"I beg pardon?"

"I'm sorry. I was speak just called up stairs to me." "What does he say?" I was speaking to the Prince. He

"It was really nothing. He was asking about Hobbs.

"Hobbs? Tell him, please, that if he has any friends he would like to have invited we shall be only too proud to ___"
"Oh, thank you! I'll tell him."

"You must not let him go away before

shall try my best, Mrs. Blithers. It is awfully kind of you to ask us to

You must all come up to dinner either tomorrow night or the night after. I shall be so ghad if you will suggest anything that can help us to make the ball a success. You see, I know how terribly elever you are, Mrs. King."

"I am dreadfully stupid."

"Nonsense!"

"I'm sorry to say we're diving out tomorrow night and on Thursday we are having some people here

"Can't you bring them all up to Blitherwood? We'd be delighted to have them, I'm sure."

"I'm afraid I couldn't manage it. They - well,

you see, they are in mourning."
"Oh, I see. Well, perhaps Mand and I could run
in and see you for a few minutes tomorrow or next day, just to talk things over a little — what's that. Mand? I beg your pardon, Mrs. King. Abem! Well, I'll call you up tomorrow, if you don't mind being bothered about a silly old ball. Good-by, Thank you so much."

MRS. KING confronted Robin in the lower hall a few seconds later and roundly berated him for shouting up the steps that Hobbs ought to be invited to the ball. Prince Robin rolled on a conch and roared with delight. Lieutenant Dank, as became an officer of the Royal Guard, stood at attention - in the bow window with his back to the room, very red about the ears and rigid to the bursting

"I suppose, however, we'll have to keep on the good side of the Blithers' syndicate," said Robin soberly, after his mirth had subsided before her wrath. "Good Lord, Aunt Loraine, I simply cannot go up there and stand in line like a freak in a side show for all the ladies and girls to gape at. I'll get sick the day of the party, that's what I'll do, and you can tell 'em how desolated I am over my misfortune."

"They've got their eyes on you Bobby." she said

"They've got their eyes on you, Bobby," she said flatly. "You can't escape so easily as all that. If you're not very, very careful they'll have you married to the charming Miss Maud before you can

say Jack Rabbit." Think that's their idea?"

"Unquestionably."

He stretched himself lazily. "Well, it may be that she's the very one I'm looking for, Auntie. Who knows ?"

You silly boy!"

"She may be the Golden Girl in every sense of the term," said be lightly.

You say she's pretty?"

"My notion of beauty and yours may not agree at all."

That's not an answer."

"Well, I consider her to be a very good-looking

"Blonde?"

Mixed. Light brown hair and very dark eyes and A little taller than I, more graceful and a splendid horse-woman. I've seen her riding. "Astride?"

"No. I've seen her in a ball gown, too. Most men ink she's stunning."

"Well, let's have a game of billiards," said he, dismissing Maud in a way that would have caused the prond Mr. Blithers to reel with indignation

A little later on, at the billiard table, Mrs. King remarked, apropos of nothing and quite ont of a clear sky, so to speak

"And she'll do anything her parents command her to do, that's the worst of it.

What are you talking about? It's your shot." "If they order her to marry a title, she'll do it. That's the way she's been brought up, I'm afraid." "Meaning Mand?"

"Certainly. Who else? Poor thing, she hasn't a chance in the world, with that mother of hers

"Shoot, please. Mark up six for me, Dank,"
"Wait till you see her, Bobby,"
"All right. I'll wait," said he cheerfully.

The next day Count Quinnox and King returned from the city, coming up in a private car with Mr. Blithers himself.

"I'll have Mand drive me over this afternoon," said Mr. Blithers, as they parted at the station.

But Mand did not drive him over that afternoon. The pride, joy and hope of the Blithers family flatly refused to be a party to any such arrange-ment, and set out for a horse-back ride in a direction

that took her as far away from Rod Roof as possible.
"What's come over the girl?" demanded Mr.
Blithers, completely nonphissed. "She's never acted

like this before, Lou.' "Some silly notion about being made a laughing-stock of, I gather," said his wife. "Heaven knows Eve talked to her till I'm utterly worn out. She says she won't be bullied into even meeting the Prince, much loss marrying him. I've never known her to be so pig-headed. Usually I can make her see things in a sensible way. She would have married the duke, I'm sure, if — if you hadn't put a stop to it on account of his so-called habits. She —"
"Well, it's turned out for the best, hasn't it? Isn't

a prince better than a duke?" You've said all that before, Will. I wanted her to run down with me this morning to talk the ball over with Mrs. King, and what do you think happened?"

She wouldn't go?"

"Worse than that. She wouldn't let me go. Now,

things are coming to a pretty pass when ——" "Never mind. I'll talk to her," said Mr. Blithers, somewhat bleakly despite

somewhat bleakly despite his confident front, "She loves her old dad. I can do anything with her." "She's on a frightfully high horse lately," sighed Mrs. Blithers fretfully. "It

it can't be that young

Scoville, can it?" "If I thought it was, I'd - I'd --- " There is no telling what Mr. Blithers would have done to young Scoville, at the moment, for he couldn't think of anything dire enough to inupon the suspected

meddler. "In any event, it's dreadfully upsetting to me, Will. She—she won't listen to anything. And here's something else: She declares she won't stay here for the ball on Friday night."

MR. BLITHERS had her repeat it, and then almost missed the chair in sitting down, he was so precipitous about it.

"Won't stay for her own ball?" he bellowed.

"She says it isn't her ball," lamented his wife. "If it isn't hers, in the

name of God whose is it?"
"Ask her, not me," flared Mrs. Blithers. "And don't glare at me like that. I've had nothing but glares since you went away. 1 thought I was doing the very nicest thing in the world when I suggested the ball. It would bring

them together-"The only two it will actually bring together, it seems, are those damned prize-fighters. They'll get together all right, but what good is it going to do us. if Mand's going to act like See here, Lou, I've got things fixed so that the Prince of Groostuck can't very well do anything but ask Mand to-

"That's just it!" she exclaimed, "Mand sees

through the whole arrangement, Will. She said last night that she wouldn't be at all surprised if you offered to assume Granstark's debt to Russia in order to

"That's just what I've done, old girl," said he in imph. "I'll have 'em sewed up so tight by next triumph. week that they can't move without asking me to loosen the strings. And you can tell Maud once more for me that I'll get this Prince for her if ---- "

"But she doesn't want him!

"She doesn't know what she wants!" he roared. "Where is she going?"

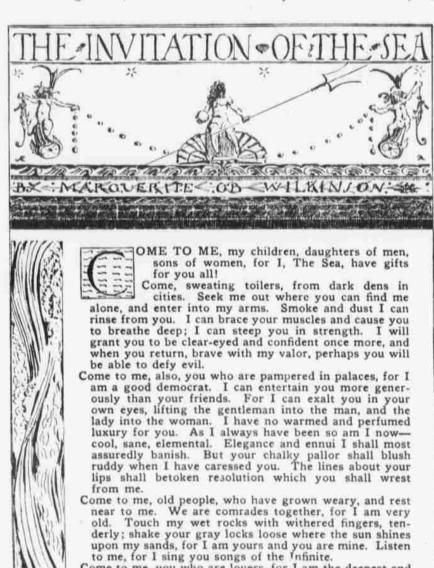
"You saw her start off on Katydid, so why-

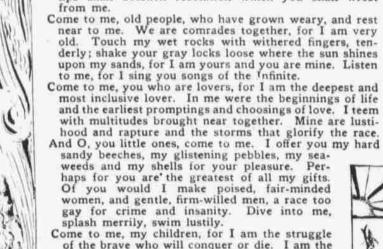
"I mean on the day of the ball."

"To New York." "By gad, I'll - I'll see about that," he grated. "I'll see that she doesn't leave the grounds if I have to put guards at every gate. She's got to be reason-able. What does she think I'm putting sixteen millions into the Grasstork treasury for! She's got to stay here for the ball. Why, it would be a crime for her to — but what's the use of talking about it! She'll be here and she'll lead the grand march with the Prince. I've got it all

I can do. She swears she won't marry a man she's never seen,"

"Ain't we trying to show him to her?" he snorted. "She won't have to marry (Continued on Page 8)





of the brave who will conquer or die. I am the going and coming of the great. I am health and prowess and achievement!





