, hailed by his people. He is granted an interview in the castle.

He is awed by his surroundings and angered by Count Romano, who refers to a marriage between Maud and the prince as impossible. Robin goes to meet Miss Guile.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Mr. Blithers in Graustark.

IMMEDIATELY upon receiving her letter Roland sent for Quinnox and Gourou, who were stopping at a hotel nearby.

"I am ready to proceed to Edelweiss, my friends," said he. "Miss Guile has departed. Will you book accommodations on the earliest train for home?"

"I have already seen to that, highness," said Gourou calmly. "We leave at 6 this evening. Count Quinnox has wired the prime minister that you will arrive in Edelweiss at 3 tomorrow afternoon, God willing."

"You knew that she had gone?"

"I happened to be in the Nordbahnhof when she boarded the train at midnight," replied the baron, unmoved.

The prince was thoughtful, his brow clouding with a troubled frown. "I suppose I shall now have to face my people with the confession that will confirm their worst fears. I may as well say to you, my friends, that I mean to make her my wife even though it costs me my kingdom. Do you think they will accept her as—as their princess?" cried Robin hopefully.

"I submit that it will first be necessary for you to induce Miss Guile to accept you as her prince," said Gourou mildly. "That doesn't appear to be settled at present."

He took alarm. "What do you mean? Your remark has a sinister sound. Has anything transpired to"—

"She has disappeared, highness, quite effectually. That is all that I can say," said Gourou, and Robin was conscious of a sudden chill and the rush of cold moisture to his brow. "But let us prepare to confront an even more substantial condition. A prospective father in law is descending upon our land. He is groping in the dark, and he is angry. He has lost a daughter somewhere in the wilds of Europe, and he realizes that he cannot hope to become the grandfather of princes unless he can produce a mother for them. At present he seems to be desperate. Have I told you that he was in this city last night? He arrived at the Bristol a few hours prior to the significant departure of Miss Guile. Moreover, he has chartered a special train and is leaving today for Edelweiss. Count Quinnox has taken the precaution to advise the prime minister of his approach and has impressed upon him the importance of decrying any sort of popular demonstration against him on his arrival. Romano reports that the people are in an angry mood. I would suggest that you prepare, in a way, to placate them, now that Miss Guile has dropped out of sight."

It must not be supposed for an instant that the city of Edelweiss and the court of Graustark were unimpressed by the swift approach and abrupt arrival of Mr. Blithers. His coming had been heralded for days in advance. The city was rudely expectant, the court uneasy.

When the special train pulled into the station Mr. Blithers turned to his wife and said:

"Cheer up, Lou. This isn't a funeral."

"But there is quite a mob out there," she said, peering through the car window. "How can we be sure that they are friendly?"

"Don't you worry," said Mr. Blithers confidently. "They are not likely to throw rocks at the goose that lays the golden egg."

The crowd was big, immobile, surly. It lined the sidewalks in the vicinity of the station and stared with curious, half closed eyes at the portly capitalist and his party, which, by the way, was rendered somewhat imposing in size by augmentation in the shape of lawyers from Paris and London, clerks and stenographers from the Paris office, to say nothing of a lady's maid, a valet, a private secretary and a doctor.

He was somewhat amazed and disgruntled by the absence of silk hat ambassadors from the castle, with words of welcome for him on his arrival. There was a plentiful supply of policemen, but no cabinet ministers. He was on the point of censuring his secretary for not making it clear to the government that he was due to arrive at such and such an hour and minute when a dapper young man in uniform—he couldn't tell whether he was a patrolman or a captain—came up and saluted.

"I am William W. Blithers," said the multimillionaire sharply.

"I am an official guide and interpreter, sir," announced the young man suavely.

"Not necessary—not necessary at all," exploded Mr. Blithers. "Any one desiring to speak to me will have to do it in English." He then marched out to the carriages.

He was in some doubt at first, but as his carriage passed swiftly between the staring ranks on the sidewalks he began to doff his hat and bow to the right and left. His smiles were returned by the multitude, and so his progress was more or less of a triumph after all.

At the Regengetz he found additional cause for irritation. No one was there to receive him except the ingratiating manager of the establishment.

The manager rubbed his hands and smiled. "This is one of our gala days, Mr. Blithers. You could not have arrived at a time more opportune. I have taken the precaution to reserve chairs for you on the veranda. The procession will pass directly in front of the hotel on its way to Castle avenue.

"What procession?" demanded Mr. Blithers.

"The prince is returning today from his trip around the world," said the manager.

"He ought to have been back long ago," said Mr. Blithers wrathfully and mopped his brow with a hand rendered unsteady by a mental convulsion. He was thinking of his hat lifting experience.

True to schedule, the procession passed the hotel at 5.

Prince Robin sat in the royal coach, and his brown, handsome, manly face was aglow with smiles. Instead of a silk hat he lifted a gay and

"Welcome home! Welcome! Hurrah!"

far from immaculate conception in straw; instead of a glittering uniform he wore a suit of blue serge and a peculiarly American tie of crimson hue. He looked more like a popular athlete returning from conquests abroad than a prince of ancient lineage. But the crowd cheered itself hoarse over this bright faced youngster who rode by in a coach of gold and brandished a singularly unregal chapeau.

His alert eyes were searching the crowd along the street, in the balconies and windows with an eager intensity. He was looking for the sweet familiar face of the loveliest girl on earth. If she were there he wondered what her thoughts might be on beholding the humble R. Schmidt in the role of a royal prince receiving the laudations of the loving multitude!

Passing the Regengetz, his eyes swept the rows of cheering people banked upon its wide terrace and verandas. He saw Mr. and Mrs. Blithers well down in front, and for a second his heart seemed to stand still. Would she be with them? It was with a distinct sense of relief that he realized that she was not with the smiling Americans.

Mr. Blithers waved his hat and, instead of shouting the incomprehensible greeting of the native spectators, called out in vociferous tones:

"Welcome home! Welcome! Hurrah!"

"Oh, what a remarkably handsome, manly boy he is, Will," sighed Mrs. Blithers.

Mr. Blithers nodded his head proudly. "He certainly is. I'll bet my head that Maud is crazy about him already. She can't help it, Lou. That trip on the Jupiter was a godsend. We'll have plain sailing from now on, Lou."

Mr. Blithers indeed experienced plain sailing for the ensuing twenty hours. It was not until just before he set forth at 2 the next afternoon to attend by special appointment a meeting of the cabinet in the council chamber at the castle that he encountered the first symptom of squalls ahead.

He had sent his secretary to the castle with a brief note suggesting an early conference. It naturally would be of an informal character, as there was no present business before them. The contracts had already been signed by the government and by his authorized agents. So far as the loan was concerned there was nothing more to be said.

There was a distinct cloud on the financial horizon, however, a vague shadow at present, but prophetic of storm. It was perfectly clear to the nobles that when these bonds matured Mr. Blithers would be in a position to exact payment, and as they matured in twelve years from date he was likely to be pretty much alive and kicking when the hour of reckoning arrived.

Mr. Blithers was in the mood to be amiable. He anticipated considerable pleasure in visiting the ancient halls of his prospective grandchildren.

The first shock to the placidity of Mr. Blithers came with the brief note in reply to his request for an informal conference. The lord chamberlain curtly informed him that the cabinet would be in session at 2 and would be pleased to grant him an audience of half an hour, depending on his promptness in appearing.

Mr. Blithers was not used to being granted audiences. He consoled himself, however, with the thought that matters would not always be as they were at present. There would be a decided change of tune later on.

It would be folly to undertake the depiction of Mr. Blithers' first impressions of the castle and its glories. To begin with, he lost no small amount of his assurance when he discovered that the great gates in the wall surrounding the park were guarded by resplendent dragoons who demanded his "pass." After the officer in charge had inspected the lord chamberlain's card as if he had never seen one before, he ceremoniously indicated to a warden that the gates were to be opened. There was a great clanking of chains, the drawing of iron bolts, the whirl of a windlass, and the ponderous gates swung slowly ajar.

Mr. Blithers caught his breath—and from that instant until he found himself crossing the great hall in the wake of an attendant delegated to conduct him to the council chamber his sensations are not to be described. It is only necessary to say that he was in a reverential condition, and that is saying a great deal for Mr. Blithers.

He was ushered into a chamber, at the opposite end of which was a large, imposing door—closed. Beside this door stood a slim, erect figure in the red, blue and gold uniform of an officer of the castle guard. As Mr. Blithers approached this rigid figure he recognized a friend, and a warm glow pervaded his heart. There could be no mistaking the smart mustache and supercilious eyebrows. It was Lieutenant Dank.

"How do you do?" said Mr. Blithers. "Glad to see you again." His voice sounded unnatural. He extended his hand.

Dank gave him a ceremonious salute, bowed slightly, but without a smile, and then threw open the door.

"Mr. Blithers, my lords," he announced, and stood aside to let the stranger in a strange land pass within.

(To be continued)

BIG ATTRACTIONS AT FAIR

Helena, September 21st.—Hundreds of workmen are busy this week transforming the Montana State Fair grounds from a place of empty buildings into the finest exhibit halls of any state fair in the country. County exhibits from 28 sections will have displays at Helena, while each portion of the state will be represented in the individual displays when the fair opens next Monday morning to continue through the week of September 25-30.

Secretary R. S. Skinner has outlined the fullest week of attractions ever listed for a state fair. Typically western in its spirit will be the relay program, with $2,000 offered in the women's relay race and $1,500 offered to the men riders. Auto polo, auto races, motorcycle contests, running races and harness events will be reeled off on the track with motion picture speed.

Helena will be a bevy of excitement in the evenings. King Karnival will reign supreme after dark on the down-town streets, while DeLloyd Thompson, fearless air fiend, will circle above the capital city and drop harmless bombs on the state capital. In the day time he will fly at the fair grounds, flying upside down and racing with the auto speed-artists.

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Helena, Montana

Sept. 25 to 30, 1916

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have been authorized from Anaconda, Butte, Great Falls, Billings, Lewistown, Kalispell and all points on the Great Northern Railway in Montana to Helena account this fair. Tickets will be good for return until October 2, 1916. Make your plans to attend this Fair and take your family with you.

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