

# The Abysmal Brute

By JACK LONDON

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(Continued from last week.)

Cannam was introduced first, and after he had scraped and ducked his head he was compelled to respond to the cries for a speech. He stammered and halted, but managed to grind out several ideas.

"I'm proud to be here tonight," he said, and found space to capture another thought while the applause was thundering. "I've fought square. I've fought square all my life. Nobody can deny that. And I'm going to do my best tonight."

There were loud cries of "That's right, Tom!" "We know that!" "Good boy, Tom!" "You're the boy to fetch the bacon home!"

### CHAPTER XI.

THEN came Glendon's turn. From him likewise a speech was demanded, though for principals to give speeches was an unprecedented thing in the prize ring. Billy Morgan held up his hand for silence, and in a clear, powerful voice Glendon began.

"Everybody has told you they were proud to be here tonight," he said. "I am not."

The audience was startled, and he paused long enough to let it sink home.

"I am not proud of my company. You wanted a speech. I'll give you a real one. This is my last fight. After tonight I leave the ring for good. Why? I have already told you. I don't like my company. The prize ring is so crooked that no man engaged in it can hide behind a corkscrew. It is rotten to the core, from the little professional clubs right up to this affair tonight."

The low rumble of astonishment that had been rising at this point burst into a roar. There were loud boos and hisses, and many began crying: "Go on with the fight!" "We want the fight!" "Why don't you fight?"

Glendon, waiting, noted that the principal disturbers near the ring were promoters and managers and fighters. In vain did he strive to make himself heard.

The audience was divided, half crying out, "Fight!" and the other half "Speech, speech!"

Ten minutes of hopeless madness prevailed. Stubener, the referee, the



"Everybody has told you they were proud to be here tonight."

owner of the arena, and the promoter of the fight, pleaded with Glendon to go on with the fight.

When he refused the referee declared that he would award the fight in forfeit to Cannam if Glendon did not fight.

"You can't do it," the latter retorted. "I'll sue you in all the courts if you try that on, and I'll not promise you that you'll survive this crowd if you cheat it out of the fight. Besides, I'm going to fight. But before I do I'm going to finish my speech."

"But it's against the rules," protested the referee.

"It's nothing of the sort. There's not a word in the rules against ring-side speeches. Every big fighter here tonight has made a speech."

"Only a few words," shouted the promoter in Glendon's ear. "But you're giving a lecture."

"There's nothing in the rules against lectures," Glendon answered. "And now you fellows get out of the ring, or I'll throw you out."

The promoter, apoplectic and struggling, was dropped over the ropes by his coat collar.

He was a large man, but so easily

had Glendon done it with one hand that the audience went wild with delight.

The cries for a speech increased in volume. Stubener and the owner beat a wise retreat. Glendon held up his hands to be heard, whereupon those that shouted for the fight redoubled their efforts.

Two or three tiers of seats crashed down, and numbers who had thus lost their places added to the turmoil by making a concerted rush to squeeze in on the still intact seats, while those behind, blocked from sight of the ring, yelled and raved for them to sit down. Glendon walked to the ropes and spoke to the police captain. He was compelled to bend over and shout in his ear.

"If I don't give this speech," he said, "this crowd will wreck the place. If they break loose you can never hold them. You know that. Now, you've got to help. You keep the ring clear and I'll silence the crowd."

He went back to the center of the ring and again held up his hands.

"You want that speech?" he shouted in a tremendous voice.

Hundreds near the ring heard him and cried "Yes!"

"Then let every man who wants to hear shut up the noisemaker next to him!"

The advice was taken, so that when he repeated it his voice penetrated farther. Again and again he shouted it, and slowly, zone by zone, the silence pressed outward from the ring, accompanied by a muffled undertone of smacks and thuds and scuffles as the obstreperous were subdued by their neighbors.

Almost had all confusion been smothered when a tier of seats near the ring went down. This was greeted with fresh roars of laughter, which of itself died away, so that a lone voice far back was heard distinctly as it piped:

"Go on, Glendon! We're with you!"

Glendon had the Celt's intuitive knowledge of the psychology of the crowd. He knew that what had been a vast disorderly mob five minutes before was now tightly in hand, and for added effect he deliberately delayed.

Yet the delay was just long enough and not a second too long. For thirty seconds the silence was complete, and the effect produced was one of awe.

Then just as the faint hints of restlessness came to his ears he began to speak:

"When I finish this speech," he said, "I am going to fight. I promise you it will be a real fight, one of the few real fights you have ever seen. I am going to get my man in the shortest possible time."

"Billy Morgan, in making his final announcement, will tell you that it is to be a forty-five round contest. Let me tell you that it will be nearer forty-five seconds."

"When I was interrupted I was telling you that the ring was rotten. It is—from top to bottom. It is run on business principles, and you all know what business principles are. Enough said."

"You are the suckers, every last one of you that is not making anything out of it. Why are the seats falling down tonight? Graft. Like the fight game, they were built on business principles."

He now held the audience stronger than ever and knew it.

"There are three men squeezed on two seats. I can see that everywhere. What does it mean? Graft. The stewards don't get any wages. They are supposed to graft. Business principles again. You pay. Of course you pay. How are the fight permits obtained? Graft."

"And now let me ask you: If the men who build the seats graft, if the stewards graft, if the authorities graft, why shouldn't those higher up in the fight game graft? They do. And you pay."

"And let me tell you it is not the fault of the fighters. They don't run the game. The promoters and managers run it; they're the business men. The fighters are only fighters. They begin honestly enough, but the managers and promoters make them give in or kick them out. There have been straight fighters. And there are now a few, but they don't earn much as a rule."

"I guess there have been straight managers. Mine is about the best of the bolting. But just ask him how much he's got salted down in real estate and apartment houses."

Here the uproar began to drown his voice.

"Let every man who wants to hear shut up the man alongside of him!" Glendon instructed.

Again, like the murmur of a surf, there was a rustling of smacks and thuds, and scuffles, and the house quieted down.

"Why does every fighter work overtime insisting that he's always fought square? Why are they called Honest Johns and Honest Bills and Honest Blacksmiths and all the rest? Doesn't it ever strike you that they seem to be afraid of something?"

"When a man comes to you shouting he is honest you get suspicious. But when a prizefighter passes the same dope out to you you swallow it down."

"May the best man win! How often have you heard Billy Morgan say that? Let me tell you that the best man doesn't win so often, and when he does it's usually arranged for him. Most of the grudge fights you've heard of seen were arranged too."

"It's a program. The whole thing is programmed. Do you think the promoters and managers are in it for their health? They're not. They're business men."

"Tom, Dick and Harry are three fighters. Dick is the best man. In two fights he could prove it. But what

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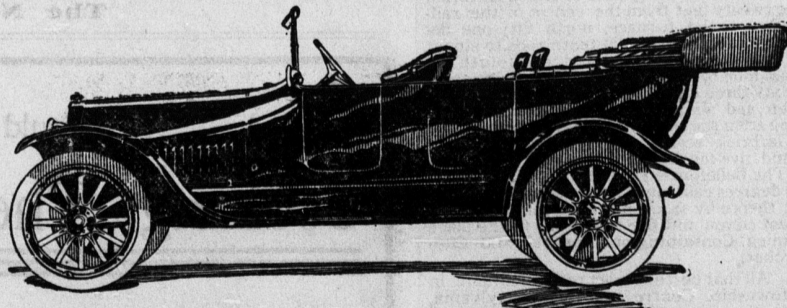
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