



"Greatest little fighter in the world, boy!" he bellowed, "Little token of esteem from the bunch."

Isidore away for a second.

Isidore became angry. He asked the referee if he should "commit it a murder."

"Shall I stop it, Pete?" he asked.

"If you do," said Peter grimly, "I'll make you hard to catch!"

"Get together!" said the referee.

Isidore was very angry by this time. By all precedent, Peter had no right to be on his feet. The champion to be lost his presence of mind and began swinging wildly. Peter bobbed his head, ducked his body, and hopped out of danger. Isidore swung a wandering right, and followed it with a haphazard left, and Peter, seeing another golden opportunity, stepped under that random left and stopped the swing of Isidore's body with another piledriving right hander just below the breast bone.

"O-o-e-ff!" grunted Isidore, clinching and locking toward his corner, where Abey was telegraphing advice with all his fingers.

When the bell sounded the end of the first round, Peter was on the floor again, but he rose at once and walked steadily to his corner. I watched his knees for the weakness which is the first sign of collapse. They were as steady as they had ever been. The house was working itself into a state of great excitement. Eddie Haynes, whooping like an Indian, had nearly completed the circle of the boxes, and business with him seemed quite prosperous during the minute's intermission.

"Look at Izzy!" said the usher. "He's blowing like a porpoise!"

I looked at Isidore. He was sprawled back against the angle of the ropes, and one hand was placed tenderly over the pit of his stomach. He was swallowing air in great gulps, and his excited handlers were not helping him any by filling his mouth with water. Two seconds, with an ear apiece, were telling him exactly what he ought to do. A minute in the corner, under bad handling, is sometimes worse than three rounds of fighting.

In the other corner of the ring, Peter the Battler was resting easily, with a large blue lump on the left side of his jaw. He caught my eye, and nodding toward Isidore's corner, tapped himself twice on the stomach. For a few seconds I had hopes for him.

When the bell rang, Isidore catapulted out of his seat with a rush which carried

him nearly all the way to Peter's corner. As he swung his right arm as a man swings a scythe, hooking it straight upward at the end of the blow, there was no time to dodge. Isidore's glove grazed Peter's forearm and struck him under the chin.

The Battler came as near turning a back somersault as his limited arc would permit, and his head struck the canvas with an amazing bump. Every man in the house grunted in sympathy.

For the fraction of a second there was silence, and in that lull I heard the calculating Abey say:

"That's the money, Izzy!"

Then, I think, I stood up and yelled. I remember finding myself on my feet and breathless. What happened was enough to make almost any man yell. No sooner had Peter's hand hit the canvas than he whirled over like a cat and literally shot from the floor in a thunderbolt charge. His yellow hair fairly streamed behind him as he rushed upon the startled Isidore, and his eyes were blazing with fury.

"He's been knocked crazy!" howled a man behind me. "He doesn't know what he's doing!"

In no other way could I account for the sudden transformation of the human punching bag, or his recovery from a blow which would have felled an ox. In a flash Peter attacked became Peter attacking, a wild-eyed maniac coming into battle with a shrill yell of rage.

To say that Isidore was surprised would be putting it quite mildly. His eyes popped from his head, his mouth fell open, and his hands hung dangling at his sides. They were hanging there when Peter landed a crazy, haymaker swing to the body, and with a yelp of pain Isidore shut up like a jack-knife. Then he shuffled away backward toward his corner, Peter following him like a tiger and banging away with both hands.

By this time it sounded as if the building was being torn down. Chairs were smashing in all directions, men were jumping up and down, screaming, yelling, whooping; canes were flying, hats were thrown away, and every man in the place seemed to be urging Peter, who needed no urging.

"Put him out!" they shouted.

I have seen many champions, but never one who showed such an insane fury of attack as Peter did that night—Peter, who through all his fighting career had been a punching bag for other men. It did not seem

possible, yet there he was, battering the great Fighting Pawnbroker along the ropes, smashing him out of clinches, doubling him up with body blows, and straightening him again with uppercuts.

Finally Isidore brought up with a crash in his own corner; he could retreat no farther. At the same instant Peter started a right uppercut which seemed to come from his shoe tops. The whizzing glove thudded under Isidore's chin, and the Fighting Pawnbroker collapsed in a heap, fell against the ropes, and slid slowly to the floor. It was all over.

The referee counted in dumb show—no voice could have carried more than a few feet in that tremendous din—but he bent low, so that Isidore, if conscious, might hear the passing of his fame.

Somewhere in the middle of the count the champion—who was to be stirred slightly, as if disturbed in his slumbers, and then nestled closer to the floor.

The referee threw up his hand at "ten" and turned to pat Peter on the shoulder, but the Battler was already helping to lift the fallen idol to his stool.

Then Peter picked up Isidore's limp glove, shook it twice, and carefully replaced it in his lap. One might have said that he did it apologetically.

By this time half the men in the house were on their way to the ring.

A wild African buffalo loose in that stampede would have needed pity. Down they came to the ringside and up under the ropes, treading on the shoulders and backs of those at the press tables, stepping on fingers and smashing telegraph instruments.

From four sides they burst into the ring, a wild wave of humanity that engulfed Peter and tossed him shoulder high in an instant. They slapped him on the back, they hugged him, they patted his arms and his legs and tried to tear off his gloves for souvenirs. The ring was jammed with a pushing, tugging, hauling mass of red-faced, open-mouthed humanity.

Only in one corner of the ring was there anything like a calm. In Isidore's corner there was no celebration. His scowling seconds locked arms and formed a cordon about him, kicking right and left when the press threatened. The Fighting Pawnbroker sat on his stool with his head in his hands, a forsaken idol, listening to a wild requiem which was also a welcome to a conqueror. Fight followers waste little time on the beaten man, no matter how great he has been. He has

been licked, and that settles him.

"The king is dead! Hoo-ray!"

At last, with immense difficulty and the aid of the police, a passageway was cleared, and Peter left the ring high on the shoulders of his delighted seconds. I crushed my way through the aisles, and by virtue of my official position as matchmaker was admitted to Peter's dressing room. The Battler was sitting on the rubbing table, while his seconds bent over his shoe laces.

"How on earth did you do it, Peter?" I demanded.

"Honest, Mr. Carey," said he, grinning, "I don't know. I guess I just went crazy. You know, that's the first jaw punch I ever really felt in my life! It made me mad. O, say! I guess I get that hundred anyway, don't I?"

"Hundred! It's five hundred! You knocked him out!"

Peter gasped and turned pale.

"Why I thought it was only a hundred!" he stammered.

He intended to say more, but there arose a fearful clamor outside the door, a hammering and a bellowing, and I recognized the voice of Eddie Haynes, lifted in supplication.

"Let him in," I said.

"Aw, he's just one of them crazy bugs!" said "Spike" McGilligan, the chief adviser. But he opened the door, grumbling as he fumbled at the latch.

Haynes entered with a roar. His collar was torn loose, his vest was ripped open, he was perspiring liberally, and his voice was hoarse. Hugged close to his chest was a stiff hat, which he carried like a turban.

"Greatest little fighter in the world, boy!" he bellowed. "Little token of esteem from the bunch! Something to pay doctors' bills! Gee, but that was a great finish!"

Then he turned the hat upside down in Peter's lap, cascading a flood of silver, paper, and gold onto the floor. Peter looked down at his lap, then stared at Haynes, and lastly turned to me.

"What the—" he began, and then he choked. "What is this, anyway? What's coming off here?"

"Looks like it might be money," I said. "Your friends in the house wanted you to have something besides the purse."

"Spike," who had been flat on the floor, suddenly dumped another heap into Peter's lap.

Haynes, grinning happily, turned the lining of the hat inside out, shook it, tapped it a few times, and replaced it on his head.

"I guess that's all of it," he said.

Peter looked down at the money in his lap, and touched the pile with his fingers.

"My Lord!" said he, and it sounded like a prayer, "I didn't know there was that much money in the world!"

Then he held out his hand to Haynes. Peter's face was twitching, and his eyes were full of tears.

"I—I can't say nothing," he began. Then he choked and began to sob.

"Forget it!" cried Haynes. "If you want to make it right with me, ask me to the wedding!"

"You're on!" said Peter, wringing Haynes' hand. "And it'll be soon, too!"

Billy Grayson says that a fighter is the most ungrateful of all professional performers. He said this after he had offered Peter all sorts of inducements to meet fighters of national reputation. Peter declined every offer; 50 per cent of the house was no inducement. To the best of my knowledge, the Battler has never had a five ounce glove on his hands since that memorable night.

He owns a laundry route now, and has three men working for him. I met him occasionally. The last time I saw him he informed me that it was a boy, and his name was Edward Haynes Hansen.

"The Sparring Partner"—another story by Charles E. Van Loan—will appear soon.