



He Don't Say Much While He's Waitin' for His Head to Steady Down.

wholesale order, and as do only a retail business. Some fine day you'd be landin' one of them sixty responder wall-pops, and I'd be flattened up against the wall so thin I'd have to be taken off with a putty knife and pass' part outed. You may need that sort of exercise, but I don't. If I had to mix it with you for a week, I'd want to see myself in a mattress. Well, perhaps I'll try the other things, then." "Next Tuesday, eh, about four o'clock?"

"The first time since I've been runnin' the studio I've ever had any trouble finding things hearty enough to satisfy a customer. He tosses the heavy dumbbells around like they was made of paper, and swingin' a pair of ten-pound clubs for an hour at a stretch hardly turns a hair on him. He picks up a chest weight machine with all the lead in the place, and he ain't more'n got hold of the handles before he has it pulled out by the roots and on the floor."

"There's only one thing left," says I, "and that's makin' the safe around." "And if I hadn't happened to think of a two hundred-pound mat artist, he'd been against such talent as Hackenschmidt. I guess he would have got disgraced, but when I puts on this special instructor makin' Fludd finds the game just what he wants. He don't want them two heaves throw each other around worth a dollar admission."

"Seems Fludd is gettin' real chummy with me. He ain't on the job, but he made him my friend for life. I don't know as I ever acquired one that I appreciated less; for it hadn't changed his nature any. He don't want to say anything mean about Fludd; but— Well, all he lacked was the tushes."

"Even in his most friendly moods, when he was content to me the story of his life, I'd be thinkin' what a shame it was that early in his career some one shouldn't accidently hit him on the head with a maul. He called himself an American, and maybe he was, but he been born in Brooklyn; but he was part foreign, some Pole, and the rest heaven only knows what. As Mr. I Zangwill would say, he was a product of the goulash kettle."

"SEEMS he'd been taken west young and grown up in a Michigan copper mine, afterwards driftin' to Montana. He got his first start by swindlin' some half-baked inventor out of a patent hydraulic nozzle management, and was proud of it. Next he got into the contractin' business, and turned out to be such a star at handlin' cooche labor that he got offers from every big corporation that heard of him. He had a very simple but interestin' rules for conductin' that sort of enterprise."

"Drive 'em!" says Fludd. "That's the way to do the truck. Drive the life out of 'em! Work 'em until they drop. And hold onto the boarding and supply contracts. Why, half the profit comes from that. You see, I'd have maybe a thousand men in my camp, and I'd be payin' 'em a dollar thirty a day. I'd feed 'em cheap, sleep 'em in tiers under tarpaper shelters at so much a week, and what I didn't get back for board would come in over the store counter or the camp bar. I've paid out seven thousand dollars on a Saturday night, and by Monday mornin' I'd have most of it back. It was almost as good as ownin' 'em. See?"

"Almo!" says I. "Why, you had the Legree come beaten both ways." "Then Fludd tells me how he worked his way east. He kept taking on bigger contracts, and always makin' good. It was the Jersey tunnel business that

brought him to New York. I never knew much about how them jobs was done until I listened to his description; but I've got the idea now. First there's the Wall Street push, with the money to finance the scheme; then there's the engineers, with the brains to figure out how it's to be done; and then comes Larson Fludd, drivin' his pick and shovel gangs, workin' 'em in ten-hour shifts, and makin' a profit on 'em even while they're asleep."

"You ought to be in the millionaire class by now," says I.

Fludd, he lets loose one of them chuckles of his. "Ought to be!" says he. "Why, I am, three times over, and by the time my next big job is finished I'll— Well, you can judge when I tell you that at this minute I have more than seven thousand men on my payroll."

"Countin' me?" says I. "Here, you get in on the mat while I earn my money!" "But nothing I could say ever pricked Fludd's hide. He'd been through all kinds of rough and tumble scraps, been shot at, hit on the head with a steel drill, and mobbed by strikers. No one had ever come so near putting him out, though, as I had, and the best imitation he could work up towards respectin' anybody was the way he felt towards me."

"I don't know of anything, outside of business, that he wa'n't willing to take my advice on,—the kind of collars he ought to wear, what was the best plays to see, and things to order for lunch. A little remark I made about his flashy diamond shirt studs makes him change 'em for pearls, and I'd only joshed him casual about the jay lip whiskers he wore, when he pikes right out to a barber shop and has 'em amputated."

**B**UT the limit was when he consults me about where he should live. Seems he was gettin' tired of being cooped up in a five-room hotel suite. Mrs. Fludd liked it; but he didn't. He wondered if a place in the suburbs wouldn't be about the proper thing.

"Sure," says I. "Rent one of them flossy villas up on the sound and buy a limousine to travel back and forth in."

Inside of a week he's done it. And where do you suppose he camps down? Van Huysen Manor, next to the Purdy-Pells. The Fludds hadn't been located more'n ten days before Larson tells me how Mrs. Fludd is complainin' because she's lonesome. The neighbors hadn't called.

"Oh, that's nothing," says I. "They may drop around after you've been livin' there a year or two."

"Huh!" says Fludd. "We want to see 'em now. Minnie, she's getting restless. I think I'll take Purdy-Pell home to dinner to-night."

"Eh?" says I. "Know him?"

"He knows who I am, anyway," says Fludd. "Suppose you come along too."

"Yes, yes," says I. "When you round up Mr. Purdy-Pell, I'd like to be there."

"Good!" says he. "We'll pick you up about five, and all go out together in the car."

Say, I had a picture of what was comin' to Fludd when he springs an offhand dinner bid on such a stiff-necked party as Purdy-Pell. Tickle me so that I has to ring up about four that afternoon and ask him if he's got his invite yet.

"Oh, yes," says Purdy-Pell.

"Ha, ha! Ho, ho!" says I. "Rich, ain't it? What did you tell him?" "Why—er—why," says he, "the fact is, on account of certain business relations that need to be

talked over, I—I— Well, I couldn't see my way to refuse."

"Gosh!" says I, droppin' the receiver. "You on the payroll too?"

**A**ND right on the minute up rolls Fludd in his car, with Purdy-Pell tryin' to look comf'able alongside him. We had an entertainin' ride, with Fludd bein' as chatty as he knew how. He sticks to the one topic he's really to home on, and that's Larson Fludd.

Course he tells us what a wonder he is, how much money he's made, how much he's spendin', and how it is he always wins out. It's chesty talk, all right; but comin' from him it sounds only natural. After one good look at him you don't expect anything else. And he's got a great point of view. Accordin' to him, this aggregation of continents and oceans was got together special as a picnic place for Larson Fludd. Cities and towns exist so he can make money by buildin' things for 'em. He don't know much about the Alps, or the ruins of old Rome. He knows Italy, though, as a place where they raise laborers that can be hired cheap by the day.

"See those hands?" says he, shovin' out his big paws, the palms soft, the nails all polished and even. "I used to lug copper with those; but I haven't done a stroke of hard work since I was twenty-three. That was when I discovered I could handle men and make money by doing it. I learned how to get the most out of 'em, to keep 'em on the jump. Make 'em sweat for you, that's my motto. Don't coddle 'em, drive 'em. It's what they're here for. That's what I tell Mrs. Fludd about managing her servants. She isn't used to so many as we have to keep out here, but she's learning. I'll show you when we— Ah, here are the gates! Quite a stretch of lawn that, eh?"

If you've ever been up past Van Huysen Manor you'll know he didn't overstate the case. The house is big accordin', one of these old fashioned colonial shacks that's been built over and added to until it would do for a summer hotel.

"What force of help are you carrying Fludd?" says I, as we rolls up the drive.

"Oh, thirty odd," says he. "All I say to Mrs. Fludd is, 'Hire as many as you like; only keep 'em all busy.'"

"Looks like she was doing it," says I. "I don't see any of 'em loafin' around."

**T**HERE wa'n't even one on hand to open the limousine, and Fludd has to ring the front door-bell. At that he waits a minute or so, and then Mrs. Fludd herself appears. I knew it was her from his descriptions. He'd found her a couple of years ago on one of his western trips, and if I'd been asked to guess where, I'd named a Denver music hall I've heard of. She's ten years or more younger than Fludd; but so far as build goes she's a good runnin' mate,—a strappin', bloomin' party with a forty-two bust, heavy jaws, and a head of peroxid hair that goes fairly well with her complexion. In the expensive costume she has on she's a good deal of a stunner, if you care for that style.

"Hello, Minn," says Fludd. "Here are some friends I've brought home to dinner, Mr. Purdy-Pell, Mr. McCabe. Where the blank are those butlers?"

Mrs. Fludd, she says she's glad to see us, and won't we step right in and excuse her while she has a word on the side with Mr. Fludd? Purdy-Pell and I'd just got our things hung up when we hears an explosion from Fludd.

"Quit, have they?" he's saying. "When? How many of 'em? Twenty-five! Well, get the others on the job, then. What! All three cooks? And the maids? Say, isn't there anyone left that can hash up a dinner? Why, blast it all, there must be! Here, who's that over there at the desk? Housekeeper, eh? She'll do. Say, you!"

We couldn't see her; but from the quiet tones we guessed she must be more or less ladylike. We heard her explainin' how she was a managing housekeeper, and really couldn't go into the kitchen and prepare dinner. She was sorry so many of the servants had left. She was afraid they had resented something Mrs. Fludd had said to them.

"Resented?" growls Fludd. "Well, that's good, that is! Wasn't I paying 'em good money? What more did they want?"

With that he comes out and gives us his views direct. This was a blamed fine state of affairs, when common house servants got so they resented orders, not only that, but had the nerve to quit work and leave their betters in the lurch. Couldn't even scare up enough help to get dinner for his guests. He'd have to call it off for this time, he guessed; but it was a blasted outrage and he was going to look into it.

"Why, here I am," says he, "with thousands of people in my employ, and nobody to cook my dinner! Think of it! And me with more money than I know how to spend! They call this a civilized community too! Civilized! What do you think of that?"

"Very—er—ah—distressing," says Purdy-Pell, backing towards the door.

**S**AY," says I to Purdy-Pell as we was riding home in the Fludd limousine, "what about that howl of his, anyway? Does bein' civilized depend on kitchen help?"

"Why—er—really," says he, "I'm not sure but that it does, you know."

"That being the case," says I, "I'm goin' home and pin a medal on our cook."