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THE PRINCE OF GRAUSTARK

By
GEORGE BARR M'UTCHEON

Author of "Graustark,"
"Beverly of Graustark," Etc.

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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.

Prince Robin is accompanied by Count Quinnox, minister of war; Lieutenant Dank and Hobbs, the valet. The prince had balked at a matrimonial alliance with the Princess of Dawabergen, both of them wishing to choose for themselves. Mr. Blithers visits the Kings uninvited.

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 if 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 in the Jupiter with an aged companion for father schemes to get them both on the same ship.

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

(CONTINUED FROM LAST WEEK)

At that very instant R. Schmidt opened his eyes. It must have been a kindly poke by the god of sleep that aroused him so opportunely; but, even so, the toe of a shoe could not have created a graver catastrophe than that which immediately befell him. He completely lost his head. If one had suddenly asked what had become of it he couldn't have told, not for the life of him. For that matter he couldn't have put his finger, so to speak, on any part of his person and proclaimed with confidence that it belonged to R. Schmidt of Vienna. He was looking directly up into a pair of dark, startled eyes, in which there was a very pretty confusion and a far from impervious blink.

"I beg your pardon," said the older woman without the faintest trace of embarrassment—indeed, with some asperity—"I think you are occupying one of our chairs."

He scrambled out of the steamer rug and came to his feet, blushing to the roots of his hair.

"I beg your pardon," he stammered and found his awkwardness rewarded by an extremely sweet smile—in the eyes of the one he addressed.

"We were looking for a letter that I am quite sure was left in my chair," said she.

"A letter?" he murmured vaguely and at once began to search with his eyes.

"From her father," volunteered the elderly one, as if it were a necessary bit of information. Then she jerked the rug away, and three pairs of eyes examined the place where R. Schmidt had been reclining. "That's odd. Did you happen to see it when you sat down, sir?"

"I am confident that there was no letter"—began he and then allowed his gaze to rest on the name card at the top of the chair. "This happens to be my chair, madam," he went on, pointing to the card. "R. Schmidt. I am very sorry."

"The steward must have put that card there while you were at luncheon, dear. What right has he to sell our chairs over again? I shall report this to the captain!"

"I am quite positive that this is my chair, sir," said the girl, a red spot in each cheek. "It was engaged two days ago. I have been occupying it since—but it really doesn't matter. It has your name on it now, so I suppose I shall have to—"

"Not at all," he made haste to say. "It is yours. There has been some miserable mistake. These deck stewards are always messing things up. Still, it is rather a mystery about the letter. I assure you I saw no—"

"No doubt the steward who changed the cards had sufficient intelligence to remove all incriminating evidence," said she coolly. "We shall find it among the lost, strayed and stolen articles, no doubt. Pray retain the chair, Mr.—" She peered at the name card—"Mr. Schmidt."

Her cool insolence succeeded in nettling a nature that was usually most gentle. He spoke with characteristic directness.

"Thank you, I shall do so. We thereby manage to strike a fair average. I seize your deck chair, you seize my table. We are quits."

She smiled faintly. "R. Schmidt did not sound young and gentle, but old and hateful. That is why I seized the table. I expected to find R.

Schmidt a fat old German with very bad manners. Instead, you are neither fat, old nor disagreeable. You took it very nicely, Mr. Schmidt, and I am undone. Won't you permit me to restore your table to you?"

CHAPTER IX.

The Prince Chats With Miss Guile.
THE elderly lady was tapping the deck with a most impatient foot. "Really, my dear, we were quite within our rights in approaching the head waiter. He"—

"He said it was engaged," interrupted the young lady. "R. Schmidt was the name he gave, and I informed him it meant nothing for me. I am very sorry, Mr. Schmidt. I suppose it was all because I am so accustomed to having my own way."

"In that case it is all very easy to understand," said he, "for I have always longed to be in a position where I could have my own way. I am sure that if I could have it I would be a most overbearing, selfish person."

"We must inquire at the office for the letter, dear, before—"

"It may have dropped behind the chair," said the girl.

"Right!" cried R. Schmidt, dragging the chair away and pointing in triumph at the missing letter. He stooped to recover the missive, but she was quick to forestall him. With a little gasp she pounced upon it and, like a child, proceeded to hold it behind her back. He stiffened. "I remember that you said it was from your father."

She hesitated an instant and then held it forth for his inspection, rather adroitly concealing the postmark with her thumb. It was addressed to "Miss B. Guile, S. S. Jupiter, New York City, N. Y.," and typewritten.

"It is only fair that we should be quits in every particular," she said, with a frank smile.

He bowed. "A letter of introduction," he said, "in the strictest sense of the word. You have already had my card thrust upon you, so everything is quite regular. And now it is only right and proper that I should see what has become of your chairs. Permit me—"

"Really, Miss Guile," interposed her companion, "this is quite irregular. I may say it is unusual. Pray allow me to suggest—"

"I think it is only right that Mr. Schmidt should return good for evil," interrupted the girl gayly. "Please inquire, Mr. Schmidt. No doubt the deck steward will know."

Again the prince bowed, but this time there was amusement instead of uncertainty in his eyes. It was the first time that any one had ever urged him, even by inference, to "fetch and carry." Moreover, she was extremely cool about it, as one who expects much of young men in serjeants' and cutting caps. He found himself wondering what she would say if he were to suddenly announce that he was the Prince of Graustark. The thought tickled his fancy, accounting, no doubt, for the even deeper bow that he gave her.

"They can't be very far away," he observed quite meekly. "Oh, I say, steward! One moment, here." A deck steward approached with alacrity. "What has become of Miss Guile's chair?"

The young man touched his cap and beamed joyously upon the fair young lady.

"Ach! See how I have forgot! It is here! The best place on the deck on any deck. See! Two—side by side—above the door, away from the draft—see, in the corner, ha, ha! Yes! Two by side. The very best. Miss Guile complains of the draft from the door. I exchanged the chairs. See! But I forgot to speak. Yes! See!"

And, sure enough, there were the chairs of Miss Guile and her companion snugly stowed away in the corner, standing at right angles to the long row that lined the deck, the foot rests pointed directly at the chair R. Schmidt had just vacated, not more than a yard and a half away.

"How stupid!" exclaimed Miss Guile. This is much better. So sorry, Mr. Schmidt, to have disturbed you. I abhor drafts, don't you?"

"Not to the extent that I shall move out of this one," he replied gallantly, "now that I've got an undisputed claim to it. Are you not going to sit down, now that we've captured the disappearing chair?"

"No," she said, and he fancied he saw regret in her eyes. "I am going to my room—if I can find it. No doubt it also is lost. This seems to be a day for misplacing things."

"At any rate, permit me to thank you for discovering me, Miss Guile."

"Oh, I daresay I shall misplace you, too, Mr. Schmidt." She said it so insolently that he flushed as he drew himself up and stepped aside to allow her to pass. For an instant their eyes met, and the sign of the humble was not to be found in the expression of either.

"Even that will be something for me to look forward to, Miss Guile," said he. Far from being vexed, she favored him with a faint smile of—was it wonder or admiration?

Then she moved away, followed by the uneasy lady—who was old enough to be her mother and wasn't.

Robin remained standing for a moment, looking after her, and somehow he felt that his dream was not yet ended. She turned the corner of the deck building and was lost to sight. He sat down, only to arise almost instantly, moved by a livelier curiosity than he ever had felt before. Conscious of a certain feeling of stealth, he scrutinized the cards in the backs of the two chairs. The steward was collecting the discarded steamer rugs farther down the deck, and the few passengers who occupied chairs appeared to be snoozing—all of which he took in with his first appraising glance. "Miss Guile" and

"Mrs. Gaston" were the names he read.

"Americans," he mused. "Young lady and chaperon, that's it. A real American beauty! And Blithers loudly boasts that his daughter is the prettiest girl in America! Shades of Venus! Can there be such a thing on earth as a prettier girl than this one? Can nature have performed the impossible? Is America so full of lovely girls that this one must take second place to a daughter of Blithers? I wonder if she knows the imperial Maud. I'll make it a point to inquire."

Moved by a sudden restlessness, he decided that he was in need of exercise. After completely circling the deck once he decided that he did not need the exercise after all. His walk had not benefited him in the least. He returned to his chair. As he turned into the dry, snug corner he came to an abrupt stop and stared. Miss Guile was sitting in her chair, neatly incased in a mummy-like sheath of gray that covered her slim body to the waist.

She was quite alone in her nook, and reading. An astonishing intertidity induced him to speak to her after a lapse of five or six minutes, and so surprising was the impulse that he blurted out his question without preamble.

"How did you manage to get back so quickly?" he inquired.

She looked up, and for an instant there was something like alarm in her lovely eyes, as of one caught in the perpetration of a guilty act.

"I beg your pardon," she said, rather indistinctly.

"I was away less than eight minutes," he declared, and she was confronted by a wonderfully frank smile that never failed to work its charm. To his surprise, a shy smile grew in her eyes, and her warm red lips twitched uncertainly. He had expected a cold rebuttal. "You must have dropped through the awning?"

"Your imagination is superior to that employed by the author of this book," she said, "and that is saying a good deal, Mr.—Mr.—"

"Schmidt," he supplied cheerfully. "Many I inquire what book you are reading?"

"You would not be interested. It is by an American."

"I have read a great many American novels," said he stiffly. "My father was an American. Awfully jolly books, most of them."

"I looked you up in the passenger list a moment ago," she said coolly. "Your home is in Vienna. I like Vienna."

He was looking rather intently at the book, now partly lowered. "Isn't that the passenger list you have concealed in that book?" he demanded.

"It is," she replied promptly. "You will pardon a natural curiosity? I wanted to see whether you were from New York."

"May I look at it, please?" She closed the book. "It isn't necessary. I am from New York."

"By the way, do you happen to know a Miss Blithers—Maud Blithers?"

Miss Guile frowned reflectively. "Blithers? The name is a familiar

one. Maud Blithers? What is she like?"

"She's supposed to be very good looking. I've never seen her."

"How queer to be asking me if I know her, then. Why do you ask?"

"I've heard so much about her lately. She is the daughter of William Blithers, the great capitalist."

"Oh, I know who he is," she exclaimed. "Perfect roodies of money, hasn't he?"

(To be continued next week)

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