

## A JOB OF WORK

By P. G. WOEDHOUSE  
(Concluded from April)

"You attending to this table?"

"I am."

There was no doubt about the puglist's appetite. It gave Freddie quite a thrill of altruistic pleasure to watch him eat. He felt like a philanthropist entertaining a starving beggar. He fetched and carried assiduously for the diner, and when at length the latter called for coffee and a cigar and sank back in his chair with a happy sigh, he nearly cheered.

On his way to the kitchen he encountered his employer, Mr. "Blinky" Anderson, looking depressed. Freddie gathered the reason for his gloom. He liked "Blinky," and thought respectful condolence would not be out of place.

"Sorry to hear the news, sir."

"Hey?" said Mr. Anderson, moodily.

"I hear the main event has fallen through."

"Who told you?"

"I have been waiting on one of the fighters upstairs."

Mr. Anderson nodded.

"That would be the Tennessee Bear-Cat."

"Very possibly. He had that appearance."

Like the Bear-Cat, Mr. Anderson was rendered communicative by grief. Freddie had a sympathetic manner, and many men had confided in him.

"It was One-Round Smith who backed down. Says he's hurt his foot. Huh!" Mr. Anderson grunted satirically, but pathos succeeded satire again almost at once. "I ain't told them about it yet," he went on, jerking his head in the direction of the invisible audience. "The preliminaries have just started, and what those guys will say when they find there ain't going to be a main event I don't know. I guess they'll want to lynch somebody. I ought to tell 'em right away, but I can't seem to sorter brace myself to it. It's the best audience, too, we've ever had. All the sports in town are there. Rich, guys, too—none of your cheap skates. I just seen old man Dunlop blow in with a pal, and he's worth all sorts of money. And now there won't be no fight. Wouldn't that jar you?"

"Can't you find a substitute?"

"Substitute! This ain't a preliminary between two dubs. It was the real thing for big money. And all the sports in town come to watch it. Substitute! Ain't you ever heard of the Bear-Cat?"

He's a wild Indian. Who's going to offer to step up and swap punches with a terror like him?"

"I am," said Freddie.

"You!"

"Me."

"You'll fight the Tennessee Bear-Cat?"

"I'd fight Jack Johnson if he'd just finished the meal that fellow has been having," said Freddie simply.

Mr. Anderson was not a swift thinker. He stood, blinking, and allowed the idea to soak through. It penetrated slowly, like water through a ceiling.

"He'd eat you," he said, at last.

"Well, I'm the only thing in this place he hasn't eaten. Why stint him?"

"But, say, have you done any fighting?"

"As an amateur, a good deal."

"Amateur! Say, can you see them sports down there standing a main event between the Tennessee Bear-Cat and an amateur?"

"Why tell them? Say I'm the heavy-light-weight champion of England."

"What's a heavy-light-weight?"

"It's a new class, in between the lights and the welters."

By this time the idea had fairly worked its way through into Mr. Anderson's mind, and its merits were beginning to appeal to him. It was certain that, if Freddie were not allowed to fill the gap, there would be no more main event that night. And in the peculiar circumstances it was just possible that he might do well enough to satisfy the audience. The cloud passed from Mr. Anderson's face, for all the world as if he had taken a Dawn of Hope cocktail.

"Why, say," he said, "there's something in this."

"You bet there is," said Freddie. "There's the loser's end, three hundred of the best."

Mr. Anderson clapped him on the shoulder.

"And another hundred from me if you last five rounds," he said. "I guess five'll satisfy them, if you make them fast ones. I'll go and tell the Bear-Cat."

"And I'll go and get him his coffee and the strongest cigar you keep. Every little helps."

Freddie entered the ring in a costume borrowed from one of the fighters in the preliminaries, and, seating himself in his corner, had his first sight of Mr. "Blinky" Anderson's celebrated basement.

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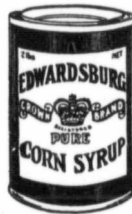
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