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"Really, Mr. Blithers, I cannot—I'll fix it with Mrs. King. Don't you worry."

"May I be pardoned for observing that Mrs. King, greatly as I love her, is not invested with the power to govern my actions?" said Robin haughtily.

"And may I be pardoned for suggesting that it is your duty to your people to completely understand this loan of mine before you agree to accept it?" said Mr. Blithers, compressing his lips.

"Forgive me, Mr. Blithers, but it is not altogether improbable that Graustark may secure the money elsewhere."

"It is not only improbable but impossible," said Mr. Blithers flatly.

"Absolutely," said the millionaire so significantly that Robin would have been a dot not to grasp the situation. Nothing could have been clearer than the fact that Mr. Blithers believed it to be in his power to block any effort Graustark might make in other directions to secure the much-needed money.

"Will you come to the point, Mr. Blithers?" said the young Prince, stopping abruptly in the middle of the road and facing his companion.

MR. BLITHERS was not long in getting to the point. In the first place, he was hot and tired and his shoes were hurting; in the second place, he felt that he knew precisely how to handle these money-seeking scions of nobility. He planted himself squarely in front of the Prince and jammed his hands deep into his coat pockets.

"The day my daughter is married to the man of my choice, I will hand over to that man exactly twenty million dollars," he said slowly, impressively.

"Yes, go on." "The sole object I have in life is to see my girl happy and at the same time at the top of the heap. She is worthy of any man's love. She is as good as gold. She—"

"The point is this, then: You would like to have me for a son-in-law?"

"Yes," said Mr. Blithers. Robin grinned. He was amused in spite of himself. "You take it for granted that I can be bought?"

"I have not made any such statement."

"And how much will you hand over to the man of her choice when she marries him?" inquired the young man.

"You will be her choice," said the other, without the quiver of an eyelash.

"How can you be sure of that? Has she no mind of her own?"

"It isn't incomprehensible that she could fall in love with you, is it?"

"It might be possible, of course, provided she is not already in love with some one else."

Mr. Blithers started. "Have you heard any one say that—but, that's nonsense! She's not in love with any one, take it from me. And just to show you how fair I am to her—and to you—I'll stake my head you fall in love with each other before you've been together a week."

"But we're not going to be together for a week."

"I should have said before you've known each other a week. You will find—"

"Just a moment, please. We can cut all this very short, and go about our business. I've never seen your daughter, nor, to my knowledge, has she ever laid eyes upon me. From what I've heard of her, she has a mind of her own. You will not be able to force her into a marriage that doesn't appeal to her, and you may be quite sure, Mr. Blithers, that you can't force me into one. I do not want you to feel that I have a single disparaging thought concerning Miss Blithers. It is possible that I could fall in love with her inside of a week, or even sooner. But I don't intend to, Mr. Blithers, any more than she

intends to fall in love with me. You say that twenty millions will go to the man she marries, if he is your choice. Well, I don't give a hang, sir, if you make it fifty millions. The chap who gets it will not be me, so what's the odds? You—"

"Wait a minute, young man," said Mr. Blithers coolly. (He was never anything but cool when under fire.) "Why not wait until you have met my daughter before making a statement like that? After all, am I not the one who is taking chances? Well, I'm willing to risk my girl's happiness with you and that's saying everything when you come right down to it. She will make you happy in—"

"I am not for sale, Mr. Blithers," said Robin abruptly. "Good morning." He turned into the wood and was sauntering away with his chin high in the air when Mr. Blithers called out to him from behind.

"I shall expect you tonight, just the same."

Robin halted, amazed by the man's assurance. He retraced his steps to the roadside.

"Will you pardon a slight feeling of curiosity on my part, Mr. Blithers, if I ask whether your daughter consents to the arrangement you propose. Does she approve of the scheme?"

MR. BLITHERS was honest. "No, she doesn't," he said succinctly. "At least, not at present. I'll be honest with you. She stayed away from the ball last night simply because she did not want to meet you. That's the kind of a girl she is."

"By Jove, I take off my hat to her," cried Robin. "She is a brick, after all. Take it from me, Mr. Blithers, you will not be able to hand over twenty millions without her consent. I believe that I should enjoy meeting her, now that I come to think of it. It would be a pleasure to exchange confidences with a girl of that sort."

Mr. Blithers betrayed agitation. "See here, Prince, I don't want her to know that I've said anything to you about this matter," he said, unconsciously lowering his voice as if fearing that Maud might be somewhere within hearing distance. "This is between you and me. Don't breathe a word of it to her. 'Gad, she'd—she'd skin me alive!' At the very thought of it, he wiped his forehead with unusual vigor.

Robin laughed heartily. "Rest easy, Mr. Blithers. I shall not even think of your proposition again, much less speak of it."

"Come now, Prince; wait until you've seen her. I know you'll get on famously—"

"I should like her to know that I consider her a brick, Mr. Blithers. Is it too much to ask of you? Just tell her that I think she's a brick."

"Tell her yourself," growled Mr. Blithers, looking very black. "You will see her this evening," he added levelly.

"Shall I instruct your chauffeur to come for you up here or will you walk back to—"

"I'll walk to Red Roof," said Mr. Blithers doggedly. "I'm going to ask Mrs. King to let you off for tonight."

**Conclusive Evidence**

IRVIN COBB, writer, and father of a daughter whose cleverness is mentioned by Arnold Bennett in his book on Your United States, lives in Yonkers, which is near New York. Recently, a family moved into the house next door, and within a week little Miss Cobb had drifted in to see them. Casually, she proceeded to tell the lady of the family much about herself, her father, what he did, and a deal of domestic history.

"My father says that you must be nice people, too," said she, in conclusion.

"That's nice," was the pleased response. "And what made him think that, since he has never seen you?"

"Oh, he says you have such nice garbage!" answered the young caller.



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