

## CHAPTER XV

### AN ADDITION TO THE STAFF

Penetrating into the Kid's dressing-room some moments later, the editorial staff found the winner of the ten-round exhibition bout between members of the club seated on a chair, having his right leg rubbed by a shock-headed man in a sweater, who had been one of his seconds during the conflict. The Kid beamed as they entered.

"Gents," he said, "come right in. Mighty glad to see you."

"It is a relief to me, Comrade Brady," said Psmith, "to find that you can see us. I had expected to find that Comrade Wolmann's purposeful buffs had completely closed your star-likes."

"Sure, I never felt them. He's a good quick boy, is Al., but," continued the Kid with powerful imagery, "he couldn't hit a hole in a block of ice-cream, not if he was to use a hammer."

"And yet at one period in the proceedings, Comrade Brady," said Psmith, "I fancied that your head would come unglued at the neck. But the fear was merely transient. When you began to administer those--am I correct in saying?--half-scissor hooks to the body, why, then I felt like some watcher of the skies when a new planet swims into his ken; or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes he

stared at the Pacific."

The Kid blinked.

"How's that?" he inquired.

"And why did I feel like that, Comrade Brady? I will tell you. Because my faith in you was justified. Because there before me stood the ideal fighting-editor of Cosy Moments. It is not a post that any weakling can fill. There charm of manner cannot qualify a man for the position. No one can hold down the job simply by having a kind heart or being good at farmyard imitations. No. We want a man of thews and sinews, a man who would rather be hit on the head with a half-brick than not. And you, Comrade Brady, are such a man."

The Kid turned appealingly to Billy.

"Say, this gets past me, Mr. Windsor. Put me wise."

"Can we have a couple of words with you alone, Kid?" said Billy.

"We want to talk over something with you."

"Sure. Sit down, gents. Jack'll be through in a minute."

Jack, who during this conversation had been concentrating himself

on his subject's left leg, now announced that he guessed that would about do, and having advised the Kid not to stop and pick daisies, but to get into his clothes at once before he caught a chill, bade the company good night and retired.

Billy shut the door.

"Kid," he said, "you know those articles about the tenements we've been having in the paper?"

"Sure. I read 'em. They're to the good."

Psmith bowed.

"You stimulate us, Comrade Brady. This is praise from Sir Hubert Stanley."

"It was about time some strong joshier came and put it across to 'em," added the Kid.

"So we thought. Comrade Parker, however, totally disagreed with us."

"Parker?"

"That's what I'm coming to," said Billy. "The day before yesterday

a man named Parker called at the office and tried to buy us off."

Billy's voice grew indignant at the recollection.

"You gave him the hook, I guess?" queried the interested Kid.

"To such an extent, Comrade Brady," said Psmith, "that he left breathing threatenings and slaughter. And it is for that reason that we have ventured to call upon you."

"It's this way," said Billy. "We're pretty sure by this time that whoever the man is this fellow Parker's working for has put one of the gangs on to us."

"You don't say!" exclaimed the Kid. "Gum! Mr. Windsor, they're tough propositions, those gangs."

"We've been followed in the streets, and once they put up a bluff to get us where they could do us in. So we've come along to you. We can look after ourselves out of the office, you see, but what we want is some one to help in case they try to rush us there."

"In brief, a fighting-editor," said Psmith. "At all costs we must have privacy. No writer can prune and polish his sentences to his satisfaction if he is compelled constantly to break off in order to eject boisterous hooligans. We therefore offer you the job of

sitting in the outer room and intercepting these bravoos before they can reach us. The salary we leave to you. There are doubloons and to spare in the old oak chest. Take what you need and put the rest--if any--back. How does the offer strike you, Comrade Brady?"

"We don't want to get you in under false pretences, Kid," said Billy. "Of course, they may not come anywhere near the office. But still, if they did, there would be something doing. What do you feel about it?"

"Gents," said the Kid, "it's this way."

He stepped into his coat, and resumed.

"Now that I've made good by getting the decision over Al., they'll be giving me a chance of a big fight. Maybe with Jimmy Garvin. Well, if that happens, see what I mean? I'll have to be going away somewhere and getting into training. I shouldn't be able to come and sit with you. But, if you gents feel like it, I'd be mighty glad to come in till I'm wanted to go into training-camp."

"Great," said Billy; "that would suit us all the way up. If you'd do that, Kid, we'd be tickled to death."

"And touching salary--" put in Psmith.

"Shucks!" said the Kid with emphasis. "Nix on the salary thing. I wouldn't take a dime. If it hadn't a-been for you gents, I'd have been waiting still for a chance of lining up in the championship class. That's good enough for me. Any old thing you gents want me to do, I'll do it. And glad, too."

"Comrade Brady," said Psmith warmly, "you are, if I may say so, the goods. You are, beyond a doubt, supremely the stuff. We three, then, hand-in-hand, will face the foe; and if the foe has good, sound sense, he will keep right away. You appear to be ready. Shall we meander forth?"

The building was empty and the lights were out when they emerged from the dressing-room. They had to grope their way in darkness. It was still raining when they reached the street, and the only signs of life were a moist policeman and the distant glare of public-house lights down the road.

They turned off to the left, and, after walking some hundred yards, found themselves in a blind alley.

"Hullo!" said Billy. "Where have we come to?"

Psmith sighed.

"In my trusting way," he said, "I had imagined that either you or

Comrade Brady was in charge of this expedition and taking me by a known route to the nearest Subway station. I did not think to ask. I placed myself, without hesitation, wholly in your hands."

"I thought the Kid knew the way," said Billy.

"I was just taggin' along with you gents," protested the light-weight, "I thought you was taking me right. This is the first time I been up here."

"Next time we three go on a little jaunt anywhere," said Psmith resignedly, "it would be as well to take a map and a corps of guides with us. Otherwise we shall start for Broadway and finish up at Minneapolis."

They emerged from the blind alley and stood in the dark street, looking doubtfully up and down it.

"Aha!" said Psmith suddenly, "I perceive a native. Several natives, in fact. Quite a little covey of them. We will put our case before them, concealing nothing, and rely on their advice to take us to our goal."

A little knot of men was approaching from the left. In the darkness it was impossible to say how many of them there were. Psmith stepped forward, the Kid at his side.

"Excuse me, sir," he said to the leader, "but if you can spare me a moment of your valuable time--"

There was a sudden shuffle of feet on the pavement, a quick movement on the part of the Kid, a chunky sound as of wood striking wood, and the man Psmith had been addressing fell to the ground in a heap.

As he fell, something dropped from his hand on to the pavement with a bump and a rattle. Stooping swiftly, the Kid picked it up, and handed it to Psmith. His fingers closed upon it. It was a short, wicked-looking little bludgeon, the black-jack of the New York tough.

"Get busy," advised the Kid briefly.