

## **CHAPTER XII - UP OR DOWN?**

After Jimmy had received his check and was about to leave, a couple of men approached him.

"We seen that little mix-up in there," said one of them. "You handle your mitts like you been there before."

"Yes," said Jimmy, smiling, "I've had a little experience in the manly art of self-defense."

The two men were sizing him up.

"Feinheimer can you?" asked one of them. Jimmy nodded affirmatively. "Got anything else in view?"

"No," said Jimmy.

"How'd you like a job as one of Brophy's sparring partners?"

"I wouldn't mind," said Jimmy. "What is there in it?"

They named a figure that was entirely satisfactory to Jimmy.

"Come over the day after Christmas," he was told, "and we'll give you a trial."

"I wonder," thought Jimmy as he started for home, "if I have gone up a notch in the social scale or down a notch? From the view-point of the underworld a pug occupies a more exalted position than a waiter; but-- oh, well, a job's a job, and at least I won't have to look at that greasy Feinheimer all day."

At ten o'clock Monday Jimmy was at Young Brophy's training quarters, for, although he had not forgotten Harriet Holden's invitation, he had never seriously considered availing himself of her offer to help him to a better position. While he had not found it difficult to accept the rough friendship and assistance of the Lizard, the idea of becoming an object of "charity," as he considered it, at the hands of a girl in the same walk of life as that to which he belonged was intolerable.

Young Brophy's manager, whom Jimmy discovered to be one of the men who had accosted him in Feinheimer's after his trouble with Murray, took him into a private office and talked with him confidentially for a half-hour before he was definitely employed.

It seemed that one of the principal requisites of the position was a willingness to take punishment without attempting to inflict too much upon Young Brophy. The manager did not go into specific details as to the reason for this restriction, and Jimmy, badly in need of a job, felt no particular inclination to search too deeply for the root of the matter.

"What I don't know," he soliloquized, "won't hurt me any." But he had not been there many days before the piecing together of chance remarks and the gossip of the hangers-on and other sparring partners made it very apparent why Brophy should not be badly man-handled. As it finally revealed itself to Jimmy it was very simple indeed. Brophy was to be pitted against a man whom he had already out-pointed in a former bout. He was the ruling favorite in the betting, and it was the

intention to keep him so while he and his backers quietly placed all their money on the otherman.

One of the sparring partners who seemed to harbor a petty grudge against Brophy finally explained the whole plan to Jimmy. Everything was to be done to carry the impression to the public through the newspapers, who were usually well represented at the training quarters, that Brophy was in the pink of condition; that he was training hard; that it was impossible to find men who could stand up to him on account of the terrific punishment he inflicted upon his sparring partners; and that the result of the fight was already a foregone conclusion; and then in the third round Young Brophy was to lie down and by reclining peacefully on his stomach for ten seconds make more money than several years of hard and conscientious work earnestly performed could ever net him.

It was all very, very simple; but how easily public opinion might be changed should one of the sparring partners really make a good stand against Brophy in the presence of members of the newspaper fraternity!

"I see," said Jimmy, running his fingers through his hair. "Oh, well, it's none of my business, and if the suckers want to bet their money on a prize-fight they're about due to lose it anyway."

And so he continued permitting himself to be battered up four or five times a week at the hands of the pussy Mr. Brophy. He paid back the twenty the Lizard had loaned him, got his watch out of pawn, and was even figuring on a new suit of clothes. Never before in his life had Jimmy realized what it meant to be prosperous, since for obvious reasons Young Brophy's manager was extremely liberal in the matter of salaries with all those connected with the training-camp.

At first it had been rather humiliating to Jimmy to take the drubbings he did at the hands of Young Brophy in the presence of the audience which usually filled

the small gymnasium where the fighter was training. It was nearly always about the same crowd, however, made up of dyed-in-the-wool fans, a few newspaper men, and a sprinkling of thrill-seekers from other walks of life far removed from the prize-ring. Jimmy often noticed women among the spectators--well-dressed women, with every appearance of refinement, and there were always men of the same upper class of society.

He mentioned the fact once to the same young man who had previously explained the plan under which the fight was to be faked.

"That's just part of the graft," said his informant. "These birds have got next to a bunch of would-be sports with more money than brains through the athletic director of--" he mentioned the name of one of the big athletic clubs--"and they been inviting 'em here to watch Brophy training. Every one of the simps will be tryin' to get money down on Brophy, and this bunch will take it all up as fast as they come.

"The bettin' hasn't really started yet; in fact, they are holding off themselves until the odds are better. If Brophy goes into the ring a three-to-one favorite these fellows will make a killing that will be talked of for the next twenty years."

"And incidentally give boxing another black eye," interjected Jimmy.

"Oh, what the hell do we care?" said the other. "I'm goin' to make mine out of it, and you better do the same. I'm goin' to put up every cent I can borrow or steal on the otherguy."

It was Saturday, the 15th of January, just a week before the fight, that Jimmy, trained now almost to perfection, stepped into the ring to take his usual mauling.

For some time past there had been insidiously working its way into his mind a vast contempt for the pugilistic prowess of Young Brophy.

"If," thought Jimmy, "this bird is of championship caliber, I might be a champion myself." For, though Young Brophy was not a champion, the newspapers had been pointing to him for some time as a likely possibility for these pugilistic honors later.

As this mental attitude grew within him and took hold of Jimmy it more and more irked him to take the punishment which he inwardly felt he could easily inflict upon Brophy instead, but, as Jimmy had learned through lean and hungry months, a job is a job, and no job is to be sneezed at or lightly thrown aside.

There was quite a gathering that afternoon to watch Young Brophy's work-out, and rather a larger representation than usual from society's younger set. The program, which had consisted in part of shadow boxing and bag punching by Young Brophy, was to terminate with three rounds with Jimmy.

For two rounds the young man had permitted Brophy to make a monkey of him, hitting him where he would at will, while Jimmy, as a result of several weeks of diligent practice, was able to put up apparently a very ferocious attempt to annihilate his opponent without doing the latter any material damage.

At the close of the second round Brophy landed a particularly vicious right, which dropped Jimmy to the canvas. The crowd applauded vociferously, and as the gong sounded as Jimmy was slowly rising to his feet they were all assured that it was all that had saved the young man from an even worse thrashing.

As Jimmy returned to his corner there arose within him a determination to thrash Young Brophy within an inch of his life after the big fight was out of the

way and Jimmy no longer bound by any obligations, for he realized that for some reason Brophy had just gone a little too far with his rough tactics, there having been in the arrangement with the sparring partners an understanding that when a knock-down was to be staged Brophy was to give his opponent the cue. No cue had been given, however. Jimmy had not been expecting it, and he had been floored with a punch behind which were all the weight and brawn of the pugilist.

He had long since ceased to consider what the spectators might think. So far as Jimmy was concerned, they might have been so many chairs. He was merely angry at the unnecessary punishment that had been inflicted. As he sprawled in his corner he let his eyes run over the faces of the spectators directly in front of him, to whom previously he had paid no particular attention, and even now it was scarcely more than an involuntary glance; but his eyes stopped suddenly upon a face, and as recognition suddenly dawned upon him he could feel the hot blood rushing to his own. For there was the girl whom Fate had thrice before thrown in his path! Beside her he recognized the Miss Harriet Holden who had been with her the night at Feinheimer's, and with them were two young men.

Something within Jimmy Torrance rebelled to a point where it utterly dominated him--rebelled at the thought that this girl, whom he had unconsciously set upon a pedestal to worship from afar, should always find him in some menial and humiliating position. It was bad enough that she should see him as a sparring partner of a professional pug, but it made it infinitely worse that she should see him as what he must appear, an unsuccessful third or fourth rate fighter.

Everything within Jimmy's mind turned suddenly topsyturvy. He seemed to lose all sense of proportion and all sense of value in one overpowering thought, that he must not again be humiliated in her presence.

And so it was that at the tap of the gong for the third round it was not Torrance the sparring partner that advanced from his corner, but Jimmy Torrance, champion heavyweight boxer of a certain famous university. But why enter into the harrowing details of the ensuing minute and a half?

In thirty seconds it was unquestionably apparent to every one in the room, including Young Brophy himself, that the latter was pitifully outclassed. Jimmy hit him whenever and wherever he elected to hit, and he hit him hard, while Brophy, at best only a second or third rate fighter, pussy and undertrained, was not only unable to elude the blows of his adversary but equally so to land effectively himself.

And there before the eyes of half a dozen newspaper reporters, of a dozen wealthy young men who had fully intended to place large sums on Brophy, and before the eyes of his horrified manager and backer, Jimmy, at the end of ninety seconds, landed a punch that sent the flabby Mr. Brophy through the ropes and into dreamland for a much longer period than the requisite ten seconds.

Before Jimmy got dressed and out of the gymnasium he, with difficulty, escaped a half-dozen more fistic encounters, as everybody from the manager down felt that his crime deserved nothing short of capital punishment. He had absolutely wrecked a perfectly good scheme in the perfection of which several thousand dollars had been spent, and now there could not be even the possibility of a chance of their breaking even.