

# The PRINCE of GRAUSTARK

By  
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**BREWSTER'S MILLIONS**, Etc.

Illustrations by R. F. Schabelitz.



R. BLITHERS, triumphant, left Red Roof shortly after luncheon; Mr. Blithers, dismayed, arrived at Blitherwood a quarter of an hour later. He had had his way with Robin, who, after all, was coming to dinner that evening with Count Quinnox. The

Prince, after a few words in private with the Count, changed his mind and accepted Mr. Blithers' invitation with a liveliness that was mistaken for eagerness by that gentleman, who had made very short work of subduing Mrs. King when she tried to tell him that her own dinner-party would be ruined if the principal guest defaulted. He was gloating over his victory up to the instant he reached his own lodge gates. There dismay sat patiently waiting for him in the shape of a messenger from the local telegraph office in the village below. He had seen Mr. Blithers approaching in the distance, and, with an astuteness that argued well for his future success in life, calmly sat down to wait instead of pedaling his decrepit bicycle up the long slope to the villa.

He delivered a telegram and kindly vouchsafed the information that it was from New York.

Mr. Blithers experienced a queer sinking of the heart as he gazed at the envelope. Something warned him that if he opened it in the presence of the messenger he would say something that a young boy ought not to hear.

"It's from Maud," said the obliging boy, beaming good-nature. It cost him a quarter, that bit of gentility, for Mr. Blithers at once said something that a messenger boy ought to hear, and ordered Jackson to go ahead.

IT WAS from Maud and it said: "I shall stay in town a few days longer. It is delightfully cool here. Dear old Miranda is at the Ritz with me and we are having a fine spree. Don't worry about money. I find I have a staggering balance in the bank. The cashier showed me where I had made a mistake in subtraction of an even ten thousand. I was amazed to find what a big difference a little figure makes. Have made no definite plans but will write mother tonight. Please give my love to the Prince. Have you seen today's *Town Truth*? Or worse, has he seen it? Your loving daughter, Maud."

The butler was sure it was apoplexy, but the chauffeur, out of a wide experience, announced, behind his hand, that he would be all right the instant the words ceased to stick in his throat. And he was right. Mr. Blithers was all right. Not even the chauffeur had seen him when he was more so.

A little later on, after he had cooled off to a quite considerable extent, Mr. Blithers lighted a cigar and sat down in the hall outside his wife's bedchamber door. She was having her beauty nap. Not even he possessed the temerity to break in upon that. He sat and listened for the first sound that would indicate the appeasement of beauty, occasionally hitching his chair a trifle nearer to the door in his agony of impatience. By the time Jackson returned from the village with word that a copy of *Town Truth* was not to be had until the next day, he was so close to the door that if any one had happened to stick a hat pin through the keyhole at precisely the right instant it would have punctured his left ear with appalling results.

"What are we going to do about it?" he demanded three minutes after entering the chamber. His wife was prostrate on the luxurious couch from which she had failed to arise when he burst in upon her with the telegram in his hand.

"Oh, the foolish child," she moaned. "If she only knew how adorable he is she wouldn't be acting in this perfectly absurd manner. Every girl who was

R. Schmidt, seated in the Ritz restaurant, looked fairly in the eyes of the loveliest girl he had ever seen.



here last night is madly in love with him. Why must Maud be so obstinate?"

Mr. Blithers was very careful not to mention his "roadside" experience with the Prince, and you may be sure that he said nothing about his proposition to the young man. He merely declared, with a vast bitterness in his soul, that the Prince was coming to dinner but what the deuce was the use? Maud would be missing. "She ought to be soundly—spoken to," said he, breaking the sentence with a hasty gulp. "Now, Lou, there's just one thing to do. I must go to New York on the midnight train and get her. That woman was all right as a tutor, but hanged if I like to see a daughter of mine traipsing around New York with a school teacher. She—"

"You forget that she has retired on a competence. She is not in active employment, Will. You forget that she is one of the Van Valkens."

"There you go, talking about good old families again. Why is it that so blamed many of your fine old blue stockings are hunting jobs—"

"Now don't be vulgar, Will," she cut in. "Maud is quite safe with Miranda, and you know it perfectly well, so don't talk like that. I think it would be a fearful mistake for you to go to New York. She would never forgive you and, what is more to the point, she wouldn't budge a step if you tried to bully her into coming home with you. You know it quite as well as I do."

He groaned. "Give me a chance to think, Lou. Just half a chance, that's all I ask. I'll work out some—"

"Wait until her letter comes. We'll see what she has to say. Perhaps she intends coming home tomorrow, who can tell? This may be a pose. Give her free rein and she'll not pull against the bit. It

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, Maud, 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 Quinnox, the Graustark Minister of War. Meanwhile it is decided to give a ball at Blitherwood in honor of Prince Robin. Maud 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. Chapters VII and VIII today.

may surprise her into doing the sensible thing if we calmly ignore her altogether. I've been thinking it over, and I've come to the conclusion that we'll be doing the wisest thing in the world if we pay absolutely no attention to her."

"By George, I believe you've hit it, Lou! She'll be looking for a letter or telegram from me and

she'll not receive a word, eh. She'll be expecting us to beg her to come back, and all the while we just sit tight and keep mum. We'll fool her, by thunder! By tomorrow afternoon she'll be so curious to know what's got into us that she'll come home on a run. You're right. It takes a thief to catch a thief,—which is another way of saying that it takes a woman to understand a woman. We'll sit tight and let Maud worry for a day or two. It'll do her good."

Maud's continued absence was explained to Prince Robin that evening, not by the volcanic Mr. Blithers but by his practiced and adroit better-half, who had no compunction in ascribing it to the alarming condition of a very dear friend in New York,—one of the Van Valkens, you know.

"Maud is so tender-hearted, so loyal, so really sweet about her friends, that nothing in the world could have induced her to leave this dear friend, don't you know?"

"I am extremely sorry not to have met your daughter," said Robin very politely.

"Oh, but she will be here in a day or two, Prince." "Unfortunately, we are leaving tomorrow, Mrs. Blithers."

"Tomorrow?" murmured Mrs. Blithers, aghast.

"I received a cablegram today advising me to return to Edelweiss at once. We are obliged to cut short a very charming visit with Mr. and Mrs. King