



I.

SIX perfectly formed bodies swayed perilously upon the shoulders and outstretched arms of Mamie Boyle, the Brunhild of the vaudeville stage, known to her public as Mrs. Jiminez, the strong woman of the Gymnastic Jiminez Troupe, eight, count 'em, eight. A beatific smile descended upon her flushed face as she stood there, her soft shoes standing firmly upon the Gibraltar shoulders of Rodriguez Jiminez, the strongest man in vaudeville.

They swayed a trifle more, and out over the footlights went the acrobats' cry: "Ee—ee—ee—yah! Hup!"

The smooth, pink-clad bodies swung out and down, each in its own expert somersault, and in an instant, smiling and bowing in perfect alignment, the curtain cut off their vision of the sea of clapping hands.

They took three curtain calls, and when by no stretch of the imagination or of the ear could they hear the audible sound of the contact of palm upon palm, they turned

to their dressing-rooms.

In front of his dressing-room door Jiminez and the woman paused for an instant. Hands on his hips, he looked at her almost sternly. He spoke commandingly in a low voice.

"I have desire you should mak' dinings weet me thees night, Miz Jiminez," he said.

A flush mounted to the woman's cheeks and an angry light was in her eye, the Irish blood in her revolting that any man should dare to address her thus commandingly.

"I will not mak' dinings weet you thees night," she mimicked. "and go easy on that Miz Jiminez stuff. My name is Mamie Boyle, as you well know. Mr. Jiminez, and that's what it is to you and everybody else behind the drop."

He looked at her darkly, and his immense ham of a hand stroked his large, curling black mustache.

"Eet ees that you are accep' the hospitaleetay of that Meestaire Horreeble Harreegan once yet again?" he demanded.

“And if I go out with Mr. Harrigan, then what is it to you?” she inquired angrily.

“Ah! That maybe we shall yet see, what eet ees unto me,” he promised. He gave his mustache a final, vicious pull and disappeared into his dressing-room.

She stared at the green door dubiously for a while and finally walked slowly off in the opposite direction.

The breach between the two had been widening for a few days, and by now had attained alarming proportions. Like everything of this kind, the basis upon which this breach was predicated was small; but a small wedge is all that is necessary to tumble a large house into the dust; and so it threatened in this case.

The wedge was the conflict of temper and temperament. The hot blood of the south of Europe and the fiery carmine fluid of the Irish are in many respects alike and it was especially so in this instance. Both Jiminez and Mamie Boyle were unbending in their moods and tempers.

To Jiminez it was sufficient to have won a woman. Then she was his forevermore; and he chose to so regard Mamie Boyle. This matter of proprietorship was contrary to several and sundry of the ideas of Mamie Boyle, and she resented the unconcealed command that was usually in the tone of Jiminez.

He loved her, but as yet it was a misunderstanding love that took everything for granted and left nothing to be won. It did not occur to him that a woman was different; it did not occur to him that there was no such quick end to the wooing of a woman; he did not know that a woman must be perpetually coaxed and wooed, even after she had been taken by storm, in order that she may remain won.

The truth of the matter was that Mamie Boyle did not stay “put.” On the

same bill with the Jiminez Troupe was Harrigan, the champion heavyweight boxer of the world. Horrible Harrigan, he was called, or Horrible Harry—the most unpopular champion that ever held the title. It was his very unpopularity that made him such a money-maker. All records for attendance were broken when he fought—and nine-tenth of the audience were usually there because they would not miss the possibility of seeing him knocked out.

It was bound to happen some day, because it was a matter of common knowledge that he had a “glass” jaw; that is, the jaw was his weak point, and a solid punch on it would send him to the place where sleeping champions lie.

But so far nobody had managed to find his jaw; he was devilishly clever, with a guard that was the most effective thing of its kind ever seen. Possessed of a powerful punch himself, he would dance around and around his victim, jabbing and cutting and getting away without a return.

Crueler than Kid McCoy was in his best days, he did not consider it a perfect day or a successful tight unless he had cut his victim to ribbons before knocking him out. Once he was sure of his mastery, he would defer the knockout to the last minute, playing with him as a cat plays with a mouse.

And all the while a cruel sneer hovered on his thin, grimly straight lips. That was Horrible Harry, of the glass jaw. Some day a hay maker would land on that jaw, and the prize fight fans of the nation would arise and give three rousing cheers.

He was on the bill with the Jiminez Troupe, picking up a little easy barnstorming money. A prize of five hundred dollars was offered to any of the local talent who could stay four rounds with him. Many were called, but no one had plucked the five hundred yet. This was

the man who was by way of stepping in between Jiminez and the Wagneresque Mamie Boyle.

II

THEY were facing each other across the snowy napery of a table in the most pretentious restaurant of Evansville, Indiana, whither their billing had led them this week.

"Say, Mamie," Harrigan said, with that ghost of a thin smile hovering about the corners of his lips as he gazed at her approvingly—in much the same way as the serpent must regard the tethered lamb—"I don't see why you hang out with that English-murdering wop. Why don't you can him?"

A warm light flared up in Mamie's blue eyes, but when she spoke her voice had a steady, monotonous inflection; any one who was really acquainted with her would have known that was a dangerous sign.

"If you are referring to Mr. Jiminez, he very careful what you say, Mr. Horrible Harrigan." she said, viciously accenting the nickname. "He isn't a wop; his blood is pure-er—Castilian, and he is my fiancé—" She gazed levelly into his eyes.

"Oh, well," her companion laughed slightly. "don't get excited about it. You're not married to him yet, are you?" He motioned to the waiter, and they busied themselves with the card.

Harrigan was another man who did not know women—as if any one does! If he had, he would have sensed that he had no chance with Mamie Boyle; and if his instinct had traveled a little farther in the same direction he would have intuitively seen that he was merely being used as a tool with which Mamie Boyle meant to enrage the hot-blooded pure Castilian.

Mamie, being a woman, knew that the only way to bring Jiminez back to the basis of relationship on which she wanted him was to make him see that he was by no means sure of her.

Harrigan, of course, did not know that. He knew only that he was the champion heavyweight of the world, and that a glamour existed around him that must have attracted the statuesque Mamie.

She looked up suddenly from the card where she had been studiously and with malice aforethought marking off the most expensive items.

"And, by the way. Mr. Harrigan, my name is not Mamie to you; it is Miss Boyle." She looked at him significantly.

He gazed back at her a little puzzled, scarcely knowing how to take her. She was a new specimen to him. Finally he shrugged his shoulders amusedly.

"All right, all right," he acquiesced, and she rewarded him with a dazzling, dimpling smile that showed a double row of firm, milk-white teeth.

"How did you know I intended to stick to him?" she asked a little enigmatically.

Harrigan sat up a trifle startled out of his composure.

"Eh, what?" he gasped, and suddenly he smiled again. "Gee. I thought all along you meant what you were saying. Say, you're some kidder, ain't you—Mame?"

Mamie Boyle had come to a quick realization that she had better be civil to Harrigan if she expected to use him. She knew it would be necessary to nurse him along. That was the reason for her change of front. As has been stated. Harrigan did not know women. Else he might have suspected that this sudden reversal of form presaged something.

It was a very intimate meal after

that; with Mamie not ordering until she had run her finger down the left side of the card. Every time it stopped at a figure that resembled three dollars she ordered it.

She met Jiminez in the wings, just before going to her dressing-room to fix up for the evening performance. He looked at her with wide, angry eyes, and twirled his black mustache viciously. She gave him gaze for gaze, coolly, and broke the silence first.

"Hello, Jimmy," she said pleasantly, "I trus' that you have mak' pleasant dinings weet yourself thees night," she smiled.

The angry red mounted to his cheeks, not only because she ridiculed his manner of speech—she often did that and they had laughed together over it—but because she taunted him about eating alone.

"Eet ees," he said slowly, as calmly as he could, "that you have this evening among Meestaire Horreeble Harry made dinings?"

"Can't hide anything from your eagle eye, can I, Jimmy?" she smiled serenely*

He flushed again, but controlled himself.

"That ees incorrect, that you should weet another man do meetings, the when you are to be unto me married."

"And why not, Mr. Jiminez?"

"Because then shall it become necessario that I shall teach heem t'ings. Eet are posseebel that I will yet mak' him to look like an acciden' what she are already happened." he said significantly, striking a heroic, up-stage pose, and the blue veins around his temples stood out dangerously as he fought to restrain his passion.

"Mr. Harrigan should bibble!" she laughed scornfully. "He could handle you

like a child."

"Meestaire Harreegan will bebble." muttered the giant wrathfully. "Eet may yet be that he shall be sink weethout warning."

She laughed again, a cool, contemptuous laugh that was calculated to strike red rage into the heart of Jiminez, and it did. Mamie Boyle turned to her dressing-room.

"Wait, Mamee!" he commanded her, and she turned involuntarily. "Eet ees I, Rodriguez Jiminez, what command you to keep yourself apart from thees Horreeble Harreegan. You grasp me?"

Her hands rested lightly upon her hips in a significant attitude as she stood facing him there, a dangerous glint in her blue eyes, and two bright lanterns of color on the fair skin of her cheeks, the crimson accentuated by the angry pallor of the rest of her face.

"And who are you, Mr. Rodriguez Jiminez, that you should order me around as if I were a piece of furniture or some other animal? Who do you think you—"

"I am he what is yet to be your husband', Mamee," he returned with dignity, "and it appears unright to me that you should mak' rendezvous of other."

"Well, you're not my husband yet, and if that's your idea of the way to treat a wife, you'll have to try it on some one else. You grasp me?" she mimicked his inflection, swinging lightly on her feet and smiling coldly.

"It is difficult of me to have understandings of your meaning," he rasped, flushing hotly at the intended studied animosity of her tone.

"You will have no difficulty in having understandings of this." she flashed up.

"This was the magnificent solitaire she ripped from the third finger of her left hand, and she accented the sentence by

flinging it in his face. He blinked a little, and the color receded entirely from his usually florid cheeks, leaving them pasty gray in his emotion.

“That will help you to grasp me!”

She swung lithely on her heel, and left him staring blankly at her firmly receding back, a whirlpool of conflicting, half-formed, chaotic thoughts.

III.

THEY were both wrong, of course. He was as far wrong in assuming complete proprietorship over her as she was in accepting the attentions of Harrigan, ulteriorly motivated as she was in her actions. And she overreached herself when she broke the engagement, permitting her flaring Gaelic temperament to get the upper hand. Such a thing as breaking the engagement was far from her desires in the matter; she loved the warm-blooded Jiminez and desired merely that he should be brought to a realization of their proportionate relations to each other.

To retrace her steps and confess her mistake, however, was far removed from her very nature. In fact, during the next few days she went even further, spending most of her spare time with the pugilist, to the greater enlargement of that gentleman's already greatly enlarged cranium.

So it came about that for the next few days Jiminez saw Mamie Boyle scarcely at all, except during the time they were together on the stage, and one or two glimpses of her as she disappeared through the dingy stage-door with Harrigan; and the heart of him grew full sore, and the rage in him mounted up to a crimson tide at the thought of Harrigan.

To be flouted by a woman was a new experience to the fiery Castilian. And when that woman happened to be the

woman one loved, it was a thing scarcely to be borne. He was a man who was proud and magnificent in his strength, which was enormous, and small doubt existed in his soul that he could maul Harrigan to a senseless pulp.

Harrigan, on his part, regarded the muscle-bound acrobat contemptuously, and sneered at him openly when occasion offered. That was his nature, to jeer the loser.

Such an occasion offered on Friday, the next to the last day of their stay in Evansville, just before the performance. Jiminez, who had come early and already got into his fleshings, was lying prone on a rustic settee back stage, brooding darkly over his setback in the realms of Venus, and meditating dire revenge. It was mayhem that he wanted to commit on the person of Horrible Harrigan. He was not exactly certain what mayhem might be, but it sounded like something deliciously bloody and gorily satisfactory to his wounded soul.

Entered then the persons of Harrigan and Mamie Boyle, evidently returned from some little morning excursion—the kind of excursion that he, Jiminez, used to take with her. He knew what it was—some long, swinging walk through the fresh, green roads, braced by the keen country air.

It was dangerously close to curtain-time, and without a glance at Jiminez, Mamie hurried to her dressing-room. Harrigan, however, was in no such hurry. He did not appear until near the end of the program, and consequently he had plenty of time to loiter. He loitered, therefore.

Spying Jiminez, he sauntered over to the bench and stood over him with a coldly-amused sneer on his thin lips. Without rising, Jiminez stared back at him, a red flush filling his large face.

"Well, ol' has-been," Harrigan broke the silence just before it became embarrassing, "I see you've been handed the bloomin' rawspberry."

It was the same way that he fought. It was not enough for him to finish an opponent; he must also torture him.

Jiminez sat up slowly and regarded him.

"I do not mak' comprehendings of blooming rasperry," he said with an inquiring inflection.

"I mean that Battling Kid Cupid has slipped one over on your mush." elucidated the horrible one. "That you've been given the grand razoo—the can."

The light of understanding came slowly into the black eyes of Jiminez.

"Ah, yes," he drawled, "but perhaps eet shall yet be slept over unto you, thees blooming razoo which you call heem."

"Is tha-a-at so?" mocked the pugilist. "What guy is there around here what kin do it?" he inquired.

Suffused with a long-pent-up rage, Jiminez rose and came very close to Harrigan.

"Mak' regardings, then, of heem what can perform such," he muttered fiercely, twirling his mustache furiously. "Eet shall be well for me that I shall do scatterings of you to the four winds of the earth. Vacuum cleaners may yet upgather those brains of you from where I mak' disposings of them."

Harrigan laughed shortly, an ugly laugh that had a shiny, needlelike quality contained within its compass.

"You! Why, I'd damage you so you'd be almost useless if you ever tried any of the rough stuff on me. I only wish you would. It'd make a pretty story for Mame." He turned on his heel. "If you ever try, the next t'ing you know you'll be

saying, 'Good morning, St. Peter.'"

He started to walk away, but changed his mind and turned to face Jiminez, who was purple in his rage.

"Say!" he said. "Why don't you try to collect five hundred dollars from me?"

"You—you mak' donations of several hundreds of dollars?" remarked Jiminez grimly. "You are one that gives away ice in the time of winter, and muffs of ears een summer. How collec'?"

"Stay four rounds wit' me and the coin is yours. You won't need it w'ere you're goin', though. Nobody is barred. Try it this afternoon—if you've got the guts," he insinuated insultingly, and walked off to his dressing-room without giving Jiminez a chance to answer.

In deep thought. Jiminez remained seated on the bench. This was a new idea, but it took deep root in him. It was revenge legitimized. Here was a chance to punish this intruder—this man who had stepped between the mighty Jiminez and his love—and to be paid for doing so.

He had not a doubt as to his ability to carry out the program. Truly terrible in his strength, it did not occur to him that he knew practically nothing of the art of boxing. He knew only that it was to be a combat of man against man—and if there was any man he feared in such an encounter he had yet to meet him.

IV.

"AND now, laideez an' gen'lemen," ballyhooed the manager of Horrible Harrigan, "having concluded his unparalleled and unprecedented exhibition uv bag-punching an' shadow-boxing, on behalf of Mr. Harrigan, champeen heavyweight of the woild, the management offers a prize of five hundred dollars to any one in the house who can stay four rounds

wit' him. Markis of Queensberry rules. Nobody is barred; the bigger they come the harder they fall. Laideez an' gen'lemen, I have the honor to interduce Harry Harrigan, the heavyweight champeen of the woild."

Harrigan stepped forward, tucked in a gaudy bathrobe, and bowed loftily to the audience. There was a scattering of applause.

"Oh, you murderer!" piped a voice from the gallery, and the house snickered.

Nobody made a move to the stage, where a small ring had been roped off. Five boys of the home "talent" had been disposed of that week, and nobody else seemed to be anxious.

"Is there no one here who needs five hundred dollars?" inquired the manager. "If not, Mr. Harrigan will spar four rounds with one of his boxing partners. Step up, somebody: it's easy money."

The house snickered again.

Then there was a commotion and a craning of necks in the rear of the orchestra, and a colossal figure stalked down the center aisle, incased in a faded bathrobe. A scattered cheer went up as the audience identified the massive figure of Jiminez climbing onto the stage, and a wildfire of handclapping ensued.

"Hand him something for muh, Jimmy, ol' thing!" came the exhortation from the gallery voice again.

"Mr. Jiminez has decided to interview the undertaker," announced the manager. Laughter.

The manager turned to Jiminez.

"I have desirings to mingle among Meestaire Harrigan," said Jiminez to him.

"Your wish shall be granted." remarked the manager.

Jiminez took off his bathrobe and threw it into the corner, standing forth in

his pink fleshing, a perfect, massive figure of physical development. Like smooth, great snakes, his muscles glided and slid over one another in his arms and back as he stood facing Harrigan, who sat composedly and aloofly in his corner.

The preliminaries were quickly concluded and, with glove-encased hands, the two combatants crouched on their three-legged stools in diagonally opposite corners, awaiting the bell.

"Clang-g-g!" the bell sounded its brazen summons. The stools were whisked from under the men. With a bull-like roar Jiminez bounded forward to the center of the ring to meet the oncoming Harrigan and crush him in his terrible grasp.

His arm, went out and closed upon space. When Harridan had been there was nothing but atmosphere. Harrigan had danced lightly out of reach. There was a slight crack, and Harrigan's glove had landed upon the cheek of Jiminez, leaving a red, bloody mark. It was a trick that the champion had, to slightly twist his glove at the moment it landed, breaking the skin and drawing blood.

The rest of the round was the same way, with Jiminez always rushing wildly forward, wide open, and Harrigan always dancing lightly, calmly away, peppering the larger man at will; hitting him with everything but the ring-posts. When the bell announcing the end of the round rang, Jiminez stumbled blindly back to his corner, a bloody, gory wreck.

The next round was the same, with Jiminez landing never a punch on Harrigan—indeed, scarcely able to touch him. A wicked, cruel sneer was winging its nebulous way across the thin, cruelly compressed lips of the champion. He went about his work in a businesslike way, addressing himself to the task of cutting up Jiminez. He was enjoying it hugely.

It was apparent to the audience that, wide open as Jiminez was, Harrigan could finish him whenever he wanted to, and a storm of hisses and jeers went up when, at the beginning of the third round, they observed that Harrigan meant to continue his tactics.

“You murderer!” piped that shrill voice in the gallery. “Why don’t you knock him out, you butcher?”

In and out he danced, round and round the plunging, gamely boring-in Jiminez, peppering him with a shower of left and right jabs that could easily have blinded a far more expert boxer than the Castilian.

The gallery started to whistle a popular waltz in time to the dancing of the champion, but he continued on imperturbably. He held to his course calmly until the middle of the fourth round.

Having decided, then, that he had had enough amusement for one day, he spread his legs and waited for the wide open, almost blind acrobat to plunge in on him. There was a double swish of gloves cutting through the air. The right landed flush on the point of the jaw of Jiminez. He fell, dead to the world. Even as he was in the act of falling, the crushing left of the champion caught him in the pit of the stomach, sinking in almost up to the wrist.

Motionless the massive Jiminez lay there, and there was dead silence from the gallery as the champion stood over him, smiling sweetly, his hands on his lips.

“You cruel beast!” came the sharp staccato of a feminine voice beside him, and he turned to face Mamie Boyle, who, unable to restrain herself, had rushed out before the curtain.

“You brute!” she shrieked at him.

He smiled and opened his mouth to speak, but no one ever discovered what it was he wanted to say.

With a sharp, powerful right hook, and with all the crushing weight of her one hundred and seventy pounds of trained bone and muscle behind it, Mamie’s massive fist landed flush on the unprotected glass jaw of the champion. Like a tree falls, straight and suddenly, he toppled over with eyes already glazing.

The champion of the world had been knocked out by a woman!

A wild bedlam of commotion and cheering ensued in the theater as the curtain was hastily rung down, but Mamie did not hear anything. She was on her knees beside the prostrate form of Jiminez, crooning tearful endearments into his unhearing ear.

V.

MAMIE BOYLE leaped into national prominence before nightfall, almost. The telegraph wires and the newspapers were full of her exploit almost instantly. Of course, Horrible Harrigan had not been prepared, and was taken by surprise, and all that sort of thing, but the fact remained—the champion of the world had been knocked out by a woman.

The thing, by the way, was his finish. Deservedly unpopular as he was, he was jeered out of pugilism. He was knocked out in the very first round in his next fight. The bubble seemed to have gone out of him, as was his ambition, and he left that famous glass jaw uncovered for just an instant. That was enough.

That night Jiminez could not appear in his act. Had Mamie been present they could have made shift somehow without him, but she was also absent. In despair, the manager called her up at the hotel and tried to induce her to come down and go through with it. She refused calmly and firmly.

“But your public expects you!” the

manager expostulated.

"I am just now attending to the wounds of the only public I care anything about," she answered him and hung up the receiver.

He called her up again before the performance the next day. She refused again, as Jiminez was too much cut up to appear in public.

"Say, listen to this telegram that came from the booking agents to-day." she said into the telephone.

"RODRIGUEZ JIMENEZ:

"Cancel all present booking and come right back to New York. They are wild to see the woman who knocked out Horrible Harrigan. Can give you fifteen weeks in and around New York, and fifty weeks in the big cities, at double your present figure. Answer at once

"SOLOMON & KLINGER."

With a sigh the manager hung up the receiver.

She turned to Jiminez, who was smiling happily at her through his cuts.

"It's us for the big burg at last, Jimmy," she exulted.

"Yes, and it are all accountings the interventions of you, girl of my hear-r-t," he rumbled in his big bass.

"No, it's through you, Jimmy," she insisted. "I would never have done it, only you were so game that it made me mad. Say, that was a beautiful right hook, wasn't it?"

"It were," he agreed. "Will you do me so much honors to mak' lunchings weet me thees noon-times?" he asked humbly.

"Will I? Why, Jimmy, you know that you have a perfect right to ask me to go anywhere you want with you. You don't have to ask!"

"You are mos' good, angel of my soul. It are my estimation of exceeding fortunate that you should mak' condescendings to go weet me," he answered politely.