



A Sap's Fable

By H. C. Witwer

The brilliantly unvarnished story of Mr. Stanislaus Kuckowsky, box fighter, as told by his closest enemy

THAT sign? Oh, I picked it up from one of them gils which bounds around peddling mottoes. "He that talks much, errs much!" it says and if that ain't the truth then Lindbergh's afraid to go up in an elevator. It give me such a kick when I seen it that I slipped a guy six bits and hung it back of the soda fountain in memory of Knockout Kelly. If it hadn't been for that baby talking too much I wouldn't have Doris and this nifty drug store. I'd still be just a mug in the vulgar fistycuff racket, fawncy that!

Who's Doris? Well, we do a net here of about two hundred and fifty bucks the week. The fifty's because we're a drug store and the two hundred's because Doris parks here most of the time. The slavey's off today, so Doris is home now, playing with the vacuum cleaner and them kind of toys in our two-story stucco which I'll own, if it kills me, by the end of the year. The new car kind of upset my schedule. When you view Doris you'll get a rough idea of the terrible loss suffered by Knockout Kelly and the Follies when I copped.

No, I never ripped off no box fighting myself. I know I'm burly enough, but you don't see no putty ears on me, do you? What I done was front for a few good boys during my thirty years of clowning and amongst 'em was Knockout Kelly, which should of been middleweight champion of the world. I'll state Kayo was the sweetest puncher I ever laced a glove on and likewise the worst rat I ever met in my life! He'd give a cat a saucer of whitewash and frame his own parents just for the ducks, but when he tried to fox me, Brother, he couldn't even get a draw. Luck—and Doris—was with me. Yeah, them egg chocolates will positively put the beef on you. Another one? Coming up! Why, yes, I'll tell you about me and Kelly. It's a story I never get tired of and why should I when I'm the hero, no less!

This Annandale ain't a bad slab at that and then every village can't be New York—electric lights and such comes high. I was born and raised in this funny burg and so was Doris and her brother Tom. That big ape's down in

the cellar now, ripping open packing cases with his bare hands. He lost the hammer and chisel and he's afraid to tell Doris. He's a card, I wouldn't deceive you—the apple of his sister's eye, but just applesauce to me.

As big as Pike's Peak, but much less known. Thomas was once satisfied he was the next world's heavyweight champ, mark you, and he wished me to pilot him to the throne. He'd never been in a prize ring in all his useless life, yet he called himself "One-Second Manning" and insisted on fighting the title-holder first or nobody. The big stiff knew and hoped that such a comical match was out of the question, but that stall enabled him to put the bee on Doris for his cakes while I was trying to learn him that a kidney punch wasn't a drink.

Doris was then running this drum here for old man Hartnett, the guy we finally bought it from, and keeping this huge gilyago Tom, which was subject to fits at the sight of manual labor and haunted by the ghost of the time he'd killed. When I tossed him out of my camp as a total loss, he spent most of his days at home training, with a pillow as a punching bag or else the mattress jerked from his bed. He made gloves out of rolls of his sister's stockings. What a boy!

Tom was champ at one thing, all right, and that was losing jobs. I bet he worked a week for every guy in Annandale with a store. On the second time around they set the dogs on him. Then he'd flounder back and moan to Doris that the world was against him and that kind of hoy. Well, Doris had the idea that this egg was just a big, helpless baby, so she'd kiss him and make a fuss over him to cheer him up and the first thing you know he'd

glommed two bucks for himself so why should he work? Well, I got that all changed. This big clown labors as our porter, shipping and delivery departments now, and, Brother, he toils, what I mean. I'll have you know I carry no tourists!

Speaking of artichokes, me and Doris had been kind of playing around together since we was kids and the only

thing she had against me was that I was a manager of scrappers. That poisoned her!

Well, I'd ached around fight camps and handled maulers practically all my young life and any other way of making a living was just something I knew nothing about.

I had a stable of palukas then which I worked throughout the state, but the money I drew down would never win me no acquittal from a oil jury. One day,



"I could of swore she expected me to kiss her good-by and I could of used it too"

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after I'd hauled off and asked Doris to wed me for the sixteen hundredth and fifth time, avoirdupois, she says:

"Joe, you're simply throwing away your life in that terrible profession you're in and all you're learning is slang. Why, you have no future at all, do you realize that?"

"What's the difference?" I grins, "we can't all be aviators. Besides, I had to practically come up from the gutter and I can no more hide that than I can hide a cold in the head!"

"I don't mind your coming up from the gutter," she returns. "I admire it. But there seems to be some danger now that you'll bring the gutter up with you. This daily contact with those horrible pugilists is coarsening you and you're such a fine boy at heart it's a wicked shame! And I know you're just living from hand to mouth. If I married you, what would we exist on?"

"We could exist on Everglade Street," I told her. "I can get a catsy bungalow there for eighty bucks the month. Of course, I don't expect to win your large brother as a wedding present. I don't mean we'll fling him aside like a broken toy, but he'll have to snap into it and crash somebody's payroll, or else!"

"Have I ever asked you to support my brother?" she exclaims, coldly.

"No," I says, "I'll say one thing for you, Doris, you never get silly. Now, what day of the week do you prefer to be married on?"

We're at her boarding house gate then under the sobbing weeping willows and it was just commencing to rain—I'll never forget it! She give me a long, lingering look and hesitated, while my heart suddenly tried to burst through my ribs. Before, she'd always answered my proposition with a prompt, cold turkey "No!"—was she going to fall this time? No fooling, I was breathing like a movie hero emoting!

"Listen, Joe," she finally says, softly. "You leave Annandale and return a success, or even showing some signs of becoming one, at some other calling than pugilism—something that won't make me ashamed when I introduce you—and I'll marry you!"

"You're the same as a married woman right now!" I almost yelled, half crazy with joy.

With that, I dashed madly away, leaving her standing there in the drizzle looking after me kind of dazed. I could of swore she expected me to kiss her good-by and I could of used it, too. Afterward, long afterward, I found out that's just what she did, but I was so cuckoo at the chance to make this panic my bride that I forgot one of the most important details!

I ANKLED back to the Palace Hotel which had sheltered my manly form for so long and I begin to pack. The walls of my cubby-hole room was the same as papered with pictures of fighters I'd handled and others I'd like to and they seemed to be kind of sneering at me, so I tore down a slew of 'em to relieve my feelings. I phoned the local fight club that I couldn't go behind one of my boys which was due to start that night, but I'd send a pal, namely Jimmy the Eel. Another phone call fixed that. Then, afraid I'd weaken and change my mind, I grabbed my suitcases and hauled hips for the depot—New York was the hamlet I wanted to take and how! At the foot of the stairs I met the landlord, Mike Grogan, and seeing the grips he naturally figured I was taking one of my scrappers out of town.

"Well, Joe, me boy," said Michael, with a hostile glance, "if this lad don't win I'm afraid you'll lose your room."

"Pardon you," I grinned at him dreamily, "if this lad don't win I'm afraid he'll lose the world!"

To save time, I took a short cut across

the yard tracks at the station, a chance detour which was to change the whole course of my life! I come to a flat car near the freight ramp and a young statue out of the art museum is piling heavy cement blocks aboard the car, stripped to the waist in spite of the fine rain.

But what held me fast, en route to dumbfound the globe, was the way this guy was loading them cement blocks from his hand-truck. With his square jaw shoved out and a scowl on his good-looking pan, he'd grab one with the left hand, then one with the right. Up they'd go without him looking, first one and then the other, as swift and well-timed as a machine. Left, right—left, right!

NOT a pause in between and I want to say to you this afternoon he looked like he could sling them blocks or whatever all the livelong day. Dimly I pictured him with the chest weights—left, right; left, right. Why, of course, that would be right in his alley! Then I imagined him in the ring with that cool and terrible left and that following poisonous right. I forgot about what Doris thought of box fighting and that I was supposed to be all washed up as a manager. I was like a race horse trainer looking at a flashy thoroughbred. This was my *trick* and before me I seen a champion!

By this time he's aware of me staring at him and he dropped the blocks to growl at me:

"Well, now you seen me, what's your thoughts on the matter?"

"You better put your coat on, Chump, it's raining," I says, coming out of my dreams. "You'll catch cold."

"What are you—from the health department?" he sneers. "If one of them railroad dicks pegs you walking around the yards what you'll catch won't be no cold, but it'll be twice as annoyin'!"

"Did you ever do any scrap-ping?" I asks, allowing that to pass.

"Are you choosin' me?" he says softly, throwing back them mighty shoulders and letting out a few feet of chest. "If you are, you're a fearful matchmaker for yourself, Big Boy!"

So then I had to explain and identify myself and he remembered seeing me at the local fight club where he often went, being an incurable boxing addict. He broke down and confessed he'd never fought in a ring in his life, but he'd done lots of rough-and-tumble battling which he thoroughly enjoyed. What it takes to win *them* pungent mélées he was all broke out with! I took a squint at my watch and swiftly propositioned him and as he was already fluently sold on himself I had no trouble showing him where the middleweight crown was his for the taking. New York, experience, the title, fame, wealth—that was the layout which caused him to grab for his coat and mutter that he was fed up with his job anyways and as he'd been paid only a half hour ago this was a perfect time to sign off. Like me, he was as homeless as a poker chip and his name was Stanislaus Kuckowsky, which at that instant I changed to Knockout Kelly.

Just before we sprinted for the train he done a strange thing. The truck loaded with them cement blocks was at the top of the long freight-ramp and the wheels of it was propped so's it wouldn't roll down the incline. Mr. Stanislaus Kuckowsky takes a swift look all around, sees nobody and with a snarling oath deliberately kicks them props loose, leaving the truck rumble crazily down the ramp where it was bound to wind up in a crash, if it didn't hit somebody or damage some other freight! They was no reason for this, it was just pure meanness, and, had I only known it, that act was the tip-off on the savage maliciousness I was to put up with till he finally fought the champ. Even when he laughed, his shark's eyes still stayed hard and cold and later his handlers claimed he was so vicious he'd foul himself shadow boxing.

About the first thing I done when we got to New York was to rent a few sparring partners out of my scant bankroll, to show Monsieur Kelly the difference between a left hook and the referee. He didn't know what it was all about and made even the bags look clever, though later he bawled at me many times during our private wars that he'd been born a boxer and needed no schooling. Kelly was tough and willing with the patience of a bear tamer, but for many's the week these tenth-raters plastered him

from pillar to post with him taking to punishment like a caddy. Anybody could outpoint him, but nobody could stop him! However, when he socked them they went out like a match in a storm, what I mean, and when he suddenly discovered a cutting straight left to go with his jaw-breaking right I couldn't get nobody to play with him. This bozo was ready and I flung him into a Harlem preliminary with another great unknown. We win in a round with a knockout which dislocated the other boy's collar bone and instantly overcome the sales resistance of the sport writers.

IN ANOTHER month we're fighting at the Garden and in two months, with my showmanship, Kelly was the talk of fistiana. He was a born crowd-pleaser, the dimes was rolling in and we was soon sitting handsome. Six knockouts in seven fights and two of his prey was light heavies! Then he begin to put on puppy, making friends amongst the racketeers and the Good-Time Charlies and the fun commenced. I got gray hairs trying to keep him off the gin and in the gym! He couldn't be annoyed training for nobody beyond getting shaved and he fought a couple or three funny-looking fights, one of which got us hauled before the boxing commission to explain matters.



Tom Manning hunched his shoulders and bellowed: "If

He was girl-crazy, too, but though handsome, he got turned down oftener than a quilt, his approach being a bit crude. His motto, "Kiss 'em and check out!" showed too plainly in his actions. In the ring, he was a smart, cruel fighter—a killer with absolutely no mercy for a beaten, helpless opponent. Out of it, he was a conceited, wise-cracking, sneering hound which craved the night clubs, the ladies, and now and then liked to make whoopee in the taste-and-strangle joints when he could sneak away from me. All in all, by the time he was recognized as the logical contender for the middleweight championship I wouldn't of been found dead in Kelly's company if he hadn't of been my fighter!

I thought I knew all they was to know about box fighting before I backed into New York, but working Knockout Kelly around the Big Town I got a college education at the game. Many's the time I could of cleaned up like nobody's affairs by making him fight under wraps, lose on a foul or leave a house-drawing card go the limit with him. Not once did I listen to them offers, for nothing crooked has ever been connected with me or ever will and if Kelly fought some bouts now and then which wasn't kosher he done it without me being in on it. The gross results of my Manhattan campaign I pass on to you—never bet on a prize fight!

All this time, mark you, Doris had never been out of my mind for a minute though when I first wrote and told her what I was doing she burst up and sent me back a blast which put me on the floor for a week. I could scarcely get any shut-eye thinking about her and my future and finally I decided to come to Annandale for a conference. I figured if I could convince my weakness I had a possible world's champion under my wing and not just a ham-and-beaner, her views might undergo a change.

RIGHT then and there I got one of the great breaks of my life! Annandale was fight-crazy at the minute and willing to pay for the best, so I went to work and got in touch with Jimmy Harvey, matchmaker for the Pioneer Club. Within two weeks I'd signed Knockout Kelly to box the middleweight champ, right in my home town under Doris' pretty nose! We took the bout for almost nothing, for I was afraid Kelly would lay the title-holder like a corner-stone and the only thing surprising to me about things was the ease with which the deal was put through. The match was a natural, but the sport writers sniffed at the Annandale location—still, they always squawk.

I shoved off for Annandale with Kelly to start the ballyhoo and we checked in at the Palace, where old Mike Grogan

greeted me warmly in the lobby. He'd been reading the newspapers.

"Shake hands with Knockout Kelly, Mike," I says. I didn't mention that his real name was Kuckowsky.

"Kelly, is it?" beams Michael proudly, more tickled than if the President himself had come to this inn. "Well, it's glad I am to meet ye, me boy, yer a dom fine two-fisted Irishman. Ye'll have the bridal suite, no less, and I won't take a cint for it!"

"Okay!" nods Kelly, carelessly. "I been in worse traps than this—but not on purpose."

"Mike, we don't want anything for nothing," I smiles. "Thanks, just the—"

A wicked kick in the ankle from Kelly cut me off. When we got upstairs he turned on me viciously and bawled me out to a fare-thee-well, winding up by calling me a Patsy for not taking anything and everything I could get when it was free.

"All I'm puttin' out here is the lights!" he sneers.

That was Kelly. By this time what I thought of that egg would of got me deported, what I mean!

Sick of him, and the game too, for that matter, I left him there unpacking his hair-slickers and getting together all my nerve I dropped in on Doris unexpected. She took a quick, astonished breath when she saw me and got a temperature-raising red, while as for me, I just stood there like the fool I am, speechless! She'd been the prettiest girl in Annandale when I hopped off, but she's since grown into a collection of curves which simply stunned me. At first, the going was plenty tough and after getting control and giving me a cool greeting she'd have none of me if I cried my eyes out. I was still connected with the prize ring, I'd failed her and she was through! I stepped in fast with my snappy sales talk on Knockout Kelly and another matrimonial bid and it got me no place whatever. So then I says:

"Doris, I admit I'm just a big dumb-bell from the gym. I learned since I seen you that most of your ideas about prize fighting is only too true. They's plenty square guys in it, but it's over-run with polecats and I see now that the things I used to look on as clever matchmaking and the like was simply clever gyping! I want to tune into something else, but, in round numbers, what else can I do?"

"You said you had saved some money—you could go in business here," she tells me.

"I got ten thousand bucks stashed and I'll get five more out of Kelly's fight with the champ," I answers. "The entire fifteen grand goes on Kelly to win by a knockout, a proposition on which I can get three to one. I want you to place this bet for me, Doris, as a big favor, for if I lay it on the line myself it'll cause talk."

"Suppose Kelly loses?" frowns Doris. "I don't like gambling."

"Listen," I grins. "This here's no gamble, Beautiful. It's a investment as air-tight as government bonds! After the fight I'll have a roll which will not only choke a horse, but will also choke off all your comical objections to marry-

ing me. What d'ye think of *them* grapes?"

She continued to frown for a minute, very thoughtful indeed and I waited for her answer like a two-time loser again before a jury. Finally, she turned to me and says slowly and without a smile:

"All right! I'll bet the money for you, Joe, on one condition—regardless of whether you win or lose, you must sever all connection with the prize ring the moment this fight is over! If you win your wager, as you're so confident of doing, you can buy the Eagle Drug Store where I work and become a respectable business man here."

"But, look here, Doris, I don't know nothing about the drug racket," I busts out, flabbergasted, "why—"

"I'll teach it to you!" she shut me off, sternly. "Mr. Hartnett, my boss, is getting old and he wants to retire. The store is doing very well and would do far better if he were not so old-fashioned and opposed to pepping it up. With a free hand we can increase the business at least twenty per cent. It's simply a wonderful opportunity and your last one from me. That's final!"

I pressed a couple of shaking hands to my fevered brow and I hope to tell you I was doing some heavy thinking. If Knockout Kelly clicked and I done like Doris said, I'd lose a champion and a split of a possible million in a few years' time.

If Kelly lost, it would be just too bad for I'd then be as broke as the traffic rules, with the only profession I could cope with barred to me by Doris. I was positively in a tough spot, but—have you ever been in love?

"You win, Doris!" I said quietly. "The minute the scrap's over I'm through with the ring forever and may I rest in peace. Amen!"

"Now for that," smiles Doris swiftly, "I'm going to kiss you!"

And blushing to her ears she done it and breezed, leaving me standing there dizzy and thinking to Hades with Knockout Kelly, box fighting or what am I bid? Gangway for a up-and-coming young druggist—hot dog!

THEN Mr. Kelly run out of his favorite chewing gum one day and dropped into the Eagle Drug Store to stock up. Just a small incident, but it had one tremendous effect on the lives of three people, to wit, me, Doris and Kelly. Nobody can ever tell me that Fate didn't direct his footsteps—they's other drug stores here. Kelly got one eye-full of Doris and fell like two tons of bricks!

Doris told me all about it later when we was checking up on everything after the sensational championship fight. Kelly tried his usual promotion tactics with confidence and was a bit amazed when Doris put on the chill for him, so then he begin to bear down in deadly earnest, finally walking behind the cigar counter after her in an attempt to date her up. This was a horse from another milk wagon and it got Doris red-headed.

"Get out of here this instant or I'll call an officer!" she shot at him, pale with rage.

"But I'm Knockout Kelly," he says, dumbfounded for once in his conceited life.

"That explains your actions, but it doesn't excuse them!" fumes Doris, and at this critical moment in walks the man-mountain, her brother Tom, seeking a touch with his daily hard luck story. If Tom had recognized Kelly, a dirty look from my fighter would of sent the priceless Tom down for a count of nine.

"Tom, put this man out!" demands Doris.

Her gigantic relative glared at Knockout Kelly, (Continued on page 52)



Illustrated by
R. Van Euren

you ain't a block away from here in four seconds, I'll ruin you!"



One Store after Another

By John T. Flynn

LET us consider the egg. There is a traveler for you. The average store egg, from the moment it sees the light of day in a henbox on the farm to the time it snuggles up in a cozy corner of the housekeeper's ice box, does as much traveling around the country as a circus baby.

The process of manufacturing the egg is very simple—at least to the hen. She handles that end of the business with completeness and economy. But after she has done her share it takes an army of hucksters, assemblers, shippers, candlers, jobbers, wholesalers, retailers, horses and wagons, railroad trains and motor cars to get that egg to the lady who is going to cook it.

The ideal system of course would be for the hen to lay the egg right in the ice box. But that is not possible. And so we must have that complicated system for lifting the egg through an almost endless series of relays to the ultimate consumer. That is called distribution.

What is true of the egg is true of most of the necessities of life. Our manufacturers have become almost as efficient as that master-craftsman, the chicken. They achieve wonders through the miracles of mass-production. But the business of distributing what they manufacture has hung back under the dominion of ancient, cumbersome and expensive methods of merchandising. As a result most of the cost of everything we buy is consumed in the intricate process of marketing and merchandising and delivery. Now, however, we are witnessing the beginning—the real beginning—of the first great practical effort to deal with that problem.

Away back in the fifties, when the shopping district in New York was just a stone's throw from the Battery, a bold young school teacher from Ireland, named A. T. Stewart, threw his text books and his ruler away and opened a small store on Broadway. We call this the age of specialists. But that was the age of specialists. The man who sold linens didn't sell silk. The man who dealt in laces didn't sell ribbons. The store which carried ladies' stockings would not think of selling her petticoats. But this audacious young Irishman, as business came to him, began stocking up with all sorts of things. Of course he was called a fool. And his early ruin was predicted when he put price marks on all his goods and made the same price for everyone—and stuck to it. That was the beginning of two things: It was the germ of the modern department store. It was the first in-

In 1859 a tiny shop was opened in New York to dispose of one shipload of tea. In order to make it visible at all its front was painted red. That was the beginning of the A. & P. Mr. Flynn here tells the romantic story of the origin and growth of the chain stores that you see everywhere

vention of the one-price which now dominates American business.

By 1862 that Irish school teacher had traveled so far that he was able to build for his store on Broadway and Eighth Street a huge iron building, six stories high, covering a block, and costing

nearly \$3,000,000. It was called the Iron Palace. It was already almost a department store. It stands today as part of the home of one of the great merchandising institutions of the world—a unit of the great store of John Wanamaker in New York.

As a matter of fact the real department store did not come until later. But for some reason during these years this problem of distribution seemed to be revolving in the minds of a good many men. Montgomery Ward was tackling it from a wholly different angle—the system of selling by mail. The very year the Civil War opened a pious Y. M. C. A. secretary in Philadelphia decided to give up the marketing of salvation and to try his hand at the selling of grosser forms of merchandise. This was young John Wanamaker.

He opened a store in Philadelphia. His great contribution to the history of merchandising was the establishment of the first real, full-fledged department store. But this was not until later—after the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition when he opened his Grand Depot in the huge barn-like structure which had been built for a great religious revival under Moody and Sankey. Long before this he was to try his hand at something far more potent in its possibilities than the department store, though he scarcely sensed its importance and did not carry the idea very far. His first store was so successful that he almost immediately opened a second in Philadelphia and then a third in Pittsburgh. Here was a small chain of dry-goods stores many decades before anyone had begun to even suspect the tremendous mercantile idea in the chain system of selling.

An Unconscious Pioneer

The real pioneer, however, the man who was to see plainly for the first time the chain idea, was just getting under way in New York. Chain stores have a way of pushing forward in bad years. But that year no one was bothering about chain stores. Instead the air was full of troubled politics and war talk. People were talking about the mad exploit of John Brown at Harper's Ferry. One day a painter set to work on the front of a small store in Vesey Street in New York to give it a new coat of red paint. Things weren't so good in the hide and leather business. And



Wide World

This store, in metropolitan New York, is a typical link in the Butler chain of more than 1,100 stores

Wide World

James Butler, who in 1884 founded the chain bearing his name, photographed with his daughters and grandchildren

