

The Abysmal Brute

[Continued from page 6, Col. 2.]

handsome face, the chaste lips, the clear looking eyes, the fine forehead which the short crop of blond hair did not hide, the aura of physical well being and cleanness which he seemed to emanate—all this and more that she sensed drew her as she had never been drawn by any man, and yet through her mind kept running the nasty rumors that she had heard only the day before at the Courier-Journal office.

"You were right," she said. "There is something more important to talk about. There is something in my mind I want you to reconcile for me. Do you mind?"

Pat shook his head.

"If I am frank—abominably frank? I've heard the men, sometimes, talking of particular fights and of the betting odds, and while I gave no heed to it at the time, it seemed to me it was firmly agreed that there was a great deal of trickery and cheating connected with the sport. Now, when I look at you, for instance, I find it hard to understand how you can be a party to such cheating. I can understand your liking the sport for a sport, as well as for the money it brings you, but I can't understand—"

"There's nothing to understand," Stubener broke in, while Pat's lips were wreathed in a gentle, tolerant smile. "It's all fairy tales, this talk about faking, about fixed fights and all that rot. There's nothing to it, Miss Sangster, I assure you. And now let me tell you about how I discovered Mr. Glendon. It was a letter I got from his father—"

But Maud Sangster refused to be sidetracked, and addressed herself to Pat.

"Listen. I remember one case particularly. It was some fight that took place several months ago—I forget the contestants. One of the editors of the Courier-Journal told me he intended to make a good winning. He didn't hope; he said he intended. He said he was on the inside and was betting on the number of rounds. He told me the fight would end in the nineteenth. This was the night before.

"And the next day he triumphantly called my attention to the fact that it had ended in that very round. I didn't think anything of it one way or the other. I was not interested in prizefighting then. But I am now. At the time it seemed quite in accord with the vague conception I had about fighting. So you see it isn't all fairy tales, is it?"

"I know that fight," Glendon said. "It was Owen and Murgweather. And it did end in the nineteenth round, Sam. And she said she heard that round named the day before. How do you account for it, Sam?"

"How do you account for a man picking a lucky lottery ticket?" the manager evaded, while getting his wits together to answer. "That's the very point. Men who study form and condition and seconds and rules and such things often pick the number of rounds, just as men have been known to pick hundred to one shots in the races. And don't forget one thing, for every man that wins there's another that loses, there's another that didn't pick right. Miss Sangster, I assure you, on my honor, that faking and fixing in the fight game is nonexistent."

"What is your opinion, Mr. Glendon?" she asked.

"The same as mine," Stubener snatched the answer. "He knows what I say is true, every word of it. He's never fought anything but a straight fight in his life. Isn't that right, Pat?"

"Yes, it's right," Pat affirmed; and the peculiar thing to Maud Sangster was that she was convinced he spoke the truth.

She brushed her forehead with her hand, as if to rid herself of the bewilderment that clouded her brain.

"Listen," she said. "Last night the same editor told me that your forthcoming fight was arranged to the very round in which it would end."

Stubener was verging on a panic, but Pat's speech saved him from replying.

"Then the editor lies," Pat's voice boomed now for the first time.

"He did not lie before, about that other fight," she challenged.

"What round did he say my fight with Nat Powers would end in?"

Before she could answer the manager was into the thick of it.

"Oh, rats, Pat!" he cried. "Shut up. It's only the regular run of ring rumors. Let's get on with this interview."

He was ignored by Glendon, whose eyes, bent on hers, were no longer mildly blue, but harsh and imperative. She was sure now that she had stumbled on something tremendous, something that would explain all that had baffled her.

At the same time she thrilled to the mastery of his voice and gaze. Here was a man who would take hold of life and shake out of it what he wanted.

"What round did the editor say?" Glendon reiterated his demand.

"For the love of Mike, Pat, stop this foolishness," Stubener broke in.

"I wish you would give me a chance to answer," Maud Sangster said.

"I guess I'm able to talk with Miss Sangster," Glendon added. "You get out, Sam. Go off and take care of that photographer."

They looked at each other for a tense, silent moment, then the manager moved slowly to the door, opened it and turned his head to listen.

"And now what round did he say?" "I hope I haven't made a mistake,"

she said tremulously, "but I am very sure that he said the sixteenth round." She saw surprise and anger leap into Glendon's face, and the anger and accusation in the glance he cast at his manager, and she knew the blow had driven home.

And there was reason for his anger. He knew he had talked it over with Stubener, and they had reached a decision to give the audience a good run for its money without unnecessarily prolonging the fight and to end it in the sixteenth.

And here was a woman from a newspaper office naming the very round.

Stubener, in the doorway, looked limp and pale, and it was evident he was holding himself together by an effort.

"I'll see you later," Pat told him. "Shut the door behind you."

The door closed and the two were left alone. Glendon did not speak.

The expression on his face was frankly one of trouble and perplexity.

"Well?" she asked.

He got up and towered above her, then sat down again, moistening his lips with his tongue.

"I'll tell you one thing," he finally said. "The fight won't end in the sixteenth round."

She did not speak, but her unconvinced and quizzical smile hurt him.

"You wait and see, Miss Sangster, and you'll see that editor man is mistaken."

"You mean the program is to be changed?" she queried audaciously.

He quivered to the cut of her words. "I am not accustomed to lying," he said stiffly, "even to women."

"Neither have you to me, nor have you denied the program is to be changed. Perhaps, Mr. Glendon, I am stupid, but I fail to see the difference in what number the final round occurs so long as it is predetermined and known."

"I'll tell you that round, and not another soul shall know."

She shrugged her shoulders and smiled.

"It sounds to me very much like a racing tip. They are always given that way, you know. Furthermore, I am not quite stupid, and I know there is something wrong here."

"Why were you made angry by my naming the round? Why were you angry with your manager? Why did you send him from the room?"

For reply Glendon walked over to the window as if to look out, where he changed his mind and partly turned, and she knew without seeing that



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he was studying her face. He came back and sat down.

"You've said I haven't lied to you, Miss Sangster, and you were right. I haven't."

He paused, groping painfully for a correct statement of the situation.

"Now, do you think you can believe what I am going to tell you? Will you take the word of a prizefighter?"

She nodded gravely, looking him straight in the eyes and certain that what he was about to tell was the truth.

"I've always fought straight and square. I've never touched a piece of dirty money in my life nor attempted a dirty trick. Now I can go on from that. You've shaken me up pretty badly by what you told me. I don't know what to make of it. I can't pass a snap judgment on it. I don't know. But it looks bad. That's what troubles me. For, you see, Stubener and I have talked this fight over, and it was understood between us that I would end the fight in the sixteenth round. Now you bring the same word. How did that editor know? Not from me. Stubener must have let it out—unless—"

He stopped to debate the problem.

"—unless that editor is a lucky guesser. I can't make up my mind about it. I'll have to keep my eyes open and wait and learn. Every word I've given you is straight, and there's my hand on it."

Again he towered out of his chair and over to her. Her small hand was gripped in his big one as she arose to meet him, and after a fair, straight look into the eyes between them both glanced unconsciously at the clasped hands.

She felt that she had never been more aware that she was a woman. The sex emphasis of those two hands—the soft and fragile feminine and the heavy, muscular masculine—was startling. Glendon was the first to speak.

"You could be hurt so easily," he said, and at the same time she felt the firmness of his grip almost carelessly relax.

She remembered the old Prussian king's love for giants and laughed at the incongruity of the thought association as she withdrew her hand.

"I am glad you came here today," he said, then hurried on awkwardly



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to make an explanation which the warm light of admiration in his eyes belied.

"I mean because maybe you have opened my eyes to the crooked dealing that has been going on."

"You have surprised me," she urged.

"It seemed to me that it is so generally understood that prizefighting is full of crookedness that I cannot understand how you, one of its chief exponents, could be ignorant of it. I thought as a matter of course that you would know all about it, and now you have convinced me that you never dreamed of it. You must be different from other fighters."

He nodded his head.

[Continued next week.]

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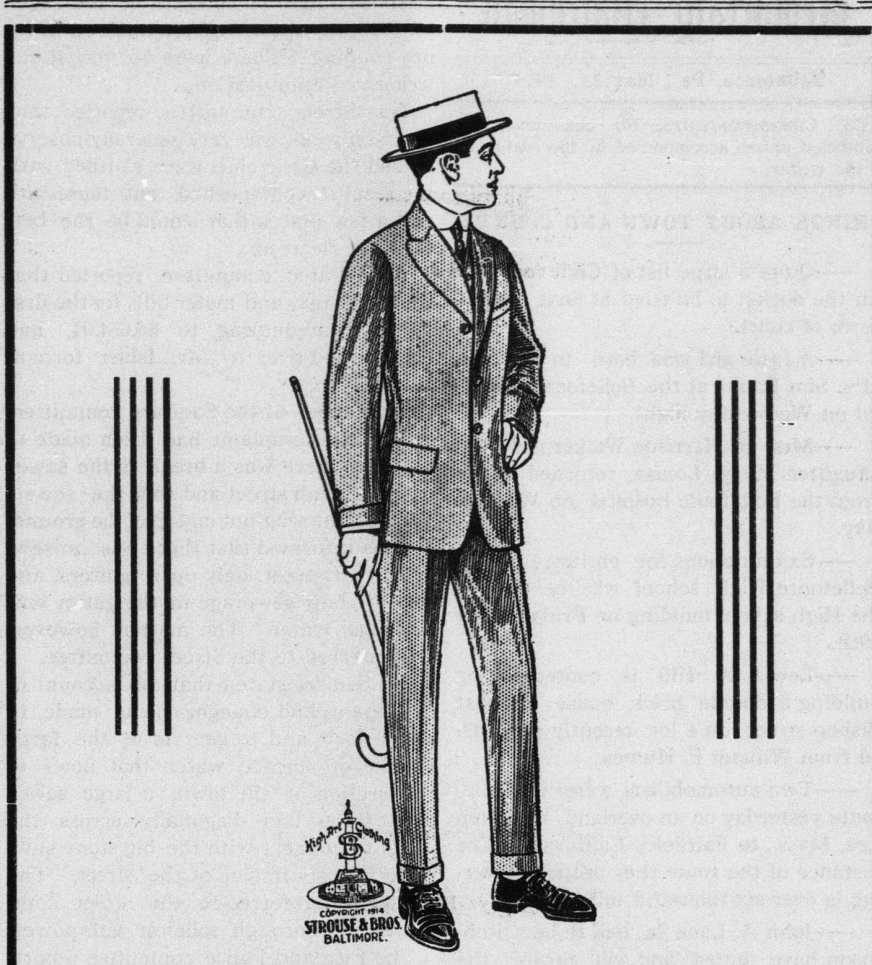
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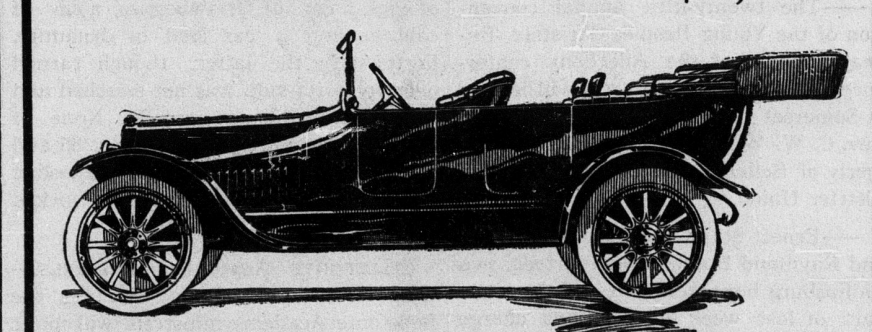
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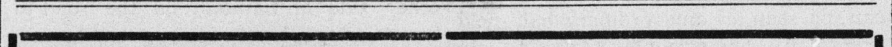
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