

and to give up the trip to Washington. Lieutenant Dank left for New York this afternoon to exchange our reservations for the first ship that we can —"

"What's this?" demanded Mr. Blithers, abruptly withdrawing his attention from Count Quinnox who was in the middle of a sentence when the interruption came. They were on the point of going out to dinner. "What's this?"

"The Prince says that he is leaving tomorrow —"

"Nonsense!" exploded Mr. Blithers, with no effort toward geniality. "He doesn't mean it. Why, — why, we haven't signed a single agreement —"

"Fortunately it isn't necessary for me to sign anything, Mr. Blithers," broke in Robin hastily. "The papers are to be signed by the Minister of Finance, and afterwards my signature is attached in approval. Isn't that true, Count Quinnox?"

"I daresay Mr. Blithers understands the situation perfectly," said the Count.

Mr. Blithers looked blank. He *did* understand the situation, that was the worst of it. He knew that although the cabinet had sanctioned the loan by cable, completing the transaction so far as it could be completed at this time, it was still necessary for the Minister of Finance to sign the agreement under the royal seal of Graustark.

"Of course I understand it," he said bluntly. "Still I had it in mind to ask the Prince to put his signature to a sort of preliminary document which would at least assure me that he would sign the final agreement when the time comes. That's only fair, isn't it?"

"Quite fair, Mr. Blithers. The Prince will sign such an article tomorrow or the next day at your office in the city. Pray have no uneasiness, sir. It shall be as you wish. By the way, I understand that your solicitor — your lawyer, I should say — was to be here this evening. It had occurred to me that he might draw up the statement, — if Mrs. Blithers will forgive us in our haste, —"

"He couldn't get here," said Mr. Blithers, and no more. He was thinking too intently of something more important. "What's turned up?"

"Turned up, Mr. Blithers?"

"Yes — in Groostock. What's taking you off in such a hurry?"

"The Prince has been away for nearly six months," said the Count, as if that explained everything.

"Was it necessary to cable for him to come home?" persisted the financier.

"Graustark and Dawsbergen are endeavoring to form an alliance, Mr. Blithers, and Prince Robin's presence at the capital is very much to be desired." "What kind of an alliance?"

THE Count looked bored. "An alliance prescribed for the general improvement of the two races, I should say, Mr. Blithers." He smiled. "It would in no way impair the credit of Graustark, however. It is what you might really describe as a family secret, if you will pardon my flippancy."

The butler announced dinner.

"Wait for a couple of days, Prince, and I'll send you down to New York by special train," said Mr. Blithers.

"Thank you. It is splendid of you. I daresay everything will depend on Dank's success in —"



"Here, sir," said Hobbs, appearing in the bedroom door

"Crawford," said Mr. Blithers to the butler, "ask Mr. Davis to look up the sailings for next week and let me know at once, will you?" Turning to the Prince he went on: "We can wire down tonight and engage passage for next week. Davis is my secretary. I'll have him attend to everything. And now let's forget our troubles."

A great deal was said by her parents about Maud's unfortunate detention in the city. Both of them were decidedly upset by the sudden change in the Prince's plans. Once under pretext of whispering to Crawford about the wine, Mr. Blithers succeeded in transmitting a question to his wife. She shook her head in reply, and he sighed audibly. He had asked if she thought he'd better take the midnight train.

Mr. Davis found that there were a dozen ships sailing the next week, but nothing came of it, for the Prince resolutely declared he would be obliged to take the first available steamer.

"We shall go down tomorrow," he said, and even Mr. Blithers subsided. He looked to his wife in desperation. She failed him for the first time in her life. Her eyes were absolutely messageless.

"I'll go down with you," he said, and then gave his wife a look of defiance.

THE next morning brought Maud's letter to her mother. It said: "Dearest Mother: I enclose the cutting from *Town Truth*. You may see for yourself what a sickening thing it is. The whole world knows by this time that the ball was a joke — a horrible joke. Everybody knows that you are trying to hand me over to Prince Robin neatly wrapped up in bank notes. And everybody knows that he is laughing at us, and he isn't alone in his mirth either. What must the Truxton Kings think of us? I can't bear the thought of meeting that pretty, clever woman face to face. I know I should die of mortification, for, of course, she must believe that I am dying to marry anything on earth that has a title and a pair of legs. Somehow I don't blame you and dad. You really love me, I know, and you want to give me the best that the world affords. But why, oh why, can't you let me choose for myself? I don't object to having a title, but I do object to having a husband that I don't want and who certainly could not, by any chance, want me. You think that I am in love with Channie Scoville. Well, I'm not. I am very fond of him, that's all, and if it came to a pinch I would marry him in preference to any prince on the globe. Today I met a couple of girls who were at the ball. They told me that the Prince is adorable. They are really quite mad about him, and one of them had the nerve to ask what it was going to cost dad to land him. *Town Truth* says he is to cost ten millions! Well, you may just tell dad that I'll help him to practice economy. He needn't pay a nickel for my husband — when I get him. The world is small. It may be that I shall come upon this same Prince Charming some place before it is too late, and fall in love with him all of a heap. Loads of silly girls do fall in love with fairy princes, and I'm just as silly as the rest of them. Ever since I was a little kiddie I've dreamed of marrying a real, lace-and-gold prince, the kind Miranda used to read about in the story books. But I also dreamed that he loved me. There's the rub, you see. How could any prince love a girl who set out to buy him with a lot of silly millions? It's not to be expected. I know it is done in the best society, but I should want my prince to be happy instead of merely comfortable. I should want both of us to live happy ever afterwards."

"So, dearest mother, I am going abroad to forget. Miranda is going with me and we sail next Saturday on the *Jupiter*, I think. We haven't got our suite, but Mr. Bliss says he is sure he can arrange it for me. If we can't get one on the *Jupiter*, we'll take some other boat that is just as inconspicuous. You see, I want to go on a ship that isn't likely to be packed with people I know, for it is my intention to travel *in cog.*, as they say in the books. No one shall stare at me and say: 'There is that Maud Blithers we were reading about in *Town Truth* — and all the other papers this week. Her father is going to buy a prince for her.'



## OUR STREET

By WALTER ADOLF ROBERTS

Tonight, adown our street, the soft Spring rain  
Lisps plaintively a very old refrain;

The passing seasons, and the human throng  
Out of the dark and then the dark again.

But though we love the street in this gray guise,  
With hair bound back and sadly streaming eyes,  
Tomorrow we shall hail the pagan Sun,  
Eternal optimist of April skies.

"I know dad will be perfectly furious, but I'm going or die, one or the other. Now it won't do a bit of good to try to stop me, dearest. The best thing for you and dad to do is to come down at once and say good-bye to me — but you are not to go to the steamer! Never! Please, please come, for I love you both and I do so want you to love me. Come tomorrow and kiss your horrid, horrid, disappointing, loathsome daughter — and forgive her, too."

MR. BLITHERS was equal to the occasion. His varying emotions manifested themselves with peculiar vividness during the reading of the letter by his tearful wife. At the outset he was frankly humble and contrite; he felt bitterly aggrieved over the unhappy position in which they innocently had placed their cherished idol. Then came the deep breath of relief over the apparent casting away of young Scoville, followed by an angry snort when Maud repeated the remark of her girl friend. His dismay was pathetic while Mrs. Blithers was fairly gasping out Maud's determination to go abroad, but before she reached the concluding sentences of the extraordinary missive, he was himself again. As a matter of fact, he was almost jubilant. He slapped his knee with resounding force and uttered an ejaculation that caused his wife to stare at him as if the very worst had happened: he was a chuckling lunatic!

"Immense!" he exclaimed. "Immense!"

"Oh, Will!" she sobbed.

"Nothing could be better! Luck is with me, Lou. It always is."

"In heaven's name, what are you saying, Will?"

"Great Scot, can't you see? He goes abroad, she goes abroad. See? Same ship. See what I mean? Nothing could be finer. They —"

"But I do not want my child to go abroad," wailed the unhappy mother. "I cannot bear —"

"Stuff and nonsense! Brace up! Grasp the romance. Both of 'em sailing under assumed names. They see each other

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