

"What do you think of it?" demanded the Prince. "Of all the confounded impudence—" began the Count healthily



The PRINCE of GRAUSTARK

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CHAPTER X.

AN HOUR ON DECK.

MISS GUILLE literally was blown into his presence. He sprang to his feet to check her swift approach before she could be dashed against the wall or upon the heap of chairs in the corner. The deep roll of the vessel had ended so suddenly that she was thrown off her balance, at best precariously maintained in the hurricane that swept her along the deck. She was projected with considerable violence against the waiting figure of R. Schmidt, who had hastily braced himself for the impact of the slender body in the thick sea-ulster. She uttered an excited little shriek as she came bang up against him and found his ready arms closing about her shoulders.

"Oh, goodness!" she gasped, with what little breath she had left, and then began to laugh as she freed herself in confusion—a very pretty confusion he recalled later on, after he had recovered to some extent from the effects of an exceedingly severe bump on the back of his head. "How awkward!"

"Not at all," he proclaimed, retaining a grip on one of her arms until the ship showed some signs of resuming its way eastward instead of downward.

"I am sure it must have hurt dreadfully," she cried. "Nothing hurts worse than a bump. It seemed as though you must have splintered the wall."

"I have a singularly hard head," said he, and forthwith felt the back of it.

"Will you please stand ready to receive boarders? My maid is following me, poor thing, and I can't afford to have her smashed to pieces. Here she is!"

RETROSPECTIVE—Prince Robin of Graustark, traveling about the world, arrives in the Catskills to visit the Truxton Kings. W. W. Blithers, self-made multimillionaire and doing father of an only daughter, Maude, prematurely decides on the Prince as a son-in-law. He knows that Graustark is financially embarrassed as a result of the Balkan wars, and with the Blithers millions in mind he confides his domestic ambition to his wife. Blithers calls at the King villa and meets the Prince. He decides to lend Graustark \$16,000,000, and departs for New York to confer with Count Quirnox, the Graustark Minister of War. Meanwhile it is decided to give a ball at Blitherwood in honor of Prince Robin. Maude does not attend the ball, and Mr. Blithers, meeting the Prince the next day, apologizes and invites him to dinner and to be his son-in-law. Maude writes her parents that she and her former governess are going abroad, she under an assumed name, and expect to book passage on the Jupiter. Coincidentally Prince Robin plans his return to Graustark, and sails under the name R. Schmidt, to avoid publicity. He meets a mysterious Miss Guile on board and is infatuated.

Quite a pretty maid, with wide, horrified eyes and a pale green complexion came hustling around the corner. R. Schmidt, albeit a prince, received her with open arms.

"Merci, m'sieur!" she squealed and added something in muffled French that strangely reminded him of what Hobbs had said in English. Then she deposited an armful of rugs and magazines at Prince Robin's feet, and clutched wildly at a post actually some ten feet away, but which appeared to be coming toward her with obliging swiftness, so nicely was the deck rotating for her. "Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!"

"You may go back to bed, Marie," cried her mistress in some haste.

"But ze rug, I feex it —" groaned the unhappy

maid, and then once more: "Merci, m'sieur!" She clung to the arm he extended, and tried bravely to smile her thanks.

"Here! Go in through this door," he said, bracing the door open with his elbow. "You'll be all right in a little while. Keep your nerve." He closed the door after her and turned to the amused Miss Guile. "Well, it's an ill wind that blows no good," he said enigmatically, and she flushed under the steady smile in his eyes. "Allow me to arrange your rug for you, Miss Guile."

"Thank you, no. I think I would better go inside. It is really too windy —"

"The wind can't get at you back here in this cubby-hole," he protested. "Do sit down. I'll have you as snug as a bug in a rug before you can say Jack Robinson. See! Now stick 'em out and I'll wrap it around them. There! You're as neatly done up as a mummy and a good deal better off, because you are a long way short of being two thousand years old."

"How is your head, Mr. Schmidt?" she inquired with grave concern. "You seem to be quite crazy. I hope —"

"Every one is a little bit mad, don't you think? Especially in moments of great excitement. I dare say my head has been turned quite appreciably, and I'm glad that you've been kind enough to notice it. Where is Mrs. Gaston?" He was vastly exhilarated.

She regarded him with eyes that sparkled and belied the unamiable nature of her reply.

"The poor lady is where she is not at all likely to be annoyed, Mr. Schmidt."

Then she took up a magazine and coolly began to