

The Abysmal Brute

By JACK LONDON

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SYNOPSIS

Sam Stubener, manager of boxers, hears about a wonderful unknown boxer called Young Pat Glendon. He finds the boy in the wilderness.

Glendon, innocent of the world's ways, goes to San Francisco and is matched with "Roughhouse Kelly."

He whips Kelly and other boxers so easily that he is called "One Punch Glendon." He meets the Flying Dutchman.

Glendon wins again. He hears the top in pugilism. His manager, Stubener, engages in crooked ring practices, unknown to Glendon.

Through Maud Sangster, a reporter, Glendon first learns of these crooked practices and first suspects Stubener.

Glendon tells her he will stop Nat Powers in the eighteenth instead of the sixteenth round of a forthcoming fight, sixteen being the secret information of the betting syndicate.

[Continued from last week.]

"That explains it, I guess. And that's what comes of keeping away from it—the other fighters and promoters and sports. It was easy to pull the wool over my eyes. Yet it remains to be seen whether it has really been pulled over for myself."

"And change it?" she queried, rather breathlessly, convinced somehow that he could do anything he set out to accomplish.

"No; quit it," was his answer. "If it isn't straight I won't have anything more to do with it. And one thing is certain: this coming fight with Nat Powers won't end in the sixteenth round. If there is any truth in that editor's tip, they'll all be fooled. Instead of putting him out in the sixteenth, I'll let the fight run on into the twenties. You wait and see."

"And I'm not to let the editor?"

"She was on her feet now, preparing to go.

"Certainly not. If he is only guessing, let him take his chances. And if there's anything rotten about it he deserves to lose all his bets. This is to be a little secret between you and me. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll name the round to you. I won't run it into the twenties. I'll stop Nat Powers in the eighteenth."

"And I'll not whisper it," she assured him.

"I'd like to ask you a favor," he said tentatively. "Maybe it's a big favor."

She showed her acquiescence in her face, as if it were already granted, and he went on:

"Of course I know you won't use this faking in the interview. But I want more than that. I don't want you to publish anything at all."

She gave him a quick look with her searching gray eyes, then surprised herself by her answer.

"Certainly," she said. "It will not be published. I won't write a line of it."

"I knew it," he said simply.

For the moment she was disappointed by the lack of thanks, and the next moment she was glad that he had not thanked her.

She sensed the different foundation he was building under this meeting of an hour with her, and she became daringly explorative.

"How did you know it?" she asked. "I don't know." He shook his head.

"I can't explain it. I knew it as a matter of course. Somehow it seems to me I know a lot about you and me."

"But why not publish the interview? As your manager says, it is good advertising."

"I know it," he answered slowly. "But I don't want to know you that way. I think it would hurt if you should publish it. I don't want to think that I knew you professionally. I'd like to remember our talk here as a talk between a man and a woman. I don't know whether you understand what I'm driving at. But it's the way I feel. I want to remember this just as a man and a woman."

CHAPTER VIII.

As he spoke in his eyes was all the expression with which a man looks at a woman. She felt the force and beat of him, and she felt strangely tongue tied and awkward before this man who had been reputed tongue tied and awkward.

He could certainly talk straighter to the point and more convincingly than most men, and what struck her most forcibly was her own inborn certainty that it was more naive and simple frankness on his part and not a practiced artfulness.

He saw her into her machine and gave her another thrill when he said goodby. Once again their hands were clasped as he said:

"Some day I'll see you again. I want to see you again. Somehow I have a feeling that the last word has not been said between us."

And as the machine rolled away she was aware of a similar feeling.

She had not seen the last of this very disgusting Pat Glendon, king of the bruisers and abysmal brute.

Back in the training quarters, Glendon encountered his perturbed manager.

"What did you fire me out for?" Stubener demanded. "We're finished. A— of a mess you've made. You've never stood for meeting a reporter alone before, and now you'll see when that interview comes out."

Glendon, who had been regarding him with cool amazement, made as if to turn and pass on and then changed his mind.

"It won't come out," he said. Stubener looked up sharply.

"I asked her not to," Glendon explained. Then Stubener exploded.

"As if she'd kill a juicy thing like that!"

Glendon became very cold, and his voice was harsh and grating.

"It won't be published. She told me so. And to doubt it is to call her a liar."

The Irish flame was in his eyes, and by that and by the unconscious clinching of his passion wrought hands Stubener, who knew the strength of them and of the man he faced, no longer dared to doubt.

It did not take Stubener long to find out that Glendon intended extending the distance of the fight, though try as he would he could get no hint of the number of the round.

He wasted no time, however, and privately clinched certain arrangements with Nat Powers and Nat Powers' manager. Powers had a faithful following of bettors, and the betting syndicate was not to be denied its harvest.

On the night of the fight, Maud Sangster was guilty of a more daring unconventionality than any she had yet committed, though no whisper of it leaked out to shock society.

Under the protection of the editor she occupied a ringside seat. Her hair and most of her face were hidden under a slouch hat, while she wore a man's long overcoat that fell to her heels.

Entering in the thick of the crowd she was not noticed, nor did the newspaper men in the press seats against the ring directly in front of her recognize her.

As was the growing custom, there were no preliminary bouts, and she had barely gained her seat when roars of applause announced the arrival of Nat Powers.

He came down the aisle in the midst of his seconds, and she was almost frightened by the formidable bulk of him.

[Continued on page 7 Col. 1.]

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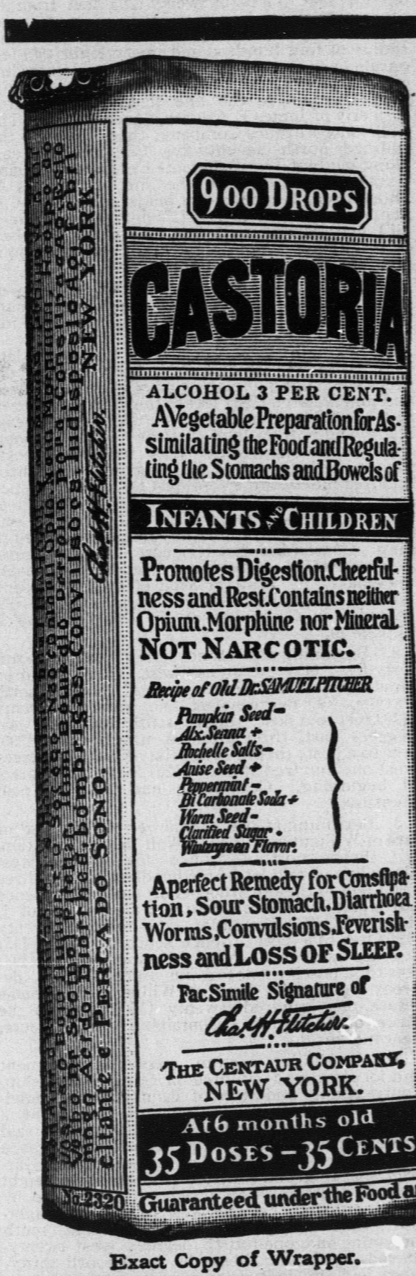
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