

FIGHTS
FOR THE
CHAMPIONSHIP.

THE MEN AND THEIR TIMES.

ADVERTISEMENTS.

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 and elsewhere, 1719.

FIGHTS FOR THE
CHAMPIONSHIP
THE MEN AND THEIR TIMES.

By
FRED HENNING

(“TOURIST”),

Author of “Recollections of the Prize Ring,” “Trips to Our Training
Quarters,” “Hosts and their Hostelries,” “Taverns and
their Tenants.” etc., etc.,

With Portraits from Old Prints.

VOL. I.

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P R E F A C E.



The orthodox style of a preface is to accuse oneself of all kinds of blunders and shortcomings; and to throw oneself upon the generosity of the reader. In my brief address to the many good sports who may peruse my book, I am going to do nothing of the kind. If the old stories of the Ring I have attempted to invest with new interest fail to hold the reader spellbound, it is no fault of mine, so I make no apology, for the material has been culled from many sources, and the fabric is a patchwork, and nothing more nor less.

To show temerity or shyness in the preface of a work upon Prize-Fighting would be out of place; so I simply ask my readers to take it for what it is worth. Books there are upon the noble art which many have read. "Boxiana," by Pierce Egan, and published in the early part of last century; "Pugilistica," a complete series from old "Bell's Life," by our old friend Miles, who was one of the contributors to the LICENSED VICTUALLERS' GAZETTE in its earliest days; together with "Fistiana," simply a rather imperfect record of the Ring, are the only works that have been published on the subject.

I claim that these two volumes treat more exhaustively of our fistic champions than any of the books published heretofore. One battle between two men standing before each other with the naked fists is very like another, and I am sure that without some accompaniment concerning the times the craftiest penman would find a difficulty in holding the reader's interest through two stout volumes like these before him. So I have borrowed from many sources matters of historical interest connected with

the Times of the men whose careers I have endeavoured to trace. It will, I trust, lend a little colour to the somewhat grim pictures which have been painted, perhaps, with not too careful a brush. Anyhow, the book is before the reader, and if he can summon enough pluck to dash in to the first round he will gather strength and energy to fight through the volumes to a finish, and "the Author" will have been well repaid for his work.

And now just a few remarks upon the subject of Prize Fighting, and then I will release you to wander through our book. Dr. Sam. Johnson said, "I should be sorry to see Prize Fighting go out. Every art should be preserved, and the art of defence is surely important. Prize Fighting makes people accustomed not to be alarmed at seeing their own blood or feeling a little pain from a wound." So saith the learned Doctor, and who, be he a true Briton, shall not share his sentiment?

Egan speaks of pugilism as being purely national, and points to its general utility as producing "emulation and the love of glory. To what a pitch of daring do not these carry men? At Talavera, Vimiera, and at that memorable epoch of military intrepidity and greatness, the Battle of Waterloo, the undaunted and persevering traits of a Shaw, a Thorne, &c., with other innumerable characteristic proofs of the valour of Englishmen in all our battles, demonstrate the truth of this position." What would he have said could he but have been with us during our African War? How did our fine young athletes acquit themselves there? And how few were there who could not use the gloves?

One more quotation from the Right. Hon. W. Windham, and I have finished. He writes: "True courage does not arise from mere boxing, from the mere beating or being beaten, but from the sentiments excited by the contemplation of such practices."

I have above me, of course, the rough views of the subject, but I fear that those who peruse the descriptions of the fights in these volumes will find some—a comparative few, I am glad to say—which smack of coarse brutality and unmanly conduct. Mostly, however, they have that heroic ring about them which has made the noble art what it is, and always will be—the stimulant to valour, helping us to cry:—

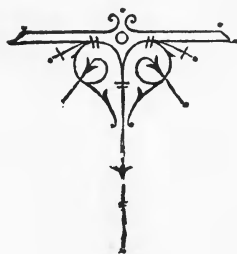
England never did and never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror.

PREFACE.

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- A very full and complete Index will enable the inquirer to trace practically the entire life history of our most prominent Champions and their friends and supporters. It will be seen that after retirement from practical life in the Ring many of its most active members gave in time their support or help to newer and younger men, and helped on a sport whose supporters claim to have been one of the causes of Britain's present glorious position.

F. HENNING.



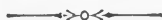
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MEMOIRS

OF

THE PRIZE RING.

FIGHTS FOR THE CHAMPIONSHIP.

INTRODUCTION.

It is now more than twenty-two years since articles under the above title first appeared in the *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette*. During that period the enormous research indispensable to the compilations of some thousand descriptive accounts of the great fights has been entrusted to less than half a dozen gentlemen, some of whose talents have shed a lustre in the literary world, whilst all have displayed a patience and indefatigable energy in recovering facts and incidents connected with the manly art of prize-fighting that—but for them—would have been lost and buried in the past.

Without disclosing names the present writer (who has had the happiness of a close personal friendship with each and all the contributors of these articles since their commencement) may state that the first was a great dramatic critic and brilliant journalist. He was succeeded by a gentleman, still living, who as a prominent politician, eminent author, editor, and newspaper proprietor, has made a name worthy of his exceptional abilities and charming personality. The third who continued to chronicle the Prize Ring in these pages for a longer period than all is a gentleman whose love of every kind of manly sport, refined education, and perfect knowledge of British history have enabled

him to weave the most interesting incidents of the times with the doings of prize fighters, investing these articles with a fascination which has made them such a conspicuous feature in the *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette*, and by their absorbing interest and graphic style delighted and entertained thousands of readers.

It has been the present writer's duty to chronicle during the past four years the more up-to-date records of the Ring, until the period was approached in the sixties when the manly art had degenerated to such an extent and found such a low level that interest had ceased. So with the Sayers and Heenan, King and Mace period it was considered that our prodigious task was at an end.

That it was a prodigious task accomplished must be admitted when it is pointed out that the number of words written upon the subject for the *Licensed Victuallers' Gazette* may be safely computed at between eight and nine millions, that the number of printed lines amounts to nearly nine hundred thousand, and that if they were run on to each other the typographical matter would form a continuous line of print reaching over forty miles, or nearly as far as Brighton is from London as the crow flies.

The immense amount of historically instructive, anecdotally amusing and exceedingly interesting matter which has been welded into those articles undoubtedly has been very great, and much regret has been expressed by letter from hundreds of the old readers of the paper at their termination.

This has suggested that it might not be by any means unwelcome to commence at the beginning once more.

Don't be alarmed. It is not our intention to travel those forty odd miles of print again, which would mean more than thrice that distance with the pen, and end only when young men were bald and grey headed and old men devoted to the noble art would be—who can tell?—fraternising with the gods and listening to the way in which Castor and Pollux (the deities of boxing) fought their way with their fists to Mount Olympus, or perhaps with open mouth and bated breath hearing the vivid description of the great fights between Hercules and Eryx or Autæus.

It is not our intention to wade through the complicated details of the rise and fall of the Prize Ring in the exhaustive manner in which it has been handled during the past quarter of a century in the paper. But it is our intention to focus our attention upon the championship fights, from the time of James Figg, who flourished in 1719, down to the time when another James, whose

surname is Smith, acquired the championship in 1885. In doing so we shall endeavour to weave into our fabric much of the most interesting matter which has already appeared, and which purely belongs to the history of the Ring, whilst we shall consult every contemporary authority as we proceed to describe the fights of the British champions. The series will constitute a complete history of the development of the sport in all its phases. There may be tales of coarse and brutal exploits, and often of brave, heroic deeds, but the bright and dark sides of pugilism will be recounted with equal impartiality. So we feel confident of being able to present an abridged history of the Prize Ring, which will not only be acceptable to the lovers of the sport, but furnish a valuable study indispensable to an understanding of the manners, customs and institutions of our forefathers.

Although we have fixed upon the period when Figg (the father of modern boxing as we must call him) held the championship, it must not for a moment be supposed that he was the originator of fisticuffs. Old Homer, who wrote more than three thousand years ago, makes many allusions to this then aristocratic and noble sport. Pope has translated it, and therefore was the first historian of the Prize Ring writing in the English language.

It is in the "Iliad" that we get most information of the single combat with the natural weapons when Euryalus answers to the challenge of Epeus at the sports held at the funeral of Patroclus.

Then let my foe

Draw near; but first his certain future know;

Secure, this hand shall his whole frame compound.

Mash all his bones, and all his body pound.

The "gloves of death," gauntlets made from thongs of hard raw hide, are bound to the fists, and the warriors enter the arena, and thus the fight is described—the very first fight recorded in the world's history, and, be it remembered, this took place more than a thousand years before the birth of Christ.

Amid the circle now each champion stands

And poises high in air his iron hands.

With clashing gauntlets now they fiercely close;

Their crackling jaws re-echo to the blows.

And painful sweat from all their members flows.

At length Epeus dealt a weighty blow

Full on the face of his unwary foe.

Beneath the ponderous arm's resistless sway,

Down dropped he nerveless, and extended lay,

As a large fish, when winds and waters roar,

By some huge billow dashed against the shore,

Lies panting ; not less battered with the wound,
 The bleeding hero pants upon the ground.
 To rear his fallen foe the victor lends,
 Scornful, his hand, and gives him to his friends,
 Whose arms support him reeling through the throng,
 And dragging his disabled legs along ;
 Nodding, his head hangs down his shoulders o'er ;
 His mouth and nostrils pour the clotted gore.

It will be seen by the above that the ancients practised prize fighting in pretty nearly the same way in which we do now—thirty centuries after at the National Sporting Club. There are the gloves—not quite so deadly, to be sure—there are also the seconds, and it was the custom then as now to take the fallen man's hand at the finish of the contest.

We could tell of many a "mill" amongst the ancients if we had space or were certain that these warriors held the title of champions and had a right to figure under our present heading, for old Virgil gives a splendid account of the great fight between Dares and Æneas, and another between the first-named and the brave Entullus, the reward being a live bull with golden-mounted horns. Entullus was a champion in his time, but had given up prize-fighting and gone out of training.

The two men met, however. Dares would seem to have been of the Jem Smith build, whilst his opponent was of the Tom King or Heenan cut—older, but bigger and stronger. In the second round Dares receives such a punch in the side with the fearful hide and iron-ribbed gauntlet that he is completely knocked out. Entullus is called upon to spare his antagonist, which he magnanimously does, and he is taken from the ring acknowledging defeat.

"Behold," says Entullus, "ye have rescued Dares from the death I might have dealt with this arm by your intercession. This arm is feeble now to what it was when I was in my prime, yet ye may know what kind of blow I could have dealt him." Then the champion plants his gauntlet with a fearful crash between the golden horns of the bull he has won, and the beast's brains are dashed out and splutter over the bystanders. "There," he says, "that is a purer sacrifice than the blood of the brave foeman, Dares. Henceforth I lay aside my gauntlet and my art until the gods make ready for me the path to that bright country beyond this life."

So much for the ancient pugilists. It is a fascinating subject, and so beautifully told by both the great Greek and Roman poets that we fain would linger longer with them in their arena and witness their manly combats



JAMES FIGG,
FATHER OF THE BRITISH PRIZE RING.

*From an old steel engraving published by Pierce Egan in
the early part of the present century.*

CHAPTER I.

THE FATHER OF THE MODERN PRIZE RING.—JAMES FIGG
AND NED SUTTON.—FIERCE COMBAT WITH SWORD, FIST,
AND CUDGEL.

It is Merry England in the reign of the First George, and as we turn up Drury Lane and cross Long Acre we have passed through one of the most fashionable quarters of London. Continuing our walk we notice the gentlemen's houses and gardens in the Oxford Road sprinkled here and there, and standing in their own grounds. We feel that we are quite in the suburbs of the metropolis, and have a fine view of the open country. Making our way to where is the Tottenham Court Road, we pass a few quaint old hosteleries with their bowling greens and rustic gabled roofs. One amongst them, at the south-west corner of the Hampstead Road, only a few hundred yards from the Oxford Road, bears the sign of the Adam and Eve. It stands on the corner of a narrow lane or court leading out of the main thoroughfare.

All around is pure country, the acres and acres of bricks and mortar have not yet sprung up in Camden or Kentish Towns, and as far as the eye can reach are grassy meads, with farm-houses scattered here and there. It is the celebrated old inn with its gardens which have been in existence since the days of the Stuarts, and was even before then notorious as a pleasure resort, and for its cakes and cream, its syllabubs, and strawberries.

Ben Jonson places it the scene of one of his comedies, *A Tale of a Tub*, and before the old Adam and Eve Hogarth makes the guards halt in his celebrated picture of "The March to Finchley." It is, indeed, the time when the great painter is living of which we speak, and, perhaps, no better way of introducing our readers to England's first Champion could be found than accompanying the artist to the hostelry at the end of the Tottenham Court Road.

Hogarth is a great friend of Figg's, for has he not designed his professional card and can tell us all about him. The card is worth looking at (*see frontispiece*), and will be handed down to posterity so long as the noble art exists. The upper part of it bears an illustration from the pencil of William Hogarth, which has been carefully engraved.

On a platform stands the great Figg, who is represented as a man of middle height, but of powerful build, with muscular legs and arms denoting great strength. He holds a sword at rest, and by his side is a military man with a quarter-staff, whilst a concourse of people fill the space around the platform, and many of more aristocratic appearance fill the gallery above.

Beneath the engraving are the following words:—
“James Figg, Master of Ye Noble Science of Defence, on ye right hand in Oxford Road, near Adam and Eve Court, teaches gentlemen ye use of ye small back sword and quarter-staff at home and abroad.”

Hogarth tells us that the professor was born in the beautiful village of Thame, in Oxfordshire, in the reign of William III., and by his extraordinary displays of boxing, fencing, and quarter-staff upon the village green had attracted the attention of the Earl of Peterborough, the very same old soldiers who was one of England's greatest defenders, and an enthusiast on the noble art of self-defence.

The Earl was a staunch patron of all brave and manly sports and amusements; so he brought James Figg to London, and established him somewhere in the Tottenham Court Road, where, for ten years, he became the tutor of all the young nobility, who flocked to his establishment to learn the noble art of self-defence. So great was Figg in demand, that he afterwards removed to more extensive premises adjoining the Adam and Eve, with his school of arms erected at the back of the ancient hostelry. The large wooden building was capable of holding on the ground floor some 1,000 persons, whilst in the gallery above could be seated two or three hundred. A large circular stage about 40ft in diameter was placed in the centre, and it was upon this platform that the champion would do “battle for money, love, or a bellyfull.”

It may be taken for granted that Figg preferred to give exhibitions of his skill for the first-mentioned, for we find that there is a method about his arrangements calculated to fill his coffers, and he was a great believer in adjourned meetings, so that his patrons might pay at the doors twice.

At the time we are introducing the great athlete to our readers, he has fought many a time with the best pugilists of the day who had dared to throw down the gauntlet, but none were successful. Indeed, he persistently challenged all comers, and every year upon the Bowling Green at Southwark, during the fair time in September, Figg was there ready to encounter anybody. There is a bill, issued at that period, which we

are enabled to quote from. Referring to the above fair, Figg announces that every day between noon and ten o'clock "the town will be entertained with the manly arts of foilplay, back sword, cudgelling, and boxing, in which the noted Parks from Coventry and the celebrated gentleman prize-fighter, Mr. Millar, will display their skill in a tilting bout, showing the advantages of time and measure; also Mr. Johnson, the great swordsman, superior to any man in the world for his unrivalled display of the hanging guard, in a grand attack of self-defence against the all-powerful arm of the renowned Sutton. Buckhorse and several other pugilists will show the art of boxing, concluding with a grand parade by the valiant Figg, who will exhibit his knowledge in various combats with the foil, back sword, cudgel, and fists."

The celebrated Mr. Johnson was no less a personage than the uncle of the great Dr. Samuel Johnson, and the bold Sutton was Ned of that ilk, whose fight with Figg for the championship we shall now proceed to describe.

Ned was a native of Gravesend, then looked upon by Londoners as a remote trading port and shipping station. He had never been to the metropolis, but had worked, boy and man, for thirty years at his trade as a pipe maker, his only recreation being in the indulgence of the athletic pursuits of the period. There wasn't a man in Gravesend, or within miles around, who could touch him with the broad sword, quarterstaff, or fists. He was, indeed, champion of Kent. When he heard of the great deeds performed by the champion in London, Ned Sutton could not rest until he had challenged him, much to the surprise of Figg, who, at that time, had never heard of this ambitious rival.

Figg was only too glad of the opportunity to meet the Gravesend pipe maker, for business had been dull in the Tottenham Court Road. King George had started for his summer trip to Hanover, the journey which is to be his last, and the cream of the aristocracy had gone with him. This visibly affected the champion's receipts, so he was glad when, in the May of that particular year (1727), to find that Sutton was in earnest and had arrived in London, for he knew that the gauntlet thrown down to the champion would fill the house.

The signing of articles being accomplished, it was publicly advertised that on Wednesday, the 6th of June, the contest, or rather contests, would take place. To begin with the combatants were to engage in as many back sword bouts as would disable or prove one man's superiority over the other. This, after an

interval, was to be followed by the *piece de resistance*—a turn with the fists, when, should both be capable, they were to wind up with the cudgels. A pretty big undertaking, especially as neither was to be acknowledged the winner unless he defeated his man in all three engagements.

It was a delightful June morning, quite early, when a large and mixed crowd gathered at the doors of the amphitheatre. The excitement was intense over the coming event, for nobody had dared for a whole twelve years to challenge the champion. Before noon, the hour fixed for the opening of the entertainment, the whole of the floor of the building was crowded, and just upon the stroke of twelve many sedan chairs were set down at the entrance, and fair ladies of high degree, escorted by the beaux of the day, snuffed, laughed, and chatted together as they made their way to the seats in the gallery reserved for them.

Although Royalty was conspicuous by its absence, and the titled folk were not much in evidence, there were many celebrities present, and on glancing at the records of the period, we find the Government represented in the person of the Prime Minister, Horace Walpole, accompanied by several M.P.'s. The stage was well represented by authors and actors, actresses and leading ladies of fashion, amongst them those whose names will live for ever and a day. Colly Cibber and Kitty Clive, the former growling as usual and the latter more bewitching than ever; Dean Swift, who was busy in London seeing his "Gulliver's Travels" through the press, and taking observations for notes for his sermon on his return to the Emerald Isle, hobnobbing with Pope, who had come especially to be re-inspired over his lines translated from Homer, and which we have quoted above. The ladies were damning and swearing prettily, and the men were telling stories and peices of scandal with a coarseness of language and rudeness of indecency that would now shock a batchelor's party. Yet the dames never once blushed, but applauded the "bluest" of jokes by a tap on the cheek with a fan, an arch smile, and a bewitching look with a laughing eye.

The entertainment had opened with some feats by the pupils of Figg, which attracted but little attention, all present being so anxious for the great event. At length the cry came out from the audience, "The masters! the masters!" and the two warriors stepped upon the platform amidst loud applause.

Ned Sutton is the taller of the two, but there is a wide disparity in their muscular development, Figg displaying enormous biceps, whilst his broad shoulders, powerful

legs, and thick neck make him appear a very formidable customer and typical fighting man.

They commence with the broadsword exercise, about which but a few words will suffice. Slowly and cautiously they make pass after pass, and every nerve is strained, the muscles twitching, and great beads of perspiration standing out upon their foreheads. It is rather slow work for the audience, as not a touch has been made during the first half hour. Still, the thrusting, parrying, feinting, and guarding are very fine, and nowhere outside Figg's school could a better display be made.

In the fifth bout they fight fiercely, and get to close quarters, and as the blades flash like lightning, the women shriek and the men become excited. Crash go their swords together, and both are broken, the Champion's sword being forced back upon his arm, and he bleeds freely. This is not, however, considered a point scored to Sutton, as it was a mischance. So fresh swords are brought and the combat is renewed. In the very next bout Figg feints, and, taking his adversary completely off his guard, slashes him beautifully on the shoulder with such a delicate hand that it cuts as neatly as if done by a surgeon's lancet. It is a mere scratch in appearance, but it is sufficient to gain for the champion the first event out of the three, and Figg is proclaimed victor by the umpires amidst a tumult of applause.

Half an hour's rest is given to the men when they reappear, the audience having regaled themselves with cakes, crusts of bread, and ale, the latter handed round in great flagons. They face each other in by no means elegant attitudes, and to the eye of the scientific boxer of to-day their positions and methods would appear to be altogether wrong. It is evident from the outset that it is to be a trial of brute strength with most unwarrantable tricks practised on both sides. Sutton, belonging to a rougher school, is wild and almost savage in his attempts to get at his adversary; but Figg is too wary to let him come near, and they spar for an opening for at least eight minutes. At last the Champion strikes out in a most determined manner at the pipemaker's head; but Sutton dodges the blow, and rushing in, clasps his opponent round the waist and, carrying him (regardless of the punching he is receiving in the small of his back) to where the umpires are, he deposits him at their feet.

Figg rises in a well-controlled passion, and his eyes flash at the indignity, for no little jeering has been provoked. He is very determined, and with arms akimbo, and head well down in the shoulders, he goes stealthily

for his man, and when in distance clutches him in a grip of iron and dashes him on to the boards upon his back with a crash.

The Gravesend man is much shaken, but is allowed ample time to recover, and having done so steps forward once more. Figg now drops the wrestling tactics, and hits out boldly at head and body, but Ned is too quick for him, and he stops and avoids beautifully, gaining more than his share of the applause.

Figg gets cross, and again closes and throws his man, but not so heavily as before, and when they come up for the fourth time, Sutton turns the tables, and there is the greatest excitement. Blow after blow he gets on to the Champion's forehead, driving him to the very edge of the stage. Then with a staggering blow in the chest Figg is all but knocked over amongst the audience. Two or three strongmen, however, save him, and pushing together throw him forward on his hands and knees.

They then take a quarter of an hour's rest, and some swells in the gallery send down a footman with a bottle of port wine (at that time only just introduced into this country), the combatants drinking the ruby fluid with evident relish.

On renewing, little is done in either the fifth or sixth rounds, only it is evident that Sutton does not possess the stamina of his adversary. The fifth bout is brought to a close in an unexpected way. Ned, who has closed upon his man, tries to drag him down by the hair of his head, but his hand slips over the bald pate of the Champion, the Gravesend man having forgotten that it was that worthy's habit to shave his head before entering the arena.

Figg takes advantage of his mistake, and getting him on the hip, once more throws him heavily. Sutton, who is then jeered and laughed at, fairly loses his temper, and dashes in recklessly, whilst Figg, as cool as a cucumber, commences to batter away at his face and neck, and then, with a terrific blow on the chest, knocks him down. Springing upon him he pinions him down with a hand on each shoulder.

"Is it enough?" shouts Figg.

Poor Ned Sutton, bruised and bleeding, with his mouth cut, and nearly blinded, feebly replies, "Enough indeed. You are a brave fellow and my master."

And so ended the first modern prize fight on record. It will be uninteresting to tell what followed during the cudgelling match. Suffice it to say that the unfortunate Sutton had his knee broken and returned to his native town, Gravesend, a sadder and a wiser man, whilst the Champion became more popular than ever.

CHAPTER II.

ROYALTY AND THE RING. — THE FIRST GREAT FIGHT FOR
THE CHAMPIONSHIP OF ENGLAND. — JACK BROUGHTON
AND GEORGE STEVENSON.

THE combats between Figg and Sutton which we have just related could scarcely be classed as battles for the premier position in the arena, for the conditions were not in accordance with a contest with Nature's weapons, as they included engagements with cudgel, broadsword, and fist.

It must be understood, however, that in those days we had not thrown away the small arms, and men in general drew their rapiers and swords at the slightest provocation. It was therefore necessary for the professors of the time to teach not only the use of the fists, but to practice with cold steel and quarter staff.

Although Figg was, as we have stated, the first man to bring the noble art into prominence, it was his successor who did most for pugilism, for Jack Broughton, the waterman, introduced scientific fisticuffs and was the first man to frame the rules of the Ring. True it is that George Taylor was placed second on the list of champions, but that should hardly have been done, for although he claimed the honour upon the death of Figg in 1734 he was beaten by Broughton, and consequently should never have assumed the title.

Indeed, the first battle for the real championship was between the two men whose names head this column, and in following out the early career of Jack Broughton our readers will see clearly that he really should have been acknowledged as the first champion boxer; and certainly he was the founder of the legitimate art of self defence, consequently his introduction to our readers will afford them, no doubt, a pleasure.



JACK BROUGHTON (CHAMPION, 1734-50).

*From a painting by Frank Hayman, R.A., formerly in
the possession of the Duke of Cumberland.*

In the early years of 1700 there lived at a village called Baunton, near Cirencester, Gloucestershire, a well-to-do farmer, named Broughton, with two young children—a boy and a girl. Farmer Broughton had lost his wife, and from that moment he was a changed man. From a steady, industrious agriculturist, he became a heavy drinking, careless fellow, and lost all the respect he formerly enjoyed from his fellow villagers. To make matters worse he formed a connection with a worthless woman, to whom he offered a share of his home and afterwards married her.

It was the last fatal step, for her cruelty to his two young children drove them from their father's roof, and brought ruin upon the old man. Young Jack Broughton, then some twelve years of age, took his sister, a rosy-faced damsel of ten, away with him, having but a few shillings in their pockets, which they had managed to save.

Out upon the world the little brother and sister made their way on foot to Bristol, and there the sturdy lad found employment at the waterside, whilst his sister Rose managed to get odd jobs. And so they eked out a living for some years, Jack by his brave and generous disposition and increasing strength devoted to the protection of the weak making many friends, whilst his pretty, strapping sister soon found any number of suitors. When she was eighteen years of age her brother consented to her marriage to a well-to-do mechanic, and she became happy and prosperous.

The jolly young waterman being relieved of his charge had a desire to see the world, and in the fair-time of 1725, when he was just twenty-one years of age, the opportunity came in rather a strange manner. As we have said, Broughton was a powerful, active young fellow, and his avocation tended to increase the strength of his muscles. Furthermore, he had, in his desire to protect the weak, many a turn-up with the Bristol lads, who were always, even then, celebrated for their pugnacious proclivities, but there were few if any capable of standing before the clever, scientific, and powerful Jack Broughton.

Well, at the aforesaid fair the principal show was a boxing-booth, where no less a person than the great Figg presided. Naturally everybody was attracted to this particular feature of the fair, and the young waterman was very curious to see the great Champion of whom he had heard so much.

During a contest between a brace of aspirants with great disparity in height and weight the bigger of the two took advantage of his lesser opponent in a shameful

manner, which upset young Broughton to such an extent that he remonstrated with the bully at the finish. This led to a rough-and-tumble before the booth and under the very eye of the Champion. The latter immediately invited the two men to fight it out on the stage, which they responded to at once, the conflict proving to be a much more exciting affair than any Figg had provided for the amusement of his audience.

Ten rounds were fought desperately, ending in a complete victory for the young waterman, although the bully was older, taller, and a great deal heavier. At this time, though, Jack Broughton was in magnificent trim, standing 5ft 11in, and weighing something like 14st.

James Figg had his eye on the lad at once, and then and there offered him an engagement to come to London and appear at his amphitheatre at the back of the Adam and Eve, near the Oxford road.

On arriving in London he made no particular stir; but he was improving daily, keeping himself as steady as possible, and devoting himself to the development of the scientific part of the noble art, and, as we have stated, became the first systematic student of boxing as an art and science. Soon his skill was noticed by the noblemen and gentlemen who frequented Figg's establishment and he was much sought as a tutor.

It was not, however, until he had been in London five years that he fought his first famous battle, although we have been unable to discover the precise date or details of the combat. We find, however, that four or five years before Figg died Jack met a Norfolk man named George Taylor, who was known as "George, the Barber," and who had come up to London to exhibit his prowess as a professional boxer, having vanquished some of the natives of the dumpling county.

Taylor was defeated, but Broughton generously allowed him to retain the title of Champion, which he had claimed at Figg's death, and even appeared on many occasions at George's Amphitheatre in Tottenham Road, the very establishment at which Figg had given entertainments before going to his new place at the back of the Adam and Eve.

Jack Broughton became one of the shining lights at Figg's Amphitheatre from the very first, and the affection of the master for his pupil was genuine. Resisting all the many temptations to dissipation which were thrown in his way and studying his science with the utmost energy, the young Gloucestershire man became the favourite of the great Champion, who would invariably give him the place of honour in an exhibition

set-to with himself, and on one memorable occasion, the proudest moment of Jack's life, he displayed his talents before King George II. himself.

It was at the meeting of Bob Whittaker and Carini (the Venetian Gondolier), and although it had nothing to do with the championship, the battle created a great sensation, and should find mention here.

Mr. William Pulteney (afterwards Earl of Bath) had been travelling in Italy, and called at Venice, the City of the Beautiful. There he was introduced to a remarkable man named Tito Alberto di Carini. He was of good family, but by misfortune had been obliged to labour for his livelihood as a gondolier. An adventure in which he saved the life of a love-making young count from an attack made upon him by three bravadoes brought the young Italian into prominence. He had, being unarmed, thrashed all three of them with Nature's weapons. Although Italians are not notorious for pugilism—the knife being more in their line—Tito Alberto was an exception, and after this display, and aided by the count, he travelled the country giving pugilistic exhibitions.

In Tuscany he accomplished the feat of defeating three men in one ring, taking number two immediately after disposing of the first, following on with the third. He was immensely powerful, and with no mean knowledge of the art, Mr. Pulteney conceived the notion of bringing the Venetian to London, and to pit him against the best men at Figg's and Taylor's, thinking that he had secured a prize.

Carini had been in England but a short time before he was introduced to the Champion, who pronounced the stranger to be undoubtedly a glorious specimen of man, with the biggest arm he had ever seen, and a chest for depth and girth that was truly remarkable.

Mr. Pulteney was proud indeed to hear his protégé spoken of in such terms by Figg, and told him how Tito had shattered the jaw of the Leghorn pitman with one blow of his left.

"Well, master!" replied Figg, "I doubt not he could break every one of his countrymen's jawbones with his fist if you gave him time, for the Lord knows Italians are brittle enough; but I'll bring him an Englishman whose jawbone he won't be able to break, though he turn his fists into sledge-hammers."

Mr. William Pulteney anxiously enquired who was the man in whom Figg placed so much confidence, and he was told that it was a comparatively unknown pugilist from Yorkshire named Bob Whittaker. Figg threw down fifty guineas upon the table, saying, "Poor

as I am I'll stake that amount with anyone that Bob will beat your mighty foreigner in less than half an hour."

"I'll back my Italian champion against your Yorkshire bully even before I see him for a thousand against five hundred!" answered Pulteney. "Done with you," said Lord Osborne. The young lord, who was heir to the dukedom of Leeds, knew something of Bob Whittaker, who was a native of Whitby. He had witnessed several of his battles.

So the match was made for the 6th of May, 1733, and caused the greatest interest, so many of the aristocracy being concerned in the matter, and everybody anxious to see this prodigious foreigner who had been imported to lick our masters.

What made the affair of greater importance, too, the King had signified his intention of being present. All the tickets were bought up, a guinea apiece being the lowest price of admission; so a very select audience was ensured.

A throne was set up for His Majesty in the gallery, and there he sat, described by a writer as "a coarse, vulgar-looking German, with bloated cheeks and belly, a blotched nose, and as beastly a voluptuous eye as his rascal of a grandson, George IV., ever had." Present also was the Duchess of Yarmouth, the favoured rival of Queen Caroline, the Earls of Chesterfield and Peterborough, the Duke of Grafton, the Earl of Portman, and a host of other representatives of our nobility.

Of course the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cumberland were amongst the brilliant assembly, with Captain Godfrey in attendance, and altogether never had there been such a gathering in Figg's amphitheatre before.

It is not our intention to describe this memorable battle, for it does not belong to the Championship fights. It will suffice to state that the Yorkshireman was victorious, although he suffered terribly from the severity of the blows dealt by the herculean Italian, who once knocked him clean off the stage on to the heads of those in its immediate vicinity. It was the British pluck and tenacity, however, that gained the day, and Signor Tito Alberto di Carini had reluctantly to admit that he had for the first time met his master.

The King and his noble friends were delighted with the exhibition, and there was one item in the programme which pleased them perhaps as much as the principal event. Figg had been commanded by His Majesty to exhibit his skill, and had selected Broughton to compete.

With dignity and pride the young professor bowed to the King, and then engaged his master with sword, cudgel, and fists. Naturally the work put in was not of a heavy nature. It was a display of science more than strength. But before the young waterman had proceeded far with the exhibition it was obvious that his skill was greater, and all interested in the manly art prophesied a big future, little thinking then that he was to succeed Figg (who died in the December of the following year) and become one of England's greatest champions.

After this display Jack Broughton made the acquaintance of Captain Godfrey, the famous sportsman to whom we are indebted for much information of the early history of the Ring in his valuable book, entitled "*A Treatise on the Useful Science of Self Defence.*" Let us quote a few lines from the work now before us.

"I have purchased my knowledge," says the noble captain (who, by the bye, was a son of Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, who was murdered in 1678, and one of the courtiers of the Georgian era), "with many a broken head and bruises over every part of me. I chose mostly to go to Figg and exercise with him; partly as I knew him to be the ablest master, and partly as he was of a rugged temper, and would spare no man, high or low, who took up a stick against him. I bore his rough treatment with determined patience, and followed him so long that Figg at last, finding he could not have the beating of me at so cheap a rate as usual, did not show such fondness for my company. This is well known by gentlemen of distinguished rank, who used to be pleased in setting us together."

It will be thus seen that Captain Godfrey was a constant visitor to the amphitheatre, and is a true historian of matters pugilistic of the period. But he tells us more, and by taking Broughton's line off the Captain we find that Jack must have been better than his master. After the death of the Champion, Godfrey was anxious to try conclusions with Broughton. The latter, quite agreeable, gave him a bout, but the former was compelled to acknowledge himself outclassed.

"Jack," he said, "you are too good for me and for most men, yet I think I can bring a friend of mine who will prove his superiority over you, at least with the broadsword."

Broughton declared that he would be most happy to oblige the gentleman, and the introduction, which was given on the following day, proved to be the turning point in Jack's fortunes.

He and the stranger met (Captain Godfrey declining to mention his guest's name), and they crossed swords. It was a strange, cruel, determined face, with small, piercing eyes, extraordinary weight of chin, and thin, compressed lips. The fight was very prolonged, and the professor felt that he had never encountered such a fine swordsman. Try all he knew, he could make no point or break down the guard. The conflict was desperately exciting to the onlookers, and the beads of perspiration stood out upon Broughton's brow. At length, summoning all his strength and determination, he made a fierce attack, and succeeded in dashing his opponent's sword from his hand.

"By God, sirs, Cumberland is beaten!" cried the stranger, as he turned to Captain Godfrey and his friends. And then Jack Broughton knew with whom he had been fighting. It was the Duke of Cumberland, who was known three or four years later throughout the kingdom as the "Butcher of Culloden."

It was a lucky day for the professor, for the Duke, from the mere fact of finding a man better than himself, honoured him, and from that moment became his staunchest patron and intimate friend. He spent much of his time at Broughton's rooms, and introduced many wealthy pupils. Broughton felt that his fortune was made—and it was.

Encouraged by his Royal and distinguished friends, he determined to remove from his fencing rooms, which stood where Hanway Street is now, and, with the Duke's assistance, set up an amphitheatre on the front of Tottenham Court Road, near the Adam and Eve, where Figg formerly conducted his business.

It was determined that the new building should be larger and better fitted up than any which had existed before. It was to have special accommodation in the way of retiring and refreshment rooms for royalty, and the galleries were to be more commodious.

It would appear that at this time these amphitheatres or gymnasiums were not only used for displays of boxing and sword exercise, but they were used also for lecturing purposes, and undoubtedly great attention was then paid to the cultivation and preservation of stamina and the physical condition of men by both doctors and professors of athletics. Of course the places were principally patronised by the aristocracy, although it would appear that the general public were invited to come and study the subject theoretically.

There is a very curious advertisement in a book in the British Museum, which may be worth quoting, as it serves to show the style of entertainments held at the

"Tottenham Nursery," as Hogarth termed it, more than a hundred and fifty years ago.

From the Gymnasium at Tottenham Court, on Thursday next, at Twelve o'clock, will begin :

A Lecture on Manhood, or Gymnastic Physiology, wherein the whole Theory and Practice of the Art of Boxing will be fully explained by various operators on the Animal Economy and Principles of Championism, illustrated by proper experiments on the Solids and Fluids of the Body; together with the True Method of investigating the Nature of the Blows, Stops, Cross-buttocks, &c., incident to combatants. The whole leading to the most successful Methods of beating a man deaf, dumb, lame, and blind.

By THOMAS SMALLWOOD, A.M.,

Gymnast of St. Giles',

AND

THOMAS DIMMOCH, A.M.,

Athletes of Southwark. Both Fellows of the Athletic Society.

The Syllabus or Compendium for the use of Students in Athletics, referring to matters explained in this Lecture, may be had of Professor Broughton, at The Crown, in Market Lane, where proper instructions in the "Art and Practice of Boxing delivered without Loss of Eye or Limb to the Students."

The Duke of Cumberland lent Broughton £300, which was considered a very tidy sum then, and Captain Godfrey got up a subscription, which brought in another £200. This was sufficient to build the gymnasium, and when it was finished and the place was thrown open to the public, Broughton was not only honoured by the Duke and a host of noblemen, but the Prince of Wales was there himself, and the inaugural performance was a gigantic success, realising another £300.

There was one person, however, who looked upon Broughton's good fortune with an envious and jealous eye. George Taylor, who had been so generously treated by Jack, took a bitter hatred to him, and did all he could to injure him. He declared that he had misappropriated money, and did everything in his power to stem the successful tide of his career. But it was of no avail, for Broughton's friends were too powerful and knew their man too well.

George Taylor then cast about for a man who could take down his rival's colours, for having been defeated once himself he had no desire to meet the clever and powerful Gloucestershire man again. But there was nobody to be found to throw down the gauntlet. In vain did he attempt to induce Greeting and Pipes, both

good men in their way, but not class enough for Jack. Then he thought of Prince Boswell, a gipsy, who afterwards met Taylor himself, but that came to nothing, and the proprietor of the rival show had to content himself with growling and grinding his teeth at Broughton's meteoric rise, and patiently await the progress of events.



GEORGE TAYLOR.

From an old print published by Pierce Egan in the early part of the present century.

Not one of the known men offered to meet the redoubtable Jack, so, to the delight of the Fancy no less than their swell supporters, on January 1, 1741, there appeared a challenge in the *Flying Post* from Jack Broughton offering to fight any man breathing within three months. But what surprised everybody most was that the Champion (for he was entitled to call himself that after his offer) declared that he was willing to meet his opponent and fight him at George Taylor's gymnasium above all places.

Still no response came to the challenge, for nobody

cared to stand before the great Broughton, and George Taylor could stimulate none of his fighting men sufficiently to have a cut. It looked, indeed, very like a "walk over" for the Champion, when one morning, only a few days before the expiration of the three months' limit given in the challenge, Broughton received the following communication:—"Mr. Broughton,—You think yourself a great fighter. Perhaps you are; but there's people here living in Clerkenwell says your fighting days are over, and you are good for nothing but to show off at them fights. I will meet you a month from to-day. If you don't come up you are a coward. If you don't dust me you are a humbug. If I beat you, you are a dead man."

The letter came from a man named Stevenson, whom nobody in the "Tottenham Nurseries" knew. It was certainly a pretty cheeky epistle; but they had a way of doing things less delicately then than now, and Jack Broughton only laughed at the impudent nonentity. When he showed the letter to his Royal patron, however, the Duke strongly advised him to reply accepting, for his Royal Highness was only too anxious to see Broughton face somebody—no matter who—just for the fun of the thing.

So an acceptance was sent off. Mr. Stevenson proved to be quite in earnest; articles were drawn up to fight on the 17th day of February, and the whole sporting world was on the tip-toe of excitement.

When it became generally known that Broughton had accepted the gauntlet which had been so roughly thrown down to him, everybody was anxious to ascertain who the daring aspirant for the Championship could be. It soon leaked out that he was in the world of sport an unknown quantity, but Dame Rumour put it about that he was a valiant provincial who had performed prodigious feats with Nature's weapons, and that he would be certain to render a good account of himself, even before the almighty arm of the great Jack Broughton.

And then as incidents in his former career came to light, George Stevenson was looked upon as quite a hero, and Frederick, Prince of Wales, had him brought to Leicester House, where that dissolute debaucher held high court.

It may be interesting to note here that Leicester House, which stood upon the site of the Empire Theatre, and whose garden ran into Lisle Street, was just before this time purchased by Prince Frederick of Wales, when he quarrelled with his father, George II. He there ran a rival court to that of St. James', and made things "hum" to some tune. Although married at the time

to Augusta of Saxe Gotha, he made love openly to her women, for her maids of honour were sprightly and beautiful. There was Molly Lepell, who commanded the admiration of the fastidious Lord Chesterfield, and Mary and Sophy Bellenden, a pair of Hebes such as figure in *The Hunchback*, and the beautiful and clever Mary Wortley Montague. But admitted into Leicester House were less conspicuous ladies, who were just as beautiful and yet more careless of their characters, and



GEORGE STEVENSON.

it was to such company as this the Prince introduced George Stevenson, inducing him to drink and debauch in as reckless a manner as himself, and this within a month of the fight for the Championship. Scarcely the sort of training to undergo for the purpose of meeting a man like Broughton, whose steadiness and regular style of living not even princes could interfere with.

But whilst Stevenson is making merry in the dining-

room of Leicester House (the room which afterwards became famous as a casino, but was then used by Prince Frederick for boxing matches between half-dressed strumpets, in which the eldest son of the King delighted) let us relate how it was that George Stevenson suddenly became so popular.

He was some two years previously only a common stable lad in the service of old Richard Sykes, a wealthy merchant, of Hull, and an ancestor of the Sir Tatton Sykes, of whom we have heard so much lately in our courts of law. Young George's duties were to exercise the horses at the merchant's mansion at Sledmere, in Yorkshire, where he kept a fairly good stud. By degrees Stevenson was promoted to under-coachman, and, being a splendid athlete, a strapping young chap, and as strong as a lion, he soon became a great favourite, especially with the lady visitors to the hall.

In the village, too, he made himself very popular, for there wasn't a lad for miles round could hold his own with George Stevenson with the fists, quarterstaff, or broadsword. He was looked upon as the champion of Yorkshire, and none durst dispute the title, although, of course, having such a good situation, he rarely sought the exercise of his pugilistic abilities.

Soon, however, accident made him more conspicuous than ever. The old merchant had taken to himself a second wife—a beautiful young creature, who cared more for the society of those her own age than for the old millionaire's attentions. So whenever Sykes went to London (he rarely took his handsome spouse with him on account of her remarkable attractions) she displayed her taste for gaiety by giving and attending balls and parties, inviting and visiting the gentry for miles around.

It was during the winter of 1739 that the Hull merchant had made one of his journeys to London, necessitating an absence of as many weeks as it would take days now, and his wife, relieved of his presence, accepted an invitation to a ball given by a somewhat fast-going set, residing about ten miles from Sledmere.

When she was about to set out on the particular evening the head coachman, who had been in the service of the family for years, and who was a trusted servant of Mr. Sykes, was suffering so badly from gout that he was unable to mount the box of the old lumbering but exceedingly comfortable coach. Consequently, George Stevenson's services were requisitioned, and it was this simple matter which altered the whole of the young coachman's career.

All went well on the journey to the house at which

the ball was given, and the beautiful young wife of Mr. Richard Sykes, glittering in her diamonds, and looking her best, won the hearts of half the men present, and when in the small hours of the morning with the winter moon shining brightly, the lady's coach was driven round to the entrance there were a dozen and more volunteers begging for the favour of seeing madam safely home, whilst there was no lack of suggestions, as to the dangers of the lonely road.

But Mrs. Sykes would have none of their protection, laughingly telling them, as she threw herself back amongst her furs, that she had body-guard enough in her trusty coachman, and that she felt quite safe with him to protect her. There was many an envious eye cast up at the magnificent fellow on the box-seat, for even amongst the gentlefolk George Stevenson was well known for his muscularity and commanding figure; whilst remarks were indulged in which would certainly have made the lady in the coach frown, if they had not called forth blushes to her fair cheeks.

All went well as the pair of great horses clattered along the hard, frosty road until they were more than half-way to Sledmere, when the quick eye of Muster George detected a horseman reined up under the shadow of a tree at a bend in the lane. Whipping up his horses and peering into the semi-darkness he saw a second and third, when his suspicions were aroused, and he knew that it was a question of "Stand and deliver," for many highwaymen infested the country at this period, particularly when balls were in progress and there was jewellery to be had for the asking.

As the coach neared the horsemen, the three wheeled into the middle of the road, and if nothing else the masks on their foreheads stamped them for what they were. As quick as lightning George drew a horse pistol from his side and blazed at the nearest man who advanced. His aim was true, and the fellow toppled over. Whiz, whiz, went the bullets over his head, and the other two closed up, but Stevenson lashed away so with his whip at their spirited horses, that they reared and threw their riders. The coachman, maddened by the piercing shrieks from the fair lady, leaped from the box and struck with the butt of his pistol one of the fellows, smashing his face in. Then turning to the third, who had drawn another loaded pistol from his holster, and was about to fire, Stevenson dashed in and using his fists with crushing effect, laid him senseless beside his two companions.

Then, disregarding madam, who had fainted in the coach, he remounted the box and dashed away to a

neighbouring village, fearful lest there might be more of the gang in attendance.

George Stevenson had through his presence of mind and courage saved his lady's jewellery, perhaps her life, and she never forgot it.

He was promoted to the position of head coachman, and it was whispered that there were more reasons for madam to be driven out into the country by the handsome Jehu than for the purpose of taking fresh air. At length the scandal became so open that it reached the ears of Mr. Richard Sykes, although it took nearly two years for that worthy to regard it in a serious light. Anyhow, Mr. George Stevenson had to quit his situation, but the lady gave him a heavy purse, and was palpably distressed when her favourite left Sledmere and came to London.

Once in the great city the Yorkshireman became somewhat reckless and dissipated, but eventually settled down in a little alley off Clerkenwell. There he proved himself a formidable antagonist to the pugilistic fraternity of that locality, and, hearing of Jack Broughton's challenge, responded with the impudent letter which we have quoted.

It was, however, the story of the highwaymen and his reputed amours with Madam Sykes that made Stevenson famous, and gave him an *entrée* to such society as that of the Prince of Wales and his profligate friends of Leicester House.

The date fixed for the battle was February, 1741, giving only one month clear for the men to prepare themselves. Jack Broughton was always in training, so there was little work for him to do, save attend to his pupils at the amphitheatre, and receive the visits of the Duke of Cumberland (afterwards known as the "Butcher"), who had, as we have already stated, become the Champion's patron. No wonder the two men came in for a large share of public notice, having two princes for their backers. The whole talk of London was the coming battle, for there hadn't been such a big fight for a considerable time. Not since the affair between Bob Whittaker and the Venetian Gondolier, Carini, which we referred to in our last chapter, and that was in 1733, when Figg was Champion.

As we have said, the match between Jack Broughton and George Stevenson created more excitement than any battle since that event, and no matter where people went—in noblemen's houses or the lowest slums, in the Mall at Vauxhall and Ranelagh Gardens, in the coffee-houses and taverns—arguments as to the merits of the two men were incessant.

Many stood by Frederick Prince of Wales' selection, but by far the greater number were on the side of William Augustus Duke of Cumberland, whose man, Jack Broughton, had never failed to vanquish all comers.

At length the memorable day arrived, and the scene in the neighbourhood of where is now Tottenham Court Road must have been a busy one. Coaches of the nobility, sedan chairs, and horsemen blocked the road, whilst crowds of pedestrians made their way to George Taylor's gymnasium; for, true to his promise, Broughton had arranged for the battle to take place at his rival's establishment. What is more, too, Taylor had been elected as "Captain of the Fight," as the referee was then called, and this showed what an unselfish nature the Champion possessed. Here was the rival showman doing everything that he could to injure Broughton, and that worthily retaliated by displaying the greatest consideration and good feeling.

It is the month of February, 1741, one of those mild days which sometimes we get in that variable season. There has been a deal of rain previously, and the roads are in a shocking condition, the wheels of the vehicles sinking in the mud and churning it into a thick paste, for our ancestors have not dreamed of asphalted pavements and wooden highways, and Tottenham Court Road is but a country lane with trees lining it, and fields right away as far as the eye can reach in the direction of Hampstead and Edgware.

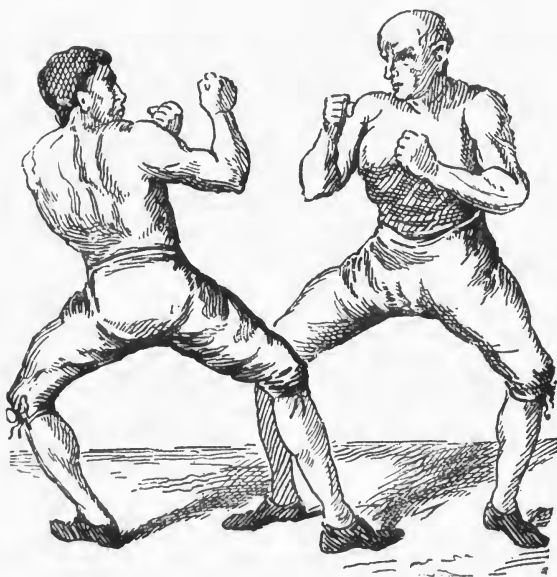
But the muddy road does not prevent the crowd from increasing, and long before the doors of Mr. Taylor's establishment are thrown open an immense concourse of people have assembled—some who are willing to pay the increased sum for admission, but the majority those who have come to catch a sight of royalty—hangers-on, who are on the alert to make a morning's work by robbery, and at the same time share the excitement.

So in the very earliest days prize-fighting was surrounded by infamy, which increased rather than diminished, and eventually proved in our own days its entire downfall.

The doors are opened, and an immediate rush is made amidst howling and oaths until the pit, where all have to stand, is quickly filled, with the exception of the inner ring, which is reserved for more distinguished visitors. At first the gallery is untenanted, but presently a shout is heard outside which heralds the royal cavalcade, and the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cumberland have arrived.

Captain Godfrey, in uniform, accompanied by some brother officers, is the first to enter the gallery, and a

wild "Hurrah" announces the young Duke, who is evidently a great favourite amongst the sports congregated. He takes his place upon the right-hand side, and his friends gather around him, several ladies being present. Another lusty cheer announces the arrival of the Prince of Wales, who seats himself at the other end, and is likewise surrounded by his favourites. With him the fair sex (if we are not libelling the women by



EARLY BOXING ATTITUDES.

Taken from a contemporary print.

calling them such) predominate. They are a "painted bevy of easy-virtued ladies," their eyes, in spite of the "make up," betraying the effects of last night's dissipation, as they lean over the rail of the gallery and survey the motley crowd beneath.

In the circle next the platform there are several well-known masters of the art of self-defence, amongst them Tom Smallwood, John Francis, Patrick Henley, William

Willis; Wells, the Lamplighter; Rushoom, the Irish Boy; Prince Boswell, the Gipsy; Harry Gray, the Clogmaker; Field, the Sailor; and Chicken Harris, the Poulterer—all good men in their time, if not quite up to Championship form.

The proceedings open with bouts of wrestling, cudgeling, sword exercises, and boxing by pupils and teachers attached to Taylor's school. Little interest, however, is bestowed upon these displays, and everybody is impatient for the event of the day to come off. At length, exactly on the stroke of twelve, a trumpet sounds, and there is a stir at the side of the stage. George Taylor takes his place as Captain of the Fight, and Captain Godfrey, who has left his royal companion, seats himself beside Taylor, for he is the chosen umpire for Jack Broughton, whilst Colonel Fitzpatrick officiates in a like capacity for George Stevenson.

All is ready, and the last-named warrior bounds upon the stage, and a ringing shout of welcome rends the air. In an instant Broughton appears, and again, louder than ever, is heard the cheering, which is taken up by the crowd outside, and must be heard half over London.

Broughton (as will be seen by our portrait) is a good-looking fellow, with a pleasing expression. There is a determined look about his bright eye and heavy chin, as he politely bows to the royal occupants of the gallery. He stands nearly six feet in height, and his splendid muscular frame calls forth admiration from the ladies and everybody present. Stevenson is the shorter man of the two, but he is broader and of a heavier build, for although there is some inches difference in height, the provincial weighs but seven or eight pounds less than the Champion. He is a magnificently formed man, and every muscle stands out upon his arms, shoulders, and loins in a remarkable manner.

They face each other, and there is a breathless silence, for everybody present feels certain that the combat will be a desperate one. In a stealthy manner they come to distance, not in the present day style, with left foot well forward, but they stand square almost before each other, heel to heel, and the knees slightly bent, giving them a crouching kind of attitude, whilst both fists are held shoulder-high before them, as shown in the copy of an old print, published at the time, and which we reproduce upon the preceeding page. At length Broughton feints and lets the right mawley go, but Stevenson, as quick as lightning, jumps back and avoids, and there is a round of applause as it is seen that the stranger is by no means a dunce.

Then there is a display of science that all have been

accustomed to with Broughton on the stage, but the surprise is at the magnificent manner in which George Stevenson stops the blows and holds his own. There is no question of rounds and "time" being called, it is "go as you please," for as yet no rules have been framed.

Stevenson, with a desperate rush, aims a blow at Broughton's head; but the Champion steps back, and the provincial missing falls forward, and would certainly have gone flat on to his face had Jack not caught him with his fist full in the chest. It is a tremendous blow, followed by two or three more upon the ribs, which quite stagger the Yorkshireman. He does not fall, however, and it is marvellous how he stands the dreadful punching. Never once reaching the Champion, he receives blow after blow upon the face, until his mouth foaming with rage and his cheeks streaming with blood he is a pitiful object.

In desperation he rushes at his antagonist and holds him in an iron grip round the waist, doing all he can to throw him. Broughton, however, is a past master of the art of wrestling, and gets a better hold, as they sway to and fro, each straining every muscle, and holding with such strength that it would seem the two bodies would become welded into one.

The audience appear unable to breathe, so great is the excitement; but a wild burst of cheering tells that one has given way. By a dexterous change of position, the Champion has his man at his mercy. He lifts him from the ground and dashes him down with fearful force upon the wooden flooring.

The Yorkshireman is much shaken as he gets upon his legs, and comes immediately to the attack; but he is by no means beaten. Cautiously they set to work, and Stevenson, to the delight of the Prince of Wales, delivers a crushing blow upon the Champion's nose, from which the blood spurts in torrents. Never for a moment losing his coolness, though, Broughton again grasps his man, and another fierce struggle ensues. The Champion is about to throw his opponent, but catches his foot in one of the stakes, and they both roll over together.

These two rounds have lasted quite half an hour, and the third finds them much distressed, for the pace has been fearful. At length Stevenson scores by bringing his man down heavily, and the excitement again becomes intense.

On resuming, they stagger about like drunken men. Then Broughton closes with his antagonist, and holds him against the stake with such a grip that well-nigh

crushes the life out of him. He does not attempt to throw him, though; but, suddenly releasing him, he steps back and, concentrating all his remaining strength, delivers a fearful blow right under the heart, and the brave Yorkshireman falls with a thud upon the platform, a senseless heap of humanity. A deathly pallor is upon his face, and the blood-marks over his chest and cheeks add to his ghastly appearance.

He does not move or breathe. Jack Broughton kneels at his side, and puts his hand to his naked breast. "Good God; what have I done?" he shouts. "I've killed him. So help me God, I'll never fight again!"

And so terminated the first great battle for the English Championship.

But we must not close this chapter touching on the great fight between Jack Broughton and George Stevenson without quoting Captain Godfrey's remarks upon it, which were published in his book, entitled "*A Treatise on the Useful Science of Defence*," a copy of which, published more than a hundred years ago, is now in the British Museum. The gallant officer writes:—

"After a most desperate conflict of thirty-five minutes, both being against the rails, and the Coachman endeavouring to get the whip-hand of Broughton, the latter, by his superior genius, got such a lock upon Stevenson as no mathematician could have desired a better. There he held him by this artificial lock, depriving him of all power of rising or falling, till, resting his head for three or four minutes upon his (Stevenson's) back, he found himself recovering, then loosed his hold. By this manœuvre Broughton became as a new man, and on setting to again he gave the Coachman a tremendous blow, as hard as any he had given him in the whole battle, so that he could no longer stand, and his brave, contending heart, though with reluctance, was forced to yield. Stevenson was a beautiful hitter. He put in his blows faster than Broughton; but, then, one of the latter's told for three of the former's. Stevenson had a most daring spirit, but his strength could not keep pace with it."

The bard of the "*Gymnasiad*" gives a sensational if somewhat harrowing description of the final scene:—

"His faithful friends the dying hero reared,
On his broad shoulders dangling hung his head;
Dragging its limbs they bear the body forth;
Mashed teeth and clotted blood come issuing from his
mouth."

CHAPTER III.

A FAREWELL MEETING.—FIRST RULES OF THE RING.—
ANOTHER RICHMOND IN THE FIELD.—JACK SLACK AND
JACK BROUGHTON.

That fearful blow delivered by the Champion in the last round had, everybody believed, killed the Yorkshireman on the spot. The Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cumberland, with their friends, retired with that impression, and the news was soon all over London that the plucky provincial had received his death blow.

This was, however, not the case, for after remaining unconscious for several hours in a bedroom at the Adam and Eve Tavern, to which place he had been conveyed, the doctors observed symptoms of returning consciousness, and an examination was made. They discovered two of his ribs broken, that he was suffering from internal injuries of a much more serious character, and that there was very little hope of his recovery.

The joyful news—especially to Jack Broughton—was speedily spread about that Stevenson lived, and many were the anxious inquiries on the following day at the hostelry where he lay. Presents of wine, fruit, and every luxury were left, and sums of money sent by the noble sports who had witnessed the battle.

The most frequent caller was the Champion, whose anxiety as to the fate of his valiant opponent was intense. The strong constitution of the Yorkshireman was all in his favour, and after lingering between life and death for the first week, there was thought to be some hope for him. Nobody was allowed to see him at first, but one of his nurses mentioned that Broughton had called constantly, and was at that moment in the parlour of the tavern, and poor Stevenson, in a feeble voice, asked if he might be permitted to see him. The doctor, on leaving, gave permission, and informed the Champion that the dying man wished to shake hands with him.

It must have been a touching scene when the two men met again under such different and sad circumstances. "Master Broughton, is that you?" said the poor fellow as he extended his thin white hand. "They told me you had been asking for me. It is very good of you. You are kinder than you need have been. But I am glad, so very glad. Give me your hand, Jack."

And the Champion stayed a long while with poor George, cheering him considerably. Day after day he came and remained with him. But he got worse and worse, and then Jack Broughton would sit at the bedside, scarcely leaving him night or day. They became true friends, but that friendship was destined to be of but short duration, for within a month the injuries had a fatal termination, and the once fine specimen of an athlete passed quietly away, with his head resting peacefully upon the strong arm which had dealt him his death blow. On the day of the funeral a beautiful wreath arrived by special post chaise from Sledmere. It was from Mrs. Richard Sykes, and a last token of affection for the aspiring young coachman, whose very short yet brilliant public career was cut off so suddenly. Still his name will be handed down to posterity as long as prize-fighting has a history, for he was the first man to attempt to win the Championship of England in the arena.

Jack Broughton received a heavy blow by the loss of his new friend, and people believed that he would keep his word and fight no more. For a long period he remained absent from his gymnasium, but at length he returned with a determination to frame, if possible, rules for prize-fighting, which would reduce the chances of such another mishap, and make the sport fairer and more manly.

Therefore, we find about a year after Stevenson's death, Jack Broughton's "Rules of the Ring" published, and these were in existence until the battle between Owen Swift and Brighton Bill, which took place in the year 1838. It may be interesting to reprint these rules, which marked a new era in prize-fighting, and did away with much of the brutality that formerly existed and undoubtedly led to more scientific displays, due to Broughton's teaching, and his fine, manly disposition.

BROUGHTON'S RULES.

1.—That a square of a yard be chalked in the middle of the stage; and every set-to after a fall, or being parted from the rails, each second is to bring his man to the side of the square, and place him opposite to the other, and till they are fairly set-to at the lines, it shall not be lawful for the one to strike the other.

2.—That, in order to prevent any disputes as to the time a man lies after a fall, if the second does not bring his man to the side of the square within the space of half a minute he shall be deemed a beaten man.

3.—That in every main battle no person whatever shall be upon the stage, except the principals and their seconds; the same rule to be observed in big battles, except that in the latter Mr. Broughton is allowed to be upon the stage to keep decorum and to assist gentlemen in getting to their places: provided always he does not interfere in the battle; and whoever presumes to infringe these rules to be turned immediately out of the house. Everybody is to quit the stage as soon as the champions are stripped, before they set-to.

4.—That no champion be deemed beaten unless he fails coming up to the line in the limited time; or that his own second declares him beaten. No second is allowed to ask his man's adversary any question, or advise him to give out.

5.—That in big battles the winning man to have two-thirds of the money given, which be publicly divided upon the stage, notwithstanding any private agreement to the contrary.

6.—That to prevent disputes, in every main battle the principals shall on their coming on the stage, choose from among the gentlemen present two umpires, who shall absolutely decide all disputes that may arise about the battle; and if the two umpires cannot agree, the said umpires to choose a third, who is to determine it.

7.—That no person is to hit his adversary when he is down, or seize him by the ham, breeches, or any part below the waist; a man on his knees to be reckoned down.

These rules require little explanation, as they speak for themselves, but a few observations upon them will perhaps make their immense value intelligible. The first abolished at once and for all those dishonourable practices common before this time by which an unfair antagonist could make a rush upon his adversary, unprepared, and throw him off his guard before the fight was properly commenced. The second made it necessary that the fight once started should be continued steadily to its close. Half a minute, perhaps, was barely time enough to allow a fallen man to recover himself, although it is wonderful what clever seconds used to be able to do for their principal, even in that short interval. But, at any rate, it was infinitely better that the business should be systematically performed with only short delays, instead of at such irregular intervals as were frequent before, when as much as a quarter of an hour was often allowed for the men to refresh themselves. The third rule for clearing the stage during the battle, and the fourth limiting the duties of seconds, were of immense service in enabling the combat to be carried on with fair play and without interruption.

The fifth, by which Broughton voluntarily surrendered, for the benefit of the actual fighter, two-thirds of the entrance money, which had hitherto been regarded as the exclusive property of the owner of the stage, was a wonderful instance of generosity, and tended greatly to enhance the dignity of prize fighting by abolishing the older arrangements, which virtually converted young and aspiring pugilists into slaves of the master of the establishment. The sixth rule put into regular shape the institution of umpires and referee, which till then had been only occasionally observed. The seventh and last was, perhaps, the most beneficial for the regulation of prize-fights, for it did away with the horrible practice, which formerly existed, of gouging, kicking, and brutally ill-treating a fallen adversary, which frequently happened during fits of passion.

At a great meeting of sports at Jack Broughton's new amphitheatre, with the Duke of Cumberland in the chair, these rules were read and unanimously adopted.

At this time, Broughton having held the Championship against the late George Stevenson, had no opportunity of breaking his vow that he would fight no more, for there was not an individual in the *corps pugilistique* of the period would dare challenge him, so for an uninterrupted period of nine years he held the Championship.

During that time, however, he was doing much for the noble art, and in turning over the pages of the *Daily Advertiser* we find many announcements of his boxing entertainments at the amphitheatre and notices concerning his private school in the Haymarket, where he taught his aristocratic pupils, and here we find that the Champion first introduced the boxing-glove. The following appeared in the above-mentioned paper in the February of 1747 :—

“Mr. Broughton proposes, with proper assistance, to open an academy, at his house in the Haymarket, for the instruction of those who are willing to be instructed in the mystery of boxing, where the whole theory and practice of that truly British art, with all the various stops, blows, cross-buttocks, &c., incident to combatants, will be fully taught and explained; and that persons of quality and distinction may not be debarred from entering into a course of these lectures; they will be given with the utmost tenderness and regard to the delicacy of the frame and constitution of the pupil; for which reason muffers are provided, that will effectually secure them from the inconvenience of black eyes, broken jaws, and bloody noses.”

We can only suppose that the gloves used were not

the 4oz pattern, but great pillow-cases stuffed with soft hair. Anyhow, it would appear that Broughton did well amongst the swells, and his introduction of the gloves was the means of bringing him a vast number of pupils.

Meanwhile, Taylor at the rival establishment was also doing good business. After his fight with Prince Boswell, the Gipsy, he made many friends. This battle took place just eight weeks after the fight between Broughton and Stevenson, and resulted in a victory for Taylor, after a disgraceful scene on the platform. Boswell ran with his head down at his adversary's stomach, and then pummelled away at his fallen foe, even kicking him, until the stage was invaded and the Gipsy dragged away. Taylor, however, persisted in fighting on, and ultimately knocked his man out. It was this brutal fight which induced Broughton to frame his rules.

Many other battles took place after this at both amphitheatres, but as none of them were for the Championship they do not claim our attention.

But in the January of 1750, one Jack Slack, whose career we shall presently briefly record, had a private quarrel with George Taylor, who had not fought in the ring since his meeting with Prince Boswell. Slack was a well-known man and a tough customer, and when the men met George found that getting on in life, as he was, he had a handful. It was a very near thing and a splendid fight; but in the end Jack Slack, who was rushing in to finish his adversary, tripped and fell heavily. So great a shaking did he receive that he was unable to get up until some few seconds over the half minute, and in accordance with Broughton's rules, which had been universally adopted, this lost him the battle.

So enraged was he over this, that he swore vengeance against the Champion for framing a rule that should be the means of his downfall for the first and only time.

It so happened that a few months later Jack Broughton attended Hounslow Races, and whilst he was eating his dinner quietly with a few friends in a booth beside the racecourse, Master Slack entered. Observing Broughton, he walked straight to where he was seated, and thumping his fist upon the table with such violence that the plates and knives and forks jumped up some inches into the air, he said, "It's you, you d——d scoundrel, Master Broughton, who robbed me of my fight with Taylor. Your cursed rules gave him the fight when I had him beaten. I'll pay you for that." "Gently, gently," replied Broughton in a quiet, soft voice, "What has your defeat to do with me?" "Everything, you scoundrel, and by G—— I'll make you suffer for it." Then, taking up Broughton's plate of food, he

dashed it down upon the grass, and bang came his fist upon the table once more.

As quick as thought Broughton was on his feet, and reaching his riding whip, for he had ridden over to the races on horseback, he cut Master Slack across the calves of his legs. This so enraged that gentleman that he seized the carving-knife and would have stuck the Champion there and then, had not half a dozen strong arms held him and wrenched the knife away. He



JACK SLACK.

From a bust formerly in the possession of Tom Belcher.

was then pushed out of the booth, trembling with rage and uttering the most fearful oaths. Prince Boswell, who was present, and who had no great liking for either Taylor or Broughton, went to Slack and did his best to pacify him, declaring that the only way to wipe out the insult of the lash was to fight the Champion publicly with the fists.

Slack at once agreed, and a challenge was sent in due course. Broughton was reminded of the promise not to fight again after the death of Stevenson; but he thought, after such an unwarrantable liberty had been taken with him by Slack, there would be no wrong in releasing himself from the vow; and besides, was there not the dignity of the Championship to uphold?

So the match was made to come off at Broughton's Amphitheatre in three months' time after the scene at Hounslow Racecourse. The Champion was always in good condition, for never a day passed without plenty of practice, although he had adopted quite a new and more scientific method. Slack, on the other hand, stuck to the old-fashioned brutal style, and although a younger man than his opponent, and in splendid fettle, felt that he had imposed upon himself a task difficult of accomplishment. He knew the Champion's form, and that there never had been a man so clever with his fists. Indeed, had it not been for the persuasion of his friends and threats of his patrons, who (four in number) had put down £50 each, in all probability he would have backed out of the affair and forfeited.

Before, however, proceeding to the amphitheatre to chronicle this memorable battle, it will be well to trace the history of Jack Slack, who was destined to become one of England's Champions.

He was afterwards known as "Jack Slack, of Bristol," which was scarcely the way to describe him, considering that the land of dumplings claimed him, he having been born at Thorpe, near Norwich, and close to where Jem Mace comes from, in the year 1721. As a youngster he soon developed pugilistic proclivities, and was a terror to all the lads of the village. When old enough he took up the trade of a slaughterman, and was so steady and persevering that, in conjunction with his brother, they were enabled to run an establishment of their own.

During the whole time, however, he practised boxing, and soon turned it to good account. When the fairs were on at Swaffham, Lynn, Brandon, or Eye, Master Slack would be there with his booth, ready to take on all comers, and made quite a little "pile" by these exhibitions. His reputation as a fighter soon became notorious through the Eastern Counties, and on the 24th of June, 1744, he had defeated one Daniel Smith, of Suffolk, who apparently was acknowledged Champion of that county, whilst Slack held the title for Norfolk.

We find the following challenge in a contemporary journal of the time, which shows how prize-fighters swaggered then as much as now, and had no small opinion of themselves.

"I, Daniel Smith, the Suffolk Champion, do once more invite Mr. John Slack, the Norfolk Champion, to meet and fight me for the sum of forty guineas, and, though I had the misfortune to be defeated by him before, am sure I am much superior to him in the art of boxing, and doubt not but I shall give him and the company entire satisfaction."

Then the Norfolk butcher advertised: "I, John Slack, the Norfolk Champion, do accept the challenge of Daniel Smith, and will be certain to meet and fight the above hero, and don't doubt that I shall support the character I have hitherto maintained."

The men met for the second time near Framlingham Castle, and fought a desperate battle before thousands of people, who had assembled from all the neighbouring counties.

In the end Slack was victorious, and so splendidly did he acquit himself that Mr. Coke, of Holkham, took him in hand and offered to back him against any of the London stars.

In 1748 he came to London, having beaten everybody who faced him in the provinces. He was then twenty-seven years old, married to a miller's daughter of East Dereham, and had two sons. He sold out his interest in the butcher's shop and slaughter-house to his brother for £100, and found himself in the metropolis with a well-lined purse, a good substantial backer, and a reputation that had preceded him, and which at once gave him an *entrée* to the several amphitheatres of the Oxford Road and neighbourhood.

When Slack came to London Jack Broughton was away in Prussia. No one dreamed of questioning his claim to the title of champion—no one imagined that there was a man in England capable of beating him in a fair fight, though he was no chicken now. It was in the year 1747, when Jack Broughton was in the full hey-day of his prosperity, that Captain Godfrey, of His Majesty's Guards, and from whom we glean so many facts connected with pugilism of this period, apostrophised him. It was a grand eulogy of the champion, but it must be remembered that the gallant captain was his old friend, pupil, and patron, and had a wonderful admiration for Broughton. He wrote:—

"Advance, brave Broughton! Thee I pronounce captain of the boxers. As far as I can look back I know none so fit, so able to lead the van. . . . What is it that he wants? Has he not all that others want, and all the best can have? Strength equal to what is human, and skill and judgment equal to what can

be required, undebauched wind and a bottom spirit never to pronounce 'enough.' He fights the stick as well as most men, and understands a good deal of the smallsword. This practice has given him the distinction of time and measure beyond the rest. He stops as regularly as the swordsman, and carries his blows truly on the line; he steps not back, distrustful of himself, to stop a blow and puddle in the return with an arm unaided by his body, producing but flip-flap blows, such as pastrycooks use to beat those insects from their tarts and cheesecakes. No! Broughton steps bold and firmly in, bids a welcome to the coming blow, receives it with his guardian arm; then, with a general summons of his swelling muscles, and his firm body seconding his arm, and supplying it with all its strength, pours the pile driving force upon his man. That I may not be thought particular in dwelling long upon Broughton, I leave him with this assertion, that as he, I believe, will scarce trust a battle to a waning age, I shall never think he is beat till I see him beaten."

That is how Captain John Godfrey in quaint language paints his idol. Now let us turn to the gallant soldier's description of Slack, for it must be remembered that as an historian of the period the Captain stands alone. Writing of the Norwich butcher, he says:—

"His height is 5ft 8½in, and his weight nearly 14st. He is remarkably compact, superior to the generality of men in strength, and of excellent bottom. His method of hitting is not regular, and he seldom fights for a preconcerted plan; but his style being suited to the man contending with him, few were able to resist him when he resolved on victory. His blows were usually given with such force that his name, 'Slack,' passed into a slang expression, and a 'slack'un' meant a smashing hit."

The above are true descriptions of the two men's styles. But let us return to our muttons. At this period of Broughton's career he paid less attention to his amphitheatre, which was under the direction of Ned Hunt, formerly one of the Champion's favourite pupils. The man from East Anglia was anxious to meet a Londoner, and he set his heart upon beating the Champion's *locum tenens*, offering to fight him for fifty guineas a-side.

Slack had never seen Ned Hunt when he sent the challenge. He had, however, heard that he was a smart man, and had defeated a tremendous fellow named Hawkesley, a Lifeguardsman, who stood 6ft 3in and weighed 17st. Guess Slack's surprise when he met

Master Ned, who was really only a light-weight, on the occasion of settling the match at Tom Faulkner's house in St. Luke's. "What! you little imp!" shouted Slack, "are you the chap that's going to fight me? I'll warrant I'll knock you into h—— in the first minute."

Little Hunt was disgusted with the stranger, and it well nigh came to blows there and then, so insulting was the East Anglian. The match was made, however, and the fight arranged to take place on the 12th of October, 1748. Great was the interest displayed at the first appearance of the Norfolk Champion, who found that in spite of his size, little Ned, thanks to the training he had received from Broughton, was exceedingly tricky, and gave Slack a deal of trouble. It was a very unfair match though, and in the long run Hunt, after being nearly killed, had to be taken from the ring.

Jack Slack went back to Norwich, where he was thought more of than ever for winning his first London engagement, and, returning in the spring of the following year, he made a journey to Bristol, where his wife's mother was born. In that city he established the school of boxing which was to bring forth some of the greatest men of the Prize Ring, as we shall find as we pursue our history of the Championships.

Being impatient for London notoriety, Slack came up to town, and wishing to feel his way a bit, he cast about for an opponent of the second class. Nobody seemed particularly anxious, for he had, in his trial stakes with Hunt, given a taste of his quality, and had furthermore never been defeated.

Poor Hunt did not get over the handling he had received by Slack. He was a cripple for life, and could never fight again. He, however, looked after Broughton's Amphitheatre and gave lessons, the young Prince of Wales (afterwards George III.) being one of his pupils.

Then came the quarrel with George Taylor and Jack Slack, resulting in the battle in which, through the rules above alluded to, the Norfolk man suffered his first defeat, and which brought about the challenge to Jack Broughton.



CHAPTER IV.

JACK SLACK V. JOHN BROUGHTON.—HOW THE MIGHTY HAVE
FALLEN !

WE closed our last chapter with a description of Jack Slack's career and the origin of his challenge to the great Broughton upon Hounslow Racecourse, the battle having been arranged to take place on the 11th of April, 1750.

We shall now describe the fight which was the last time the Champion, who had done so much for the grand British sport, appeared upon the stage, and we shall bid adieu to the man who was an ornament to his profession, the companion of the first in the land, and certainly the finest model of any boxer of the earliest English school. There was not much time for training, there being but a lapse of a month between the day of the quarrel and the fixture for the fight. Still that mattered very little, for both men were in fair condition, although Broughton had done no serious work since he fought George Stevenson, which was nine years before, and he was certainly approaching the "sere and yellow," whilst the other Jack was as hard as nails, and at the very zenith of his career.

There was tremendous excitement over the affair in every class of society, especially amongst the aristocracy, for Broughton, as we have shown, was the chosen one of royalty, being a great favourite with the Duke of Cumberland, and after his defeat of Stevenson, by the Prince of Wales also. The Duke, who was known as the "Butcher of Culloden," happened to be staying at Newmarket when the match was made, and he at once despatched a messenger to London to bring the Champion down to the Cambridge town of gee-gees, so that he might take a few spins upon the breezy heath and confer with his Royal Highness as to the best means for making a "pile" out of the business, for the Duke looked upon Broughton's success as a foregone conclusion. So a coach with horses from the royal stables at Saville House, Leicester Square, was started, and Broughton journeyed to Newmarket in state, having had an inter-

view before leaving with the Prince, who was attended by Bubb Doddington, afterwards Lord Melcombe, of Melcombe Regis.

It is from that worthy—who, by the bye, must have been a very great busybody—that we have some curious pictures of royal life in Leicester Square, and we have



NED HUNT,
JOHN BROUGHTON'S SECOND AND PUPIL.

before us now some extracts from Doddington's diary, together with his portrait drawn by Hogarth.

Here is one which may be of some interest, for it is dated exactly a month after Broughton's departure to Newmarket.

" 1750, May 15.—About eleven, the Prince sent for me

to come to Leicester House as soon as I could. I arrived there in half an hour's time. I found the Groom in Waiting and the Bishop of Oxford. The Prince soon joined us, and said the Princess had been ill since three in the morning; by this time the Duke of Chandos and Lords Egremont and North, Messrs. Cust and Breton had come. We went into the bed-chamber at three-quarters after eleven. The grooms withdrew. We found in the bed-chamber Lady Middlesex, Berkeley, Irwin, and Howe, Lady Bailey, Mrs. Cornwall and Payne, the midwife upon the bed with the Princess, and Dr. Wilmot standing by. At half-past twelve she was delivered of a prince, without once complaining or groaning the whole time."

Exactly one year after this the Prince of Wales died at Saville House, and the Ring lost one of its most ardent supporters. But of that anon.

Arrived at Newmarket, Broughton was received with a royal welcome, and the Duke was so impressed with the Champion's confidence in himself, that he made a bet with the young Earl of Chesterfield, laying him the enormous odds of £10,000 to £400 on Broughton. This was the signal for some very heavy gambling upon the event, and it is recorded that no less a sum than a million pounds sterling would be lost if Broughton did not succeed in winning the battle.

All the while that the Champion was away, Slack was hard at work at Norwich getting himself into perfect condition, whilst the former took things very easy as a guest of the Duke, for he felt that he had no difficult task set him, and that it would be practically a walk-over.

In London great preparations were being made at Broughton's Amphitheatre in the Oxford Road. This was the only place then existing, for George Taylor's establishment had been pulled down, and Figg's old place had been swept away years before.

The carpenters were at work for fully two weeks before the date set down for the event sitting up new boxes and extending the galleries, whilst an entirely new stage was erected in the centre of the auditorium for the two warriors to fight out their great battle, in which the famous Champion was either to retain his title or be ruined for ever.

All these great entertainments commenced early in the morning, and although we are unable to find a programme of this memorable display, we have one dated some time previously, which will give an idea as to the bill of fare provided.

As an interesting relic of pugilism of the past, we herewith reprint it:—

AT BROUGHTON'S AMPHITHEATRE,

OXFORD STREET,

The back of the late Mr. Figg's,

On Tuesday next, the 12th inst.,

Will be exhibited

THE FINE ART OF BOXING,

By the Eight famed following men, viz.,

ABRAHAM EVANS	ROGER
SWEEP	ALLEN
BELAS	ROBERT SPIKES
GLOVER	HARRY GRAY, the Clog-maker.

The above eight men to be brought on the stage, and to be matched according to the approbation of the gentlemen who shall be pleased to honour them with their company.

N.B.—There will be a BATTLE ROYAL between the

NOTED BUCKHOUSE

and SEVEN or EIGHT more; after which there will be several BYE BATTLES by others.

Gentlemen are therefore desired to come by times. The doors will be open at nine; the champions mount at eleven; and no person is to pay more than A SHILLING.

Of course, on the occasion of the battle between Slack and Broughton the admission was not confined to so small an amount. The lowest price being half a crown, and the amount taken in the pit is recorded as £130. Besides which nothing less than a guinea was accepted for seats in the boxes and gallery.

It was a bright spring morning the 11th of April, 1750, and before the sun had risen and revealed the green fields and villages of Hampstead, Highgate, Finchley, and Edgware, then far away in the country, hundreds of people had assembled. Many had trudged for miles half through the night in order to be there in time to rush in when the doors were opened at nine o'clock and secure standing room in the pit, which was capable of holding only some thousand people. Hundreds were disappointed, and stood at the doors cursing and swearing at their misfortune in not being able to gain admission. Naturally there were several free fights, and those who were excluded from the entertainment within had plenty of amusement in the mixed crowd outside.

The early part of the programme consisted of sparring matches, fencing bouts, and wrestling which lasted

until one o'clock, when the great event was timed to come off.

Just before that hour the boxes and gallery began to fill with royalty and the aristocracy, amongst them many ladies well known in Court circles. Both the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cumberland were there, the former accompanied by several members of his family, and the latter with Lord Grantham and, of course, Captain Godfrey, besides many other distinguished officers. It was quite a brilliant assembly when the whole of the guests had arrived—the picturesque costumes of the period making the interior of the Champion's amphitheatre quite gay.

At precisely one o'clock Jack Broughton, with a nimble step, ran up the ladder on to the platform, and there was a tremendous cheer. Even the occupants of the royal box stood up as the Champion turned towards them and made a graceful bow. Slack immediately followed, and came in for his share of applause. Then the seconds joined their men, Smallwood and Harris officiating for Jack Slack, whilst Tom Faulkner and Ned Hunt were there to act for Jack Broughton.

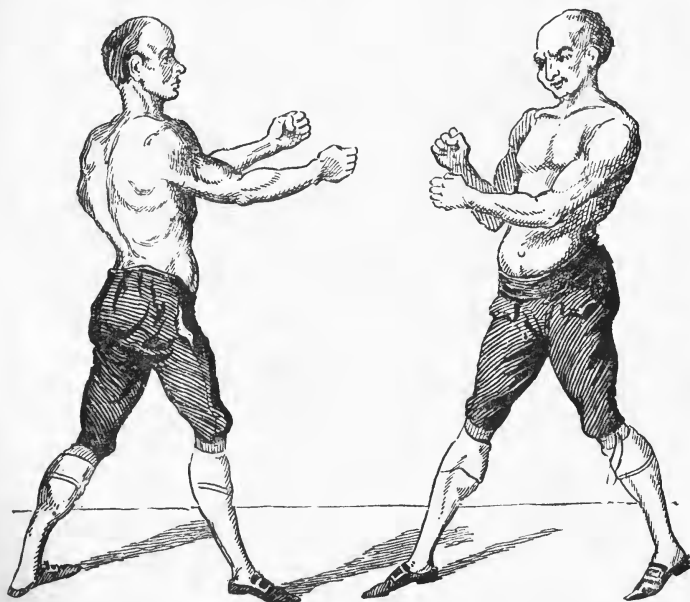
George Taylor, the ex-Champion, was appointed as "Captain of the Fight," and certainly no better man could have been selected for that responsible office. Then the umpires were chosen, and the chalk line drawn in accordance with Broughton's rules, which had been adopted and approved since his fatal fight with Stevenson, and all was ready to begin.

As they stood before each other, awaiting the signal from Taylor to commence, they struck the spectators as being a formidable couple, but as unlike in every respect as it was possible to conceive. Broughton's fine open face and pleasant smile were in great contrast to Slack's snake-like head. The former's torso might have belonged to a Roman gladiator, who had been chosen for the model of a sculptor, whilst his fine figure, standing six feet in height, had that commanding grace which is only to be met with amongst the finest and most perfectly-formed athletes.

The other man stood some four inches shorter, but there was scarcely any difference in their weight, consequently Slack was proportionately broader and thicker set, and although he lacked the fine symmetry and majestic carriage of his opponent, he gave everybody the impression of being a tough piece of humanity, capable of rendering an excellent account of himself. His heavy brow and rather small, close-set eyes gave a determined appearance to his countenance. There was a decided frown upon his forehead as he surveyed the

man whose title he had come to do his best to snatch from him. It was by no means a good face. Lurking in the small, snake-like eyes there was an evil expression which indicated a cruel and treacherous disposition.

Placing his toes firmly upon the chalk-lines, he squared himself into the position adopted in those days, and, contrary to his usual style of fighting, played a waiting game, having evidently determined to let the Champion



ENCOUNTER BETWEEN BROUGHTON AND SLACK.

From a print published at the period, 1750.

lead off. Those who had seen his former battles remarked this change, for it had been his invariable rule to dash in, and with tremendous and fierce attacks to bear his antagonist down. On this occasion, however, he felt that he had a master of the art facing him, and was careful not to lay himself open to danger.

Jack Broughton was evidently disappointed, for he had told the Duke that he intended to avoid or stop

these rushes until Slack had tired himself, when he should polish his man off without difficulty.

For some seconds they stood motionless, then Broughton, contrary to his resolution, fainted with his left and let the right go, hitting his man a tremendous blow on the chest. Heavy as it was, however, it made little impression upon the thick-set short man who had planted his toes on the chalk-line, and he scarcely moved. Again Broughton let the right go; but Slack stepped back, and the blow but just reached him without doing any damage.

This was the signal for activity, for Slack, as quick as lightning, delivered his left on Broughton's cheek, and the Champion's eyes flashed fire as he countered heavily on the chest. They were at it in real earnest after that, and at once the superior science of the elder man was apparent, for he got blow after blow in upon his opponent's face, receiving but little in return.

There did not seem, however, much power behind them; and it was palpable to all that whilst the Champion had gained in quickness of delivery, and had a style more finished than before, he had fallen off woefully in strength. It was the work more of the accomplished teacher of boxing than the powerful pugilist, and his friends were astonished, whilst before the first ten minutes of the fight had elapsed his royal patron looked serious, and was no doubt thinking of the somewhat reckless bet he had made in staking such a sum as £10,000 to win a paltry £400.

But just at the moment that Broughton's friends were discovering that their idol had seemingly lost his former power, Slack gave him an opening, and with a tremendous hit right out from the shoulder, the Champion placed his left on the throat of his adversary with so much force that he brought his man down with such a thud upon the hard elm boards, that he lay there for a moment without a sign of life.

A wild cheer went up from Jack's friends from the pit, and the Duke of Cumberland shouted out "Bravo, Broughton! Well done!" and for the moment it was thought that the battle was finished.

Slack, however, had a lively recollection of his former defeat by failing to conform with Rule 2, "that a man to be considered beaten if he does not come up to time within the prescribed limit of thirty seconds." Before half that time had expired Slack had struggled to his feet, and there was a cruel look in his little bead-like eyes and a devilish expression upon his face as "20 to 1 on Broughton" was shouted from all parts of the amphitheatre.

Cumberland had recovered his high spirits, and was singing the praises of his gallant gladiator. It was but a brief delight though, for Slack, before they had sparred for ten seconds, jumped several inches from the platform, and in a most extraordinary manner brought his great bony fist down with one of his notorious "chopper" blows between the Champion's eyes. The effect was terrible. In an instant the eyes puffed, and blood trickled from beneath the lids, plainly showing that some serious mischief had been done. It was certainly a staggering blow, and Broughton reeled back as if he would fall.

With a supreme effort, however, he pulled himself together, and dashing in, struck over Slack's guard and once more sent him sprawling. Again the people cheered the Champion; but as he acknowledged the applause from the royal box, whilst Slack was upon the ground taking all the time he could get, there was an expression of pain upon the Champion's face, and it was evident that he was suffering both physically and mentally. The agony he was enduring through the damage he had received to the nerves and arteries of the eyes was bad enough, but the thought and dread that blindness was overtaking him was worse. That was what was happening, however, and only too well he knew it.

Slack again faced his man, and for the third time they sparred, the evil expression on Slack's face being more marked than ever. Broughton, to the surprise of everybody, placed himself on the defensive, hoping that the blood would cease to flow in the blinding manner from his eyes. It was a very poor defence, though, for Slack with the greatest ease brought his right heavily on his opponent's jaw, and the Champion rolled over on to his side, amidst the yells of the multitude.

"What are you about, Broughton?" roared the Duke of Cumberland. "What are you doing? You can't fight; and we shall lose our money!"

But a few minutes before his Highness had been calling "Bravo! bravo! Jack. You shall have a thousand pounds to-morrow if you win the fight!"

What a change in the tone of the royal voice! Again he demanded of Broughton what was amiss.

"I can't see my man, your Highness," said Broughton, with a broken voice; "I'm blind, but not beat. Only place me before my man so that I may see him, and I'll gain the day yet!"

His seconds placed him on the chalk-line, and Slack stood before him and dealt blow after blow upon the bleeding face, whilst the great pugilist beat the air with his fists wildly. He was quite blind, and the knowledge

of his condition drove him well nigh to madness. Again Slack hit him mercilessly between the eyes, and the mighty had fallen. Feeling around him with both hands and twitching fingers in space, with a hoarse voice he shouted "I'm done. By God, I'm done!"

The battle had lasted only fourteen minutes; but in that short time the great John Broughton, the finest fighter that Britain had produced up to that period, had fallen. He had been defeated by a man immeasurably his inferior. He had held his opponent too cheaply, and had not kept himself in the necessary condition, but whilst teaching his swell pupils had neglected his own stamina.

Perhaps, too, his continental journeys had done him no good, for though he was abstemious enough, the change of living and luxurious dishes may not have suited his constitution. Not infrequently would the Duke induce him to travel in his company, and even took him to the Prussian Court and introduced him to Frederick the Great. Broughton would then leave his amphitheatre in charge of Ned Hunt, his trustworthy pupil.

It was on the occasion of one of these travels abroad that he attended with Cumberland a review of the Prussian troops. They were standing near King Frederick, when the latter pointed proudly to his line regiment of Grenadiers, who had just returned from the Austrian wars. His Majesty asked whether he should pick out one of the finest men amongst them to fight with.

"If it please your Majesty," replied Broughton, "I should have no objection to fight the whole regiment, if only you will be kind enough to allow me a breakfast between each battle." We believe that the King really did pit one of the men, who stood six feet, and was the pride of the regiment, against our Champion; but he made such an example of the warrior that the King was not disposed to experimentalise further.

And now for a few words about Broughton's second, who was the champion pupil and custodian of his amphitheatre. To Edward Hunt we have already alluded in his unequal battle with Slack. He was Jack Broughton's favourite pupil and confidential man, and acted as his second in his last fight. Ned loved and worshipped his master, and no doubt had he been heavier would have figured in the list of champions. He was, however, a marvel in his way. He was only a little man, standing 5ft 5in, yet he fought men of all heights and weights—11st to 17st, and standing 5ft 6in to 6ft 3in. Although he never would have been champion, he deserves a place

here, for he fought them and had more pluck than many of the big 'uns put together. "Jon Bee" gives us in *Panercatia* the following critical estimate of Hunt's qualities, formed by the best judges of that day:—

"Being constantly over-matched, he had more difficulties to encounter than any other boxer on the list, and of the few instances of "shifting" which occurred in his time he is the most singular, for he conquered the stoutest man by his admirable art. With strength so much beyond his own opposed to him he might have been allowed to drop; but he seldom fell without a blow. He never confined himself to one attitude, for, being extremely active, he found he could more effectually confuse his antagonist by continually changing his guard. He endeavoured to avoid blows aimed at his body by stepping aside, and then took an opportunity of dexterously winding his man, who was driven forward by his own force. If a blow was aimed at his head he stooped to let his adversary's arm pass over him, and then succeeded in general in planting a good body blow. These manœuvres proved highly advantageous to Hunt in his pugilistic career, for his opponents became aware of these practices and accordingly fought on the defensive, by which means he became the assailant and avoided being overpowered by their superior power."

After Slack had defeated Broughton, the cruellest thing of all was the turning against him by the Duke of Cumberland, who had been for so long his steadfast friend. The "Butcher" declared that he had been sold. Just as if a man like Broughton could have been guilty of such an ungrateful act, especially when he was in so exalted a position. In consequence of this the ex-Champion avoided all his associates of the arena and became very dejected.

He might well have said with the bard:—

So farewell to the little good you bear me;
Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness;
This is the state of man: to-day he puts forth
The tender leaves of hope, to-morrow blossoms,
And bears his blushing honours thick upon him,
The third day comes a frost, a killing frost,
And, when he thinks, good, easy man, full surely
His greatness is a ripening, nips his root,
And then he falls as I do!

Whether it was at the instigation of the Duke or not we are unable to say; but it was certainly suspicious that shortly after his defeat his amphitheatre was closed by order of the Legislature, and Jack Broughton never fought or boxed again. He turned his premises

into a furniture mart, and bought and sold articles of *vertu* and curios, and made more money than he knew how to spend, operating most successfully on the Stock Exchange.

He had married a second time, at the death of his first wife in 1756, and after some twenty years' successful business he retired into private life, having grown a fine, corpulent old man, with a commanding figure and gentlemanly appearance. Every merchant in the City knew him and respected him, and in the parks the nobility (many of whom he had taught boxing when they were young) rarely passed him without saluting him with "How d'ye do, Master Broughton?" Even the King (George III.) would wave his hand to him, and sometimes stop and speak about the fun they had at Broughton's before he ascended the throne.

The Duke of Cumberland, too, made it up with Broughton, and gave him a good appointment. We find authority for this latter statement in the "Annual Register" for the year 1788, which we will quote as we bring our history of this remarkable champion to a close.

"Died at his house at Walcot Place, Lambeth, in his eighty-fifth year, the celebrated John Broughton, whose skill in boxing is well known, and will ever be recorded in the annals of that science. He was originally bred a waterman. His patron, the late Duke of Cumberland, got him appointed one of the Yeomen of the Guard, which place he enjoyed till his death. He was buried in Lambeth Church on the 21st December, 1788, and his funeral procession was adorned with the presence of several capital professors of boxing. He is supposed to have died worth £7,000."



CHAPTER V.

"LE BOXE " FROM FRANCE.—A BIRMINGHAM BRUISER TO THE FORE.—THE DOWNFALL OF JACK SLACK, AND THE RING DEGENERATES.

IN every tavern and coffee-house throughout the metropolis the defeat of Jack Broughton, the Champion of England, and the hero of so many encounters, was the only subject of conversation. The news spread into the provinces, as the coaches rumbled out of the metropolis on the following day, and the consternation became universal.

So good a man had Jack been, that nobody believed that he ever could be beaten, especially by such a man as Slack. Not only did it create surprise, but sorrow too, for the shining light of the Ring had been put out. The fine noble face and dignified figure, the associate of royalty and the highest in the land, was to be seen no more walking proudly with an elastic step in the neighbourhood of Oxford and Tottenham Roads; the broadsword, the cudgels, quarterstaff, and gloves were laid aside, and Jack Broughton as a pugilist lived, as he always will live, only in name.

John Slack had won the highest position amongst pugilists by the downfall of Broughton; but it was a great pity, since from that moment the importance of pugilism as a manly sport commenced to decline. The Norfolk butcher's head was turned by his sudden, not to say unexpected, success. He found himself written up by the papers, sought after by a certain class of women who sold themselves in order to share the notoriety of any man, whilst he was toadied to and worshipped by the lesser lights of the Ring.

The great patrons of the sport, however, soon found out that he was quite a different kind of man to his predecessor, and at once withdrew their support, and never dreamed of associating with the low-born countryman. He also experienced a great difficulty in finding a pitch

for his school. In the first place, Broughton declined, even though he was offered the tempting bait of £100 a-year rent, to let him his amphitheatre, and both Figg's and Taylor's had long before been pulled down. The ex-Champion, after losing his licence, converted the place into a huge furniture mart, and continued there the business to which we have before alluded.

It seemed as if the "Tottenham Nursery" was to be a thing of the past, and although in the Tottenham Court



MONS. PETIT.

From a portrait taken when exhibiting at Mme. La Rooba's show.

and Oxford Roads there still existed small establishments, the localities were no longer frequented by the swells. Slack, being a shrewd man, determined upon an entirely new plan of campaign, which, if it lowered the status of pugilism, did a great deal towards popularising it outside the metropolis.

In the first place, he set up a tremendous booth in the Marylebone Fields, in which he gave second-class exhi-

bitions, lamentably beneath those held by Figg and Broughton. These would last, perhaps, for a month or two, when the fighting butcher would strike his tent and in a Barnum-like manner travel the country. During these journeys he never missed Bristol, and it was Slack who was the means of establishing the school of pugilism in the west-country town, which was in after years to turn out so many men who distinguished themselves so valiantly in the Ring—men whose names will last as long as pugilism holds a place in our British history. So far Slack did good to the noble art, for wherever he went he left an impression and made pugilism universally adopted. But it was all done for gain, not ambition, as in the case of the great Broughton, who worked for the honour and dignity of the art of self-defence. He had laboured to bring to perfection that which Figg had made popular.

Naturally Slack would frequently visit his native town, although he was not particularly liked in Norwich. Still he was able to make money there, for the Norfolk people were always fond of fisticuffs, and have furnished some good men—Jem Mace to wit, perhaps the finest scientific man who ever pulled off a shirt.

Residing at Yarmouth at the time (1751) was a large shipowner named Sampson, who for some cause had a great longing to take the Champion down a peg or two. Mr. Sampson had known Broughton personally, and disapproved of the swaggering, bullying style adopted by his fellow-countryman. But the difficulty was where to find someone to accomplish the task. In the July of the year referred to, however, the shipowner thought he had at last discovered the man.

Like Mr. William Pulteney's prodigy, our friend Tito Carini, Mr. Sampson's champion, was a foreigner, which was not saying much for that gentleman's patriotic feelings in the matter. This time it was a Frenchman, who rejoiced in the name of Mons. Petit, for the only reason, that we can discover, that he was, like the Italian, of enormous proportions—a giant, in fact. He had come over from St. Pierre, near Calais, some year or so before, and had been exhibited in a show at the different fairs run by the sister of a salesman in Spitalfields Market, named Fry. This lady's professional name was La Rooma, and she made a good living by travelling with her show of giants, dwarfs, and other human curiosities. Mons. Petit soon displayed a great aptitude for *le boxe*, and after many successful engagements with several fairly good pugilists at the fairs, was noticed by Mr. Sampson, and taken in hand for the express purpose of taking the conceit out of Jack Slack.

The battle came off at a little village named Harleston, south of Norwich, on the borders of Suffolk, on Thursday, the 29th of July, for £100 a-side, in addition to the money taken at Slack's booth, in which the battle was to be fought. It was a miserable exhibition by all accounts, and unworthy a record in the annals of the Ring. The Frenchman, whose muscular power was in proportion to his colossal form, immediately rushed at Slack, gripped him by the throat and nearly asphyxiated him, as with the other hand he pummelled him about the face until he was black and blue, amidst the execrations of the crowd. How Slack managed to extricate himself from his awkward position it is difficult to say, for the cowardly Frenchman stood 6ft 4in and weighed over sixteen stone. Of course, he should have been disqualified. But they were less particular then, and even Broughton's rules were disregarded.

In the second round, however, Slack threw his great antagonist heavily, and carefully avoided his fond embrace every time they came up, until the giant got him against the rails, and pushed him clean over amongst the people. After this offers were made of a guinea to a shilling on the foreigner by the Sampson party. They were, however, doomed to disappointment, for Slack, pulling himself together in a most determined manner, got to half-arm hitting and rattled the blows in with such force, peppering Mossoo's face to such an extent that one eye was bunged up entirely. Then, rushing in, the Champion threw or literally toppled the great mountain of flesh over the rails, and he fell with a crash on to the turf upon which the platform had been erected with a thud, nobody caring to remain in order to break the fall of the infantine foreigner. A contemporary writer says that after this "Petit had so much the fear of his antagonist before his eyes that he walked off without so much as civilly taking leave of the spectators," which is certainly a droll description of the final round of a contest for the Championship. The only wonder to us is that he was able to pick himself up at all, after a fall over the rails, a distance of some eight feet.

The above is a fair specimen of the kind of fighting Slack, the Champion of England, indulged in. Devoid of all science, regardless of the rules, they were brutal encounters unworthy the name of prize-fights. It will not be interesting, then, to take our readers through the details of these exhibitions, although our history would be incomplete without reference to one other engagement, in which it was a near thing with him, before describing the battle in which he lost his title.

He still kept travelling through the country, and five years had elapsed since he had beaten Broughton, and four had passed away after his encounter with the Frenchman, as described above. It was during the very year, 1755, that old George Taylor fought Tom Faulkner (of whom we shall hear more by and bye) near St. Albans, when the veteran received such ill-treatment that he never recovered, and died in the December of the same year. Slack had been making his Western Circuit when he was challenged by a collier, named Cornelius Harris. By all accounts this rough miner was a desperate character, and was feared by everybody who knew him. There wasn't a man in his county who dared to stand before "King Cole," as he was called, from the grimy state of his skin, which never, or rarely, made acquaintance with soap or water.

There were ugly rumours about this devil, too, for he was known to have gone out with a girl one Sunday afternoon, and she never returned. A search having been made, she was found dead, and lying beside her was the lifeless body of a former lover. Nobody dared openly accuse Harris of having done the two to death, and there was no Public Prosecutor in those days. Some said that it was a case of murder and suicide, but everybody *thought* that "King Cole" was the author of the crime, and he was shunned as much as possible.

This brute had fought dozens of battles on the village green, and whenever he quarrelled with anybody he invited them down the pit to settle their differences, and there in the bowels of the earth they fought, not infrequently to the death, Cornelius always getting the best of it.

So when Slack came to Bristol with his booth and fighting-men, "King Cole" sent a messenger with a challenge to fight him for the Championship. Having made inquiries about the collier, the great fighting man had no desire to meet him, although he could not hold his position and refuse. So he sent a reply that he could not think of obliging him for a stake of less than a hundred guineas a-side. This sum, he thought, would settle the matter. To his surprise, however, the money was forthcoming and immediately put down, for "King Cole" had earned and extorted from time to time a considerable amount, and was by no means given to extravagance, never paying in the village inn, but accepting from everybody who, for the sake of peace and quiet, offered him what was going.

So the fight was arranged to come off at the little town of Kingswood, in Gloucestershire, on the 13th of March, 1755. It was a desperate struggle of strength

against strength. Of science there was none, for little as Slack displayed throughout the whole of his career, the collier had less. He fought like a very devil, though, as if he would rather be killed than lose his hundred golden guineas, which had taken him so long to accumulate. It was for gain and gain only he struggled, for on his side there was no reputation to save, and ambition he had none.

Slack, however, had everything to lose, and the fierceness of the combat was so great that the Champion's friends trembled for him, and the miners, who had gathered to see the man they hated thrashed, were fearful that he would win and return amongst them a greater bully than ever.

Never had Slack met such a vicious opponent. Better men he had fought, but none so determined, so hard, and so vindictive. One description says that "they hammered away at each other with such indiscriminate violence as would have killed ordinary mortals half a dozen times over. Iron fists fell on iron faces, and seemed to produce even less result than a couple of hammers would have had on a couple of anvils, for the concussion of hammers and anvils would have emitted sparks, at any rate, and these were wanting in this process of human pounding."

It is not necessary to give details of this diabolical engagement. They fought on until Harris slowly but surely began to expend his strength, whilst the Champion, with his greater experience, husbanded as much as possible for a final effort, always keeping, as the saying is, "something up his sleeve," if ever so little. At last the time came. "King Cole" was exhausted, and Slack not far from the same condition, when the men came up for the final bout. The miner expended his last few blows and reeled from sheer weakness, when Slack, letting the whole of his remaining strength go, struck his man between the eyes and felled him like an ox.

There he lay unconscious long after time had expired, and the Champion held his own and the hundred guineas. When Cornelius Harris came to, he is described as being a frightful spectacle. Directly he knew that his money had gone, he shrieked with the voice of a thousand devils, and blood and foam came from his mouth, making his blackened face hideous. He rushed about like a madman to seek Slack. That worthy, however, had discreetly retired, praying that he might never have to dispose of such another ugly customer.

We find that after this meeting he did nothing of importance until 1759, when he beat an aspiring cowman named Moreton, at Reading. By this time Jack Slack

had made a considerable sum of money, and he ceased his ramblings and settled in London, giving lessons in the noble art at his home in St. George's Fields. As nobody seemed inclined to throw down the gauntlet, he lived quietly, although he always kept himself in good condition, for fear that his services might be demanded at any moment, as in those days no such indulgence was given for training operations as is allowed now.

At last a man appeared upon the scene who thought himself capable of disputing the title with Slack. His name was Stevens, and as far as we can discover he was



BILL STEVENS.

encouraged to challenge the Champion through the influence of the Dukes of Cumberland and York. The first-named patron of the sport had bestowed his patronage upon Slack for the past few years, and was evidently anxious for some entertainment, so his brother the Duke of York, who had heard of the new man, offered to back him, whilst Cumberland took Slack.

Bill Stevens, of Birmingham, first came to London in 1760, and attracted the attention of royalty by the manner in which he had polished off one Jacob Taplin. This man was well known in the metropolitan ring as a

great, burly and powerful pugilist, who had been very successful over second-rate men, and when the battle came off with the provincial he was expected to win without difficulty. The men met at a place then known as Marylebone Basin, a natural amphitheatre in the fields which then existed at the back of Oxford Street, on the 14th of February, and the Brummagem man won. His first victory in the metropolis caused him to be much respected by the leading pugilists, for Taplin was a strong, ferocious fighter, and he had been knocked completely senseless by Stevens in the last round.

But before we introduce the Midland man to John Slack, the Champion, let us say something about his early career, for he is to occupy a position in our sketch portraits of Champion pugilists.

During the first half of the eighteenth century, the districts now known as the Black Country were noted for the industry of nail-making, and we extract a description of how the industry was carried on at that period from a writer in 1741, whose account is now before us:—

“In 1741, when I first entered Birmingham, I was surprised at the number of blacksmiths' shops upon the road, and could not conceive how a county, though populous, could support so many people of the same occupation. In some of their shops I observed one or more females stripped of their upper garments, and not overcharged by their lower, wielding the hammer with all the grace of their sex. The beauty of their faces was rather eclipsed by the smut of the anvil. Struck with the novelty, I inquired whether the ladies in this country shod horses, but was answered with a smile, ‘They are nailers.’”

One of these brawny-armed female Vulcans, who worked at a shop in Soho, near Brum, was a Mrs. Stevens, and Master William, to whom we have introduced our readers, was one of her offspring. Of his early career of childhood we have little information, but it is only natural to suppose that he spent much of his juvenile time near the forge, whilst his *mother* was “toiling, rejoicing, sorrowing,” and, perhaps, swearing over her light and genteel avocation. Anyhow, little Willie got tanned with the blazing forge, and as hardened from his very cradle as the pig-iron and scrap, which were his only toys. In spite of the cuffs and kicks, the rough food and brutally barbarous bringing-up, young Stevens grew to be a great, powerful chap, standing six feet in height and exceedingly muscular, whilst his fists, face, and body were as hard as the castings of a bronze statue.

His trade as a nailer developed his strength, and having

polished off all comers in and about Birmingham, he determined on a visit to London, where he was introduced to the Ring in the manner already described. This victory so encouraged him that, having gained more confidence by overthrowing a few other Londoners, he determined to tackle the Champion himself, and forthwith sent Slack a challenge through the instrumentality of the Duke of York, as already stated.

The match was made for one hundred guineas a-side, and since it was under direct royal patronage, the heart of London was selected as the locale, the Tennis Court in James Street, Haymarket, being fixed upon. There a new stage was erected ready for the combatants, where they met on the 17th of June, 1760, quite a revival of the swell supporters of the Ring being present.

As a battle, however, it is scarcely worth recording, although the issue considerably controlled the immediate future of the Prize Ring. Still, being a Championship engagement, it commands some of our attention.

Slack, it must be remembered, had at this time been Champion for about ten years, during which period he had by no means furthered the scientific attainments of fighting nor added to the dignity of the Ring. On the contrary, he had abused the rules set down by Broughton, and had allowed the brutal, irregular kind of contests to become revived in a manner even worse than before the time of Figg.

Besides which John Slack was no chicken, and if not past the age to successfully enter the ring, he had degenerated in strength enough to jeopardise his chance with a man like Stevens, who was in the prime of life and as tough as the iron amongst which he had been bred. Yet the Nailor had even less pretensions to science than Slack, and it was thought that the latter's greater experience might pull him through. This opinion was not, however shared by the Duke of York, for he laid £500 to £100 on the Birmingham man as they faced each other for the combat.

Slack led off with his so-called "chopper" hit; but Bill Stevens had been put up to this move on the Champion's part, and dexterously avoided it, at the same time letting him have such a drive low down on the chest that sent him reeling, and well-nigh knocked the old 'un's wind out, as he rolled over on to his side. Jumping to his feet, he was pale with rage at being thus served by the provincial so early in the fight.

With a rush the Champion dashed in a tremendous blow at his antagonist's lower ribs. It was with force enough to have disposed of nine out of ten men who received it. But Bill's body and face seemed to be cased

in iron, and it had little effect. Then Slack closed with his man and proved himself far superior to the Brum as a wrestler, throwing him after a long tussel. This disconcerted the Nailer, and he carefully avoided close quarters for the next few rounds, playing a waiting game.

It was not long, however, before Slack came to the attack and managed to use his favourite "chopper" blows with some effect, and it was but the extraordinary condition of the Brum's face that saved him from blindness. Then the latter, gathering himself together, concentrated all his power into one blow, which, with good judgment of distance, he placed with terrific force full on the Champion's forehead, and then as quick as thought twisted his left leg round his man's right and brought him crash down upon the wooden platform upon the back of his head.

The half-minute time had gone as Ned Hunt and Smallwood, his seconds, did all they could to get him on his legs. It was of no avail; there he lay with his arms swinging, and his head upon Smallwood's breast as two surgeons, who had been brought by the Duke of Cumberland, made an examination. There was a fearful roar from the people present, for they realised that Jack Slack, who had not only been defeated by the unknown provincial, but that he had lost the title of Champion, which he had held against all comers for so many years.



CHAPTER VI.

BLOTS ON THE PUGILISTIC ESCUTCHEON.—MEGGS, DARTS, LYONS, CORCORAN, AND SELLERS.—A BATCH OF BLACK-GUARD BRUISERS.

WE regret that the present chapter will not prove nearly so interesting as those to come, for it has to deal with a period in prize-fighting which for the first time, and so soon after its acknowledgment as a sport in England, was fraught with ruffianism and dishonesty. Indeed, by the vile actions of the men whose names head this chapter, pugilism was all but nipped in the bud, and had it not been for one man, Tom Johnson, later on coming to the rescue, the Ring would have prematurely collapsed.

Painful as it may be, it is our duty to record the events in connection with the struggle for the Championship, so the present chapter will have to serve more as a link to brighter and happier times for the Ring, rather than a pleasing narrative of its progress.

The Ring was bad enough during the period of ten years that John Slack reigned supreme, but after his defeat by Bill Stevens it became rotten to the core, and we will pass hurriedly through the careers of the next set of Champions, if Champions they could be called.

The success, quite unexpected, of the last named, encouraged the provincials to journey up to London in order to have a shy at the coveted title, and amongst those who fancied themselves was a collier from Bristol, by name George Meggs. He was a roughish sort of chap, who had astonished everybody at the western seaport by his pluck and hard hitting, but he had no more idea of putting his fists up scientifically than he had of playing the part of courtier at the King's palace.

And that reminds us that four months after the defeat of Slack, George II. shuffled off this mortal coil, consequently for the time being pugilism ceased to have royal patronage. Not that it deserved it, for the disgraceful business associated with the Ring about this time was enough to stamp it out for ever. c

But to return to George Meggs. When he came from Bristol he went straight to Jack Slack, who had taken a butcher's shop in Chandos Street, and divided his time by buying and slaughtering beasts and teaching the art of self-defence. Although knowing little, he had the name of ex-Champion, and that brought him a fair number of ambitious youths who desired to be initiated into the mysteries of fisticuffs, and he did fairly well with his pupils.

When Slack had cast his eye over the Bristol man, who came to him with an introduction from some of his old friends belonging to the town where he, years before, had established a school of boxing, he invited the young countryman into his slaughterhouse at the back of the premises, and tested his capabilities. So pleased was he that he thought he had hit upon the very man who would be able to take Stevens, his conqueror, down. The wish, however, must have been father to the thought, for he hadn't induced Meggs to issue the challenge to fight for the Championship for £200 a-side many days when he began to "funk" the whole business. Perhaps he found, on further acquaintance, that Master George was not quite so good as he at first thought him. Anyhow he was nervous about his £200, and at once began to scheme how it was possible to avoid the chances of losing it, with a probability of making more.

What did this fine specimen of a British Champion do but bribe Bill Stevens (another beauty) with £50 to sell the fight by allowing himself to be beaten by the new man, arranging that the transfer of the stakes to Meggs should be but a form.

And so the Championship was to be sold for the paltry sum of fifty pounds!

The "barney" took place at the Tennis Court on the 2nd day of March, 1761, and lasted exactly seventeen minutes. Scarcely a blow had been struck when, to the surprise of everybody, Stevens gave in, and Meggs claimed the Championship.

The whole disgraceful business came out within a few months, Stevens confessing, and that ended Slack's connection with the Prize Ring.

Meggs was never really acknowledged as Champion, although his name appears on some of the lists with that title. Stevens suffered for his dishonesty, for nobody would accept his challenges, and the only other fights on record of his after the sell were with a man named McGuire, which took place in a field where now stands the British Museum on July 4, 1769, and again in 1778, with Sellers, who was allowed to call himself Champion when the Nailer was old and weak

and easily defeated. He died in a miserable condition in 1781, Slack having preceded him three years. Meggs was twice defeated by Millsom who, however, does not seem to have laid claim to the title, although he won several good battles in the provinces and performed very creditably in London.

The next claimant was Tom Juchau, a paviour. After several victories "Disher," as they called him, fought Millsom and defeated him, immediately assuming the title of Champion.

A year before that, however, Bill Darts, a dyer, of Spitalfields, had appeared upon the scene, and after several fights about the provinces, met and defeated George Meggs after a tough battle, when he came back to London, and also laid claim to the Championship. So there were two Richmonds in the field, both questionably legitimate claimants.

Up to that period (1763), from the time of the downfall of Slack (six years), the aristocracy had taken very little notice of prize-fighting. The racecourse was where they enjoyed their sport, for so rotten had the Ring become that it scarcely drew the attention of a single good sportsman.

This was fourteen years before the establishment of the first Derby, but horseracing, had long been very popular, and the Earl of Eglinton, the Duke of Queensberry (then Earl of March), Col. O'Kelly (owner of the celebrated Eclipse), Sir Charles Bunbury (owner of Diomed, who won the first Derby), and a host of others, including the Duke of Cumberland, went hotly into the Sport of Kings, and turned their backs upon the Ring, which had so degenerated.

The Earl of March, "Old Q" as he was afterwards known by, was an extraordinary character and a dreadful gambler.

It was he who bet a large sum of money that he would have a letter conveyed fifty miles within an hour. This was before express trains were running, and everybody laughed at the eccentric Earl. He, however won his wager, for the letter was enclosed in a cricket-ball, and thrown round an extended circle by a dozen experts. The Earl, a few years before, too, had distinguished himself by riding the memorable match with the Duke of Hamilton for £1,000, with each riding his own horse, March winning easily. The distinguished sportsman, in conjunction with the Earl of Eglinton, laid a thousand with Count Theobald O'Taaffe and Mr. Andrew Sprowle, "that the two former would produce a carriage with four running wheels, and with a man in it, to be drawn by four horses nineteen miles an hour."

A coachbuilder, named Wright, was entrusted with the manufacture of the vehicle. It was made exceedingly light, with the harness constructed of the thinnest leather strengthened with silk, and the seat for the driver was swung upon straps, and was somewhat like the perch used for trotting nowadays. Tins for oil which dripped upon the axle-trees were provided, and a contrivance of springs for holding the traces was improvised, so that it was impossible for them to get under the horse's legs. The race commenced at seven in the morning, near the Six Mile House, Newmarket Heath, and the course lay between the Warren and Rubbing Houses, through the Running Gap, where, turning to the right, the vehicle was drawn three times round a corded piece of ground, four miles in circumference, and then back to the starting-post. The carriage and harness altogether weighed but $1\frac{1}{2}$ cwt, and the noblemen won easily, nineteen miles being covered in fifty-three minutes twenty-seven seconds.

This kind of sport and duelling occupied the attention of these gentlemen, and pugilism was sadly neglected. Apropos of duelling, there is a good story told about the Earl of March. He had a misunderstanding with a n owner of racehorses, and was accused of fraud, leading to a duel being arranged. The Earl's antagonist was a hot-headed Irishman and a magnificent shot (pistols at this time having taken the place of the sword). They met in accordance with the arrangements early one June morning. To the consternation of those assembled, the Irishman was preceded by a man as he walked upon the ground bearing a large black coffin, which he placed before the Earl of March. There was the following inscription upon the plate: "James Douglas, Earl of March, born November 5, 1725, died June 10, 1750."

The subject of the joke turned ghastly pale, and demanded an explanation, when the Irishman said with a smile, "Why, my dear fellow, you are, of course, aware that I never miss my man, and, as I find myself in excellent form this morning for a bit of sport, I have not the shadow of a doubt that you will require this oaken chest before the next ten minutes are over." This was too much for March's nerves. He tendered an ample apology, and the lot went home to breakfast. The Earl never accepted or gave a challenge again.

But to return to our Champion, for we have somewhat digressed in order to show what kind of sports lived at this particular period of our history of the Prize Ring.

We had left Bill Darts and Tom Juchau both claiming the Championship. This was a state of affairs

that could not possibly be allowed to exist, and the Duke of Richmond, having his attention called to the matter, determined to make one more effort to pull the Prize Ring together. Amongst the noblemen connected with the Turf an unheard-of sum was collected, amounting to £1,000, and arrangements were made to bring the battle off near Guildford, for it was to be the first great fight that had ever taken place in the open, all the former high-class contests having been held within the walls of the amphitheatres, Tennis Court, or elsewhere. The men went strictly into training, and the date was fixed for May 21, 1766.

There was an immense grand stand erected, and a scaffolding put up which provided for some six hundred people, whilst assembled around the platform upon which the men fought were thousands who had journeyed to get a sight of the battle, no gate money being charged.

Everything promised to afford a grand day's entertainment, for the arrangements were perfect. The warriors, however, spoilt the whole thing. Instead of standing up and fighting fairly under the rules, they in every round attempted to take unfair advantage of each other, and put the rules, which had been framed by the great Broughton, at defiance. No interest would be created by giving the details of this encounter. Over and over again Juchau (who, by the bye, was of German origin) struck foul blows, and although they were appealed against, the men were allowed to fight on. At length Darts, seeing his opportunity, delivered a most cowardly blow very low beneath the belt with terrific force on the abdomen, and his man was unable to come to the scratch.

Bill Darts was proclaimed Champion, and amongst the public became somewhat popular, but not with the gentlemen sports, who were disgusted with the sad exhibition which they had at so much cost and trouble provided.

Juchau after this disappeared, and we are unable to discover what became of him or when he died. Darts was so elated with his success that he spent the best part of his money in taking a tavern in a street off Holborn, where he dissipated in a reckless manner, and we have records of very few other fights in which he was successful.

In the autumn he defeated Doggett, the West-country bargeman, for a hundred guineas a-side, and in the October of the following year he beat Swanney, the Butcher, in Epping Forest, for half that amount. Then, on the 27th of June, 1769, his overthrow came at Kingstons. There he fought Lyons, the waterman.

Everybody thought that this man had not the slightest chance with the Champion, although he was a tough customer, and had fought some good battles on the banks of the Thames. The betting was 10 to 1 against Lyons, and for the first half hour Darts appeared to be making mincemeat of him, bowling him over in nearly every round. Then by a chance blow the Champion was knocked out.

Darts, after Lyons became Champion, fought Steven



PETER CORCORAN.

Oliver, a pugilist who once figured somewhat prominently in Jack Broughton's Amphitheatre, but who was in the "sere and yellow" when he was defeated on the 25th of March, 1770. Darts after this lived in hopes of once more regaining his position as Champion, which by that time had passed from Lyons to one Peter Corcoran, a native of Galway, he having been born in the little

village of Ballyconnerly, and was brought up roughly on buttermilk and taters. The simple living and fine bracing, fresh air, however, seemed to agree perfectly with Pat's constitution, for before he was eighteen years of age he stood just upon six feet, and was a perfect Hercules.

Always eager for a fight, whether the tail of his coat was trodden upon or not, Peter broke more pates with his shillelagh than any of the lads in the county, and was a perfect devil with his fists. An unfortunate affair caused him to leave his home, and after many months' roaming he found himself in London. It appears that Master Peter was a rare chap for the lassies, and woe betide the amorous youth who crossed his path. A young fellow living in the same village with Corcoran, dared to court one of the charming blue-eyed, black-haired, bare-footed wenches who are only to be found in the Emerald Island. Peter looked upon him as a rival, and resented his attentions by delivering a blow on the side of the head which stretched him out, and he never rose again.

Peter's father giving him several pounds, the savings of a lifetime, bade him fly from the place to avoid justice, and, as we have said, after roaming about the country, he eventually found himself in the metropolis.

We cannot minutely follow the Irishman's career, but we find that by some means or other he obtained an introduction to the notorious Colonel O'Kelly, who was such a conspicuous character on the Turf, and owner of Eclipse.

The latter was a marvellous man, and his life would make a most interesting work, full of romance and strange vicissitudes. He came to London in 1748 from Ireland, and his people were in a very humble position, his brother being a brogue maker. Denis O'Kelly was then quite uneducated, not being able to write his own name. He obtained a situation as sedan-chairman, and his handsome face and magnificent figure attracted the attention of a rich lady of title, who lavished money and presents on him. After rising in a meteoric manner he became a great gamester, and was thrown into the Fleet Prison, but "woman, lovely woman," came again to his rescue, and he eventually rose to the position of one of the first men on the Turf, the associate of the aristocracy, and an enormously rich man, winning the Derby twice, once with Young Eclipse, and again with Serjeant. When it is remembered that Denis O'Kelly made with his stud no less than £518,000, it will be seen what a position he held as a breeder of bloodstock.

The Colonel was, at the time Peter Corcoran came to

London, a man of vast importance, and took a great interest in his fellow-countryman, who had when O'Kelly had his attention called to him, somewhat distinguished himself in the Ring. To go through all his battles here would serve no purpose. Besides two or three minor contests in Dublin, he met in London Bill Turner, who had previously defeated Bill Stevens, the Nailer, and ex-Champion. The stakes were only £20 a-side, but Peter won easily, and thereby established some kind of a reputation.

This was in 1769, and immediately afterwards he made himself quite famous by vanquishing in quick succession Tom Dalton, Joe Davis, and Bob Smiley, and then sent a challenge to Lyons, who but a few months previously had won the title from Darts. This gentleman was in no way disposed to meet the Irishman, and after much procrastination the whole thing fell through, and Peter Corcoran claimed the title of Champion.

All this time Colonel Kelly had kept his eye upon his countryman, and when he got so near the top of the tree he determined to back him against all comers. Darts was the man who responded, and the battle was arranged to come off on Epsom Racecourse, after the races were over, then held in May.

Again the "cutting-up" stakes was resorted to, Darts having been got at for £100, and sold the fight. The ex-Champion after this never prospered, and fell into utter disgrace. Even his customers at his tavern in Holborn withdrew their support, and he died, we believe, in poverty, in 1781, leaving a stained name behind him, and a reputation not worthy of a place in the history of the British Prize Ring.

Corcoran was quite as bad, and posing as Champion (although, under the circumstances, he had really no right to the position), he fought a Birmingham man named Sam Peters, near Waltham Abbey, in June, 1774. This was another "barney," which put enough ill-gotten gain into his pockets to enable him to take the Blakeney's Arms, in St. Martin's Lane. Here he blustered and boasted of his prowess until one Harry Sellers accepted his challenge. He was a West of England man, who hailed from Jack Slack's Bristol School, but was never looked upon as a top-sawyer.

They met for a hundred guineas in front of the Crown Inn, Staines, on October 10, 1776, and the only record of the battle is published in a contemporary paper in the following lines:—

"At the first onset Corcoran gave his antagonist a violent blow, which threw him to the farthest end of the stage, and the odds increased from 3 to 4 to 1

in Peter's favour. Sellers now fought very shy for about eighteen minutes, in order to wind his antagonist, which, having accomplished, he advanced boldly and beat him by straightforward hitting in ten minutes."

It was no surprise, for the Irishman had plenty of brute strength, but could never fight in a scientific manner, and was not fit to clean Broughton's shoes. He died like the rest of the black-legs, in poverty, some



HARRY SELLERS.

eight years after, and has no right to figure amongst our Champions.

Henry Sellers was by no means a first-class pugilist, but he retained the title for about four years, defeating Joe Hood, at Ascot Heath, during the race week of 1777, and overthrew Bill Stevens, the ex-Champion, in 1778.

On the 25th of September, 1780, Sellers met an Irishman named Duggan Fearn, and there is little doubt that it was another put-up job, like those then so dis-

gracefully prevalent. It is remarkable as being the shortest Championship contest on record. It lasted one minute and a half, Sellers falling after the first blow, and declining to renew.

Under the nominal leadership of Mr. Fearn, prize-fighting sank to the very lowest ebb, but he formed the climax, and capped the careers of what we have rightly named a "batch of blackguard bruisers."

And now the unpleasant task of disposing of these men who have left stains upon the history of the Ring is over. The next chapter will be devoted to clearing the clouds which had gathered over the sport, letting a little sunshine in as we herald Tom Johnson, one of the greatest ornaments to pugilism.



CHAPTER VII.

INTRODUCING THE GREAT TOM JOHNSON AND A NEW SCHOOL
OF PUGILISTS.—DEATH OF DENNIS O'KELLY.

HAVING in our last chapter disposed of the batch of bruisers who were more or less a disgrace to the noble art, we turn with pleasure to the career of Tom Johnson, who for straightforwardness, science, pluck, and good-heartedness will compare with the best of our Champions who have held a premier position in the annals of the Ring.

Thomas Jackling (for that was his real name) was born in 1760, at Derby, although both Sheffield and Doncaster have claimed him. We are, however, able to state positively that it was in the first-mentioned capital of the county of the Peaks that Tom graduated from an "infant mewling and puking in the nurse's arms" to a robust youth, full of pluck, spirit and ambition. We have seen a document in his own handwriting, signed "Thomas Jackling, of Derby," and a very good specimen of calligraphy it is too, proving that his education (for few could write in those days amongst the common herd) had been by no means neglected, and that he came of decent parents.

Of young Tom Jackling's juvenile career we are able to find nothing. We conclude that being of a roaming disposition he ran away from home to seek his fortune in the great city, which, before railways were invented, was supposed by the ambitious country youth to be paved with gold. Anyhow, somewhere about 1777 we find him in London, a great strapping young man, following that laborious but well-paid avocation of corn porter.

Tom has not been following that calling very long before something happens which at once brings out the goodness of his disposition, and stamps him with a generosity of disposition and good-heartedness, which are in after life to be such prominent traits in his character.

He has been keeping himself very steady, and by his exceptional strength earning an excellent living, lodging with one of his mates, and leading a quiet sort of life. Through a wrench in the back his friend is laid up, and having a sick wife and very large family, it goes hard with the poor fellow, and the loss of his place is threatened. What does Tom Johnson (for that is the name we shall henceforth call him) do but carry two



TOM JOHNSON.

sacks of corn for every one that the other fellows bring in, and in that manner earned his chum's weekly wage, which he religiously takes to him, and what's more, keeps his situation open for him.

This and many other acts of generosity soon made Tom a great favourite; but such is the case, the more a man is liked the greater chance has he of coming across

a few enemies, and Johnson was no exception. A carman, named Jarvis, became envious of the manner in which our hero was received by their circle of acquaintances, and chose to pick a quarrel with him. He was a bullying sort of a chap, who had fought several minor battles, and was looked upon as quite a terror in his way.

Tom, however, was afraid of no man, and met this fellow's insults by challenging him to a fair stand-up fight. The men met in Lock's Fields, Walworth. The battle attracted quite a thousand spectators, but Johnson being opposed to a semi-professional pugilist, and never having before this entered the arena, was thought to have little or no chance, and heavy odds were laid against him.

Johnson, to the surprise of every body, and the delight of all his friends (and they were many), came out with flying colours, licking his man easily. In the following year Tom thrashed the "Croydon Drover," a great rough, who was looked upon as a very formidable antagonist; and then in the June of 1784 he ventured into the arena with the once celebrated Steven Oliver. To be sure, the old pugilist was in the "sere and yellow." Still his long experience and knowledge of the tricks of the ring were thought to give him a great advantage over the young aspirant for fistic honours, and the veteran was a warm favourite.

Oliver was known by the nickname of "Death," and had distinguished himself on many occasions, having fought some twenty or thirty battles, defeating amongst others the big Hertfordshire butcher, whose name, curiously enough, was William Small. In one of the papers of the period a very smart epigram appeared on the occasion of that mill which is worth quoting:

Ah ! foolish wight, why strive to conquer Death ?
When he, thou know'st, can stop thy vital breath ;
That ruthless tyrant rules the lives of all,
And vanquishes the Great, as well as Small.

Young Tom, however, on this occasion put "Death" at defiance, and blinded him within half an hour.

Steven Oliver, as we have stated, was an old man at this time, for he had appeared in Figg's, Taylor's, and Broughton's booths with the noted Buckhorse and other celebrities. And here we may perhaps be pardoned for harking back and saying a few words about the last named, although at the period of which we write he had been dead several years. He was, however, thought remarkable enough for Hogarth to paint his portrait, a drawing from which we reproduce. Jack Smith (for that

was his real name) made no pretensions to the championship, although he appears to have shown a deal of courage and some rude skill. But it would seem that his ugliness and his buffoonery were his chief attractions, and he was, in fact, a pugilistic clown rather than anything else, a man who would be better suited for a travelling circus than an amphitheatre devoted to scientific pugilism. Hogarth must have painted him for his ugliness, surely, for we have him thus described:—"A huge head, containing at least half a dozen waters on the brain, little screwed-up eyes, a turned-up nose, a squeezed-up chin, and no neck at all." He must have had some reputation as a boxer, however, for we find him "starred" on Broughton's bills and frequently mentioned in exhibition displays. He came to grief though after that worthy's retirement, and was found dead in a ditch on a winter's day clutching a bottle of gin. But to return to Tom Johnson.

Bill Love, the butcher, was the next opponent he met, a good man in his time, but who had to knuckle under to the superior strength and science of our young hero. This battle was fought on the 11th of January, 1786, when Johnson was twenty-one years of age and in his prime. Immediately after (within a few weeks, in fact) he beat Towers, of Barnet, and in the June of the same year defeated Fry, who was a man so much his superior in height and weight that Johnson established his reputation with his unbeaten record, and was made welcome into the ranks of the first-class pugilists of the time.

And now the Ring entered upon a new lease of its existence. What a transformation in the few years! Only four years had elapsed since the rogues of the Ring played their ugly games and came to grief, very nearly bringing prize-fighting to grief with them.

But in the year of the first Derby Stakes, a change came o'er the scene, and such men as Humphries, Mendoza, Ryan, and Tom Johnson appeared like bright stars upon the fistic horizon, and once more attracted the Corinthian attention.

1784, too, the year when our hero overcame Fry, was that in which George IV. (then Prince of Wales) made his first appearance as the owner of racehorses, patronising the sport ardently, and at the same time taking the greatest interest in the pugilists who were coming forward to save the downfall of the Ring.

Not only did the Prince encourage the sport, but such men as the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Jersey, Charles Wyndham, Shelley, Brummell, M. Day, Churchill, and others, boon companions of his Highness, fixed their

attention on the rising young pugilist, Tom Johnson, as the coming man.

It was through these noblemen and many other distinguished sportsmen, including Colonels Hanger and O'Kelly and General Fitzpatrick, that the first important match was made for Tom Johnson. So well had he acquitted himself that no man in London could be found to take up the gauntlet, and they cast about in the provinces for an opponent worthy to meet the dashing young pugilist.



JACK SMITH (GENERALLY CALLED BUCKHORSE).

After a painting by Hogarth.

Bath and Bristol were then the principal provincial towns which had made the greatest progress in pugilism, and it was from the latter hot-bed they found their man whom they thought worthy to meet the redoubtable young pugilist, whose fame had by this time spread throughout the kingdom. The West-countryman was Bill Warr, and the match was made for £200 a-side, to take place upon a stage at Oakingham, in Berkshire, on June 18, 1787.

Great was the disappointment, however, to the thousands who journeyed to witness the battle. Our hero acquitted himself in the most perfect manner; but Warr, immediately on facing Johnson, discovered that he was outclassed, and adopted those cowardly tactics of getting down to avoid punishment that were practised only too frequently later on in fistic encounters.

For more than an hour did Johnson endeavour to get in a punishing blow, but every effort was frustrated by Bill Warr going to grass, and at that time there was no rule framed to make this an act of forfeiture. Having lost patience with his antagonist, Johnson, whose look of supreme contempt betrayed his opinion of the man who faced him every time only to fall, watched his opportunity, and rushing in as the other was going down, hit him a tremendous blow on the side of the head, which greatly accelerated his movements. It was enough, the Bristol man would have no more of it. Tom Johnson was awarded the stakes, and declared entitled to call himself Champion of England until somebody could be found ready to dispute his right.

For some time nobody seemed to care about taking up the gauntlet, but whilst Johnson was acting as second to a man named Savage in a battle with Doyle, in Stepney Fields, he had a dispute with the latter's esquire, which ended in heated words and an agreement to meet to settle their differences. The man's name was Michael Ryan, a pugilist who had done some very good work, and one who had been frequently mentioned as a likely conqueror of the Champion.

The Corinthians again willingly gave their support, and worked up the greatest interest in the affair, which promised to be a right-down genuine combat for the Championship.

Wradisbury, in Buckinghamshire, was the place selected for the meeting, and there the men met to do battle for the sum of 300 guineas and the premier position in the Ring.

There was a more representative crowd than ever in attendance. Colonel Hamilton, Sir Charles Bunbury, and all the swells mentioned above were present, and never had there been such a distinguished and enormous gathering outside the metropolis in order to witness a fight. One, however, was conspicuous by his absence, and that was Colonel O'Kelly. His friends, Jack Etherington, Lord Egremont, Ned Bishop, Lord Grosvenor and M. Champreaux, the Duke of Orleans, Jack Stacie, and that terrible specimen of the ruffianly gentleman, Dick England, were all there. But the Colonel was lying at death's door in his town house at Piccadilly.

He was only in his prime, fifty-one years of age, but the life he had led had undermined his magnificent constitution. Surrounded by wealth and luxury, with the fair Mistress Charlotte Hayes in attendance, he was passing slowly but certainly away. That lady had been his guardian angel throughout the most part of his brilliant career—a beautiful, witty creature, who had been instrumental in raising him from poverty, and had been his main help on the road to fortune.

The Colonel, we believe, never got over the thrashing he received from Dick England, who was once his closest friend. They quarrelled over some disputed debt. We find the following in a biographical notice of the Colonel:—

“The Colonel was suffering from a severe attack of gout, and although a powerful man and an accomplished bruiser, was unable to do much against his brutal and cowardly assailant, and was consequently thrashed within an inch of his life. He brought an action for damages against England in the Court of King’s Bench, but so adverse was Lord Mansfield’s summing up, and in such black colours did he paint O’Kelly’s character, that the jury only gave the plaintiff one shilling damages. Shortly after the Colonel got into bad odour among Turfites for scratching his horse Dungannon, after it had been heavily backed against Mr. Bullock’s Rockingham, on which O’Kelly narrowly escaped being lynched. Still he had such natural gifts for winning popularity among all classes, that these peccadilloes were soon forgotten, and in the year 1782 we find him at the annual meeting of the Hibernian Charity, a most respectable institution started by the Earl of Bellamont, unanimously voted to the presidency. In 1785 O’Kelly purchased the beautiful seat of the Duke of Chandos, who had spent £200,000 in erecting a palace there, which was pulled down at his death and replaced by the humbler but still commodious villa bought by O’Kelly. He bequeathed his fine estate—the Canons—to the faithful Charlotte Hayes, and Clay Hill to his nephew, with directions that all his horses in training should be sold, and that the said nephew should forfeit £500 for every bet he made on the Turf—a curious clause in the will of a man who owed all his fortune, and all his success in life to lucky speculations on the Turf. Eclipse survived his master two years, and so did another famous favourite belonging to the Colonel, namely, his celebrated parrot, also called Eclipse, which had been hatched at Bristol and bought by O’Kelly for fifty guineas, and which could not only talk, but sing in imitation of *the*

human voice, after a fashion that astonished all who heard it."

We could not omit to say a little about the great Denis O'Kelly, for he had done perhaps more for the Ring as well as the Turf during the last few years of his life than anybody else, and he was passing away when our hero and Mr. Michael Ryan were facing each other, surrounded by the *élite* of the sporting aristocracy and thousands of the lovers of the true British sport.

But let us to the ringside. Tom Johnson never looked in finer condition. In height he was less than 5ft 9in, but he weighed fourteen stone, so it may be imagined that, as he had not an ounce of superfluous flesh, he must have been a broad-shouldered, muscular specimen of humanity. He had that depth of chest and breadth of loins that denoted immense power. His face always wore an expression of serene kindness, and he was never known to frown, facing his man always with a smile as if they were but having a friendly bout for the simple love of the thing.

Ryan was a much bigger man, and his notoriety for skill and endurance had the effect of making him favourite at 6 to 4. Humphries and Mendoza appeared for Johnson, and Dunn and Tring did duty for the Irishman.

Most carefully they both went to work, and it was evident that bar accidents the spectators were in for a display of science and strength that had not been met with for years. At the expiration of twenty minutes, during the whole of which time no damage was done, both sparred magnificently. Then one of those unsatisfactory incidents happened, which, although it saved the Englishman from losing the fight, it called forth the greatest condemnation upon one who ought to have known better, and caused considerable disappointment at the termination of the battle.

In the first round the powerful Irishman managed to get in a fearful blow upon Johnson's temple, which for the moment stunned him. His arms dropped to his side and he was about to fall. Ryan, intent upon following up the advantage he had obtained, dashed in with another crushing hit, and would undoubtedly have got home upon the face of his dazed antagonist had not Humphries rushed in and caught Ryan in his arms.

A fearful state of confusion followed, and the Irishman's backers demanded that the fight should be awarded to their man, who was perfectly justified in hitting his man before he was absolutely down, and it was a "Foul" for the second to interfere. Under the

subsequent rules of the Ring this undoubtedly would have been the case, and should have lost the day for Johnson as it was. However, Ryan wishing to lick his man without a doubt, and believing that it was an easy thing to accomplish, generously offered to continue the contest.

The time spent over the dispute, though had given Tom the opportunity to recover himself from the nasty knock he had received, and having discovered his antagonist's method, fought on the defensive until the big 'un tired himself out, and then, in the vigorous style he had adopted in all his battles, went in and polished his man off amidst the shrieks and yells of the spectators. So once again, more by luck than judgment on this occasion, Tom Johnson retained the Championship.

Nobody was satisfied with the result though, and another match was made. So well were the two men doing, however, in exhibiting themselves in booths around the country, and so great a friendship had there sprung up between them, that it was not until the February of the following year—1789—that they met for a second battle. On this occasion the Earl of Essex had interested himself in the affair, and the amount subscribed was, as before, 300 guineas a-side. His lordship had a stage erected in his park at Cassiobury, Rickmansworth, in Hertfordshire, selecting the beautiful spot then known as the Rabbit Dell. He generously threw the park open to the public, and invited a host of people belonging to the sporting aristocracy to be entertained at the house before and after the battle.

An enormous amount of money was staked on the issue, and the attendance was more brilliant and greater than at the first meeting, whilst opinion was very much divided as to which was the better man. As before, Humphries, who had been severely admonished by Johnson for his behaviour in the first fight, acted for the Champion, with Jackson as his bottle-holder, whilst Mr. Rolfe, a baker, and friend of the Irishman, acted in like capacity, with Rowlan for bottle-holder.

Without going into full particulars of this battle, as there are many others of more importance to which it will be our duty to call our readers' attention, suffice it to say that Tom Johnson had discovered all Ryan's weak points during their sparring tour, and made use of the knowledge thus obtained upon the day of the fight. It was Tom's strong point to study the character, temper, and style of his man, and he always fought

with his head, like a good general, depending upon that equally with his science and strength.

The first round was fought magnificently on both sides, and never since the days of Broughton had such a clever display been given. In the end Johnson went down from a terrific blow on the chest. This so delighted the Irishman that he determined to rush in and endeavour to bring the contest to a close as quickly as possible. In this he quite succeeded, for Tom met him coolly, and hit him with right and left in a fearful manner, and Michael went down all of a heap. He came up again full of fighting, but Tom Johnson had his man set, and with a smile still upon his good-looking face, met the rushes in such a masterly manner that Ryan was cut and bleeding about the eyes and nose, and getting blind. Ten to one was laid on Johnson, and Mr. Wyndham laid that in hundreds with Sir Frederick Fitzgerald, promising Tom that he should have the winnings if he won the battle.

Michael Ryan had by this time lost his temper, but Tom was cooler than ever, and after fighting three or four rounds more the great Irishman's nose was smashed, his eyes were completely closed, and his second skied the sponge in token of his defeat.

Tom Johnson made upwards of £500 out of the battle, and became the lion of the day, the favourite of the Corinthians, who had at last found someone worthy to hold the name of Champion, and in whom they could trust to honourably uphold the glory of the Ring.



CHAPTER VIII.

DISTINGUISHED SPORTSMEN OF THE PERIOD.—THE LONG AND
THE SHORT OF IT.—TOM JOHNSON AND ISAAC PERRINS.
—ONE OF THE SEVEREST ON RECORD.

WE now proceed to tell the story of Tom Johnson's fight with Isaac Perrins, a battle which stands conspicuous amongst the plucky displays to be found in the annals of the Ring.

Before doing so, however, let us turn to the sportsmen who supported the manly art at this time, and who came to its rescue immediately there was the vestige of honour and uprightness introduced once more into pugilism by the appearance of Tom Johnson.

Amongst the aristocracy first and foremost was the above-named Earl of Essex, a fine, tall, ruddy-faced, silver-haired old gentleman. Let us picture him at his fine mansion near Rickmansworth, surrounded by many a "baron bold," discussing the second fight that had taken place between Tom Johnson and Michael Ryan.

The invited guests (all of them having put down their guineas for one side or the other) are Mr. Wyndham, Charles James Fox, Mr. Crewe, Mr. Bradyl, Colonel Hamilton, Colonel Lennox, Sir Richard Symonds, Sir Charles Bunbury, Major Hanger, General Fitzpatrick, and other ardent votaries of sport. The last named is in high spirits, and the quip and joke go round as merrily as the bottle. But who would have thought, to see that jolly, happy-looking soldier—tall, handsome and *débonnaire*, apparently without a care in the world—that he had only a few days before written the following letter to George Selwyn:—

"I am very sorry the night ended so ill; but to give you some idea of the utter impossibility of my being useful on the occasion, I will inform you of the state of my affairs. I won four hundred pounds last night, which was immediately appropriated to Mr. Martindale, to whom I still owe three hundred pounds, and am in Brook's books for thrice that sum. Add to all this that at Christmas I expect an inundation of clamorous

creditors, who unless I somehow or other scrape together some money to satisfy them, will overwhelm me entirely. What can be done? If I could coin my heart or drop my blood into drachms I would do it, though by this time I should have neither heart nor blood left. I am afraid you will find Stephen in the same state of insolvency. Adieu! I am obliged to you for the gentleness and moderation of your dun, considering how long I have been your debtor.—Yours, most sincerely, R. F.”

Nobody dreamed, who saw him on that particular evening, that he was to change so soon. The terrible, late nights, the cards, the wine in excess told upon him. His great friend, Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, said, “I witnessed the painful spectacle of his surviving almost all the personal and intellectual graces which Nature had conferred upon him with so lavish a hand.”

Sitting next to him is his friend William Wyndham (three years later Secretary of War), the best cricketer, leaper, swimmer, rower, skater, fencer, boxer, runner, and horseman of his time—the boon companion of Dr. Johnson, Reynolds, and Garrick, the cherished disciple of Burke, the beloved associate of Fox; his expressive face lit up with intelligence, his manly figure developed by every form of athletic exercise. Of all the enjoyments of his life, even in his most melancholy days, in the intervals of his greater occupations of politics, literature, and profound study, nothing came up in his estimation to a fight.

He would at all times make any sacrifice rather than miss the spectacle of a good bruising match, and it is curious now to find one of the most eminent men of his day—in politics and society—after describing his exertions in the House of Commons, interviews with statesmen, dinners with swells, visits to the theatre to see Mrs. Siddons or Mrs. Jordan, the queens of tragedy and comedy, writing thus in his diary :—

“The day after went to the battle between Johnson and Ryan, at Rickmansworth; the party were Crewe, Fitzpatrick, Grey, and George. We had set off in time. The day was fine, the company pleasant. We had an object before us, the country air did its duty by me, and I felt all those spirits which such a concurrence of causes was likely to produce. The delay that took place afterwards, with the change of weather and vexation at being too late for the debate, took off all satisfaction, and made me well disposed to have gone away without seeing what we came for. The battle at length took place, and was certainly a very grand one. But upon the whole I both blame myself and am sorry for my going. The occasion was one of those on which not to have

gone would have been as much matter of remark as the going."

The above shows exactly the disposition of our great public men over a hundred years ago. We wonder what would be said if Lord Salisbury, Mr. Balfour, Mr. Curzon, or our present day Ministers attended a prize-fight. There is one, however, we should be pretty safe in predicting his attendance, and that is Lord Charles Beresford, if he had the opportunity, and no doubt there are plenty of our officers and the nobility who would now jump at a straightforward *al fresco* mill with the "raw 'uns."

But they were indeed the "good old times," and a man who couldn't box, fight, drink, and hunt was no good amongst the set. James Thomson gives us a glimpse of these dashing old sportsmen enjoying themselves after the chase, lines which everybody should read:—

The fuel'd chimney blazes wide :
 The tankards foam ; and the strong table groans
 Beneath the smoking sirloin, stretched immense
 From side to side, in which, with desperate knife,
 They deep incisions make, and talk the while
 Of England's glory, ne'er to be defaced.
 While hence they borrow vigour ; or amain
 Into the pasty plung'd at intervals,
 If stomach keen can intervals allow,
 Relating all the glories of the chase.
 Then sated Hunger bids his brother Thirst
 Produce the mighty bowl,
 Swell'd high with fiery juice, steams liberal round,
 Nor wanting is the brown October, drawn
 Mature and perfect from his dark retreat
 Of thirty years Whilst awhile
 Walks his dull round, beneath a cloud of smoke,
 Wreath'd fragrant from the pipe, or the quick dice
 In thunder leaping from the box, awake
 The sounding gammon ; while romp-loving Miss
 Is hauled about in gallantry robust.
 At last, these paling idlenesses laid
 Aside. the dry divan
 Close in firm circle and set ardent in
 For serious drinking. Nor evasion sly,
 Nor sober shift, is to the puking wretch
 Indulg'd apart ; but earnest brimming bowls
 Lave every soul the table floating round,
 And pavement faithless to the fuddled foot.

 Vociferous at once from twenty tongues,
 The impatient catch bursts from the joyous heart ;
 And opening in a full-mouth'd cry of joy.
 The laugh, the slap, the jocund curse go round,
 While from their slumbers shook, the kennel'd hounds
 Mix in the music of the day again.

But let us return to our muttons, although the above quotations prove historically how our forefathers loved sport, especially prize-fighting, drinking, and the chase.

After the second battle with Ryan, which was fought much against both of the men's desire (for they had, it will be remembered, after the first conflict, entered into partnership, and sparred about the country, making lots of money), Tom Johnson became more popular than ever. Nor did the friendship cease, for Ryan was a splendid fellow. In fact, so attached had he become to Johnson, that before the second battle he was proof against the taunts levelled against his courage. At length, Tom persuaded him in his eloquent way.

"Mike, laad, what have I ever done to offend thee, that thou won't feight me?"

"Divil a bit of offence, Tom, have I ivver resaved from yez," was Ryan's reply.

"Then let's feight, Mike," rejoined Johnson; "here's my hand on it."

"Begorra, and here's moine," answered the Irishman; "and to obleege a friend it's meself that'll foight ye."

And so, as we have said, they fought for the pure love of fighting, and a contemporary writer so truly remarks of the best bruisers of the olden times, when he says, referring to Tom Johnson and the Irishman, "They were animated by no vindictive motives, but simply by professional pride in the 'noble art' and a chivalrous desire to test their strength and skill. It was this spirit which, in the eyes of men like Wyndham, Charles James Fox, Fitzpatrick, George Selwyn, and the Earl of Essex, besides others eminent alike in literature and politics, rendered a prize-fight a spectacle interesting to every true sportsman, and robbed it of every element of coarseness and brutality."

It reads like the stories of the heroism of the "Middle Ages," and reminds us of the anecdote of the famous Scottish knight, Sir Patrick Graham, who lived in the period of Edward III. He was despatched to Paris on an important political mission. On his return he stayed in London, visiting the English Court, and was there entertained at supper. At the banquet an English knight, leaning across the table, courteously invited Sir Patrick to tilt three courses with him on the morrow. This was graciously accepted, and the next day the knights and their esquires met in the lists, surrounded by royalty, the courtiers, and ladies who thronged to witness the friendly duello.

Let us quote from the chronicler:—"In the very first course Sir Patrick Graham struck the English knight

through his harness with a mortal wound, so that he died on the spot. Whereat Sir Patrick mourned grievously, as one that had lost a brother."

These knights had put lance in rest purely to test each other's prowess, and it was in precisely the same spirit that Tom Johnson challenged Mike Ryan, and that the latter accepted.

Tom Johnson, after proving himself superior to his friend, the Irishman, blossomed forth into quite a swell in his way, for he had netted a nice little sum. And here we find, on reference to the history of his career, that he had plunged into the vice of gambling, no doubt having caught the passion from the habits of his noble patrons. Besides the £300 stakes made up to more than £500, to Tom's astonishment he had settled upon him an annuity of £20 a-year from a Mr. Hollingsworth, who had won quite a pile upon his victory over Mike Ryan.

Tom, not exactly flushed with success, but very light-hearted consequent upon the manner in which he was going a-head, was anxious for more feathers in his cap, but the difficulty was to get matched. At length he found a gigantic individual of the name of Brain to throw down the gauntlet, and induced Mr. Bullock, the well-known banker, to back him for £100.

The match was made, but unfortunately "Big Ben" Brain, as he was called, and of whom we shall have much to say later on, fell sick of fever, and his share of the stakes had to be forfeited to Tom.

It then seemed impossible to find anybody likely to come forward, until the Birmingham school, which had gradually been following in the Bristol path to prominence, decided upon tackling the Londoner to contest the boasted supremacy of the metropolis.

Accordingly, five Brum pugilists, who were looked upon as the best in the hardware town, sent challenges to five Londoners, and the following list shows how they were paired off:—

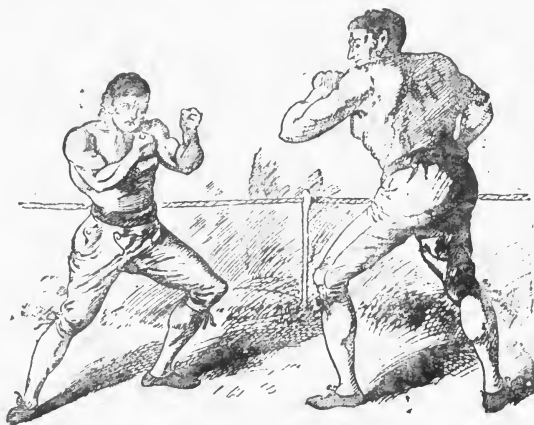
Isaac Perrins v. Tom Johnson.
Jacomb's v. Brain (Big Ben).
Pickard v. George Ingleston.
Tom Falkener v. Watson.
Thornhill v. Hooper.

We shall have to refer to most of these men as we progress with our records of the Championship Fights, but at present we only have to do with the first brace of warriors.

Mr. Isaac Perrins it will now be our pleasing duty to introduce. He was, according to a contemporary

writer, a man of enormous physique, gigantic in weight and height, and of astonishing activity. He stood 6ft 2in without his boots, and scaled the enormous weight of 17st, or 3st heavier than Johnson.

So great was the strength of this son of Anak, that he is said to have lifted eight hundred of iron into a waggon, and performed feats of strength that would make Sandow feel small. Besides this, the Brum school had the highest opinion as to his science as a boxer, and, in fact, he was looked upon as being perfectly invincible, for he had defeated all comers from the counties of Warwickshire, Staffordshire, and Worcestershire.



THE GREAT FIGHT BETWEEN
TOM JOHNSON AND ISAAC PERRINS.

From old print.

He had issued a challenge to fight any man breathing for £500, and this handsome amount (for those days) had caught the eye of the Champion. So confident were the merry sports of Birmingham as to the impossibility of Isaac being licked by a man of Johnson's calibre that they invested several thousand pounds on their man, laying the odds of 2 and 3 to 1. Even those who best knew Johnson admitted there was unusual disparity, and it was doubted in London circles that such an amount of weight could be given away to one so smart and scientific as Perrins was reputed to be.

That the disparity in the men's size was great can be gathered by our illustration, which is a reduction from an engraving published about the time, and no doubt from drawings made during the fight.

The meeting between the provincial and London heroes was arranged to come off at Newmarket during the First October Meeting, but for some reason they were notified that the battle would not be allowed to take place in the neighbourhood or upon the Heath, so fields and pastures new had to be selected, and the spot eventually chosen was Banbury, in Oxfordshire.

The arrangements for the fight were as perfect as possible, a fine piece of turf being enclosed, and a platform erected in the centre, also covered with turf. Stands were built within easy distance of the stage, the seats for which were charged from a guinea to two shillings and sixpence.

Although the time had been fixed for eleven a.m., on the 22nd of October, 1789, it was a little before one o'clock when Mr. Lambert, of Walworth, who acted as referee and timekeeper, called the men to come up. Johnson was seconded by his old antagonist, Will Warr, and as a bottle-holder he had the services of Mr. Joe Ward, who eventually became, as we shall see, quite a celebrity in the Ring.

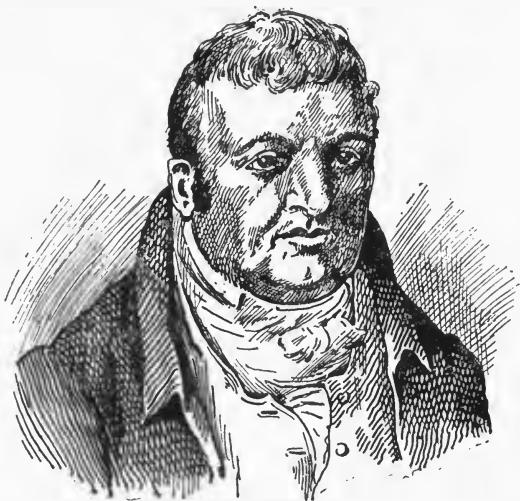
Pickard was Perrins' second, and the latter's brother played the part of henchman, whilst Colonel Tarleton stood umpire for Johnson, and Mr. Meadows, of Birmingham, officiated in a like capacity for Isaac.

Everything was ready, and amidst absolute silence the men walked briskly up to the centre of the stage, and placed themselves in attitude. Nothing would be gained by embellishing the description of this battle, which was admitted, by everybody whose report has been handed down, to be one of the fiercest and most scientific fought up to that period, so we will give the "plain, unvarnished tale" as we find it, written by an eye-witness, leaving our readers to fill in the colouring with the brushes of their own vivid imagination.

"For five minutes all was expectation. Perrins then, with great force, aimed a blow which Johnson dexterously eluded, and then gave the first blow, by which Perrins fell. The three next rounds also terminated in Johnson's favour, who confused his antagonist by dancing round him, and occasionally planting an unexpected hit. Perrins became excessively irritated at this conduct, and throwing off the caution he had shown at the beginning, followed Johnson with vast resolution, and appearing to treat his manœuvres with contempt, he, despite several sharp hits, at last got in a successful knock-

down blow, which success he followed up for several rounds, in one of which he brought blood by a severe cut on Johnson's lips.

"Johnson watched his opportunity, and in reply to a taunt from the Birmingham Goliath, jumped in, and planting a blow over Perrins' left eye, cut the eyebrow and completely closed the eye up. This blow and the failure of Perrins' wind, which was now very visible, raised the bets amazingly in Johnson's favour; the odds, however, again changed upon Perrins closing one of Johnson's eyes. After this Johnson began once more to fight



JOE WARD.

(From a painting taken after his retirement from the Ring.)

cunningly, and having skilfully parried a violent attack of Perrins, he caught him so severe and swift a blow in the face as laid his nose completely open. Odds now rose 100 to 10 on Johnson.

"Perrins recovered his breath, and with great vigour and resolution attacked Johnson, who retreated parrying, but Perrins got in a blow over Johnson's right eye, which again brought down the odds, but not to even. Forty rounds of resolute boxing had now taken place.

"In the following round Johnson fell when not struck,

and Perrins claimed the victory, but the umpires decided it was allowable, as the articles did not specify to the contrary

"Perrins, in turn, seemed now to lose much of his strength. He tried to imitate his antagonist's mode of fighting, with which he was totally unacquainted. He fought low, and had recourse to chopping, back-handed strokes, which at first drove back Johnson and disconcerted him, but against which he soon guarded himself very collectedly, often getting home a sharp return.

"Johnson seemed to improve in strength as the battle went on, never beginning the attack. Perrins, in aiming several heavy blows, fell as if from weakness. Johnson watched his falling and hit him in the face, generally falling at the same time. He seemed now to hit Perrins whenever he tried. At the end of one hour and a quarter Johnson gathered himself for a blow, and it took effect directly, in the centre of the face, and finished as severe a contest as stands recorded, the combatants having fought sixty-two rounds of fair hard boxing."

In the above anything but graphic description of this celebrated mill, the reporter has told it with a charming simplicity which would hardly suit the "blood and thunder penny plain and twopence coloured" details of the fights of a century later; but following the battle through carefully and with consideration, it will be seen that both men fought for the head, and the body blows seem to have been very infrequent, whilst the "getting down to avoid" appear to be pretty prevalent amongst the big guns even at that period.

The scene after this fight may be better imagined than described. The greatest confusion prevailed through the crush around the platform in the anxiety of the public to congratulate the Champion, who had, in spite of fearful apparent odds against him, held his own.

Mr. Bullock, Tom's backer, made no less a sum than £20,000 from the Birmingham people, and presented him with a cool thousand the same evening. The money taken for admission to the stands and enclosure came to £800 or more. So Master Tom was in clover; his pockets, well lined, had made for himself a host of friends, and still held the proud title of Champion.



CHAPTER IX.

A VICTIM TO THE GODDESS OF PLAY.—TOM JOHNSON AND
BEN BRAIN.—FALL OF THE CHAMPION.

THE fight described in our last chapter between Tom Johnson and Isaac Perrins, the bold Brum, who tried his utmost to wrest the title from the Champion, had not long been over when Tom began to display his true character. Like many other men who bid for fame, and who are favoured by Fortune, his head was turned, and he plunged into the most reckless dissipation. In the space of one year he lost all his winnings gambling with the dice, £5,000 being sacrificed at the shrine of the Goddess of Play. Yet Johnson was such a favourite amongst the fast-going set of nobility of the time that he found plenty of friends, and was never absolutely without money.

Isaac Perrins never fought again. He must have been a fine fellow by all accounts. Having received a good education, with tremendous strength, "yoked with a lamb-like disposition," he was much sought after, and had a host of supporters. He had a fine voice, and was at one time leader of the choir at West Bromwich.

Five years after his defeat by Johnson he went to Manchester, and became Boniface of the Jupiter Tavern, we believe, and soon made that hostelry famous, for the big Brummagem bruiser was most amusing company. There was a book published about that time, called "The Itinerant," written by William Riley, who tells us a deal about Isaac Perrins. It brings into bold relief the excellent qualities of the man, showing what some of the prize-fighters of a century and more ago were like. Speaking of George Frederick Cooke, the celebrated yet most eccentric actor, "It happened," wrote Mr. William Riley, "that Perrins, the noted pugilist, made one of the company this evening. He was a remarkably strong man, and possessed of great modesty and good nature. The last scene took such an effect upon his imagination that he laughed immoderately. Cooke's attention was attracted, and, turning towards him, with his most bitter look, he exclaimed, 'What do you laugh at, Mr. Swobson, hey?

Why, you great blubber-headed thief, Johnson would have beat two of you! Laugh at me!—at *George Frederick Cooke!* Come out, you scoundrel!" The coat was soon pulled off, and putting himself in an attitude, the actor cried, 'This is the arm that shall sacrifice you!' Perrins was of a mild disposition, and, knowing Cooke's character, made every allowance, and answered him only with a smile, till, aggravated by language and action the most gross, he very calmly took Cooke in his arms, as though he had been a child, set him down in the street, and bolted the door. The evening was wet, and our hero, without coat or hat, was unprepared to cope with it, but entreaty for admission was in vain, and his application at the window was unattended to. At length, grown desperate, he broke several panes, and inserting his head through the fracture, bore down all opposition by the following witticism: 'Gentlemen, I have taken *some panes* to obtain admission. Pray let me in for I *see through my error*. The door was opened, dry clothes were procured, and about one o'clock in the morning we sent him home in a coach."

It would seem that at Manchester Perrins was most successful in business, admired and respected by all who knew him. It so happened, though, that he was not destined to enjoy the fruits of his labours for long, for in the December of 1800 he died as he had lived, a hero. On the 2nd of that month a fire took place in Market Street, and Isaac, always ready to help, made his way to the scene of the conflagration. The house was ablaze, but the brave fellow dashed into the place and succeeded in rescuing three people, who would have perished had it not been for his timely assistance. He also succeeded in saving a quantity of property, his enormous strength and determined character permitting him to lift the half-suffocated people like babies, and drag out the heaviest goods.

The night was bitterly cold, and Perrins had nothing but his shirt and trousers on, and became overheated and wet from the water which was being thrown over the burning building. He caught a violent chill and was attacked with a fever which proved fatal in eight days, when he had just completed his fiftieth year.

Isaac Perrins was one of the best men who ever contended for the Championship, and was lamented by all who knew him.

But to return to Johnson. Still leading his dissipated life, and gambling whenever he had a chance, no rival appeared to deprive him of his title, and in all probability he would have retired without another contest had it not been for two of his noble patrons, the Earl of Surrey

and the Duke of Hamilton, the first named laying £1,000 to £500 that no man could be found to beat the Champion within three months. The bet was accepted, and the Duke chose Big Ben Brain, a powerful man who hailed from the town of Bristol, which, since John Slack had established his school of boxing there, had become exceedingly notorious for bruisers.

Brain was born in 1753, and as a lad was engaged in the coal-pits of Kingswood and Cockerwood, near Bristol. The rough work soon developed his natural strength, and he devoted all his spare time to cultivating those pugilistic propensities for which his fellow-workmen were so notorious. Before he was twenty years of age he had distinguished himself by thrashing a man named Clayton, who was looked upon as the Shropshire Champion. Following up this victory by defeating a fellow-collier named Harris (known as the "Cock of Kingswood"), he became so feared that nobody would meet him in that part of the country. In 1774 Big Ben Brain came up to London at the instigation of the ex-champion Slack, whose pupil Brain had become, and here we may mention that four years after this (1778) Slack died.

The Bristol man when he came to the metropolis made little progress in pugilistic circles, for he was a modest, retiring young man, and did not have the assurance to push himself forward. He took a job at coal-whipping near the Adelphi, close to Inigo Jones' water-gate, which is now at the bottom of York Street. Here he soon came into contact with his rough fellow-labourers, distinguishing himself upon every occasion. He was then matched by somebody, whose name we are unable to find, against a man named Boone, known as the "Fighting Grenadier." This battle took place upon the very spot where the British Museum now stands, on the 31st of October, 1786, so it would appear that Brain must have been working in London twelve years, and was thirty-three years of age when he first fought in the Metropolitan Ring.

It was a fierce combat, for the "Grenadier" was a good man and an exceedingly hard hitter, his blows said to have been like kicks from a horse. Ben by all accounts had the worst of it at the commencement, and received a fearful crushing blow between the eyes, which caused them to swell so much that he was nearly blind. A rush was made for the ring, which was broken into, and fortunately a surgeon, who was present, whipped out his lancet and bled Brain, so that when a new ring was formed he was enabled to see. It was a lucky thing for the Bristol man, both the surgeon's attendance

and the delay caused by the breaking up of the ring, for he was able to resume and, after a tremendous battle, to defeat his opponent.

Two years elapsed before he fought again, soon after the match with William Warr and Wood, the Coachman, when Big Ben encountered an Irishman named Corbally, who was a sedan-chairman. Snow was on the ground all round the stage, and the wind was bitterly cold, and that fact and that John Jackson, of whom we shall have much to say by-and-bye, seconded Brain, the latter defeating his adversary, is all we are able to find, as there does not appear to be any record of the fight handed down.

Shortly after this Big Ben Brain became very conspicuous in the pugilistic world, for he was matched against the Champion for £500 a-side. When a hundred had been put down, however, the Bristol man, owing to illness, had to forfeit. But a few months after this we find him well enough to be matched against Jacombs, a member of the Birmingham school.

He must have been a tough customer, a man of high courage, and not without scientific attainments. The battle took place on the 23rd October, 1789, and in the early part of the contest Jacombs exhibited determined resolution, and set about Brain in a style that would take no denial. It would seem that, by perusing the details of the battle, Ben had some doubt about the result of the encounter, for he did not conduct himself after his accustomed method, fighting on the retreat, often shifting to avoid Jacombs' blows, and frequently falling. Much disapprobation was expressed by those who witnessed the mill, particularly the Warwickshire men, who were getting enraged at Ben's manœuvring. At length, however, the Bristol man stood to his opponent, and showed what he was capable of performing by putting in a tremendous floorer, which at once convinced the spectators and his adversary of his quality. The battle, which was fought in a most desperate manner, lasted one hour and twenty-six minutes, and resulted in another victory for our hero.

After this Big Ben defeated the great Porter of Carlton House, and Hooper, the Tinman, both of which battles we shall allude to in a future chapter, for they were with men who tried the coming Champion severely. By this time he had climbed to the top of the tree, and, although no chicken, was looked upon as the best man of his time, and by many better than the Champion, Tom Johnson, with whom he was eventually matched by the Duke of Hamilton, as we have already said, that nobleman having stood by him in many of his previous battles

whilst Mr. Bullock, who, it will be remembered, had won something like £20,000 over Johnson when he beat Perrins, stood by the Champion with the Earl of Surrey.

In turning over the pages of the *Oracle*, a contemporary print, we find the following paragraph referring to this fight:—"Public expectation never was raised so high by any pugilistic contest. Great bets were laid, and it is estimated £100,000 was wagered on the event. The betting from the first making of the market was 7 to 4 on Johnson."

They were bold and reckless sportsmen living in those days, and the Earl of Surrey must have been an extraordinary character. He was notoriously a hard drinker (as indeed were they all in those days), and he would frequently lay his father, the Duke of Norfolk, and all the guests under the table at the Thatched House in St. James' Street, and then walk off to his other haunts and recommence his libations. In appearance, too, he was exceedingly conspicuous. A great coarse, muscular man was the Earl, who, when all the aristocracy wore powdered wigs and queues, would go abroad with his hair cut short, in the fashion of a Jack Sheppard; worst of all, he was filthily dirty, and would not wash or change his linen for weeks. His servants, when he was hopelessly drunk, would undress him, scrub him down, and put him to bed with fresh underclothes, but sometimes he would be in a shocking condition.

There is a story told that he once complained to Dudley North that he was a martyr to rheumatism, and had tried everything in vain.

"Pray, my lord, did you ever try a clean shirt?" was the reply.

Although the Earl had little education, he had a natural wit and talent that made him amusing, and would have been not half a bad sort of fellow if he could only have kept clean. Anyhow, there was no pride about him, and he was a firm friend to the Champion.

The Duke of Hamilton was a similar character to his great chum the Earl, but he studied his personal appearance more, and the wonder is that he would allow himself to walk about in the society of the unwashed.

As we have said, the excitement over the match and the money invested were enormous. January 17, 1791, was the day fixed for the battle, and the place selected was Wrotham, a little village in Kent, on the high road from London to Maidstone, about twenty-eight miles from the metropolis. The place had the advantage of being near the officers' quarters at Chatham, and is a pretty part of the country overlooking the Medway.

Of course, there is an enormous attendance, all the

swell sportsmen of the day being present, amongst those conspicuous being Col. Hanger, old Tattersall (founder of the celebrated house), Colonels M'Mahon and Tarleton, Sir Charles Bunbury, Mr. Bullock, &c.

The stage is much smaller, it is observed, than usual, for it measures only 20ft square, but is turfed over beautifully. Johnson is the first to step on to the plat-



BEN BRAIN, COMMONLY CALLED "BIG BEN."

form, and he is received with tremendous cheering. His second is Joe Ward, and his bottle-holder Dan Munday. Then follows Big Ben Brain, accompanied by Will Warr as second, and Richard Humphries, "the gentleman boxer," for his bottle-holder; and another lusty cheer from the thousands of British lungs is echoed from hill to hill of that long range which commences at Strood and runs through the counties of Kent and Surrey to Wilts and Hants.

Both men for their time of life look in splendid condition, although perhaps Tom Johnson has lost that rosy colour to his flesh which denotes the pink of perfection, and his face is strongly marked through the strain upon the mind caused by his gambling propensities. Brain looks "hard as nuts," and although he has lost the graceful lines which accompany the youthful athlete, he is a most formidable lump of human flesh for even the great and accomplished Johnson to tackle.

"Time" is called, and in breathless silence, broken only by the shrill whistle of the wind through the leafless trees, the fight begins. With eyes like the hawk they contemplate each other, and then, both of the same mind, they are *vis-à-vis*, and as quick as lightning, the two spar for an opening. The breathless audience has not long to wait, for spunk, spunk go the blows, and to the horror of the Champion's supporters, he at once spins round with the blood pouring from his nostrils and falls flat upon his face.

A long-sustained groan, agonising in its sound, even subdued as it is, escapes the spectators, for nine out of ten of those assembled think that Tom Johnson, the Champion, has received his *coup de grâce*.

It is not so, however, although the effect of Big Ben's tremendous blow is fearful indeed, and the Champion comes up to the mark for the second round in a very "groggy" condition. Then immediately his opponent strikes him a powerful blow over the guard, and down he goes again.

As the Champion comes up, to everybody's surprise, he has pulled himself together in a marvellous manner, and shapes in somewhat his old style, artfully drawing his opponent, who springing in and overreaching himself is knocked clean off his legs by Johnson. Both have now their blood up, their eyes flashing fire and looking desperate. Then, as if by mutual consent, they cast science and caution to the winds, and a ding-dong slogging match takes place, the crowd swaying to and fro in their excitement and yelling at every effort.

During this fierce attack by both men, Johnson dashes in and smashes his fist against his opponent's forehead, and it is seen at once that he has caused some injury to his hand. Joe Ward examines his fingers and finds one broken and hanging loosely from above the knuckle joint, and of course his hand is disabled.

For the first time in the whole of his pugilistic career, Tom Johnson loses his temper, and as he throws away his self-control he is as a child in the presence of Big Ben Brain.

Round after round does the powerful Bristol man

knock the Champion to the ground, as Tom gets weaker and weaker and more exasperated, until his ghastly face is horrible to look at, the demoniacal expression, the pallor, and the trickling streamlets of blood causing an involuntary shudder to those near to him.

In the eighteenth round the battle is decided, and it is a relief to everybody present. A terrific knock-down blow fells the Champion, and he lies a senseless, bleeding mass, and his second gives in for him.

It is hard to realise that the great Tom Johnson is overthrown. But such is the case; the eighteen rounds have lasted but twenty-one minutes, we are told, but it must be remembered that the half-minute rest between each round was not taken into consideration in counting the duration of the fight.

The *Daily Advertiser* for June 22, 1791, says:—"Though Johnson was so heavily punished, in appearance Ben seemed little hurt, and on the Monday following displayed great activity in a sparring match at the Grecian Theatre, in the Strand."

It was Johnson's last battle. He never made an attempt to recover his lost laurels. Few of his friends deserted him, however, and the Earl of Surrey and Mr. Bullock gave him sufficient money to set up as a tavern keeper, and he was shortly afterwards installed in the Grapes, Duke Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. It is recorded that he did well there; but unfortunately his passion for gambling once more led him astray, and he turned his establishment into a private gambling hell, and visited the race meetings, squandering his money in a most reckless manner.

Eventually he went to Ireland, having made this country too warm for himself. He must have taken a good sum of money with him to Dublin, for we find him in business there, and advertising very largely. His gambling, however, again caused him to be expelled from his tavern, and he went from Dublin to Cork, where he earned his living for some time teaching boxing.

Bad luck, though, seemed to pursue him, and his spirits and health broke down, for on the 21st of January, 1797 (six years and a few days after his battle with Ben Brain), he died away from all friends and in a strange land.

Whatever Thomas Jackling (for that was his real name) might have been outside his profession, he was certainly perfectly straightforward as a pugilist, and possessed that pluck and determination, that splendid constitution and smartness in science, which stamped Tom Johnson as other than the ordinary man.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRINCE'S PORTER OF CARLTON HOUSE. — A DESPERATE
BATTLE AT DARTFORD.—LORD BARRYMORE'S BULLY.—
EXIT BIG BEN BRAIN.—EARLY DAYS OF MENDOZA.

BEFORE parting with Ben Brain we must briefly relate two of his earlier fights — that with Tom Tring, the Big Porter of Carlton House, and his engagement with Hooper, "The Tinman," whose patron was the celebrated and eccentric Earl of Barrymore.

The opening scene of our story is at Carlton House, when owned by George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales (afterwards George IV.), and the period would be 1790. This was the time when the Prince was at the zenith of his mad career.

Carlton House, now no more, stood at the corner of St. James' Park, and Thackeray, in "The Four Georges," tells us: "When I first saw England she was in mourning for the young Princess Charlotte, the hope of the Empire. With my childish attendant, I remember peeping through the colonnade at Carlton House and seeing the abode of the Prince Regent. I can yet see the Guards pacing before the gates of the palace. What palace? The palace exists no more than the palace of Nebuchadnezzar. It is but a name now. Where be the sentries who used to salute as the Royal chariots drove in and out? The chariots, with the Kings inside, have driven to the realms of Pluto; the tall guards have marched into darkness, and the echoes of their drums are rattling in Hades. Where the palace once stood a hundred little children are paddling up and down the steps to St. James' Park. A score of grave gentlemen are taking their tea at the Athenæum Club, and as many grizzly warriors are garrisoning the United Service Club opposite."

His father, being in a respectable position, had sufficient influence to get his son, Tom Tring, born at Leigh-

ton Buzzard, Bedfordshire, into the service of the Prince, as sedan chairman. He was 6ft. 2½ins. in height, and the attention of Sir Joshua Reynolds, Sir Wm. Beechey, and John Hoppner, and the first artists and sculptors of the day were called to his symmetrical shape and muscular limbs, and they were permitted to borrow him as a model. He soon became so popular that the Prince promoted and installed him as porter, and he stood at the entrance to be admired by all visitors.



TOM TRING, THE BIG PORTER OF CARLTON HOUSE.

The eyes of noble sportsmen were soon also upon him, and with the Prince at their back he was dragged out and put under the celebrated Tom Johnson to learn the art of defence and attack. So well did he progress, that it was determined to back him against one Jacob Doyle, an Irishman, who had two successful appearances in the ring. The stakes were made small, and the Prince did not appear upon the scene, but a lot of money was speculated on the fight, and each man was promised a *douceur* if he won.

They met in the summer of 1787, and Tom Tring soon made mincemeat of the Hibernian fighter. He shortly after this met and defeated Pratt, following the victory up with another over Harry Norfolk. This seemed to please the Prince exceedingly, and he had Tom tried privately, and took the advice of Tom Johnson, his tutor (who, it must be remembered, was then Champion, not having been defeated by Big Ben Brain at this time). The result was that the Prince authorised him to be backed against any man in the world for £1,000, only barring the Champion.

After some time the challenge was responded to by Brain, and the spot chosen for the fight was Dartford, in Kent, the date being the 18th December, 1789. It must have been a gay scene, for the Prince had announced his intention of being present, and all the sporting aristocracy turned out with their gaily painted carriages. It was a bright frosty day, and the journey through Deptford, by Greenwich Park, over Blackheath, Shooter's Hill, to Welling, on the great road leading to Dover by Bexley Heath, and so to Dartford. The nobles put up at the Bull and George there, and did full justice to a hearty meal off the good old English fare provided for them.

The Prince, smothered in furs, and attended by Lord Malden and Colonel Hanger, preferred to remain on the box-seat of his drag to occupying the position which had been reserved for him on the platform near to the stage where the men were to fight, and which had been specially erected for him. Tom Johnson escorted Tring to the arena, and he was followed by Joe Ward as second, and Sibley as bottle-holder. Brain then appeared with Martin and the Bath butcher to wait upon him.

It will be unnecessary to describe the appearance of the men as they stood stripped in the ring. They were, it may well be imagined, a splendid pair. So we shall content ourselves by describing the principal details of the fight.

Brain knew what he was about, and refrained from taking any liberties with the man-mountain before him, for he weighed over fifteen stone, although Johnson had taken off three stone whilst training him. Big Ben knew that if he permitted him to get one blow home he would be felled like a bullock, so he kept his distance and played round his foe. After a few exchanges of no moment had been delivered, Brain getting rather the worst of it, the latter sprang in, and, shooting in a right-hander on the mouth, followed it up instantly with another on the cheek, which laid the flesh open displaying a grisly gash.

After this round the Prince and his friends looked somewhat glum, for there could be no two opinions as to the better scientific attainments of Big Ben. After several other bouts a change came o'er the scene, for notwithstanding the fact that Brain got another blow in, which did considerable facial damage, cutting a gash as clean as if it had been done with a knife, Tom Tring caught his antagonist in his arms and, lifting him up like an infant, threw him. This gave Brain a severe shaking, and the royal party looked more cheerful. Again things looked bad for Brain, when a slogging hit full on the nose knocked him clean off his pins, and the blood spurted from both nostrils.

Let us now quote from a vivid description given of the end of this battle, for we have no room to describe it throughout :—

“Brain’s blood was now at boiling pitch, and it was plain that he meant desperate fighting, and desperate fighting there was. Like a flash of lightning he dashed Tom’s guard aside, delivered a fearful straight left-handed punch on the jaw, and instantly followed it up with a still harder blow from his right just in the centre of the man’s face. The effect was startling. Tom went down with a thud, like a pole-axed bullock, and lay so still that most people thought it was all over with him. But Joe Ward, cleverest of seconds, brought him round, and sent him up before the ten seconds’ grace had elapsed. Brain went at him after this with right and left, hitting with frightful severity, till, bleeding, helpless, and almost blind, Tring dropped like a stone at the rail. In the next round smack, smack, smack went those razor-knuckled fists into Tom’s face, until, beaten to a jelly, the huge fellow fell with a great groan at the feet of his seconds.”

The battle had lasted but half an hour when the brave porter of Carlton House fell before the arm of Ben Brain, who was shortly after destined to rob the Champion of his title.

The disgraceful thing about the whole affair was that the Prince of Wales dismissed him from his service and never looked upon him favourably again.

He died, we believe, in 1815, having during the last few years of his life eked out a living by sitting as a model.

And now let us mention another eventful fight in which Ben Brain was concerned before we dismiss his name from amongst our early Champions. This was with Hooper, “the Tinman.” He was a Bristol man, and took his name from his calling. After serving his time he started off as a tinker, and roamed from village

to village, enjoying the gipsy-like life and gaining much experience over rough-and-tumble fights, for he was never happy unless picking a quarrel for the mere love of the fight which invariably followed. Eventually he found himself in London, and made his first appearance after the battle between Ryan and Johnson, which our readers will remember took place at Cassiobury Park on the 11th of February, 1789. Hooper then defeated a Welshman after the great event had been disposed of, and at once attracted the attentions of Lord Barrymore



HOOPER, "THE TINMAN."

He was an eccentric gentleman, was Barrymore, and took such a fancy to "The Tinman," after he had defeated a man named Wright, that he offered him quarters at his mansion at Wargrave, dressed him superbly, and even went so far as to introduce his newly-found Champion to the Prince of Wales, who was his guest at the time, and staying at the above

estate. Lord Barrymore was a most recklessly extravagant nobleman, for at his seat he had a theatre built, which is said to have cost £60,000, and on the night of Hooper's introduction it was crowded to overflowing with all the rank, beauty and fashion of the Prince's Court. The Prince liked "The Tinman," and he was matched against a man named Watson, a *protégé* of Colonel Hanger's, for £300 a-side. It was a desperate battle, ending in the defeat of Watson. Lord Barrymore was more than ever delighted. He had won a large sum on "The Tinman," and so much did he admire him that he appointed him his body-guard and companion, Hooper going everywhere with his lordship. Indeed, they were inseparable. Barrymore's enemies called him his "Bully," and they were not far wrong, for the Earl was always in hot water over his mad-cap freaks, and not being very powerful himself, when he was in danger of chastisement he put "Bully Hooper" on to tackle his man. The Master of Wargrave's ambition was that Hooper should become Champion of England, and declared to his friends that he was invincible.

Colonel Hanger, after Bob Watson's defeat, swore that he would bring somebody to take the conceit out of "The Tinman," so he put up Ben Brain against him; and that worthy's backers, chief amongst them the Duke of Hamilton, being quite willing, the match was made, to come off on August 30, 1790, at Chapel Row Revel, near Newbury, Berkshire.

The whole thing was a failure, for Hooper, finding himself pitted against a man so much his superior in height, reach, strength, and activity, as soon as he received a punch or two played an artful game, and kept out of harm's way. This mockery of a prize-fight lasted for three hours and a half, during which one hundred and eighty apologies for rounds were got through.

An eye-witness says: "He fell every time Ben's hand reached him, or even before; ran all over the stage, filled his mouth with water and spurted it in Ben's face, accompanied by provoking and blackguard epithets, to irritate Brain and throw him off his guard. At length Ben determined not to follow him, and none of these stratagems of 'The Tinman' could induce Brain to break ground. He stood firmly on the scratch in the middle of the stage, and called upon Hooper to face him; this the latter did for a few seconds, and was then off and away."

Eventually the so-called battle was declared a draw, and "The Tinman" lost what reputation he had made as a fighter, and he was ignored by his former supporters,

all except Lord Barrymore, who appointed him as his permanent "minder," and we cannot help thinking that the nobleman had something to do with the disgraceful affair, and that "The Tinman" was fighting to orders.

Of "The Tinman" we shall have more to say anon. Big Ben Brain, as we have already described in a previous chapter, after this met the redoubtable Tom Johnson, and defeated him, becoming thereby Champion. But it was his last fight. For three years he held the Championship unchallenged, until Will Wood, known as the "Coachman," accepted. But Death put his veto upon the engagement. As soon as the Champion entered into training he fell ill, and the doctors pronounced it liver disease. So the match went by default. The fight had been fixed for February 24th, 1794; on the 8th of April the Champion fell to the only foe who had been capable of vanquishing him, and he was buried in the famous graveyard of St. Sepulchre's, Snow Hill. His name can still be seen on the register, but we believe that the monumental slab put up to his memory has disappeared. The tombstone had upon it the following words:—

Farewell, ye honours of my brow,
Victorious wreaths farewell :
One blow from Death has laid me low,
By whom such brave ones fell.

Yet bravely I'll dispute the prize,
Nor yield, though out of breath,
'Tis not to fall—I yet shall rise
And conquer even Death.

Now we come to a period in pugilism more in the recollection of those who have followed the noble art in our own times. The Champions whose careers we have briefly sketched in former chapters were known without doubt to all who take an interest in the Prize Ring, but the name of Daniel Mendoza will strike a more familiar chord to lovers of the art and its history, for the famous Jew, with his pluck, science, and adroitness, started a new era in pugilism, and was for years associated with some of the best men of the ring.

Daniel Mendoza was the first Hebrew who followed pugilism as a profession, although since then we have had some wonderful exponents of the art of the same persuasion—men who in due course will figure in our pages—Isaac Bittoon, to wit, with Old Dutch Sam, Aby Belasco, Young Dutch Sam, and Izzy Lazarus. It has been said that the introduction of the Hebraic element into pugilism was injurious, but we do not see how that can be.

It is to Mendoza we at present ask our readers'

attention, and he alone will show that there was much grit in the Jew, as he played a prominent part in the records of the Prize Ring.

Fortunately an old friend, who has devoted much time to the research of this subject, came across a small volume purporting to be an autobiography of the celebrated Jew, and we shall quote freely from its pages, for it is really the only authentic life of the celebrity, although he never could have written it himself, and must have enlisted the services of some literary



DANIEL MENDOZA.

acquaintance. It is entitled "*Memoirs of the Life of Daniel Mendoza*," the preface being indited from his public-house in Commercial Road, and that alone stamps it as genuine.

He tells us that he was born on the 5th of July, 1764 (the date usually given being 1763), in the parish of Aldgate, of respectable Jewish parents, in what we should now call the lower middle-classes. When quite young he was sent to one of the schools of his persuasion, schools which surpassed all the Christian academies for good teaching in

those days. He undoubtedly at the onset of his schooling displayed his pugilistic prowess, for he soon became the cock of the school, and few of the youngsters durst tackle him. We are told by him that at the age of thirteen he was sent to a glass-cutter's, with the idea of apprenticing him to the trade. The master, however, was addicted to drink, and spent most of his time in the adjacent pubs., neglecting his business and leaving his eldest son to mind the shop.

This lad, who was somewhat of a bully, soon aroused the temper of the high-spirited Jew boy, and they came to blows, young Mendoza giving his master's son a severe thrashing. This finished his engagement with the glass-cutter.

After this he seems to have led a somewhat reckless life, going from one business to another. Wherever he went, though, he proved his ability to take care of himself, and was a terror to the errand boys who dared to take liberties with him, which they frequently did by insulting him for being a Jew. All this time he was making great progress with his pugilistic education, and astonishing his various combatants and the onlookers by his marvellous qualities as a natural fighter. Now we will let Master Daniel tell a few episodes in his own language :—

"My next situation in life was with a tea-dealer, in whose service I fought the first pitched battle that attracted the attention of the public. This was in the year 1780. I was then only sixteen years of age. And the occasion of my fighting arose from the following circumstances :—

"A porter, who had been sent to our house with a load, on my offering him the price of a pint of porter as a gratuity to himself, rejected the offer in a contemptuous manner, and made a demand for double the money. At this moment my master entered the shop and remonstrating with him on the impropriety of his behaviour, the fellow became still more abusive, and challenged him to fight.

"Upon which I turned him into the street, and told him that since he was desirous of fighting, I was at his service, that I felt myself fully competent to punish him for his insolence, and was willing to give him instant proof of it if he pleased. He accepted my challenge with great eagerness, and most probably flattered himself with the hopes of gaining an easy victory over a youth, being himself a stout, athletic man in the prime of life.

"A ring being consequently formed in the street, we immediately set-to, and, after a severe contest of about

three-quarters of an hour, my antagonist confessed himself unable to stand any longer against me, and gave in. Upon this occasion Mr. Richard Humphries, whom I shall frequently have occasion to mention in the course of these memoirs, was my second.

"This battle, which first brought me into public notice, laid the foundation of the fame I afterwards enjoyed; the spirit and resolution I displayed throughout a contest with an antagonist of such superior strength, excited the general applause of the spectators, many of whom were intimately acquainted with me, and became the general subject of conversation in the neighbourhood for some time after."

Daniel Mendoza in writing (or having it written for him) his biography, seems to display little modesty, and has no small opinion of himself. It is interesting, however, to learn that it was during his first public encounter that he met Mr. Richard Humphries, who, like John Jackson, was honoured by the title of "Gentleman."

When he seconded the young Jew, Humphries had never fought publicly in the Prize Ring; but he was well known in boxing circles, had his rooms in Pantion Street, Haymarket, and was a teacher to many of the tip-top swells. He was admitted to be the most graceful and accomplished boxer of his day, and one writer says that his style was considered the prettiest and most artistic that up to that date had been seen in the ring. He was the pet of the aristocracy, the most popular and fashionable teacher of the noble art since Jack Broughton, and he had the credit of raising the profession to a higher place in public estimation than it had perhaps ever known before, even in the palmy days of the Father of the Ring.

After some time, Dan was backed to beat a man who was looked upon as a fighter of some consequence. He was a coal heaver, far superior in height, weight, and strength, and after fighting for nearly two hours, Mendoza was declared victorious.

This was the first time the young Jew had fought for a money stake; Humphries was once more his second, and with his experienced eye detected that he had found a man who was likely to make his mark in the fist world.

"Humphries," says Mendoza, "again seconded me, and when some of the spectators called out to him to direct me how to strike, I well recollect hearing him reply, 'There's no need of it; the lad knows more than us all.'"

By this time Master Daniel's master showed his

abhorrence to the career the lad cut out for himself, and gave him the sack, and we find him engaged as a traveller for a tobacconist of White-chapel. During this term of office he appears to have got about a great deal, visiting, amongst other places, Chatham. There he thrashed a big bully of a sergeant, displaying such tact and pluck that an officer who



RICHARD HUMPHRIES.

witnessed the battle, presented him with five guineas. He relates many incidents of his life after this. How he got himself into disgrace through a smuggling transaction, which he declares in his memoirs he was lured into, without the knowledge of the nature of the business.

He also tells us how, when walking back from Barnet, where he had been to see Tom Johnson fight Bill Love, he had no less than three off-hand fights with

roughs, beating the lot. Then he records his visit to Northampton, where, in partnership with his cousin, he set up a confectioner's shop, and fought and thrashed the biggest bully in the town. The business in the town of leather was, however, apparently unsuccessful, for we find him back again in London.

Then came the first reverse to the "Wandering Jew." He was matched against Tom Tyne, and they fought at Leytonstone for five guineas a-side. Dan was then nineteen years of age, his opponent being his elder by two years. After a severe combat of an hour and a quarter, Mendoza was taken away by his friends, and his antagonist claimed the small stake.

This by no means satisfied Master Dan, for seven months after he fought Tyne again, at Croydon, for twenty guineas, and proved victorious. Between these two fights there was, however, another battle in which Mendoza figured, which had much to do with his future career. He writes:—

"I was shortly afterwards induced to engage in a contest with a pugilist of the name of Matthews. We fought at Kilburn Wells, and though the battle was only for the sum of six guineas, several distinguished personages were present, among others a personage of the highest rank, at whose instance afterwards I fought Martin, the Bath Butcher."

The personage of distinction was none other than the then Prince of Wales.

It was not always an advantage to get acquainted with royalty, and there is little doubt that Mendoza's introduction gave cause for jealousy to "Gentleman" Humphries, who had heard the Prince express his admiration for the way in which the young Jew had polished off Matthews, who was a very clever fighter.

The rupture soon came, for a Mr. Elwood, well known in the world of sport, backed Mendoza to fight a man named Nelson, and arranged that Dan should be trained for the battle by "Gentleman" Humphries. So the Jew was taken in hand by the big pot, and they went down to the wilds of Epping Forest, and put up at the house of a friend of the fashionable boxer's.

We must, however, draw the curtain over what happened at this place, for it was nothing more nor less than a brothel filled with ladies, who had come down to make a dead set at the good-looking young Jew. Mendoza, we may imagine, was no Joseph, but a very few days of the life he was leading convinced him that this place of luxury and vice was no place for him, if he intended to train properly in order to win his patron's money. He therefore remonstrated with

Humphries for having taken him to such a house. The "Gentleman Boxer" was so annoyed at being dictated to and called over the coals by the young Jew, that he went direct to Mr. Elwood, and pitched him a story that induced that gentleman to withdraw his patronage and pay forfeit.

Mendoza never forgave him. Without making any fuss about it he bided his time, determining to have some day satisfaction for the manner in which he had been treated. Shortly after this Humphries and Mendoza met at the Roebuck, in Duke Street, Aldgate, then one of the most celebrated sporting houses in the City of London.

The "Gentleman" proved himself on this occasion unworthy the name, for he most grossly insulted the Jew, and did everything he knew to provoke him to strike him. But Dan knew that if he did so he would be debarred from entering the tavern again, for Humphries was in the midst of all his friends there, and a great favourite. Not even when Humphries, having failed to upset the Jew, rushed at him, caught him by the collar and tore his clothes, did he retaliate. He coolly turned to those present, and bowing politely, said that he should not forget himself, if Mr. Humphries did. With that he turned upon his heel and left the tavern. But there was an evil flash about his dark, lustrous eyes which told that he meant to be avenged for the insult and assault. But how the oath which he uttered between his teeth as he regained the street was fulfilled we shall tell in another chapter.

After this he turned his attention to biscuit baking, and whilst following this vocation a turn of the lucky wheel brought something to him which entirely altered his career. This is what he says:—"I accordingly engaged myself to work at this business (biscuit baking); but I had been but a short time at it when one morning Mr. Tring (who at that time was patronised by an illustrious personage) called on me and informed me his patron had matched me to fight Martin, the Bath Butcher. I could scarcely believe the fact, but afterwards having the honour of an interview with the noble personage himself, and being by him assured of the truth of what was stated by Tring, I declared my willingness to exert my utmost powers on the occasion.

"Accordingly it was settled very shortly afterwards that we should fight at a place called Shepherd's Bush, about five miles from town; but having met at the time, accompanied by our respective friends, and by a vast concourse of people, we were prevented from

deciding the contest for that day; for, just on our arrival a party of the 10th Regiment of Dragoons appeared, and immediately, by order of the magistrates, destroyed the stage and dispersed the populace, and I was obliged to make my escape behind a friend upon horseback."

There can be no doubt about these facts, for they appear in Mendoza's book, published during his lifetime. Yet it seems hard to believe that a prize-fighter was sent for by the Heir Apparent to the throne of Great Britain, and that his messenger was a man who was also destined to figure in the ring, Master Tring, the handsome porter of Carlton House.



CHAPTER XI.

A BATTLE RENEWED.—SKETCH OF BILL GIBBONS.—A "TURN UP" IN EPPING FOREST.—MENDOZA AND HUMPHRIES.—THEIR FIRST BATTLE.

It will be remembered that Mendoza and Martin met at Shepherd's Bush, and were interrupted by the soldiery, much to the Prince of Wales' annoyance, for it was he who had matched the Jew against the Bath butcher. Now His Royal Highness had no inclination to be balked of his pastime, so a fortnight later the men were ordered to meet at Barnet. The fame of Mendoza had spread like wild-fire when it became known that the Heir Apparent had taken him in hand, and the attendance was enormous, at an early part of the day there being congregated no less than 5,000 people. Martin, whose abilities in the P.R. were well-known in London, had a great following, and from the East End the Jewish supporters of the Ring, who existed at that period in great numbers, made their way to the field of battle by foot, horse, and vehicle.

The Prince of Wales, attended by his fast-going fraternity, and accompanied by his brother, the Duke of York, arrived at Barnet at an early hour. He had ridden over on horseback with Colonel Tarleton and Jack Payne, whilst the Duke had driven in his phaeton. Colonel O'Kelly went with his flash chariot, and amongst others who attended were Mr. Bradyll, the patron of Humphries, and "The Gentleman Boxer" himself, attired like a swell of the first water, and seated beside Colonel Glover in the latter's curricule. Captain Harvey Aston, Major Hanger, Lord Gage, the Right Hon. William Wyndham Byng, and many other notabilities were present.

Bill Gibbons, who was always chosen to put the finishing touches to the arena and see that all was right, was busy bracing up the stakes, and whilst he is doing so perhaps a few words about that worthy will

not be out of place, particularly as he will accompany us through many of the championship fights in the future.

Bill Gibbons' name is familiar to all who are versed in the lore of the Prize Ring. For upwards of forty years he held a unique position as an oracle on every species of sport. No matter whether it was a race, a fight, or a cocking match the opinion of Mr. William Gibbons on the probable result was eagerly



BILL GIBBONS.

sought for, and those who were fortunate enough to obtain it seldom had cause to regret following his "tips." Bill lived in stormy times, for he was born in 1757, and died, at the advanced age of seventy, 1827, and at the time of Mendoza's first battle was looked upon as an oracle. William was of a somewhat grave disposition, and could nod as impressively as Lord Burleigh himself (though we have always been of opinion that there was more in the nod than in the noddle of that

Elizabethan worthy), and could assume a look of impenetrable wisdom which rather awed his younger contemporaries.

Gibbons' honesty was proverbial. He was perhaps not above making a good bargain, or even sometimes taking advantage of an innocent purchaser who came to buy "a leetle dawg" of him. In all matters connected with the Fancy Gibbons' judgment was singularly good, and he was hardly ever known to back a losing man in the ring for himself. Though naturally pugnacious he never entered the professional arena, but was always ready for a turn-up out of it. The value of the stakes was no consideration to Bill. In two of the severest battles he ever fought the guerdon of victory was in one case sixpence (the amount of a disputed fare with a Hackney coachman), and in the other fourteen pence, the price of a gallon of ale. Bill was an enthusiastic politician, especially at election time, when there was plenty of free fighting going on. Ah! in those good old days an election was something worth seeing and taking part in (for those who like excitement and had an Irishman's love of a row), a very different affair from the tame, degenerate function of our own times. Colonel Hanger, whose experience in two hemispheres certainly qualified him to be a judge in such matters, says:—

"No one, in my opinion, has seen real life or can know it unless he has taken an active part in a contested election for Westminster. In no school can a man be taught a better lesson of human life. There he can view human nature in her basest attire; riot, murder, and drunkenness are the order of the day, and bribery and perjury walk hand in hand, for men who had no pretensions to vote were to be found in the Garden in as great plenty as turnips, and at a very moderate rate were induced to poll. A gentleman to make himself of any considerable use to either party must possess a number of engaging, familiar, and condescending qualities; he must help a porter up with his load, shake hands with a fisherman, pull his hat off to an oyster wench, kiss a ballad singer, and be familiar with a beggar. If, in addition to these amiable qualities, he is a tolerably good boxer, can play a good stick, and in the evening drink a pailful of all sorts of liquors, in going the rounds to solicit votes at their various clubs—then, indeed, he is a most highly-finished useful agent. In all the above accomplishments and sciences except drinking, what I was never fond of, I have the vanity to believe that I arrived nearer to perfection than any of my rivals. I should be ungrateful indeed if I did not testify my thanks to

those gallant troopers of high rank and distinguished fame, the knights of the strap and the black diamonds; knights (the Irish chairman and coalheavers) who displayed such bravery and attachment to our cause."

But to return to the ring side, where Bill Gibbons and Paddington Jones have completed the arrangements for the battle, and where the brilliant assembly, surrounded by the rag-tail and bobtail are impatiently awaiting the commencement of the fight.

At length everything is ready, and the two men ascend the stage, Mendoza accompanied by his second and bottle-holder, Tom Johnson, the ex-champion, and Tom Tring, the Carlton House porter; whilst Michael Ryan and Packer officiate for Martin.

All eagerly scan the warriors as they take up their positions. There is no doubt in anybody's mind that the Jew looks in splendid condition. And how marked is the tribe of Israel upon their Mendoza! His jet-black hair, large dark eyes that are pleasingly soft when his mind is passive, but blazing with a fierce light when aroused. It is a decidedly Spanish Jew who is before them. The very name itself would suggest the nation of his ancestors, for soldiers, statesmen, and scholars have been famous in Spain whose names were Mendoza. But there is the prominent nose that stamps him as an Israelite. His weight is 11st, and an eye witness relates:—

"He is extremely well formed in the breast and arms, but his loins were very weak; his wind is good, and he possesses excellent bottom."

Martin is a sturdy, red-faced man, with a regular bull-dog jowl, an inch shorter than Mendoza, but several pounds heavier. The attitude of Mendoza is admirable, far more elegant than that of his opponent, who stands awkwardly. As they spar Dan delights the connoisseurs by the manner in which he shapes and stops Martin's rushes; but Martin is a dangerous man, for he has stood before Humphries for an hour and a half, and he is a determined fighter. Once he drove his fist into Mendoza's face, but the Jew returns with a fearful blow on the jaw, and Martin staggers back, and would have fallen had it not been for Tring, who catches him at the edge of the platform. Tom Tring is Mendoza's second, and there is a howl of rage from the supporters of the Jew.

The *Morning Herald* of that date says:—"It is remarkable that at Mendoza's battle Tring twice supported Martin, who would otherwise have fallen to the ground, which was at length noticed by Mendoza, who knocked him off the stage."

This report is none too clear. We presume the writer means knocked his own bottle-holder off the stage, which was a somewhat extraordinary thing to do.

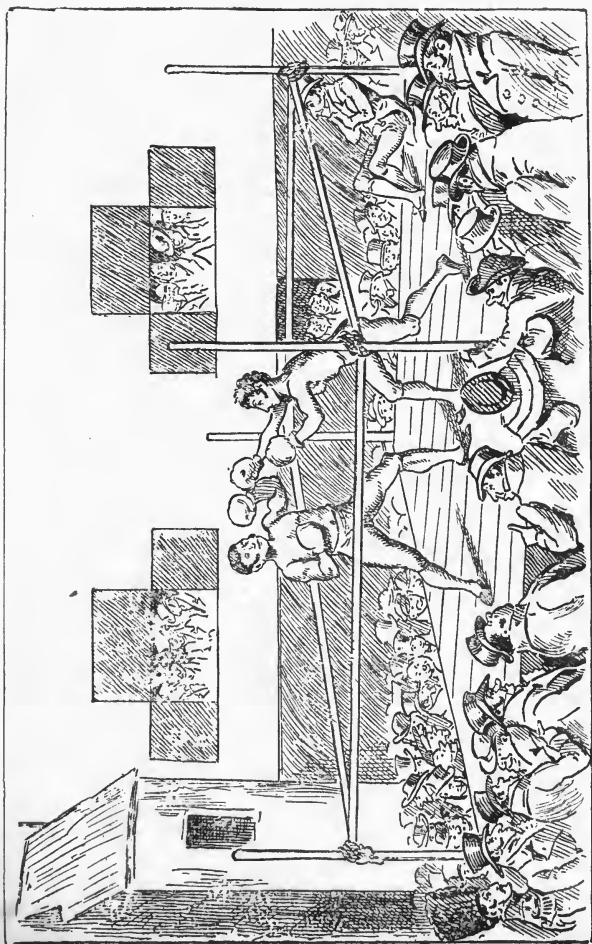
But the accounts of this battle are very meagre, and we only learn that the Jew, by quick two-handed hitting, utterly demoralised his opponent, and the Bath Butcher at the expiration of twenty minutes' fighting gave in.

The enthusiasm was intense, and the Prince sent for Mendoza, and honoured the victor by shaking him by the hand. This act mortified Humphries. As our readers will remember there was no love lost between them; but this public recognition by royalty stung him to the quick, and furthermore he was annoyed to think that the Jew had defeated Martin in the short space of twenty minutes' whilst it had taken him 105. From that moment he determined to try conclusions with the Hebrew.

Not only did the Jew gain great kudos by this battle, but he made quite a little pile, and thus refers to it in his autobiography:—"This was the first stage batt'e I ever fought, and I had abundant reason to be gratified at the result. The great personage who patronised me on this occasion, and who had generously given me £50 before the battle, made me several presents afterwards amounting to £500, and several gentlemen who won money over the contest were also pleased to reward my exertions in a very liberal manner, by which means I suddenly came into the possession of wealth far beyond what I ever expected to be master of, having received altogether considerably more than a thousand."

And now a few words about "Gentleman" Richard Humphries. He was personally far superior to the Jew, and might almost be compared with the other "Gentleman" of the Ring, John Jackson, although he had many faults. He was over fond of theatrical effect and too particular in appearance, almost foppish. But he was as honest as he was prepossessing, and as brave as he was courteous. Richard Humphries was the most graceful and accomplished boxer of his day, and the most artistic that had shown up to then in the Prize Ring. He was a pet of the aristocracy, and the most popular and fashionable tutor since the days of Broughton.

At the Fives Court when he appeared the popular resort would always be well attended, and in the boxes frequently royalty with the fair sex in attendance would be present to watch the graceful gentleman boxer. We give an illustration of that famous place, taken some ten or twelve years after the date of which we are speaking, but which nevertheless gives an excellent



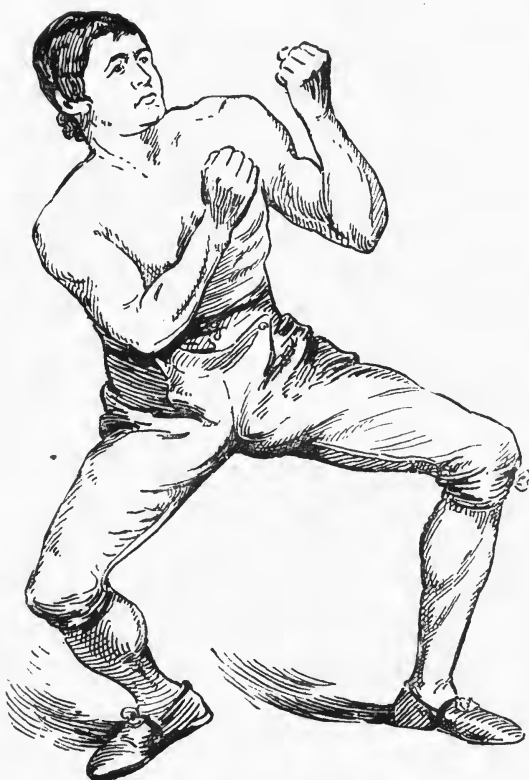
A SPARRING MATCH AT THE FIVES COURT. PUBLISHED 1813.
Drawn by J. R. Cruikshank, etched by G. Cruikshank.

idea of its interior, which was somewhat of a National Sporting Club of the time. The same old sporting writer of the end of the last century who described Jack Broughton, and which we have quoted in a former chapter, leaves us the following sketch of Richard Humphries, which we will reprint, for it gives a truthful picture of the celebrated pugilist :—

“It might be about five years subsequent to the battle between Towers and Day that, walking in Cheapside one forenoon with an old friend, an officer in the army, who had signalised himself in America, but had the misfortune to *pile his arms* with General Burgoyne, that we overtook Humphries. The breadth and substance of his shoulders and capaciousness of his chest, his knees, and firm position upon his pins struck me particularly. His height seemed under five feet nine to the eye. My companion, himself a good piece of mutton, would speak to Humphries, and each tipped him a forefoot, as amateurs and friends, leaving him after a little chat with many good wishes and speed to our next meeting. I said afterwards to my friend: ‘This Humphries has certainly a first-rate reputation, and is no doubt a hard hitter, and equally able to stand against the milling of the heaviest fist; but I cannot help thinking from the hue of his complexion and his eye that his constitution is inclined to the *turnip* sort, and that he will not stand through those lengthened and distressing combats in which our hardiest and stoutest boxers have distinguished themselves. He will never stand up to be bruised to a mummy like Broughton.’”

As to his parentage and early career there are contradictory accounts. Pearce Egan states that he was born at Clapham, and that his father was a general dealer, who supplied the Clapham “Sect” with goods, and that amongst these religious worthies young Humphries learned his manner of gentility at an early age. He afterwards went to a coal wharf, which was kept by his uncle near the Adelphi, and there picked up the art of self-defence.

This is hardly probable, we should say, for whatever polish might have been put on in the midst of the Clapham saints such as W. Wilberforce, Zachary Macaulay, Henry Thornton, and others it assuredly would have been rubbed off amongst the black diamonds at the Adelphi. We prefer to believe the other account which declares that Richard Humphries was born a gentleman. Our authority is the *Public Advertiser* of that date, which states that his father held a commission in the army until the peace of 1763, when he received an appointment in the Pipe Office (the department for



RICHARD HUMPHRIES.

From the Celebrated Portrait by John Hoppner, R.A.

AN EXACT FAC-SIMILE OF BARTOLOZZI'S ENGRAVING OF THE
FAMOUS PICTURE.

making out leases of Crown lands, &c.). The elder Humphries had a good education and lived up to it, and when he died left his family destitute. His son took a situation with a Mr. King, of Highgate, and it was there that he formed an attachment for the noble art, his master being an enthusiastic patron.

But to return to the feud between Mendoza and Humphries. The former had his boxing saloon in Chapel Court, near the Royal Exchange, and the latter had rooms in Panton Street, and great rivalry existed between them, for the patronage of the sporting swells was pretty equally divided, although Humphries came in for the lion's share of the aristocracy.

In the summer of 1787 Mendoza went to Epping Forest fair at Harlow with some friends. Humphries heard of this, and determined to go down, meet the Jew, pick a quarrel with him then and there. To cut a long story short, they met at the Cock Tavern, near the forest, and after an altercation, they came to high words, and the Jew declared that the time and place suited, and that they had better have it out on the spot if they could but appoint seconds. The landlord of the Cock stood by Mendoza and a friend of Humphries acted for Humphries, so they adjourned to the tavern yard, with but a handful of spectators to see the two finest fighters in England settle their quarrel. As good luck would have it, though, before the battle had commenced some peace officers arrived, and they were warned of the consequences if they came to blows. Their anger having somewhat calmed down, they agreed to fight in a month's time, and to meet at the Spread Eagle, Gracechurch Street, on the following day to bind the match.

On this occasion there was a dreadful disturbance at the above-named tavern when loaded whips, sticks, and fists were freely used, and nothing came of the match.

However, a month later both Humphries and Mendoza were attending a fight at Epping Forest, when the former publicly challenged the Jew to fight for £50. This was accepted, and ultimately articles were signed and arrangements made that the battle should come off on January 19, 1788. Odiham, in Hampshire, was selected, and the men went into strict training, whilst the excitement in sporting circles over the event was intense.

Humphries, leading rather a free life, went quietly down to the neighbourhood of Ipswich to get himself fit; but the Jew, who was most abstemious and careful, needed little preparation. Public interest was so great that it is said that before a week had passed over after the making of the match £10,000 had been wagered on

the fight, and the Jews were exceedingly sanguine that their "poy" would win, and freely undid their purse strings.

On the Sunday morning before the fight, Dan Mendoza posted down by chaise with his second, David Benjamin, and Jacob Hesler as bottle holder, one a pastry cook and the other a fishmonger belonging to the "chosen people." He took with him two white pigeons and two black, the understanding being that if the first came to London they would know that he had won, if the second that he had lost the day.

Humphries left Ipswich for the rendezvous on the Thursday, and for the next few days the roads from Bath, Winchester, Beds, &c., were unusually lively. As we have said, the stakes were only £50 a-side, although "Fistiana" states that they were £150, and "Boxiana" £400. But we have seen a copy of the original articles which are published in Mendoza's book, and that fixes it at £50.

We learn that Humphries was attended by Tom Johnson and Tom Tring as before, but as to the fight itself the records are by no means vivid. That all the tip-top swells were present, including royalty, we may take as a matter of course, and that the boxing was of the highest class may be taken for granted, although the attitude to us, as shown in our authentic portrait of Richard Humphries, would be considered ridiculous in our time. They would appear, however, to place themselves in position for chopping, half-arm blows rather than for the "slogging" of the present day school.

Although the descriptions of this great battle were not too well reported, we have an account of it in verse, written by a poet who calls it "The Odihad," and which gives us some idea of the contest and its result.

Mendoza, mortal foe to Christian light,
Aims his left fist against th' opponent's sight,
Bold Humphries totters, foiled in every thwack,
Head, eyes, ears, nose, lips, teeth, loins, belly, back,
All smart alike beneath the ruthless Jew,
Whose matchless blows the astonished vulgar view.
All Judah shouted, whilst they spied below,
Prone or supine, the topsy-turvy foe.

Mendoza's ear then fell a deadly blow,
And tides of curdling gore began to flow;
Each drum resounded, and defeat and pain,
With thrilling thunder vibrates in his brain.
Nor paused the fist, but quick the impetuous hit,
With force electric, punched the stomach's pit;
Down dropped the pallid Jew, and breathless sunk
A battered mummy—an exhausted trunk.

Rather highly coloured, but the facts, as far as we get them, were that Mendoza at the finish struck Humphries in the face, he was countered on the jaw, when the Jew fell, or rather slipped, for the rain which fell during the combat had made the wooden planks very dangerous. He fell with his ankle under him, and so painful was the injury that he lost consciousness. So in the brief space of 29 minutes the "Gentleman" boxer triumphed over his Jewish rival.

Richard Humphries' patron and backer, Mr. W. Bradyll, was not present at the fight, but the same evening he received the following note from the victor:—"Sir, I have done the Jew, and am in good health.—
RICHARD HUMPHRIES."

Hours, however, before that the news was known in town, for the black pigeon had arrived like a mourner of woe, and the whole of Houndsditch, Aldgate, Petticoat Lane and its neighbourhood were plunged into mourning for the "peoplesh" had lost over £50,000.



CHAPTER XII.

A BITTER HATRED.—THE MATCH MADE AT LAST.—SECOND
GREAT FIGHT BETWEEN HUMPHRIES AND MENDOZA.—
AN UNEXPECTED DISAPPOINTMENT.

It was a crushing defeat for Mendoza that we described in our last chapter, and his brother Israelites were a long time getting over the shock and the strain upon their purses. None of them believed for a moment that Humphries was the better man, and they attributed it solely to the Jew's misfortune. Mendoza himself gives the following account of his reverse in his book, from which we have frequently quoted. He says:—

"My strength and spirits were superior to my adversary's until the last fall but two, when I fell directly on my head, and by the force pitched quite over. I then found myself much hurt in the loins; indeed, so much that it was with extreme difficulty I could stand upright, and by the last fall I received was rendered wholly incapable of standing; indeed, I was scarcely able to breathe, and it was with great difficulty that I could sit on the knee of my second. When Johnson asked me if I had done I could only answer him by a sign. By this untoward accident alone I lost a battle on which my warmest hopes were fixed." At the time he made the following statement:—"If the world is desirous of renewing the conflict, and should Mr. Humphries be willing, I shall be more than happy to engage him."

After the fall of Mendoza, Humphries became the lion of the day, and he was fêted and feasted at the houses of his noble patrons, and was looked upon by the sporting public as a demi-god. The "Gentleman" boxer was not long in replying. He informed the Jew that he should be quite willing to meet him any time within three months of the Odiham affair (May 6, 1788), and

fight him again for £250 a-side. Mendoza's reply was that he could not possibly fix a time, for it would be impossible for him to enter the ring until his ankle and particularly his loins had got better. And so the word went round with his opponents that he was afraid to meet the "Gentleman." This was not so, however, and all who were personally acquainted with Mendoza were sure of it, for there was nothing of the white feather about the Jew. He was undoubtedly seriously injured, and he would have been mad to decide upon a date until he knew how long his recovery would take. Meanwhile an ill feeling worse than ever sprung up between the two men, which was destined in a short time to noisily explode.

They met for the first time since their battle at Croydon, when John Jackson fought Fewterel, and Richard Humphries acted as the ex-champion's second. The latter whilst in the ring looking after his man espied the Jew amongst the spectators, and shouting out at the top of his voice he demanded to know when Mendoza would meet him again if ever he intended to do so. The Jew replied quietly that he would do so when he felt well enough, and that he hoped would be by the New-market October Meeting. At which there was a yell from the friends of Humphries, who again put it about that the Jew was really afraid.

A month after the meeting at Croydon rather a disgraceful incident occurred, which did not say much for Mr. Richard Humphries' title as "Gentleman." It was on Saturday, July 5, 1788, when the usual weekly boxing meetings of Mendoza's at Capel Court took place. Humphries, with several friends, attended, and were most courteously shown into front seats. Mendoza, who was in mourning, having just lost his child and looking exceedingly ill, stepped upon the platform, and in a few words thanked Mr. Humphries for honouring him with a visit, but regretted that his health would not permit of his sparring that evening. Humphries stood up and made a civil acknowledgment, and everybody present thought that he really had come in a friendly spirit, and the remarks generally were that both men were on the best of terms. They were mistaken, however, for during the interval between the first and second part of the boxing entertainment Humphries jumped upon the platform and calling for the master, said :

"I want to know, Mr. Mendoza, whether or no you will fight me on the 1st of October as you said at Croydon?"

"I am not at all, sir, in a condition for fighting, as I

think your own eyes must assure you," replied the Jew.

"I want to know, Mr. Mendoza, whether you mean to fight or not. I mean to have a plain yes or no from you. Will you or will you not?"

"I see your object, sir; you came here from envy to make a disturbance in my academy, at a time when you know I am unable to defend myself, in the hope of spoiling my business, and lowering me in the eyes of my pupils and supporters."

"That is false, sir; I only came here to know whether you will fight me."

"I will, sir." When there was a burst of loud applause from Mendoza's friends.

"When?"

"As soon as I am well." This provoked jeers and hisses from Humphries' friends.

"How shall I know when that is?"

"By its being thought by my friends that I am in proper condition."

The above dialogue was given at greater length in the *World and Morning Post* of the period; and the papers stated that, after an angry altercation, Humphries said:—

"When you are *well*, sir, I shall take you by the collar and thrash you, as I did once before."

"And I," said Mendoza, "shall not turn my back upon you."

And then Mendoza, with quiet dignity, left the sparring room. But Humphries called him back, and would not leave the place until he came. At length, in order to save disturbance, for Humphries' friends were getting very excited, the Jew returned, when Humphries said he might deposit a sum, however small, and he would fight him for it. Mendoza said he would do nothing of the kind without first consulting his friends.

After this followed a paper warfare, in which the "Gentleman" did everything he could to provoke the Israelite, but to no purpose, and then, after much correspondence through the columns of the Press, Master Richard wound up by saying: "I am convinced that in spite of all his pretensions the man never meant to fight me, and I hereby declare him a coward."

Notwithstanding all that was said against Mendoza, he continued to be very popular, and not one of his friends deserted him. Mr. Harris, of Covent Garden Theatre, engaged him to spar upon the stage for six nights with Harry Lee, and the place was crowded, and the Capel Court rooms were better patronised than ever. And then came a reverse to the popular Jew.

The Lord Mayor of London, inspired it is said by Mendoza's rivals, sent two City Marshals to Capel Court to arrest anybody found sparring upon the premises, and declared that to take money for admission to such exhibitions was unlawful within the City. But the wily Dan circumvented his lordship, and the manner in which he did it we will tell in his own words:—

"I was, however, enabled to keep my public room open afterwards by the following stratagem. As the Lord Mayor of London had refused me his permission to receive money for publicly exhibiting the art of self-defence, I employed a man, who was a freeman of the City, to sell an engraved portrait of myself at half a crown, and directed him to invite each person into the exhibition room, and to mention at the same time that no money was required for seeing the performance."

Nothing of note occurred until the November. The Newmarket October Handicap had been run, and still the Jew did not come to the scratch, and some people began to falter in their confidence in the Jew. But Master Dan was all the time getting into grand health again, and taking the greatest care of himself. At length it was rumoured that the men were about to meet to discuss the preliminaries of their second engagement, and they both turned up quietly one evening in the presence of a few of their backers at the White Hart, Abchurch Lane. This was on the 26th of November, 1788. It was, by all accounts, a stormy meeting, and but for the presence of some of the noble sports present nothing definite would have been arrived at. The men wanted to take post-chaise and accompanied only by six friends on each side, drive away a few miles into the country, find a suitable place, and there settle their personal quarrel. This was all very well, but a noble lord present pointed out the absurdity of such a proceeding. Not only would both men be sacrificing a deal of money, but, what was still worse, they would be disappointing thousands of people and be making themselves very unpopular amongst all classes. It would be a most unsatisfactory course to pursue. Ultimately they gave way, and the following articles were drawn up and signed:—

"White Hart Tavern, Abchurch Lane,

"November 26, 1788.

"Mr. Mendoza proposes to fight Mr. Humphries upon the turf in a space of forty-eight feet square.

"If either person falls without receiving a blow he is to lose the battle, unless such fall should be deemed by the umpires accidental.

"If the ring should be broken in upon, the man who

leaves the field before the battle is decided by the umpires shall be deemed the loser.

"Each party to deposit in the hands of a person appointed by both the men the sum of £20, the whole of which is to be given to the winner.

"That no person be admitted to see the fight without paying.



MENDOZA IN FIGHTING ATTITUDE.

From an old print, 1790.

"The place of fighting to be enclosed in the strongest manner at the joint expense of both parties.

"That no person shall be admitted within the place of fighting but the umpires and the seconds.

"That both the seconds, immediately at the setting-to of the parties, shall retire to one of the four corners of the enclosure till one of the combatants is down.

"That the place shall be at the option of Mr. Humphries, who agrees to give one month's notice where it is to be to Mr. Mendoza; the time, the first Wednesday in the month of May, 1789, between the hours of twelve and two, and that the money collected from the spectators be equally divided.

"To all these propositions Mr. Humphries accedes, and each party deposits twenty pounds in the hands of Mr. Thomas Hotchkiss, who is hereby authorised to give the whole to either party if the other refuses his performance to this agreement.

"(Signed) "RICHARD HUMPHRIES,
"DANIEL MENDOZA."

Every paper in the least devoted to sporting matters published these articles, and the interest in the affair became intense, and Mendoza took the Lyceum Theatre for two months, where he gave exhibitions of sparring.

The winter of 1788-9 was a memorable one, for it was then that King George III. went wrong in his head and there was a strong party feeling as to the position the Prince of Wales should take, and great excitement prevailed in political circles. Just when the fever was at its height, however, the King recovered, and for the time being at any rate order was restored, and the Heir Apparent pursued his ungodly way. During all this fermentation, however, the two gladiators were never for a day forgotten, and the greatest interest was invested in the whole affair.

Humphries went down to Ipswich for his preparation, and placed himself in care of his old friend, Ripshaw, who was the gaoler there. The warrior was a great favourite with the Ipswich people, for he had been on frequent visits to the Suffolk town. Very few people knew, however, that Master Richard was by no means up to the mark, for during the winter he had suffered from sciatica, and it was said that he had had a touch of paralysis.

Dan, who had become restored to perfect health, was full of confidence, and he was a lucky fellow, for his friend and backer, Sir Thomas Apreece (or Ap Rhys we believe is the right way to spell the gentleman's name), had invited him to stay and train at his mansion near the pleasant little village of Upminster, in the fine old hall which had once been the residence of the Abbots of Waltham. Everything that Mendoza required was at his service, and he had a very fine time

of it. He tells in his book the following amusing story in connection with his training there, which may prove interesting:—

"During my residence here I was frequently invited by persons in the neighbourhood to spar with them, but generally refused, being aware that otherwise I should have been continually harassed by importunities of this kind. One day a Mr. Smith, a remarkably stout, athletic man, came to Sir Thomas, and, having enquired for me, and being informed that I was not within, expressed his regret on the occasion, declaring that he came with the intention of trying his skill in sparring with one whom he had heard so highly celebrated, upon which Sir Thomas informed him that I was not then in the habit of practising with anyone, having come to his house solely for the purpose of enjoying the air and improving my health previous to my next battle; but told him that as he seemed so desirous of trying his skill, *he* (Sir Thomas) would indulge him with an opportunity, and would have a trial with him himself if he chose. This offer was eagerly accepted by the other, and they accordingly set-to; but Mr. Smith had very speedy reason to regret his readiness in engaging with an opponent of such superior skill; for in a short time his face became so dreadfully disfigured and bruised by the blows he had received, that he declined to continue such an unequal contest any longer. He had just given over when I returned home, and Sir Thomas introduced him to me, and acquainted me with what had passed; but Mr. Smith now felt more diffident of his own powers, for on my requesting to know whether he was still inclined to have a trial with me, and informing him that if he wished to display his skill I would not disappoint him, he replied, 'No, sir; I am obliged to you; I have had too much of the *scholar* to feel the least inclination to engage with the *master*.'"

So Mendoza seems to have had a very merry time of it at the estate near the pleasant little Essex village of Upminster, and the weeks slipped along quickly.

The selection of the place at which the fight was to take place rested with Humphries, and we read in the *World* of April 13 that Stilton, in Huntingdonshire, had been selected as the battlefield, that Sir Henry Thornton had placed at their service a walled paddock, that an amphitheatre was in course of erection, and that tickets were on sale at every inn in the town, and of course could be had at the principal metropolitan sporting houses. The time could not have been more happily selected, for May 6 just suited those who had

been at Newmarket for the First Spring Meeting, so the congregation of Corinthians was expected to be very great.

Let us, however, once more quote from the *World*. That journal said:—

“STILTON.—The Beds here are all occupied, and the Maid servants of the Inns, to make room, sleep *three* in a bed. Every carriage and every horse upon the road are engaged. Humphries reaches the town this afternoon. The Amphitheatre in which he and Mendoza fight is finished. Servants are to keep places. The price, half a guinea each person.”

Then we read in the *Morning Post* issue of May 6, 1789, that Lord Hinchinbrook, Master of the Royal Buckhounds, had gone down to Mr. Welle's house, near Stilton, to be present at the fight. Now his lordship was not only the confidant of the King, but one of the kindest, most hospitable, frank, and manly gentlemen of the time, yet he thought no harm in witnessing a prize-fight where two men were to stand up and display the noble art with all its science and fair play. He could see nothing demoralising in such a spectacle.

Both combatants left their training quarters on Saturday, May 2, spent Sunday in London, and on Monday posted to Stilton. Humphries put up at the Angel in company with Mr. Ford, Tom Johnson, Mr. Harry Christian Coombe, and Captain Harvey Aston. Those who were permitted to see the “Gentleman Boxer” were most struck with his change in appearance. The Humphries of 1789 was no longer the Humphries of Odiham—no longer the fine athlete whose portrait, after John Hoppner, R.A., appears on another page, the Herculean gladiator who had vanquished the Jew. Illness throughout the winter had reduced his bulk, and he was much weakened. Indeed, it was not until twenty-four days of the date fixed for the battle that he was able to leave off the drastic course of medicine prescribed by his doctor. He was a different man.

Mendoza, in company with Sir Thomas Ap Rhys, Captain Browne, and Michael Ryan, made their headquarters the famous Bell Inn. This was the house kept for so many years by that worthy boniface, the “Hero of Stilton,” John Thornhill. It was he who rode from Stilton to London, from London to Stilton, and again from Stilton to London, that being 213 miles, which he accomplished in 12h 17min, or according to another version, in 11h 33min 46sec. It was Thornhill, too, who made Stilton cheese famous. A relation living at Wymondham, near Melton Mowbray, named Mrs.

Paulet, made these cheeses and sent them to Stilton, where they were sold at the Bell Inn.

The amphitheatre erected in Mr. Henry Thornton's paddock is described as octagonal in shape with ten rows of seats, the back being eighteen feet from the ground. The approach to these was by a ladder, the combatants and their seconds and bottleholders, the umpires and referee alone being admitted to the arena by means of a door. The size of the space in which the men were to fight was *forty-eight* feet square, just four times the size of the ordinary ring, and every one of the spectators who paid for admission had a splendid view. Amongst those present whose names have been mentioned in the reports were Lord Delaval, the Earl of Tyconnell, Colonel Hamilton, Major Hanger, Mr. Fitzroy, Mr. Coke, of Holkham, Alderman Newman, the Hon. George Damer, Sir Willoughby Aston, Mr. Franco, Mr. Wilson Bradyll, Colonel Tarleton, Captain Roope, and many others.

Just after one o'clock Richard Humphries stepped into the ring, accompanied by Mr. Harvey Christian Coombe, his umpire, and his seconds, Mr. Ford and Tom Johnson. Almost immediately after Daniel Mendoza made his appearance, supported by Sir Thomas Ap Rhys, his umpire, and his seconds, Captain Brown and Michael Ryan. The captain, we believe, has never been introduced to our readers before. He was an extraordinary man, who had formerly been quartermaster in the Blues, and had married the gay and lively Lady Ligonier, or rather she had after taking a fancy to his stalwart figure and good-looking face married him. But as George Selwyn wittily observed she appeared to like him not so well in the *buff* as in the *blue*, and consequently after three weeks of wedded bliss separated herself from the soldier by leaving him.

Before some 3,000 spectators the men stepped to the mark for the conflict, and both looked very serious, for they were not fighting for the glory of the thing alone. There had been a bitterness existing between them for a long time, which had well nigh approached hatred, and now all this was to be wiped out. Betting was in favour of Humphries, 2 to 1 being laid on the "Gentleman."

By the descriptions to hand of the first two or three rounds they would have been to the modern boxer somewhat wearisome, for they consisted of hit and parry without much force, a close and a harmless roll over on the soft turf, and then to their seconds' knees. After three or four rounds, however, the Jew seemed to have changed the aspect of affairs, for

stopping the blows aimed at him with consummate skill he made it so warm for Humphries that the latter constantly fell, and once or twice was clean knocked off his legs. Yet the "Gentleman" took it all in good part, and is stated to have remarked over and over again, "Very well done, very well done, indeed." This made Mendoza exceedingly riled. Dashing in with great determination he let go right and left, dealing some punishing blows, saying after each, "Is *that* very well, Mr. Humphries? Is *that* very well? How do you like *that*?" But the "Gentleman" was unmoved, and fought on coolly. But the Jew was the stronger of the two, and gradually took the lead, driving his opponent about the ring. So severe were Mendoza's blows, too, that several times Humphries flinched, which called forth derisive words from Master Dan. So the battle went on, mostly in Mendoza's favour, when an incident occurred which threatened to bring the fight to a sudden and most unsatisfactory end. This is how an eyewitness tells it:—

"In the twenty-second round Mendoza struck Humphries, on which the latter dropped. As the articles of agreement specified that he who fell without a blow should lose the battle, a general cry of 'Foul! Foul!' took place, and Mendoza's friends declared that he had won it. All those interested in the fate of Humphries, however, exclaimed that it was fair, and the whole was immediately a scene of uproar and confusion. Humphries, as well as Johnson and part of the spectators, insisted that the blow was stopped before he fell; the partisans of the other side were as vehement in avowing the contrary declaration. The matter, however, could not be decided as the umpire of Mendoza declared it foul, while that of his adversary declined giving his opinion on the subject, as he was unable to see clearly what had happened. Captain Brown told Johnson that he was a liar and a black-guard. This assertion was answered by the other walking up to him with a stern and menacing look, and it was a matter of dispute whether a bye battle would not have taken place between the seconds.

"Humphries came several times to his antagonist and called on him to fight out the battle; but this Mendoza's friends would not suffer, on which Humphries threw up his hat and challenged him to the contest. A number of people exclaimed that this went nothing towards deciding the point in dispute; and the battle would perhaps have been a drawn one had not Mendoza, either advised by his friends, or irritated by his adversary's coming so often across the ring

and taunting him with not continuing the fight, consented to resume the contest. On this they again set to, and the two first rounds were terminated by Mendoza's knocking down his antagonist.

"They fought for half an hour, during which time Mendoza seemed evidently to have the advantage, and at last gained the battle by a violation on the part of his antagonist of the articles of agreement. After some blows had passed in the last round, and Humphries had given way, Mendoza followed him up, and was preparing to strike, on which Humphries fell, and as it was obviously without receiving the blow, he was universally declared to have lost the battle."

CHAPTER XIII.

A ROYAL TURN-UP AT BRIGHTON.—PRINCE OF WALES AS A
SECOND.—A NOVEL BATTLEFIELD.—THIRD AND LAST
FIGHT BETWEEN MENDOZA AND HUMPHRIES.

MANY important and interesting matters in connection with the Ring had taken place between the 6th of May, 1789, when Mendoza and Humphries met at Stilton, and the time when we must again introduce them to our readers in the autumn of the following year. But as they do not concern the championship directly we must fain pass them by.

Mendoza, after his victory, of course came right to the front. His staunch friend and patron, Sir Thomas Ap Rhys, invited him to spend a month at his estate, and made him accompany him to a friend's seat in Northampton, where he met numerous sports of the upper class, and enrolled any number of pupils. Daniel tells a curious story of their adventures whilst paying this latter visit. On arriving at Peterborough the inhabitants discovered who he was, and so popular had he become throughout the kingdom that the carriage was

mobbed, and the postillions were unable to ride their horses through. As Mendoza puts it: "Sir Thomas, from the windows of the carriage, addressed the mob, and proposed that we should stand for some time on one of the benches of the market place. So we were bound to stand there for upwards of an hour bowing and paying our respects to the populace, till at length they began to disperse, and we were enabled to proceed to the end of our journey."

So popular did Mendoza become that he made no end of money touring through the United Kingdom, and at Manchester he performed with the gloves for three nights at the Theatre Royal, Messrs. Banks and Connor, the then lessees, paying him twenty-five guineas a night. The business they did was tremendous.

And Mr. Richard Humphries. His mortification of being defeated by the Jew may be better imagined than described. Still his patrons stuck faithfully to him, losing neither their faith nor respect for him. His staunchest friend was Mr. Wilson Bradyll, his chief backer, with whom he stayed for a couple of months in Lancashire to improve his health. There is no doubt but that Richard Humphries had tried his constitution to a great extent, for he was rather a fast-going gentleman and mixed with a fast-going set, whilst the Jew on the other hand took every care of himself. We read in the *World* of December 12, 1789, a paragraph relating to Humphries which states that he was "much recovered," and adds: "If he means to beat Mendoza it will not be amiss to avoid London entirely. The temperate life led by Mendoza is a great thing in his favour."

Humphries did mean to try conclusions with the Jew, for he was determined to play off the rubber, and about this time he addressed a letter through the papers asking Mendoza to name a time and place so that they might make arrangements for another battle. The Jew promptly replied: "Six o'clock on the evening of Monday, Jan. 18, 1790, at the White Hart, Abchurch Lane, E.C.," adding, "I will not bring with me more than three friends, and expect that you will not exceed the same number."

Something, however, prevented this meeting, and it was not until a few weeks later that they met at the Crown in Moorgate Street. Everything went off in a businesslike manner, Mr. Thomas Hotchkiss acting on behalf of Mendoza, and Mr. Charles Baxton for Humphries. The agreement was drawn up in a satisfactory manner to all present, and bound them over to meet on the 17th of May, 1790. between the hours of twelve

o'clock and two for the sum of twenty guineas a-side, to be then and there deposited, and that they should fight in a 48ft ring, the place to be chosen by Mendoza. It will be observed that the amount of the stakes was very small; but at that time it must be remembered large sums (amounting to hundreds) were taken at the gates.

Everything appeared to be in perfect order, when it transpired that the whole affair had been nipped in the bud, for Sir Sampson Wright, the chief magistrate at "The Public Offices" as Bow Street Police Court was then known, issued a summons against Richard Humphries to appear before him. Sir Thomas informed the gentleman that the magistrates had determined to put a stop to all displays of public boxing, and that he would be bound over to keep the peace for six months. Mr. Wilson Bradyll became surety in a bond of £100, and Humphries himself was bound over in the sum of £200.

Great indignation was felt at the high hand taken by the London magistrates, especially when it was known to everybody that the prime supporters of the Ring were the aristocracy and people in prominent Government positions. And now we will relate a little affair that took place just at this time, showing the injustice and absurdity of such a decision as that arrived at by Sir Sampson Wright and the partiality of this dead set made against the professional fighter.

Passing along the Steyne at Brighton one evening, Lord Barrymore (who was, of course, accompanied by his henchman, handsome Hooper the Tinman) met young Fox, son of the proprietor of Covent Garden Theatre. My lord stopped him and accused Fox of having written an abusive pamphlet about him. This the other denied, when Barrymore called him a liar, and without further provocation knocked him down. Fox, who was a young man of spirit, immediately prepared to set about his man in the true orthodox fashion, when a voice from the other side of the road shouted, "A ring! A ring!" It proceeded from the lusty lungs of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, who had come out for a stroll accompanied by some half-dozen companions.

The ring was immediately formed, and the Prince volunteered his services as Barrymore's second, actually tendering his knee in the approved style of the Ring. Fox had the best of the fighting, and Lord Barrymore's face was bruised and bleeding. The latter lost his temper, and deliberately struck a foul blow, when His Royal Highness shouted, "No, d—n it, Barrymore; behave like a man!" In the end it would appear that

young Fox, overawed by the Royal presence or disliking the unfair way in which his opponent fought, resigned the contest, much to the disappointment of the Prince and his friends. The *World* in its report of the affair took occasion to compliment H.R.H. on the quiet professional manner in which he discharged his duty as second. It seems almost incredible that the Heir Apparent should play such a rôle in the public streets; but he undoubtedly did, and this at a time when the authorities were binding over the professional pugilist to keep the peace. We do not learn, however, that the Prince and Lord Barrymore were brought before the "beak."

Ultimately it was agreed that Mendoza and Humphries should fight on September 29, 1790, and in the July of that year the latter went down to his old quarters at Ipswich with his mentor, Ripshaw the gaoler, whilst Master Daniel again went to Upminster Hall, in Essex. Nothing was known about the spot selected until less than a week before the date fixed, and then it transpired that Doncaster was the place, and that the affair was to come off on the day after the St. Leger Stakes had been run.

Colonel Hamilton—who was, besides being one of the keenest sportsmen of his time, a celebrated violinist—together with Sir Thomas Ap Rhys undertook all the preliminary arrangements and selection of the battlefield. So they journeyed to the town of gee-gees several days before in order to have everything in readiness. Whilst surveying the country around the town of Doncaster they chanced to look in at the Rose and Crown Inn, just on the outskirts, then a very well-known sporting house. Now, the old hostelry had attached to it a tremendous yard, bordered on two sides by high brick buildings, on a third by the inn itself, and at the other by a strong palisade, which separated it from the River Don, that flowed wide and deep on the other side. The very place, these gentlemen thought, to bring off the fight, for the yard would contain 600 people comfortably, and as admission was to be by half-guinea tickets only, here was the enclosure ready made for them. So the place was engaged, with rooms for the men and their friends, a platform was erected in the centre of the yard, and everything was in readiness.

The Colonel and Sir Thomas took with them that knowing gentleman, Bill Gibbons, of whom we had much to say in a previous chapter, and whose portrait we reproduced on a previous page. Bill was the recognised authority upon the erection of a ring, and that worthy, after surveying the ground decided upon, soon had the work-

men engaged and the arena erected. It certainly was a happy choice, this inn yard, for beside the seclusion it offered the seats were so arranged that everybody was able to get a grand view of the proceedings. The tickets were printed, and began to sell like wild-fire. Indeed, so great was the demand that no little anxiety was felt as to the place selected being large enough. As events turned out, which we shall presently relate, the selected spot might have had a holding capacity for double the number and then there would have been none too much room. Only a certain number of tickets were issued, and these sold over and over again, the prices going up on each transfer until it was next to impossible to get one for love or money. One account says that some of the 10s. tickets were eventually sold for £5, and a few even at £10 to late comers, who were determined not to miss seeing the great battle.

Not in the recollection of the oldest inhabitant had Doncaster been so crowded with visitors as upon that occasion. The fabulous prices demanded for beds where they could be had and the charges for food were enough to scare the wealthiest visitor.

On the day by ten o'clock in the morning all the ticket-holders had taken their seats without the slightest confusion or overcrowding. Every window surrounding the yard was packed with heads, and hundreds were sitting on the roofs. In the river a couple of vessels had dropped anchor immediately facing the Rose and Crown, and as one report puts it, "the sails of which being furled up and slung at different distances across the mainmast served as seats at 1s. per head."

But, unfortunately, there were hundreds of very clamorous Tykes eager to see the combat, and they had congregated on the opposite side of the river to where the palisade divided the Rose and Crown Inn from the water. A boatman, apparently anxious to turn the honest shilling, had an inspiration. He suggested that he should row the crowd, boatful after boatful, on to the other shore at a fare of a shilling a head, and that when a sufficient number were landed, with their united efforts they should push down the palings, and, entering the yard, share the fun. No sooner suggested than acted upon, and the sagacious waterman did a roaring trade. Some two hundred people being taken across, with one push down went the whole palisade, and with a wild war-whoop the great strong army of Tykes had taken possession of the field. It was useless to attempt to turn them back, for their only means of exit was into

the river, so the matter was compromised by their payment of a shilling a head to be allowed to remain.

At 10.30 Humphries stepped from under the archway of the inn and made for the stage, passing through a lane which was open for him in the crowd, receiving a hearty cheer as he vaulted nimbly on to the platform, with William Warr in attendance as his second, and John Jackson taking the bottle-holder's place. "The Gentleman" was not so flashily dressed as when at Stilton, for he had plain stuff breeches, and the only bit of show about him were the scarlet ribbons at his knees.

Another cheer greeted the appearance of Mendoza as he stepped forth leaning upon the arm of Tom Johnson, who had consented to second him. It was then proposed that Mr. (afterwards Co'onel) Aston should be selected as referee; and this worthy's high character as a sportsman and a gentleman particularly fitting him for this post, he was at once appointed, and all was in readiness to commence.

But let us take a glance round the inn yard and we shall see some familiar faces. There is the burly Charles James Fox with Captain Dealtry, who had won the Sellinger with Ambidexter on the previous day. There is the Duke of Hamilton, Lord Barrymore, Colonel Hanger with Captain Morris, Colonel Tarleton, and the Admirable Crichton of his day, General Fitzgerald. There is George Moreland, the great painter, in the midst of a bunch of third-class pugilists, whose expenses to Doncaster and admission to the yard poor foolish George has paid. There is "Old Q" in the midst of a number of aristocratic acquaintances, and, besides many jockeys, trainers and racing men, you can recognise Frank Butler, old John Singleton, Dick Goodison, and Sam Chifney.

There is a silence throughout the company present as the men advance, for there is a wicked look in both their eyes telling that they are about to engage in combat with a feeling other than ambition. Personal animosity is apparent upon both their countenances, and those assembled feel that this engagement is to be a serious business. Humphries has learned in his former battles that in quickness, trick, and general knowledge the Jew has the advantage of him, so he has determined to make a bustling affair of it, and at the onset attack his man with all the vigour possible. The betting at the start is 7 to 4 on Mendoza, and that worthy stands still and cool before his slightly excited adversary. Then in an instant Humphries rushes in. His movements are so quick that he takes the Jew by surprise, and dashing out the right catches Daniel high

on the stomach, just above the mark, and the Jew rolls over on the boards. For a moment nobody realises what has happened, and then a wild yell of ecstasies goes up from the Gentleman's partisans, and no longer are the odds on offer from the Israelites.

Humphries appeared to be in a desperate hurry to renew hostilities, and was the first at the call of "Time." Immediately they faced each other Master Dick made another rush, but Mendoza was not to be taken by surprise upon this occasion, but stopped the blows cleverly, at last countering on the collar-bone with a blow which could be heard all round the ring. The men then closed, and a desperate struggle ensued for the throw. The advantage in height was slightly in favour of Humphries, but the Jew's splendid condition and powerful grip served to allow him to hold his own. At length, after nearly five minutes tussle, Humphries brought his man over and fell upon him; but in doing so he sprained his knee badly, the effects from which he suffered during the remainder of the fight.

The following round was fought with a deal more caution on both sides, for owing to the injury to his knee, Humphries dropped the rushing game and played more upon the defensive. This did not suit Master Richard's followers, for they called upon him to go in and fight, and at last Humphries did so. Mendoza stepped aside as he made his rush, and with that quickness and elegance for which he was so notorious he dealt Humphries such a volley of blows with right and left that that worthy was completely at a loss, and being unable to recover himself sufficiently to take the lead dropped down to avoid the further fury of the Jew's hitting. Some thought that it was a "foul," and the word was shouted out from different parts of the yard, but the umpires agreed that the fall was perfectly legitimate, and ordered the men to fight on.

Humphries, on resuming, made another great dash, but Mendoza, once more as cool as a cucumber, countered with the utmost speed, skill, and elegance, fighting in a masterly style, which surprised all who had seen their previous battles. Richard was trying all he knew to get in a blow upon the mark, as at the onset, but the Jew was too wary for him, and once when he tried it Mendoza neatly stopped him and countered full in the face.

From that moment Mendoza proved his undoubted superiority in science as well as better condition. Yet Dick fought with unabated gameness, and gave such proofs of his dauntless spirit as elicited great applause from the spectators. But Mendoza was too quick for

him. At almost every blow he struck he got inside the guard until he had marked the Gentleman's face in an extraordinary manner. His nose was swollen and his cheeks bleeding from the gashes made by the Jew's sharp knuckles, and the fashionable boxer looked anything but pleasing in appearance. The remainder of the battle we will tell in the language of a reporter who was an eye-witness. He says, referring to the fifth round:—

"A number of rounds after this took place, but in every one of them Mendoza evidently had the advantage, and odds had risen to 40 to 5 in his favour. Humphries continuously fell, sometimes in consequence of blows, but more frequently from a policy often used in boxing, which perhaps may be considered fair; several times he sank without a blow, which conduct, although contrary to the articles of agreement, was passed unnoticed, as his general manners placed him above suspicion of cowardice. For although he had undoubtedly the worst throughout the battle, he fought with great resolution, and even when his friends, perceiving him conquered, and one eye perfectly closed, persuaded him to yield, he solicited to fight a little longer. Notwithstanding all this display of excellent bottom, he was again obliged to acknowledge the ascendancy of the Israelite.

"Mendoza was very much cut about the left side of the head, his left eye and ear being much mutilated, and he had received a severe cut in the ribs on the right side by a projectile left-handed blow of his antagonist.

"Humphries had several hits which drew blood under his left arm; his right eye was closed early in the battle, and he had a severe cut over his left. He had a wound clean as a razor cut by the left side of his nose by a straightforward springing blow of Mendoza's. The same blow also split his upper lip. He was carried through the crowd upon the shoulders of his friends, who conveyed him in a post chaise out of the town. Mendoza walked over the racecourse on the Town Moor for some time after the combat 'the observed of all observers.'"

Immediately after the fight, too, we gather from another source the Jew was so elated that he jumped round the stage and hugged everyone he came across, especially his patron, Sir Thomas Ap Rhys. Then, before finally quitting the stage, he addressed the crowd, thanking them for their attendance and orderly conduct, asserting that he would never fight again. But this resolution he did not keep. Humphries, however, from that day never entered the ring again. He retired honourably, respected, esteemed, and admired by all as a brave, honest, sterling English-

man. Subsequently, by the kindness of his patron, Mr. Wilson Bradyell, he was enabled to set up as a coal merchant in the Adelphi and became exceedingly prosperous, eventually dying in affluent circumstances, amidst the profound regret of a large circle of friends, in the year 1827.

Of Mendoza we shall have much more to say in future chapters.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON TOUR WITH ASTLEY'S AMPHITHEATRE.—A DUST-UP WITH
A NOBLE AMATEUR.—DAN MENDOZA AND BILL WARR.—
THE JEW CLAIMS THE CHAMPIONSHIP.

AFTER the fight at Doncaster between Mendoza and Humphries, which, as described in our last chapter, took place on the 29th of September, 1790, and resulted in a second victory for the Jew, there was no doubt that Daniel had proved himself not only immeasurably superior to the "Gentleman," but by far the most scientific boxer that had up to that date been seen in England.

His fame had spread all over the Kingdom, and he received no end of offers from managers of provincial shows and theatres, and at the end of the year he started on tour through the north of England and Scotland. He took with him the big Birmingham bruiser, Fewterell, who, by the bye, was a Scotchman by birth. He was a good man and a formidable antagonist for the Jew to spar with, as he had been a pupil of Isaac Perrins and Jacombs, and was of great bulk and strength. His height was more than 6ft, and he weighed upwards of 14st. Besides which he had a great experience, having fought no less than eighteen battles prior to this date. We may remark, too, that it was Fewterell who fought the Highland Giant, which was the first prize-fight, so far as we can gather, that was brought off in Scotland. They travelled together and did marvellous business with their boxing entertainments, and their experiences

in Edinburgh and Glasgow alone would be worth relating if we could but afford the space.

In the latter place Mendoza saved his companion's life, for Fewterell, who was an inveterate gambler, was attacked one night by some rowdies on his return home, they thinking that they could rob him of his winnings. His cries for help outside the door awoke Mendoza, who threw up the window and threatened to shoot them. They took no heed, however, of the threat; but continued bashing poor Fewterell about the head with



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sticks as he lay in the roadway. Mendoza there-upon took up a heavy mahogany table and hurled it into their midst, following the bombardment up with a few wooden chairs until the rascals fled.

After nine months' tour they returned to England, and it was then that the great Philip Astley, the celebrated horseman, and afterwards the proprietor of the Amphitheatre in the Westminster Bridge Road, engaged Mendoza to perform with the gloves in his

place in Peter Street, Dublin. This was in the summer of 1791, and his success was immense. By the terms of his agreement the Jew was not allowed to show anywhere else, but he was permitted to give lessons at times which did not interfere with the performances. He was soon besieged with gentlemen anxious to take lessons, and he took a large room in Dame Street for the purpose of teaching his pupils. Thither all the young bucks and bloods from Daly's Club assembled, and he made money hand over fist. It was in this very room, too, that Mendoza fought his first and last battle in Ireland, and we must try to find room to tell the incident as it has been handed down to us, for although it was only an impromptu affair, it was one of Mendoza's most interesting engagements.

At the time when Mendoza visited Dublin with Philip Astley there was a gentleman known in every sporting house as Squire Fitzgerald. He was almost a second edition of his notorious cousin, George Robert of that ilk, better known as "Fighting Fitzgerald," who only four years previously had closed his murderous career on the gallows. The squire was a hot-headed fellow, renowned for his skill and daring in all kinds of sports. One evening he visited the Amphitheatre in order to see the boxer, and later on at the club expressed himself somewhat contemptuously about the Jew, declaring that he was only a trickster, who would stand no chance against a man of real courage and determination. Lord Westmeath was present, and said:

"Bedad, Fitz, my bhoys, it's yourself that could knock the consate out of him in no toime, and it's mesef would like to see you do it!"

Fitzgerald replied that he thought he might lick the Jew in a fair fight, and other admirers of Fitz gave it as their opinion that the Jew would go down before the powerful arm of the stalwart Squire. So persuaded did Mr. Fitzgerald become of his superiority that he declared he would challenge Mendoza the very next day.

Now, Daniel held his class regularly in Dame Street between eleven and two, and on the morning of August 2, 1791, many gentlemen who were not pupils entered his room together with his patrons. The Jew was engaged in giving a lesson, when shortly before noon Squire Fitzgerald entered, in company with Lord Westmeath, Lord Grannard, the Earl of Ormonde, and his brother, the Hon. Mr. Butler, Lord Harrington, Colonels St. George, St. Leger, White, and Craddock, and several well-known men of fashion in Dublin. The Duke of Leinster, stepping forward, said "I wish to

introduce you to my friend Mr. Fitzgerald, who would like to make trial of your skill."

"Do you wish to take lessons from me," airily asked Mendoza.

"Bedad, sir," replied Fitzgerald, "it's mighty little you could teach me, I'm thinking—anyway in the matter of fighting—for I daresay I've had as much experience as yourself."

"You would like, then, to have the gloves on with me, sir?" said Dan.

"Oh, gloves be d——d! I've come here to show you, sir, what an Irishman can do with his bare fists."

"I must decline, sir, having a set-to *without* the gloves."

"What, sir, do you mean to insult me? If you refuse I'll brand you through Dublin as a coward."

This very much upset Mendoza, who replied by telling him that he was no coward. "Then you shall fight me," rejoined the furious squire. But Mendoza was firm until Lord Westmeath told him that all these gentlemen had purposely come down to see a mill with the raw 'uns, and it was their intention to subscribe fifty guineas for him whether he lost or won.

This put an altogether different complexion on the matter, and Master Daniel immediately accepted the offer, and the doors having been locked, the spectators, some forty in number, arranged themselves around the room, and the two men proceeded to strip to the buff.

Mendoza's cousin Aaron acted as his second and bottle-holder, whilst Colonel Cradock and a Mr. Freemantle waited upon his opponent, and the Duke of Leinster and Lord Grannard acted as umpires. "Time" was called by his Grace, and the amateur and professional took their positions in the centre of the room, shook hands, and were ready for the impromptu mill.

The Irishman was some 4in taller than Dan, and he weighed at least 12st. He was, moreover, a fairly-built specimen of humanity, and having all the Hibernian fire and pluck of his race, was a toughish bit for the professor to tackle. But the Squire had knocked about considerably with his fast set, and although he was kept pretty well in perfect condition by his love of athletics, he had not the hardiness of constitution which was possessed by the Jew, who never by any chance took liberties with himself.

The devil-may-care Irishman came to business at once, for he dashed in with an amount of recklessness which was astonishing. Curiously enough though, Mendoza coolly slipped aside, or cleverly stopped the blows, and made not the slightest effort to inflict punishment upon

his adversary. At length the performance became apparently a trifle monotonous, for the Duke of Leinster shouted out, "Why don't you hit him, Mendoza? This is not fighting. You're only playing with him."

Then Squire Fitzgerald exclaimed, "Let him hit me if he can," and Mendoza smiled with such a provoking air of conscious superiority that the Irishman lost his temper, and, advancing to his opponent yelled, "You d—d Jew, don't stand there grinning; if ye think ye can thrash me, try and do it; but don't think you're going to play any of your cursed Jew tricks with me."

Now Mendoza, as our readers will remember, had a great repulsion to all who attacked his creed. In his youthful days, as he has told us in his memoirs, the abuse he received for being a Jew caused him to have many a battle, and when he heard his persuasion spoken of by the Squire, his brow darkened, and there was a dangerous look in his snake-like eyes as he set his lips and almost hissed, "Well, if you will have it, you shall."

As Fitzgerald came with a rush Dan hit him flush on the nose, and the Irishman fell sprawling on the floor, the blood pouring in torrents from the nasal organ. Again they faced each other, when the Jew at once took up the offensive, and drove his opponent before him like a weak infant, until lashing out both fists he sent him staggering amongst his friends. He had been called a "d—d Jew," and he had no mercy afterwards.

From that moment the Irishman knew that he had underrated Mendoza's powers, and after sticking pluckily to it for some fifteen minutes, during which time he received dreadful punishment, his friends intervened, and the battle and the £50 were awarded to our hero.

This is what Squire Fitzgerald said to Mendoza after the affair was all over: "Mendoza, you have licked me fairly, and I may tell you that you're the only man that has ever beaten me. If in the heat of the moment I may have used any expressions that seemed insulting, I apologise for them. Give me your hand, sir. I'm proud to shake the hand of the bravest and most skilful boxer I have ever seen."

On leaving Dublin, Mendoza and his cousin Aaron went to Belfast with Astley, thence to Liverpool, and finally returned to London at the close of 1791, when Dan once more opened an academy at the Lyceum Theatre.

It will be remembered that the Jew, after his third battle with Humphries, had declared that he would fight no more in the ring; but his great success with the showman had given rise to a deal of envy with many of the metropolitan pugilists, and they one and all felt it necessary if possible to bring the Jew down a peg or two.

Amongst these was Hooper, the Tiuman, who, with a number of his aristocratic followers, went one evening to Mendoza's place, where they put the gloves on. It was soon evident, however, that Hooper had no chance, and after the poor display he made they cast about for another man more worthy to meet the Jew.

William Warr, who had made himself very famous as a boxer in Bristol, was at the time in London, and was regarded by his friends as one of the cleverest fighters of the day. He had met the great Tom Johnson on the 18th of January, 1787; but he had no chance with the champion, and lost the battle by dropping. His next appearance was with Will Wood, the coachman, whom he defeated after a stubborn fight on December 31, 1783, and this victory raised Warr considerably in the estimation of the Londoners. Since then he had not appeared in the ring; but having, during his career up to that period, been engaged in many successful turn-ups, he was thought good enough to meet the Jew. An incident happened, however, that prevented the Bristol man for a time at least from entering the ring. He fought a blacksmith at the Black Horse, Enfield Highway, when on his journey to Stilton to witness a fight, and had killed his man. Fortunately, the jury of sixteen had a majority for manslaughter, although seven of them were for wilful murder. He received three months' imprisonment.

Instead of Mendoza and Warr coming together in the ring, curiously enough, they became partners, and both gave lessons at the Lyceum. They did not, however, get on very well, and Mendoza, in a very short time, dissolved the connection. This made Bill Warr fearfully annoyed, and he challenged Mendoza to fight. Dan was doing too well to dream of such a thing, and told the Bristolian so. But the latter was determined, and having got hold of the Duke of Hamilton as a backer, together with his old friend, Mr. Watson, who were good enough for £200, he forthwith made up his mind to pick a quarrel with the Jew.

They met at the Finish, a well-known night house in Covent Garden, which stood on the south side of the market sheds, and belonged at the time and for a long

while after to a Mrs. Butler. Tom Moore describes it in the slang of the day by the following lines:—

Some place that's like *The Finish*, lads!
Where all your high pedestrian peds,
That have been up and out all night
Running their rigs among the rattlers,
At morning meet, and, honour bright,
Agree to share their blunt and tattlers.



WILLIAM WARR.

They met in the early hours of the morning, quarrelled, and Will Warr struck the Jew, who as usual took matters very coolly and resolved to treat the incident with contempt. Warr, however, spread it about that Dan had put up with a blow from him and had allowed himself to be branded as a coward. That would never do; so there was only one thing left, and that was to accept Warr's challenge, which he quickly did.

Without dwelling upon the preliminaries, suffice it to say that the place chosen was near Margate; but the Mayor of Dover objected, and then Stokechurch, Oxfordshire, was chosen. But the authorities interfered, and the principals and their followers returned to Uxbridge, where they hired a cricket field for ten guineas. Once more, however, the myrmidons of the law interrupted the sport, and for the time being the affair had to be given up.

What followed we will tell in Dan's own words:—

"It was afterwards settled that we should fight at Hounslow; but we were again prevented, for a magistrate, on being apprised of the circumstances, repaired to the place accompanied by a party of soldiers, and having desired the people to disperse, proceeded to read the Riot Act, and then declared his determination of waiting no longer than an hour before he employed the assistance of the military to effect by force what, he observed, could not be otherwise accomplished. He accordingly took out his watch and observed the time very minutely. After some while had elapsed, during which the populace seemed, notwithstanding his menaces, to have increased rather than diminished, he went again to pull out his watch, with the intention of seeing how the time went—when lo! a terrible disaster occurred. Some wicked fellow had taken a fancy to his Worship's watch and to the Riot Act too, and had taken the liberty of stealing them both. This will not certainly be deemed an unfortunate event, as it was the cause of the soldiers not being ordered to act, and perhaps some bloodshed was thereby prevented, for the magistrate was completely at a loss what to do. To borrow a watch was impossible—no person could be induced to lend one for such a purpose; at length he retired from the scene in disgust. The battle, however, was prevented."

Weeks passed away after this, and many began to think that the whole matter would drop through; but both the men and their patrons meant serious business, and eventually it was agreed that the fight should take place on May 14, 1792, at Southam Bottom near Croydon. The excitement had grown to such an extent that no less a number of people than 10,000 made their way to the spot, and the roads leading out of London through Croydon must have presented a very lively aspect.

Some delay took place through the non-arrival of the Duke of Hamilton, Warr's backer, the latter refusing to commence hostilities until his Grace arrived. So it was not until twenty minutes to two that the men stepped upon the stage. Mendoza was accompanied by his

second, Tom Johnson, and his bottle holder, Ned Butcher, whilst Bill Warr had the services of John Jackson and Joe Ward. The betting was 7 to 4 on the Bristol man, and the confidence of his backers was extraordinary. They shouted to Mendoza, asking him if he had brought his coffin? "He'll kill you as sure as he did the blacksmith."

Warr had the advantage of two inches in height and nearly half a stone in weight. But it would seem that he was no beauty to look at, neither in face nor figure. He had small, artful eyes, and was built on exceedingly rough lines. Although this must have been a most important contest, strangely enough we have but meagre reports handed down to us. That both men fought with extreme caution in the opening rounds is certain, and after that we find that the hitting of Warr was very severe, whilst the stopping on the part of Mendoza was extremely clever. Warr is described as fighting throughout the first eight rounds with tremendous activity, whilst the Jew acted almost entirely upon the defensive. In the ninth round, however, Warr left an opening, and Mendoza, as quick as thought, availed himself of it by dashing in and planting his left full on the mouth with great severity, cutting the Bristolian's lips badly, and knocking him clean off his pins—thus gaining the two first events with one blow. Then in the fourteenth we learn that Warr returned the compliment, felling the Jew with a tremendous blow. Mendoza himself describes it by saying: "I received but one blow of material consequence; this was on the neck just under the right ear. The effect at the moment was so powerful as to deprive me of my senses, but in the course of a few seconds I was enabled to set-to with unabated vigour."

The spirits of the patrons of Warr were, however, very high until, after some twenty rounds had been got through, Mendoza, just beginning to warm to his work, went for his man and knocked him down three times in succession. Then it was the Jews' turn to get excited and confident, and the encouraging remarks made to their "poy" were of the most flattering kind.

Warr was unstrung after these tumbles, and became very cautious, so much so indeed that he on more than one occasion went down to avoid Mendoza's attack, and was cautioned by the two umpires and referee. Before the next round was over they were laying 2 to 1 on the Jew, and the followers of the brave Bristolian were looking glum, whilst the "peoplesh" were inwardly cursing themselves for not having invested more money at the outset of the battle.

From this time, when Mendoza had fairly collared his man, there could be no doubt as to the issue of the combat. As the fight went on Mendoza steadily increased his lead until poor Warr's face—as one account puts it—"was beaten and bruised almost into a jelly, and 10 to 1 was laid on the Israelite."

In the twenty-third round Bill was so exhausted that as he staggered towards his opponent Mendoza lifted him in his arms like a child, threw him heavily, and fell upon him. That settled him. He was no longer able to stand, and his second at once gave in for him, amidst the shrieks and yells of the Jewish party. The fight had only lasted a little over half an hour, but the punishment Warr had received was very serious.

There was, considering, very little money changed hands, and Mendoza says in his book:—"I gained more honour than money by this battle. My friends were reluctant to accept bets and their gains were but trifling. I won, however, a small sum, which I staked on the contest." One of the contemporary reports, however, stated that Mendoza won over a thousand pounds.

The Duke of Hamilton and his friends were bitterly disappointed at the result, but Will Warr made all sorts of excuses for his defeat, and declared that he would meet the Jew again and thrash him. That he did meet him was true, but not until the lapse of two years, but what transpired during that period and the result of their second meeting we must reserve for the next chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

THE JEW AND THE GENTILE.—SECOND FIGHT BETWEEN
MENDOZA AND WARR.—HYDE PARK A HUNDRED YEARS
AGO.—A CLASSIC BATTLEFIELD IN ESSEX.—JOHN JACKSON
AND DAN MENDOZA.—FALL OF THE JEW.

AFTER the first fight between Mendoza and Warr, briefly described by us in the last chapter, there was a long rest over matters pugilistic, and the period of two years elapsed before the question of championship arose. To be sure there had been several interesting combats between men who did not aspire to the title; and Bill Warr, after his first defeat by Mendoza, had not been altogether idle. He had met Ben Stanyard at

Colnbrook, and by a fluke had beaten him. Stanyard was a pupil of Tom Johnson, and undoubtedly a good man, so Warr's victory made the Bristol man somewhat conceited, and he thought himself good enough to try conclusions with Mendoza for the second time.

In this interval of two years Warr had somewhat retrieved his reputation by this victory over Stanyard, whilst Mendoza had added nothing to his laurels.

As a matter of fact the Jew had fallen considerably in public estimation owing to his refusal to fight Hooper, the Tinman, in the March of 1794, and his preferring to forfeit the £20 deposited by his friends rather than risk his reputation.

But in justice to Dan it is only fair to say that the match with Hooper was made without his consent, and as at the time he fell ill, he was quite right in acting as he did. On the Jew's return to London Warr determined upon meeting him again. He had chosen his time well, for he believed Dan's constitution was shattered and that he was no longer the man he had been, and that if he could only provoke the Jew to meet him, he (Warr) would have a grand opportunity of turning the tables upon him.

So the match was made, and Warr's friend's were so confident and anxious to lay out money that the betting was 2 to 1 on the Gentile.

We have, however, devoted so much space to Mendoza's battles that we must curtail our remarks upon this second fight with Warr, and pass on to the next championship succession created by the Jew's battle with the great John Jackson. It would, however, be dropping a link in his brilliant career if we were to omit a reference to this battle, so we will once more quote from Mendoza's book. He thus sums up the result in his "Memoirs": "At the conclusion I felt myself nearly as fresh and vigorous as at first setting to, and there was no reason to imagine my opponent had not used his utmost exertions, for he had suffered so severely from the conflict that when he gave in he was utterly unable to stand, and was once more obliged to be carried off the stage by his seconds."

The issue of this the second contest was precisely the same as the first; yet even the staunchest adherents of the Jew scarcely expected him to win so easily and decisively. Mendoza had, perhaps, never fought better in his life, and everybody who witnessed the battle admitted that Dan had unquestionably proved himself to be the most brilliant man that the Prize Ring had produced. Consequently we may be excused for devoting so much space to this clever exponent of the fistic art.

This was Will Warr's last battle. His reputation as

a fighter had gone. He still must have had many friends though, for a year or two later we find him installed as mine host of the One Tun in Jermyn Street, where we shall in future frequently meet him in company with Corinthians and stars of the Fancy.

Of Mendoza we have more to tell, and come now to a period of his career when he was destined to taste the bitterness of defeat, thus bringing his long span of victory to a sudden and ignominious end.

And now let us return to the Championship, for after the death of Big Ben Brain it was difficult to decide who could legitimately lay claim to the proud title. Dan Mendoza, by his defeats of Humphries and Warr, which we have already described, and which are generally included in the "Fights for the Championship," immediately Brain died, had a perfect right to consider himself at the top of the tree, for Tom Johnson had retired and Warr had declared that he would enter the ring no more.

Consequently there was a lull, and Mendoza had plenty of time on his hands to look after his pupils and match his bantlings. At this time Mendoza leased the Lyceum Theatre as a sparring school, and did a fine business, although not amongst such a swell set as Tom Johnson at the Fives Court in St. Martin's Lane. Nevertheless, at both establishments good shows were given, and now and again a battle with the raw 'uns would be organised for the delectation of their patrons. Sometimes these battles would be brought off in Hyde Park, at a place known as "The Ring," and here we may mention that the enclosure had nothing originally to do with prize-fighting, as generally believed, although many impromptu matches were fought there at the close of the last century. Long before prize-fighting was known in this country, in the time of Charles II., there was an inner circle, or railed-off space, in the centre of the northern half of Hyde Park, in which it was the practice to ride or drive. This was called "The Ring." Its origin is unknown; but down to the reign of George II., when it was partially destroyed in the formation of the Serpentine, "The Ring" was a place of fashionable resort.

Thomas Walker, the police magistrate, in his well-known work, "The Original," written in 1835, speaks of "The Ring" as being still traceable round a clump of trees near the Foot Barracks, and enclosing an area of about ninety yards in diameter. "Here," he adds, "used to assemble all the fashion of the day, now diffused around the whole park, besides what is taken up by the Regent's Park."

But many a fight had been brought off there, organised by Johnson, Mendoza, Joe Ward, or others, and we have a description of one before us now between two of those masters' *protégés*.

It has nothing to do with the Championship, so a description can find no place here; but, just to show how the nobs favoured the manly art then, we will give a list of some of those present at "The Ring" at 5 a.m. one lovely summer morning.

The concourse was naturally not a numerous one, for the affair had been kept as quiet as possible, and the stakes were only for 20 guineas, but there were some distinguished persons present—rake-belly bucks who had been up all night and had come straight from their devilled kidneys and broiled steaks at the "Finish;" the young Earl of Jersey, to whose countess the Prince of Wales had just taken an unholy fancy; Lord Yarmouth, known later on as "Red Herrings," from the fiery hue of his whiskers; our old friend, the ubiquitous Major Hanger; Captain Morris, the laureate of the Beef-steak Club; and their Royal Highnesses the Dukes of Clarence and Sussex, who had been making a night of it with Harry Angelo, the fencing-master; Jack Edwin, the comedian, and one or two other convivial souls at Medley's, in Round Court, Charing Cross.

There was nothing the two dukes liked more than a nice little bruising match on the Q.T., and they could not well have had anything better suited to their tastes than the merry battle on the green sward among the venerable trees of the park, with the early morning sun throwing its cheerful radiance over the scene.

An interesting picture, surely, in the centre of London's fashionable park. But that is how the great professors of pugilism kept their patrons together, of course occasionally alternated with a provincial trip, in which the general public joined.

And so time went on after Brain's death, and Mendoza had placed himself at the top of the tree by his defeat in the last two fights of Humphries and the vanquishing of Warr; good performances, certainly. Yet many of the enthusiastic sportsmen of the time thought that when the Champion died Mendoza's title should be disputed in the only practical fashion, and they consequently cast around for a man who was willing and capable of meeting the clever Jew. Bristol was ransacked, the Midlands were turned to, but nobody could be found good enough to match with Mendoza, and it was ultimately decided that no fighter could be nominated better than Gentleman John Jackson, whose only two fights we have already referred to when he was

victorious over Fowterel and suffered a peculiar defeat by Ingleston, better known as George the Brewer. The latter had taken place six years prior to the time of which we are speaking, and really Jackson was looked upon more as an amateur—as a marvellous and accomplished amateur, to be sure. Not many thought, however, that he would be inclined to re-enter the lists, for



GENTLEMAN JACKSON.

From an original portrait in the possession of Sir Harry Smythe, Bart.

he had a splendid establishment, whereat the most aristocratic of all the students of boxing came to acquire the art from the finest boxer of the period.

As might be expected, there was considerable rivalry between Jackson and Mendoza as teachers, for both were splendid judges, and the "Gentleman" took the lead in the West, whilst Dan's talents were considered

unrivalled in the East. It was about this time put about that the Jew had said many things that were by no means complimentary of Jackson, and that he had spoken disrespectfully of his pluck and talents as a boxer. No doubt these remarks had been exaggerated before being conveyed to the gentleman teacher: but it seems that he took notice of it, and threw down the gauntlet to Daniel.

Two hundred pounds a-side were named for the stakes, and they signed articles to fight at Hornchurch, in Essex, on the 15th of April, 1795. One chronicler calls attention to the fact that Hornchurch was aptly chosen, as it had been famous ever since the days of Henry II. for an annual wrestling match between the bravest and boldest athletes of the country for the prize of a boar's head. Here is a short account of the ceremony as described by a contemporary of Jackson and Mendoza: "At Hornchurch, on Christmas Day last, the annual wrestling match, continued from time immemorial, took place for a boar's head, the gift of the leases under St. John's College, of the Rectory of the Liberty of Haverling-at-Bower. The scene of the contention was highly picturesque, the country being whitened with snow. The contest took place in a deep pit opposite the hall. The spectators were ranged in a large ring, on the margin of which, held by an aged countryman on a high pole, was a boar's head tastefully decorated with holly and light blue ribbons, and a lemon placed beneath his ample tusks. About ten couples entered the ring, but the hard and cold embraces of mother earth seemed to chill the ardour of the competitors. After the usual number of falls the conqueror was declared and the prize paraded round the village amidst the acclamation of his friends, and it was afterwards feasted upon by the party at one of the inns."

Upon this classic ground there was to be fought out the great battle for the Championship between two of the best men who ever stripped to the buff to contend for the title. The greatest excitement prevailed in every part of the country, and the subject was the foremost discussion in taverns and clubs at home and away. Great preparations were made from all neighbouring centres for the conveyance of the thousands who intended to be spectators, and in Cambridge, several days before the fight was to come off, not a vehicle could be hired for love or money. From London the exodus was tremendous. Unfortunately, however, the weather was most unfavourable, for the rain came down in torrents for days before, and turned the Essex roads into quagmires, the deep ruts making them well nigh impassable.

The further the cavalcade made its way from the metropolis the worse was the going, and those bringing up the rear by all accounts had a dreadful time of it, constantly sticking in the mud which had been churned up by those ahead. It must have been anything but a pleasant journey, and the lordly carriages, the hundreds of gigs, post-chaises, curricles, and vehicles of a commoner class all more or less suffered, some in the cavernous ruts turning their living cargoes into the mud, whilst the pedestrians (and there were many) had an unpleasant time of it, sticking in the clay and floundering about on the sides of the road.

Besides the sporting nobility from town there were many Essex gentry, and little Hornchurch had never before beheld such a concourse of people. The excitement was intense, for had they not come to witness a battle between the great Mendoza, the most talented professional and Jackson the most accomplished amateur of the period for the Championship Belt. The latter's friends were quite in the minority, and the betting was 5 to 2 on the Jew, but the odds were picked up in a very rapid manner, for the "Gentleman's" friends were all wealthy, and they had a great opinion of their idol.

Jackson drove up with Captain Robinson, at whose estate he had been training, at half-past ten, and looked as fresh and dignified as his mud-bespattered face and clothes would permit. In the carriage with them was Tom Johnson, the gallant ex-Champion, who was to officiate as second, and he, always a favourite, as our readers will remember, received a grand ovation. Also occupying a seat with this conspicuous arrival was Bill Wood, the Coachman, who was to act as Jackson's bottle-holder.

Scarcely had the cheers died away, when a tremendous shout was raised. It was Mendoza who had arrived, accompanied by Harry Lee and Symonds, who were to act respectively as his second and bottle-holder. In the chaise with them was Sir Thomas Ap Rhys, the enthusiastic admirer of the Jew. A number of eminent sportsmen stood chatting around the carriages whilst the men were completing their toilets, amongst whom we may mention Mr. Bradyl, Mr. Aston, Mr. Sykes, Lord Dacre, and Sir G. Weston. The preliminaries were soon settled, the officials selected, and all was in readiness soon after eleven o'clock. The umpires were—for Mendoza, Mr. Brandon Smith; for Jackson, Mr. James Naylor, grandfather of the owner of Macaroni, winner of the Two Thousand and Derby in 1863. The referee was Mr. Cookson, a distinguished member of the Jockey Club.

Jackson's and Mendoza's seconds tossed for corners, and

the former having lost, John Jackson had to take the lower ground, with the additional disadvantage of his face to the sun, which had just struggled through the clouds and made the scene a deal more cheerful. All being in readiness "Time" was called, and both came



WILLIAM WOOD, THE COACHMAN.

JACKSON'S BOTTLE HOLDER.

quickly to the scratch, shook hands, and placed themselves in attitude for the fight.

Our readers have already had the appearance of the two men described, so it will be unnecessary to repeat it here. One thing, which was evident to all assembled,

was the grand proportions of John Jackson's figure which stood boldly out in contrast to those of the smaller stature of Mendoza. Those who compared them and had backed the Jew had to confess that he had something cut out for him to accomplish the defeat of this magnificently framed amateur. Amongst the aristocracy, who had stuck to their man and managed to get an enormous sum invested on him, general satisfaction was freely expressed, for never had the fashionable boxer been turned out looking so strong and well. Mendoza looked serious as he eyed his antagonist and carefully manœuvred before him, with his black eyes sparkling as they watched every movement of his fine opponent, who was sparring in his best style and as cool as a cucumber for an opening. For quite two minutes they displayed their perfect knowledge of the art in all its minutiae. At length Jackson saw an opening, and as quick as lightning delivered a fearful right-hander, which would have smashed right into the Jew's mouth had he not thrown his head slightly back. As it was the blow came with crushing force upon the throat and sent Mendoza staggering back. Following up with extraordinary quickness, Jackson caught his man with the left at the side of the face, cutting a deep gash, and laying him prostrate upon the platform. First blood and first knock-down to the "Gent."

There was a yell of delight from the "Gentleman's" partisans, and another of disappointment from the much larger following of Mendoza, as Symonds and Harry Lee helped him to the corner of the stage and gave him restoratives. The two blows he had received—in fact, the only two blows that were delivered in the initial round—had shaken the Jew a great deal, and his party shouted no more the offer to lay odds.

As they came up for the second round Dan looked very determined, yet somewhat shaky; but Jackson seemed no more concerned than when giving his boxing lessons in his own rooms. Neither of them appeared inclined to force the pace, and little was done. Yet Mendoza displayed his extraordinary knowledge of the science by time after time stopping Jackson's well-aimed blows. Terrific exchanges were, however, made in the third bout. Mendoza fought magnificently, and it was impossible to say which of the two was getting the better of the other. The hitting was quick and severe and the manœuvring magnificent. In the end Mendoza went down; but it was an accidental slip which caused his fall, not a blow, as in the first bout. Still they laid slight odds on the Jew, for his display was grand.

In the fourth round, however, Jackson seems to have

aken the measure of his man to a nicety. Then drawing Mendoza on, he permitted him to have it all his own way, fighting on the retreat, and only stopping the blows aimed at him. Suddenly altering his tactics, however, he stopped, warded off another blow, and then dashed in, regardless of results, in what must have seemed a rather reckless manner. Then, laughing the Jew's science to scorn, he hit out with all his powerful strength, punishing his opponent terribly, and astonishing everybody, most particularly Master Daniel. At length, measuring his man, he let go the right, catching him upon the eyebrow, making a grisly gash, and at the same time knocking the great Mendoza once more clean off his legs.

This time the excitement round the platform must have been greater than ever, for the Hebrews, who had mustered in vast numbers, and who had found most of the money, began to feel disconsolate, and the odds were no longer on offer upon their man. In the following round they tried a wrangle, and called to the umpires and referee that Jackson had been guilty of breaking the rules of the Ring. He had, in fact, held Mendoza by the hair of his head, which he generally wore long for a pugilist; and Jackson, holding him with the right-hand grip, dashed his left full into his face, until the Jew, bleeding and giddy, dropped upon his knees and rolled over upon the stage. Jackson, however, knew what he was about, and was too well acquainted with the rules not to know that no breach had been committed. If a man wore his hair long in the ring at that period, he did so at his own risk, and gave his opponent a decided advantage.

After this the odds changed to 2 to 1 on Jackson; but they were on offer with but few takers, and the fight proceeded, everybody by that time having discovered the superiority of the "Gentleman." In the next few rounds—only meagre descriptions of which have been handed down—Jackson increased his lead, and the gallant Mendoza was terrifically punished. Some of those who had much at stake declared that it was a "barney," and that their man was selling them. That, however, was ridiculous. The Jew had found a man superior in science, strength, and coolness to himself, and the result must have been easy enough to anticipate when they came up for the ninth round, which terminated the fight.

The Jew was very slow, and his bruised and battered face prevented him from seeing his man distinctly. Jackson scarcely had a mark, and appeared almost as fresh as at the commencement of the battle. Again and again he hit poor Dan with sledge-hammer force, and finally, with a crushing blow upon the chin, he was sent

heavily to the ground, where he lay motionless. Symonds and Lee did all they could to revive him, but in vain. Mendoza had been conquered by "Gentleman" Jackson in the short space of time of ten minutes and a half, and the latter was proclaimed Champion of England.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN JACKSON AS A LION.—PUGILISTS & ROYAL PAGES.—
THE END OF HIS CAREER.

IN our last chapter we described the great fight at Hornchurch between Daniel Mendoza and ("Gentleman") John Jackson, which resulted in the dethronement of the former and the instalment of the latter as Champion. Mendoza we shall have before us several times again, but as this was Jackson's last fight it will be better to follow through his interesting career and connection with the Prize Ring down to his death, which did not occur until 1845, or exactly fifty years after. Of course, it will be impossible to write a biography of the great pugilist in these pages over so long a period, so we must content ourselves in calling attention to the principal features of his extraordinary career, and it will be seen that never before nor since has a pugilist shone so much lustre upon the noble art as John Jackson.

As we have stated, our hero was the foremost instructor amongst the aristocrats before he won the Championship: but after that event he became more in demand than ever, and all the tip-top sports sought him. During a period of three years he remained unchallenged, and at the expiration of that period so great was the pressure of business, and so elevated did his social position become, that he announced his retirement from the Ring, leaving it open for another great pugilist, Jem Belcher (to whom we shall introduce our readers in the next chapter), to assert and maintain his claim to the position of honour.

Then came the opening of Jackson's rooms at No. 13,

Old Bond Street, where he taught the youngsters from each of the Universities, and from far and near, the noble science.

Indeed, not to have had lessons from Mr. Jackson was considered a positive neglect of a gentleman's ordinary education.

So the ex-Champion came in personal contact with the highest in the land. It was said that to give a list of his pupils would be to copy out one-third of the peerage. One, however, we must say a few words about. Byron, who loved the fine athletic exercise, was an enthusiastic follower of Jackson, and became one of his staunchest friends. All will remember the author of "Don Juan" referring to the great professor in a note to the 11th Canto of that famous work. He wrote:—

"My friend and corporeal master and pastor. John Jackson, esquire, professor of pugilism, who, I trust, still retains the strength and symmetry of his model and form, together with his good humour and athletic as well as mental accomplishments."

Was that not a eulogy from such a source? But then our hero was refined, courteous, intellectual, and well educated—a fit associate for the highest in the land, and yet a professional pugilist. Although everybody, even the most enthusiastic admirer of pugilism, must admit that the Ring has, and always had, many unpleasant people and matters associated with it, there cannot be any doubt that when a man like Jackson took the lead in the ranks of pugilists, it became an honourable and gentlemanly pastime, making Britons what they are to-day.

But to return to Byron. He wrote in his diary:—"Jackson has been here. The boxing world went as usual; but the club increases (*i.e.*, the Pugilistic Club). I shall dine at Cribb's to-morrow." Speaking of this particular dinner, the great poet writes:—"Just returned from dinner with Jackson, the emperor of pugilism, and another of the select, at Cribb's, the Champion."

We must point out that this was several years after our hero had defeated Mendoza, Jackson at the time being forty-four and the author of "Childe Harold" but twenty-three. Byron, in another allusion to his tutor, shows that he actually went into training:—"I have been sparring with Jackson for exercise this morning, and mean to continue and renew my acquaintance with my muffers. My chest and arms and wind are in very good plight, and I am not in flesh. I used to be a hard hitter, and my arms are very long for my height

(5ft 8½in) ; at any rate the exercise is good, and this is the severest of all. Fencing and broadsword never fatigued me half so much."

Again, on the 17th March, 1814, he writes :—" Got up, if anything earlier than usual ; sparred with Jackson *ad sudorem* (until he perspired freely), and have been much better in health than for many days."

All this shows what an admirer the poet was of the P.R. He must have been pretty good with his fists, for he wrote the following to his friend Tom Moore :—" If I discover the ' toad ' you call him, I shall ' tread ' on him, and put spikes in my shoes to do it more effectually." Again he wrote on April 9, 1814 :—" I have been boxing with Jackson for exercise during the last month daily."

Two years before this meetings were held in Jackson's rooms in Old Bond Street, amongst the greatest sports of the time, and the Pugilistic Club was formed, which might be compared with our National Sporting Club of today. The formation of this still further tended to raise the tone of boxing, for the highest in the land became its supporters. Here are a few :—The Dukes of York and Clarence, the Duke of Queensberry, the Earl of Albemarle, the Earl of Sefton, the Marquis of Worcester, Sir W. W. Wynne, the Marquis of Tweeddale, Lord Byron, and Lord Berkeley. For twenty-five years this club flourished, but was abandoned about eight years before Jackson's demise. However, in the course of our history of the Championships we shall, no doubt, have to make many references to this institute, which proved so beneficial to the order and regulation of pugilism.

John Jackson was an excellent companion, for he could tell a capital story, and hold his own in argument with the best of them. Both Colonel Aston and Alderman Coombe, who had backed him every time against Mendoza, were to be found constantly in his company. And that reminds us of the sad fate of the first-named gentleman, which may be worth telling, showing as it does the honourable men some of these enthusiasts of pugilism were. Poor Aston ! While in India in command of his regiment he had occasion to comment with some harshness on the conduct of his two majors towards a subaltern. These hearing of the letter demanded an explanation, to which he responded that he could explain nothing connected with his proceedings as colonel to his inferior officers ; but as a private gentleman he was willing to give any explanation or satisfaction required. Both challenged him. Major A. first, who, having won the toss for fire, had

the first chance, and missed. Aston then refused to avail himself of the opportunity, and fired in the air. Even this noble conduct did not satisfy the second major, who insisted on a meeting. He too fired and hit the colonel; the latter, however, drew himself up and taking deliberate aim at his antagonist, covered his heart. He then turned to the seconds, and appealed to them to notice that he had strength to return the shot, he deliberately changed the direction of his pistol and fired at nothing, saying, "That he was wounded; he believed the wound was mortal, and the last act of his life should not be one of revenge."

Another great friend of Jackson's was the Duke of Queensberry, better known as "Old Q.," to whom we may have frequently to refer. A writer says, "'Old Q.' liked virtue in every form but the feminine, and even in that his hatred could not have been very deep, as he was always ready to buy it. But if a man had talent or genius of any kind, and was not too proud to acknowledge a patron, he was sure to find a generous and discriminating, but not exacting, one in 'Old Q.' He also was one of Jackson's principal backers against Mendoza. The Duke was thoroughly heartless, selfish; but, as already said, some of his vices had good results, and many honest and honourable men had cause to thank the vicious old master of the mysterious house in Piccadilly, the secrets of which were whispered of with awe by respectable people."

It is quite certain that to John Jackson the Duke was always liberal; perhaps the more so because the latter never toadied him nor forfeited the manly independence which was a distinctive trait of his character.

And now to turn to one or two remarkable episodes in John Jackson's life after he gave up the Championship. In 1814, in honour of the peace of Europe, after the fall of Napoleon Bonaparte, there were great rejoicings throughout England, and the metropolis was illuminated for three consecutive nights. Immediately afterwards the Emperor of Russia, the King of Prussia, and a numerous train of distinguished generals came over to this country and met with a most brilliant reception, and were the guests of the Prince Regent.

Amongst other amusements and entertainments provided for our distinguished visitors was an exhibition of British pugilism, which was stated to have been organised expressly at the request of these illustrious foreigners. Anyhow, Lord Lowther invited the Emperor of Russia, Generals Platoff and Blucher, with other distinguished persons on the 15th of June, 1814, to his house in Pall Mall. After a sumptuous breakfast some

of the best pugilists of the day entered a ring prepared for the purpose, in one of the large saloons, where they witnessed a set-to with the gloves. So delighted were these gentlemen with the exhibition—displaying as it did the generous method of settling British quarrels, without the use of other than Nature's weapons, and the clever methods of attack and defence—that they requested that they might be afforded the opportunity of witnessing a repetition of the performance. Accordingly, on the following Friday, more extensive preparations were made, and the party was augmented by the presence of the King of Prussia, the Prince Royal of Prussia, the Prince of Mecklenburgh, General D'York, and others.

Those who demonstrated the art before this distinguished audience included John Jackson, Belcher, Cribb, Richmond, Painter, and Oliver, all of whose careers will in due course pass before our readers. Everything went off splendidly according to the contemporary accounts; but our hero's style was most admired by the royal guests. The elegance of his position, his gentlemanly behaviour on entering and retiring, the fortitude of his manners, the celerity of his attack and the superior mode of guarding his frame, all won their admiration. This was John Jackson.

But then he was one of Nature's gentlemen, and mixing as he did with the aristocracy, he naturally caught their polished appearance. An old writer, who knew him, thus describes him, and we are sure our sketch of the celebrated pugilist would be incomplete without the quotation, so here it is:—

"There were the Lades, the Hangers, the Bullocks, the Vernons (all men famous for their good looks); but give me John Jackson, as he stood amongst the throng. I can see him now, as I saw him seventy years ago, walking down Holborn Hill in the direction of Moorfields. He had on a scarlet coat, worked in gold at the button-holes, ruffles, frill of fine lace, a small white stock, no collar (they were not then invented), and looped hat with a broad black band, buff knee breeches and long silk strings, striped white stockings, pumps, and paste buckles; his waistcoat was pale blue satin, sprigged with white. It was impossible to look upon his fine, ample chest, his noble shoulders, his waist (if anything too small), his large, but not too large, hips, his limbs, his balustrade calf and beautifully turned ankle, his firm foot, and peculiarly small hand, without thinking that Nature had sent him on earth as a model. On he went at a good five and a half miles an hour the envy of all men and the admiration of all women."

So John Jackson lived a life that no other pugilist before or since experienced. Still keeping in touch with his profession and fellow-pugilists, he would frequently assent to become stakeholder at the principal events, and occasionally fill the office of referee. And for the getting up of "benefits" there was no equal. But in a match made by Martin and Randall (to which we shall come in due course) there was a wrangle about the stakes of £500 a-side. Jackson held the money, and was so annoyed about the disgraceful conduct that he declared he would not take office again, unless it were a question of charity. And he kept his word. He was, as may be imagined, much worried by the poor class of pugilists who, either through their own follies or misfortunes had come to grief, and there wasn't a week passing without a begging letter or application of some kind. There is one little story told of him which we may as well repeat, although we cannot vouch for the truth of it, so let it be taken for what it is worth.

An old boxer was perpetually pestering him for money. "I was very nearly tired out at last," said Jackson, in relating the incident to his friends, "so I said 'No I won't give you a penny; but you may go to the Horse and Groom, and you will find a clean bed, three meals a day, and a pint of beer a day. Stay there until matters mend.' And what was the result? I went to the Horse and Groom the following day, and found the old boy bartering his dinner for a glass of gin."

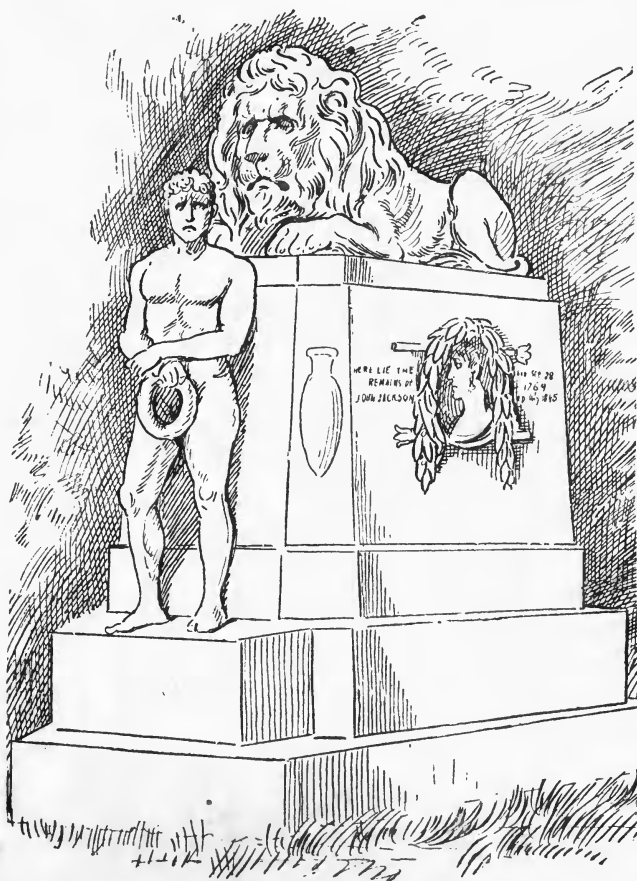
But we must not omit to relate perhaps the most important and interesting circumstance connected with Jackson's career. This also was concerning royalty. At the coronation of George IV. there was a desire to make the ceremony unusually impressive, for nothing of the kind had taken place for fifty years, and the excitement of the public was very great. The King was none too popular, it will be remembered, at the time, for a large section of the public were in favour of Queen Caroline, who was then excluded from the throne. It was therefore thought that possibly there might be a fracas as the procession entered Westminster Hall, or even in the hall itself. So it was determined to engage a special bodyguard for His Majesty, and upon the Lord Great Chamberlain (Lord Gwydyr) the task of providing them devolved. With the sanction of the King he engaged eighteen of the first pugilists of the day. Each was provided with an elegant page's suit, and their business was to stand at the doors of Westminster Hall and guard the King from the time that he alighted from his carriage until he resumed his seat

therein. Those who were engaged will play important parts in these pages during the progress of our history, for they were John Jackson (who, with a distinguished amateur boxer of the period named Watson, had the selection of the men), Cribb, Spring, Tom Belcher, Carter, Tom Oliver, Harry Holt, Peter Crawley, Dick Curtis, Medley, Purcell, Sampson, Bill Eales, Richmond, Ben Burn, Harry Harmer, Harry Lee, Tom Owen, and Josh Hudson.

It must have been a picturesque sight to have seen these fine made fellows in their silks and satins waiting upon the King, and we think it would have gone hard with anybody who had been daring enough to have interfered with his Royal Highness whilst in the hall. Of course their duties ceased outside when the military escort took charge of King George. There was, however, nothing for the pugilists to do but to enjoy the novelty of the situation, for which they received liberal payment and much admiration from the public, who were allowed to visit the hall on the following day, when the pages were retained to keep order.

In acknowledgment for their services each man received a letter of thanks, addressed to them from Lord Gwydyr, and a gold coronation medal, which the Lord Great Chamberlain stated he had received from the hands of the King himself for them. We should like to know what has become of those documents; surely some of them must be in existence, if the medal has passed out of sight like so many golden emblems do. We may mention that the last-named was raffled for by all the pages, and the lucky man was Jem Belcher, who wore it on special state occasions until his death.

And now we think we have devoted enough space to this most illustrious of pugilists. He never changed in disposition, but was beloved by all who were intimate with him, high and low. For many years he lived at his house, No. 4, Lower Grosvenor Street, W., and there he received and returned visits to some of the greatest men of the day. A writer speaks of him when in the "sere and yellow" of his life:—"Loved by many, respected by all, enjoying an unlimited circle of excellent society, the ex-Champion passed his days, affluent but not rich. He wanted less than he had. As a private associate and 'boon companion,' his company was at all times courted by men of the highest distinction, at whose houses he was a welcomed guest, and the banquet rooms of the Clarendon often rang with laughter at his quaint and characteristic anecdotes of men and scenes with whom and with which his chequered life had made him acquainted. He had a good



MONUMENT
TO JOHN JACKSON IN BROMPTON CEMETERY.

Thomas Butler, Sculpsit, 1847.

voice, and could sing a comic song with much unction. For the last two or three years he suffered from ill health; but until then he scarcely ever had a day's illness. Peacefully and trustfully, with his hand in that of his niece (whom he loved as a daughter), John Jackson expired on the 7th October, 1845."

And then a tomb was raised above him in Brompton Cemetery "by the subscriptions of several noblemen and gentlemen to record their admiration of one whose excellence of heart and incorruptible worth endeared him to all who knew him." Can we say more of this great pugilist? We can only conclude by quoting the lines upon the monument set up:—

" 'Stay, traveller,' the Roman records said,
 'To mark the classic dust beneath it laid :
 'Stay, traveller,' this brief memorial cries,
 And read the record with attentive eyes.
 Hast thou a lion's heart, a giant's strength?
 Exult not, for these gifts must yield at length.
 Do health and symmetry adorn thy frame?
 The mouldering bones below possessed the same.
 Does love, does friendship, every step attend?
 This man ne'er made a foe, ne'er lost a friend.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE EARLY LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF JEM BELCHER. — HIS MARVELLOUS FIRST BATTLE.—HIS VISIT TO LONDON.

HAVING disposed of the famous Gentleman Jackson in our last chapter, next in order of succession amongst our Champions is Jem Belcher, whose name is familiar to all followers of the fistic art. He has been aptly called the "Napoleon of the Ring," and without doubt was the greatest of all the natural fighters. Nor was he unlike the fiery little Corsican, who in the early part of the century was so much dreaded in this country, and whose very name struck terror to the children of the nursery, when they were told that "Boney" was coming. By a g'ance at the accompanying portrait. the

similarity of the two faces will be observable. The finely-shaped, snake-like head, the piercing eyes and firmly-set mouth, the bold, resolute, defiant, dashing expression possessed by James Belcher agree with the likeness of the "mighty Frenchman," who, if he were only alive to-day, would quickly set things in order on the other side of the Channel.



JAMES BELCHER.

From the original portrait in the possession of Mrs. Belcher, the widow.

HE WAS THE INVENTOR OF THE NECKERCHIEF OF
THAT NAME.

We wish our readers to take a journey to Bristol with us, to the town whither they accompanied us at the commencement of our history of the prize ring, when John Slack, the only conqueror of Broughton, went after his disgrace in London, opening a butcher's shop and establishing pugilism. When the great Norwich bruiser visited the "Queen of Western Cities," it will be remem-

bored that he went there at the height of his fame and thrashed the champion of the Kingswood colliers. So well was he treated that he appears never to have forgotten the place, and settled down there after his dishonest conduct over the Moggs and Stevens match. Indeed, Slack made the West-country city his home, but whether he married before he went or was afterwards married to one of the ladies of those parts we are unable to say. It is certain, however, he had several daughters, and one of them was Jem Belcher's mother.

We have mentioned in the earlier part of these annals that John Slack did not die until 1778, just thirty-eight years after becoming Champion, so he had a considerable part of his life in Bristol to devote to the cultivation of the art. He started a boxing-school at the Guildhall Tavern—afterwards kept by the famous Sam Portch—a popular sporting house for many years. As we have said, the origin of the powerful Bristol School was due to John Slack, our hero's grandfather. And it was a powerful school, too. First of all came from there such shining lights as Big Ben Brain, the conqueror of Tom Johnson and Champion of England; Will Warr, who was second only to Mendoza as a bruiser and scientific fighter; the notorious Hooper the Tinman, Bob Watson, and Harry Sellers. Then later on came men from the West Countree who will figure prominently in the future chapters of this history of the Championship, viz., the two Belchers, George Nichol's, Tom Cribb, the Game Chicken, John Gully, Jack Ford, Harry Lancaster, Harry Harmer, and William Neate.

Indeed, Bristol may be reckoned next to London as a town productive of pugilists. But even before Slack's time the Bristolians were addicted to fighting. Within a short distance from the city were the coal-pits of Kingswood and Cockerwood, around which lived a hardy race, distinguished from all their neighbours by reason of the free and unrestrained, not to say lawless life they led. All their domestic disputes were settled by means of the fist. Every question of rivalry in trade or love was decided by this primitive method. The stalwart coal-carriers of the Harris class (who has been introduced in a former chapter) of the mining district loved fighting for fighting's sake, and enjoyed a bout of fisticuffs merely to show "which on 'uz is the best man," or "just to ha' a bit o' vun."

And that reminds us that there is an anecdote told about a farmer who resided in the neighbourhood. He left the farm and all his belongings to his youngest son out of five, giving as his reason for departing from the usual order of succession:—"Ben can lather all your of

his brothers, zo let un ha' the varm." Little wonder, then, that fighters came from Bristol, and that one, Jem Belcher, who was a native, turned out such a star.

He was born on the 15th of April, 1781, in a quaint double-gabled old house in St. James' Churchyard, a house that must have stood there when Queen Anne visited the city, when she said in admiration of it to the delighted Mayor: "Nay, I could not feel myself to be Queen until I came to Bristol." Yet down to nearly the middle of the century this city, according to accounts, was the worst governed municipality in the kingdom. The paving and lighting of the streets were simply execrable, whilst the watchmen, whose duty it was to protect life and property, were decrepit old drunkards who notoriously connived at nocturnal crime, and, in fact, were in league with the prostitutes and thieves that infested the streets.

The way in which the Bristolians used to drink, too, was astonishing, and we have before us now a brief account of one of the Colston banquets held in those days. Dinner commenced at 4 p.m. At 9 p.m. oysters were served. At 4 a.m. grilled bones were placed before the company, and all the while the drinking was kept up until breakfast was served in the same hall, to the same guests who had sat down to dinner sixteen hours previously!

But there were few other amusements save a brief theatrical season and a few concerts and balls. Young Belcher's class, however, found plenty of entertainment in the shape of bear-baiting, bull-baiting, cock-fighting, and prize-fighting. To these scenes he was at a very early age accustomed. Bob Watson, his brother-in-law, being fond of the youngster, took him always about with him. Little wonder, then, he soon felt inclined to participate in one or other of the sports. His relation had taught him how to put up his hands, and little Jem was bursting to have a try with the fists. The old man (who did not die until 1837) used to love to tell people still living how the "little chubby-faced kid" would stand between Bob's knees, double up his fists, and delight in getting him to spar.

According to Bob Watson, Jem's first fight took place when he was only twelve years of age, during the St. James' Fair, which for more than two centuries had been held in the churchyard, which the Belchers' house overlooked. It was with a colliery boy from Kingswood, and his brother-in-law saw him through and gave him a knee. At this time Watson was in a good way of business as a butcher, and he engaged Jem to take the meat round in a basket, riding a pony. He was, in the

language of Bob, "one of those lissom, wiry 'varminty' lads who didn't know what fear was."

His next performance was at Landsdowne Fair, held just outside the city of Bath. Of course, a boxing booth was down from London, and young Jem couldn't keep away from it. Jack Firby (the Young Ruffian), Tom Tyne, George Maddock, and Eliash Crabbe were the performers, and a clever lot they were. Belcher was seventeen at this period, and more gone than ever on pugilism.

It so happened that a young cabinet-maker from the above city named Sam Lowatt put on the gloves in the booth with Belcher. The latter, no doubt desiring to show his mettle to his numerous Bristol pals who were there, slipped into the youth in a marvellously workman-like manner, and gave him such a towelling that he lost his temper and threw off the gloves, declaring that nothing would satisfy him but a go with the raw 'uns. Belcher quite willing, an adjournment was made to a nice bit of turf upon a common, and at it they went hammer and tongs. When Jem was getting all the best of it a strapping fellow shouldered his way into the ring, shoved Belcher on one side and dragged Lowatt away, to the utter astonishment of the former.

"Why, it's Bob Britton," shouted somebody in the crowd, and the young aspirant looked at the fellow who had stopped the fight and recognised a man whose reputation was very great as a pugilist in both Bath and Bristol. But Jem wasn't going to be robbed of his glory like that, so the youngster turned to the full-blown pugilist, "Well, if you won't let your friend fight, will you fight me yourself?" Britton was flabbergasted, and, dropping Lansdown's arm, re-entered the ring, amidst the groans of the much disappointed spectators, and looked Jem closely and fixedly in the face with an air of utter astonishment. But Jem only nodded and exclaimed, "Oh! you may stare away as much as you please, I mean it." "I've a d——d good mind to gio thee a thrashin', thou impudent young wosbird, but I've promised to take this lad away first." And Britton made off with his friend. It turned out that the young cabinet-maker was brother to Britton's sweetheart, and she, seeing her relation getting a licking, implored her affianced to get him out of the difficulty. But that was not the last of the affair, for Belcher and Britton met again and renewed the dispute, with the result that Bob Watson was called on the scene, and a match was made to fight for ten guineas. Articles were signed in the Guildhall Tavern, and the date was fixed for the 6th of March, 1798, the affair to take place at the little village of Hanham, some five miles from Bristol.

Two to one was freely laid on Britton, who was over twenty years of age, whilst young Belcher had only just passed his sixteenth birthday. A crowd of some two thousand people assembled, although the battle was between two comparatively unknown men. Yet, as we have pointed out, Bristol and its environs were the very hotbed and nursery of pugilism. There is but a meagre account of this fight handed down, neither would it be our duty to describe it *in extenso*; but being our Champion's first engagement in the ring proper, it may be permissible to give a brief outline of the encounter from the best account procurable.

The stripling youth, slim and supple, with the gristle on him not yet turned altogether to bone, standing up to face the square-built, sturdy, mature Britton, a strong, fully developed man; the chuckle of derision from the backers of the latter, as they note the enormous physical advantages their man possesses; the ill-disguised trepidation of Belcher's friends, his father particularly, as they realise the tremendous odds against which the young 'un has to contend; their intense excitement as Britton makes his first furious rush, as if to annihilate Jem; their relief as the lad ducks and dodges, and defies all Britton's efforts to hit him; the wild yells of the latter's pals, who tell him to follow the young 'un to the ropes, and go in and smash him—this may all be imagined without describing the incidents of the battle.

But it is not quite so easy to imagine the feelings of Britton and his adherents when—after about half an hour of this sort of thing, and Belcher by his activity is leading his man such a dance that he is visibly losing his wind, strength, and temper—the youngster goes in and ping, ping go the blows upon Britton's scarlet, perspiring face. Then the hearts of Belcher's relations leap with joy, and Bob Watson cries "Steady, steady, lad." But Jem Belcher, who is to figure as the Napoleon of the Ring, needs no advice. He has got his man fairly set, and there is a style about him that none present have seen before. His eyes blaze. The soul of pugilism is in every line of his face. It is an inspiration. The latent talents have been aroused, and all his natural genius is laid bare to the wonderment of all the bystanders, including his tutor, his father, and all who had seen him fight before. He dashes in, delivers where he pleases, he avoids, feints, and attacks when he will, and dashes the blows in with such precision upon poor Britton's face that it is bruised, bleeding, and distorted. Now an expression of pleasure lights up his countenance. It is the joy of battle which they say overspreads the countenance of a warrior who loves his work, and dashes

bravely in with the presentiment of certain success and ultimate glory—fighting for the name and reputation of his forefathers and the honour of his friends. The young lad of less than seventeen seemed to cut out quite a line of his own, disregarding all the orthodox moves in the ring, yet sending in the blows with an arrow-like precision, and dodging the mad onslaughts in a marvellous manner. It would seem that he were enchanted. For three and thirty minutes does Britton stand bravely before this merciless and unexpected force that is against him. How different from the commencement—the strong man rushing in to annihilate his juvenile opponent! Now the lad has his powerful antagonist as a child before him—weak, nearly blind, gashed about the cheeks and mouth, and reeling as if to fall. It is all over, the man is beaten, and James Belcher has had his “baptism of blood,” for it is the first time he has been in the arena proper. He has been credited with his first victory, and is destined to achieve such brilliant successes in the ring as few others of our great Champions can have recorded.

The congratulations, the praises, and the wonderment of all who saw this first fight of Jem's well nigh turned his head, and he found the drudgery of a butcher-boy's life unendurable. Ambitious as the youngster was before this encounter, he was ten times more so after the event. He felt that he was fit to shine in the “magic circle,” and his relations (particularly his mother, who dreamed of another champion in her family) encouraged the lad to pursue the road she felt to him was the only one to fame and prosperity.

So, after a family consultation, it was determined that he should make a journey to the metropolis, there to try his fortunes. A handsome little purse was made up for him, and this added to his own savings—for he had been a careful lad with his money—a tidy sum was in the pockets of his new rig-out as he started from Bristol on a bitterly cold morning of the March of 1799, half the town turning out to see him depart.

On arriving in London he made direct for the Black Bull in Tottenham Court Road, a house then kept by an old friend of his father, named John Cullington. Mine host of the above-mentioned house gave him the warmest of welcomes, and at first sight took a great fancy to the lad, and from that day to his death stood his staunchest friend and adviser. After resting a few days Mr. Cullington took him to see Will Warr, his fellow-townsmen, with whom our readers are already acquainted. Warr at this time kept the One Tun, in Jermyn Street, a very fashionable sporting house, which the Corinthian

supporters of the Fancy frequented. Having an introduction from Mr. Rogers (a Bristol man also, and backer of Warr), together with that of Bob Watson, and the personal presentation by John Cullington, young Belcher was received very warmly by the host of the One Tun. Besides, Warr had heard independently from some friends in the West-country of Jem's achievement with Tom Britton, and was really anxious to run his critical eye over the youth.

It was a fortunate matter for Belcher, the call on that particular day, for there was to be a little dinner heid, at which a few of the Corinthians would be present. So Warr invited him and his friend to stay and be present, knowing full well that nothing would delight the gents more than something fresh from the country, who could hold his own with most of the stale Londoners generally kept on hand for the amusement of the sports during the evening. Mr. Warr, though, thought he would just like to trot the youngster out privately before extolling his abilities to his guests, so he desired young Belcher to give him a taste of his qualities. Somewhat bashfully the youth consented, and they adjourned to a room upstairs.

Now it will be remembered that Will Warr was one of the trickiest boxers who ever stood before a Champion, and he certainly intended to take a rise out of the youngster. Just, however, as they were about to commence operations, who should stroll in but Sir Harry Vane Tempest, Lord Say and Sele, Colonel Montgomery, Mr. Fletcher Reid, and Captain Desmond. Sir Harry was giving the little dinner in commemoration of Hambletonian's great victory over Diomed, which had taken place a few days previously at Newmarket, and had created such excitement. Young Jem Belcher was accordingly introduced to the swells as a clever novice, and the old 'un and the young'un started the experimental spar.

Sir Harry and his friends thought it was preposterous for the clever Warr to take the boy on, and begged him to play light with the stranger as they took their seats and rang for the waiter. But they were all speedily surprised and undeceived, for the veteran was unable to touch the lad, who hit and got away in precisely the same manner as he did with Tom Britton. This astonished the amateurs and puzzled Will Warr. Do what he could and try all his old moves on the board, he was unable to touch young Jem. So when the latter gave him one and then another with more powder behind it than usual, sending the veteran puffing and blowing up against one of the tables, the host of the One Tun

pulled off his gloves saying, "That will do." Then turning to the Corinthians, he added, "This youngster can go in with any man in the kingdom." But what were the fruits of that fortunate little bit of practice, and how it became the immediate stepping-stone to Jem Belcher's success, we must reserve for the next chapter.

CHAPTER XVIII.

JEM BELCHER MAKES HIS DEBUT IN LONDON.—HIS FIGHTS
WITH PADDINGTON JONES AND JACK BARTHOLOMEW.

WE left young Belcher with his old Bristol friends, Mr. Callington and Will Warr, at the latter's hostelry, the One Tun, in Jermyn Street, in company with Sir Harry Vane Tempest, before whom the youngster had given a taste of his quality. After dinner, at which it will be remembered several Corinthians were present, and Will Warr had trotted young Belcher out with another turn with the gloves, wine and cigars were produced, and the conversation naturally turned upon the juvenile phenomenon, who had just made his appearance in the metropolis.

"Now, gentlemen," said mine host of the One Tun, "here is the finest opportunity you will ever have of making a pile of money, and taking the lead as patrons in the pugilistic world. There is nobody to touch the lad. The proof of the pudding is in the eating, they say; and I have had some." This was as much as to say that the man who could lick *him*—the great William Warr—*must* be the best man, and able to thrash any other in the kingdom.

Sir Harry laughingly said that although, judging from the little exhibition of talent, he was not quite sure of that, he was quite willing to back the youngster, for his cleverness was established. He thought, too, that it would be better for those assembled to trot him out as a dark horse, so far as London was concerned, to keep their own counsel, and get up a match for the new-comer as soon as possible.

So it was left to Will Warr to find a foe for the Bristolian, and he there and then fixed upon Tom Jones, of Paddington, who had proved himself a hard nut to crack,



"PADDINGTON" JONES.

and had the reputation of being a resolute and scientific fighter. Now "Paddington" Jones was, like Nelson, a hero of a hundred fights, and, also like the great naval

commander, he had never been beaten. All these mills are not recorded, but it is certain that Tom fought more battles than any man of his time, and the history of them has been handed down more from the Paddingtonian's own accounts when he was M.C. at the Tennis Court years after he retired from the Ring. There are veterans still living who will no doubt remember him.

Therefore Master James Belcher had no easy task set him, and, when the articles were signed a few days after the meeting at the One Tun, people opened their eyes and became interested in the coming event. The match was made, to be particular, on the 8th of April, 1799, which is a red-letter (or rather a white letter day) in the records of weather. One of the greatest snowstorms in this country took place upon that date. So great was the fall that for seventy-two hours the roads in most parts of England were blocked, and no less than fourteen mail coaches had to be abandoned, whilst the travellers cut their way through to the nearest shelter, or floundered through the drifts.

It seems that the confidence must have been very great on the part of Messrs. Tempest, Warr, and Cullington to test their *protégé's* prowess, for the fight was fixed for April 12, only four days after the signing of articles of agreement, and three days before Jem Belcher's nineteenth birthday. Of course, there was very little time for speculation, but unfortunately for the little syndicate one of the members must have let the cat out of the bag, for no money could be got on their man, unless they laid evens. This was very provoking and unexpected, but there it was, and when Sir Harry Vane Tempest and Mr. Fletcher Reid displayed much energy in investing their money, the surprising odds of 6 to 4 on the novice were demanded. This was most extraordinary, from the fact that Jones (who, by the bye, had been taken in hand by the ex-Champion, Tom Johnson) had done such marvellously good work in the arena, and was always game and willing.

To illustrate what a plucky fellow he was, we will narrate a couple of anecdotes about Master Thomas. After he had polished off a baker named Horton, and thereby caught the eye of Johnson, Jones attended Colchester on the 4th of September, 1792, to witness the battles between Hooper and Banner, and Stanyard and Gamble. Whilst on the ground, waiting for the first of these two fights to come off, "Paddington" Jones was insulted by a six-foot yokel, named Abraham Challice. To the astonishment of the natives, Tom slipped off his coat and hat, handed them to somebody whom he knew beside him, and slipped into the chawbacon. Major

Hanger and some swells who were near, and who knew Jones, attempted to stop him, thinking that he might get roughly handled by this great strong chap and his friends. Tom, however, begged to be let alone, and at the commencement of the first round the great countryman was stretched upon the turf from the effects of a blow he had received behind the ear. He came up staggering, and then the Paddington youth gave him such a dressing that he was eventually knocked senseless. It turned out that this fellow was the terror of the country around, and so delighted were the farmers and cattle-dealers at his downfall that they made up a purse there and then and presented it to Jones. The battle between Stanyard and Gamble was postponed until the next day, when they all met on the same spot. A rough from Colchester, a great murderous-looking chap, who was the bully of the town, and whose nickname was "Leather Jacket," jumped upon the stage after the two professionals had finished their battle, and challenged any "d——d" cockney to have a go with him. Yokels in those days had a supreme contempt for the physical powers of Londoners. Paddington Jones was the first to respond, although his hands were much puffed and bruised from the effects of coming in contact with Challice's hard nut on the previous day. But the moment "Leather Jacket" espied who it was, he exclaimed, "Na, na, you's the chap as beat Abe Challice yesterday. I don't mean he," and forthwith jumping over the rails he ran away as fast as his legs could carry him, followed by the jeers of everybody who had expected to see another turn-up.

Those were the kind of fights Paddington Jones loved to be mixed up in: he delighted in an impromptu battle. Little wonder, then, that they were not all recorded. As Tom used to say at the Fives Court, "I fought so many times that I left off counting."

But there were two battles which were reported in full, that between Caleb Baldwin, on the 14th of May, 1792, and with Keely Lyons on the 10th of May, 1794. The first was a drawn battle, and in the second Jones was victorious. The last mentioned was notable for the Prince George of Wales honouring it with his presence. It was just at the time when he was financially at his lowest ebb, and was very popular. It was the very year that the Supply Bill was introduced to pay H.R.H.'s debts, and here we may be permitted perhaps to break off in our narrative of the Ring to call attention to the Prince's position, since he figured so prominently amongst the champions of his time, particularly as we have in earlier chapters spoken of his late father's extravagance,

and there may be some confusion in the minds of those who are now students of the social lives of those wonderful Georges. The Prince was popular, for the reason that he mixed much among the people, who believed that his embarrassments were not owing to his own extravagance but to the stinginess of his father. There never lived a more obstinate man than George III., and, having determined not to pay his son's debts, there was no moving him from his resolve. He had a constitutional aversion to parting with money for the payment of the debts of anyone, no matter how nearly related to him. When he came to the throne he persistently refused to liquidate the not very heavy liabilities of his "late lamented" father, Frederick. It was useless appealing to his respect for the name of his parent; George was absolutely without such filial respect, and it must be admitted that his father had done nothing to deserve it. Indeed, Frederick Prince of Wales probably merited the contempt of his son George III. as much as he did the loathing of his father George II. But out of respect for his own position and character, George III. ought certainly to have paid the paternal debts. By not doing so he fairly laid himself open to the stinging reproach conveyed in the following epigram, which appeared just at that time:—

"Pay my son's debts!" cried Wisdom, in a pet.

"Why so? I have not paid my father's yet."

But to return to our muttons. The Prince went to Blackheath to see Keely Lyons, who was a *protégé* of Dan Mendoza, get licked by Tom Jones. So much for Jem Belcher's first antagonist in the London ring. Mr. Will Warr had certainly picked out a "warm 'un" for him.

There was no time for training, for the battle was to come off on the 12th of April, and the match (as we have stated) was made on the 8th. We wonder what the present day professor would think of that. But in those days, when a man seriously meant following pugilism, he always kept fit, and never gave way to "bursts" in between, *i.e.*, getting out of condition, which meant a lot of preparation and work to get back to form. In a word, he was always at par.

It was the very day upon which Rodney secured his victory over the French that Jones met Belcher for the latter's *début* in the London Ring. The place selected was Old Oak Common, close to Wormwood Scrubbs, on the road to Acton. We must leave the reader to imagine the excitement which existed amongst the little coterie of sports who had felt so much confidence in the ability of the Bristol stripling to conquer the veteran

pugilist of a hundred battles. Sir Harry Vane Tempest, who had laid £600 to £400 on Jem with his old rival, Mr. Cookson, the owner of Diamond, came down from his drag and took up his position close to Jem's corner, whence he kept up a fire in a most reckless manner of "6 to 4 on Belcher. I'll back the Bristol man." Mr. Fletcher Reid was close by, just as enthusiastic over the novice; whilst John Cullington (who, by the bye, we omitted to mention, was a celebrated bookmaker as well as publican) supported the youngster through thick and thin.

Belcher's seconds were the two celebrated Bills—Warr and Gibson—the former expressing his opinion as to the boy's chance by laying out £300 of his money. It was the red-letter day of the young aspirant's life. Yet he never turned a hair or shade of complexion as he stood before his experienced adversary. He "felt it in his bones" that he must—would succeed. We need not relate the combat here. James Belcher *did* succeed, and his name was written from that day in large letters upon the roll of pugilists.

It may be better imagined than described, the sensation created by this battle. It was scarcely credible that a young fellow, whose age was but eighteen, could have accomplished such a feat as vanquishing a man like Tom Jones. He had made himself a hero, he had fought and won his first battle in the metropolis, and he was courted, was this youthful prodigy.

Some few months elapsed, and Jem Belcher found himself absolutely in clover. In spite of many efforts on the part of his original backers, they could find nobody to take up the gauntlet, for all the best judges who had seen him fight gave the unanimous verdict that he was the coming man, and none but the best bruisers of the day should be pitted against him. This was all very well; but the difficulty was to discover the antagonist in his class. There were plenty of small fry quite willing to try their hand, just for the honour of the thing; but John Cullington, the genial boniface of the Black Bull, of Tottenham Court Road, who saw what a glorious future the youngster had before him, if he only took care of himself, refused to allow him to take on Tom, Dick, or Harry. His popularity spread like wild-fire. At all the sparring saloons every inducement was given to him to appear, and the "new Bristol wonder" was in enormous request.

At Jackson's, at Mendoza's, at Will Warr's, and everywhere the *cognoscenti* foregathered to see the young phenomenon use his "dukes." At length, on one of his

sparring exhibitions, Fortune favoured him, and he fell in with the man who was to give him the opportunity of once more distinguishing himself with the raw 'uns in public. And here we may mention that James Belcher was better as a fighter than a sparrer, although nobody could give him points with the mufflers, as they all found out who tried it.

One August evening in 1799 Jem Belcher was at Warr's house (naturally a favourite resort of his amongst friends) when Lord Camelford came in. Now Milord was a fiery individual, who had always something ready to spring upon his brother sports. He had been in the Navy, and found it a bit too warm for him, for the following reason, so retired and devoted his attention to certain kinds of sport.

Lord Camelford, whilst commanding the *Famish* sloop in the West Indies, had with his own hand shot Lieutenant Peterson, of the *Perdrix*, because the latter refused to obey the orders of his lordship, who was his senior officer. This dreadfully stern act of discipline was done in sight of the crews of both vessels. "Do you persist in refusing to obey my orders?" asked the commander. "Yes, I do persist," was the reply; on which Lord Camelford immediately put a pistol to the lieutenant's breast and shot him dead. Of course his lordship was tried before a court-martial and honourably acquitted, the court being of opinion that Lieut. Peterson's conduct was a serious act of mutiny. But his lordship found it none too agreeable after this incident in the service, so when his ship was put out of commission he retired.

We mention the above facts so that our readers may judge of the sort of gentleman this enthusiastic patron of the Prize Ring was.

But to return to Will Warr's on this particular August evening. Camelford had brought one Jack Bartholomew with him because that worthy had expressed a desire to box with the Bristol wonder. "Barty," as they called him, was a wonderfully successful man in the ring, and had had an extraordinary career. Although extremely interesting, we cannot find space for a description of it here. He was the son of a market gardener residing at Brentford, and first became noticed for his pugilistic qualifications, through his plucky and determined attack upon some highwaymen on the road to his native town from London, he having captured one, and was complimented by the magistrate. The London amateurs were always on the look-out for new blood, so after the story got spread, "Barty" was invited to the metropolis to show what he could do before Colonel Hanger, Sir Peter Burrell (afterwards Lord Gwydyr), Captains Harvey,

Aston, and others. The verdict was in his favour after his first trial with the gloves, and the above gentlemen determined to match him.

The opportunity came after the fight between Lyons



JACK BARTHOLOMEW

and Jones, to which we have already referred, which took place at the Hounslow annual fair on the 22nd June, 1795. Jack Firby, known as the "Young Ruffian," jumped upon the stage and challenged anybody to join

him. Colonel Hanger promptly produced Bartholomew, and in the result Firby was beaten blind. This was a brilliant victory. After a time he was matched with William Wood, "The Coachman," who had challenged Big Ben Brain, it will be remembered, the engagement falling through on account of the Champion's illness.

This was on the 30th of January, 1797, and the fight took place at the village of Greenford, between Ealing and Harrow. It was a sorry exhibition after the first few rounds, for Jack dropped and avoided in a most inexplicable manner, until Wood was declared winner on a foul. "Barty" sprang at "The Coachman," struck him in the stomach, seized him savagely by the neck, after a severe struggle flung him on the boards, and then deliberately struck him twice in the jaw when the man was down on his back. This was, of course, too palpable to be overlooked. Both umpires agreed that he had wilfully transgressed the rules, and they consequently awarded the stakes to Wood.

That was the man in whom Lord Camelford placed such confidence, and desired to try with the Bristol wonder at Warr's sparring room in Jermyn Street.

The result of the trial was, as all Jem's friends expected, in favour of their *protégé*. But neither Lord Camelford nor Bartholomew was satisfied, so it was arranged that they should meet on the following morning to settle which was the better man of the two. This was so quietly arranged that it did not get wind to the general public, and a select few only attended on the Uxbridge Road to witness the interesting impromptu mill with "Barty" and the budding Champion. Belcher was attended by Will Warr and Bill Gibbons; Bartholomew by Joe Ward and his old antagonist, Tom Owen; but unfortunately there is but the most meagre report of the fight extant, for the simple reason that no newspaper man was present. Bartholomew fought most stubbornly, but in the end had to cave in, and the Bristol Youth, as he was then called, secured one more victory, which, with the exception of another meeting with these two men, brought him face to face with Andrew Gamble for the Championship, which we shall relate in our next chapter.

CHAPTER XIX.

MENDOZA DECLINES.—THE IRISH CHAMPION'S VICTORY.—
GAMBLING AT THE COCOA TREE CLUB.—JEM BELCHER V.
ANDREW GAMELE.

It will be remembered that Jem Belcher came from his native town, Bristol, in the March of 1793, and before twelve months had passed he had fought three battles—two with Jack Bartholomew and one with Paddington Jones. In that time he had risen with meteoric-like effect from the unknown coarse provincial lad to a star of the first magnitude. Only a youth of nineteen, and yet he had carried everything before him, and was, in the May of 1800, throwing down the gauntlet to all comers and aspiring to the Championship. Young Jem was dubbed by the numerous sportsmen of the day the "Pet of the Fancy," and certainly he was a general favourite, making friends and fresh patrons wherever he went. Undoubtedly he had been exceedingly lucky in his good introductions at the start, and Bill Warr had rendered him invaluable service and sound advice. The lad, however, had his head screwed on all right, and knew which class of pugilists and their supporters to hob-nob with and which to avoid.

As our readers are aware, when John Jackson retired from the Ring after his battle with Dan Mendoza, over whom he gained a victory in 1795, there had been no recognised Champion, for the Jew had, for some reason best known to himself, made no effort to contend for the return of the title, which he might easily and most successfully have done, for there were none who for science, strength, and experience could have held their own. Although he had been fighting for some sixteen years, Mendoza was in the prime of life, as pugilists went then, being only thirty-seven years of age, and frequently men would, in those days, be found entering the ring eight or ten years later in life.

It might have been that Mendoza was disgusted at

the manner in which Jackson had beaten him, for his adherents all declared that if the retired Champion had not taken a hold on the Jew's long hair, and held him whilst he punched him, Mendoza would never have been defeated. Be that as it may, the loss of the title appears to have upset him woefully, and there is no doubt he took it greatly to heart.

We find him shortly afterwards deserting pugilism and playing various *roles*, amongst them sheriff's officer, recruiting agent, and travelling showman, in which latter capacity, of course, he introduced boxing, but displayed no disposition to enter the roped arena. Now young Belcher's one great ambition was to meet this great exponent of the art, who had been before the public so long, and who had won so many laurels. Although, as we have said, Jem was not out of his teens, he was longing for the coveted title of Champion, and knew that the only legitimate way to try for it was to fight Mendoza, who was the greatest acknowledged master of the art living. So, to the delight of the Fancy, Young Belcher challenged the Jew. The whole sporting world was on the tip-toe of expectation when it became known, and many who did not know the Bristol lad well commented upon his audacity, and declared that the youngster was trying to fly too high. Bill Warr, however, thought differently, as did Jack Bartholomew and Jones, for they had stood before him and experienced his extraordinary and original style, and declared that there was not a man breathing who could defeat him.

Day after day they anxiously awaited the reply from the Jew, but it never came. Whether Dan shared the opinions of Belcher's friends as to his capabilities, or whether he had made up his mind to fight no more, we know not; but he hadn't the decency even to reply to Jem's challenge. Great was the disappointment, but the only thing to do was to cast about for somebody else for the Bristol youth, and his friends did not mean letting the grass grow under their feet. Amongst the school of hard hitters to which Jones, Bartholomew, Jack Firby (called the Young Ruffian), Will Wood (the Coachman), and others belonged, there was one named Andrew Gamble. He came from the Emerald Isle, and was looked upon as the Irish Champion. He belonged to that rough - and - ready order of pugilists who depended more upon courage, physical strength, and determination rather than upon scientific attainments. But he was a good man, and after his desperate battle with Noah James (the Lifeguardsman), to which we shall briefly refer anon, he was looked upon as the only likely man to check

Jem Belcher in his progress to the highest rung of the ladder.

So when there was no indication of Mendoza taking up the gauntlet—for Dan was away from England, travelling in Scotland to keep away from his creditors—a match was talked about being made between Gamble and Belcher. Before, however, the articles were signed, Mr. Fletcher Reid, one of the best known sports and patrons of prize-fighting of that period, met Mendoza in Edinburgh. We may here mention that this gentleman was a native of Dundee, in the neighbourhood of which his family possessed great estates, and he having plenty of money made athletics and sport in general his hobby. He had backed Mendoza in most of his fights, and had stood his friend on more than one occasion. Not only that, but he was a great admirer of Jem Belcher, and for the pure love of the sport he determined to try to bring them together.

So persuasive did Mr. Fletcher Reid become with the Jew, offering the most tempting inducements, that at length Dan consented. But only on one condition, that the battle should be brought off in Scotland. In all probability it was on account of his debts that he raised the objection to fight in England, but, anyhow, Mendoza was to have his way on that point, and Mr. Reid having got the agreement and (so far as Mendoza's signature went) the articles signed, he posted off at once to London. On arriving in the metropolis this enthusiast was just in time to stop the match which was under consideration between Gamble and Belcher, and to which we have referred.

It may be well imagined with what delight the news was hailed in London. Jem Belcher signed articles on the 5th of August, and the battle was to take place on the 1st of October, 1800. The excitement was intense when it was all arranged that the two greatest masters of the art were at length to meet. In spite of the Jew's brilliant record, at first 3 to 2 was laid on the Bristol lad, but at length betting was at evens.

And now came the bitterest disappointment of all. This pugilistic treat was destined not to come off, for Dan Mendoza comes to London, but for what purpose we never could understand. Here was he, afraid to trust himself in the metropolis, had made all arrangements that the fight should come off in Scotland, and then deliberately posts off to town. Early on the morning of September 26 Dan was arrested in bed, where he was staying, in Bethnal Green. He was taken to Bow Street Police Court, under a warrant signed by Sir Richard Ford, notorious as being the thickest-headed magistrate

on the bench. He kept up his reputation on this occasion, too, for in spite of the offer of bail, and the undertaking that Mendoza should not break the peace in England, and the explanation that the fight was to take place, if at all, in Scotland, therefore out of his jurisdiction, nothing could prevail upon the stubborn magistrate, and Dan was bound over to keep the peace, forfeiting a large sum if he failed to do so, no matter where. Mr. Fletcher Reid, who had had all the trouble and great expense over the matter, together with several other gentlemen, offered to see Dan through, find the money for the court, and take all responsibility if he would only meet Belcher as arranged. But Mendoza decided to keep the law. The rage of Jem Belcher and his friends may be better imagined than described. They declared that the Jew had connived at the arrest, and never meant to meet the Bristolian. Some said that he had his eye on the Lord Nelson Tavern, White-chapel, and thought that if he ran in contradiction to Sir Richard Ford it would prevent him from holding a licence in any public-house in the metropolis. He point blank refused all the entreaties to meet Belcher, and the whole affair dropped through, much to the delight of Andrew Gamble, who was now at liberty to fight Jem Belcher for the Championship of England.

Before, however, we enter into the details of the battle, it will be as well to have a few words to say about the Irishman who had the distinguished honour of competing for the title which was then in abeyance.

Mr. Andrew Gamble, according to "*Pancratia*," the best book written upon such matters at the time, was born in Dublin, in 1771, and followed the calling of a stonemason in that city. He appears to have made some name as a fighter in his native country, and on coming over here he was fortunate enough to attract the notice of his fellow-countryman, the Earl of Tyrconnel, who, like his father-in-law, Lord Delaval, was an enthusiastic patron of the Ring. About this particular period the Earl had a somewhat unenviable notoriety in society. His sister was mistress to the Duke of Gloucester, and his wife was mistress to the Prince of Wales; but his lordship was far too complaisant to make a fuss over such trifles. He accepted his position philosophically, was on excellent terms with his sister, and lived quite contentedly under the same roof with his wife. A charming specimen of the British aristocracy a hundred years ago!

Notwithstanding his unquestionably immoral private life he was a keen sportsman, this Earl of Tyrconnel, and he took a fancy to Gamble, and was the means of

arranging his first fight in this country. His opponent was a Birmingham man, named Ben Stanyard, who was defeated by Bill Warr, and they fought at Bentley Green, near Colchester, on the 5th September, 1792. It was by all accounts a short but fierce fight, but unfortunately it was brought to a sudden termination by an appeal against Stanyard for having deliberately fallen without



ANDREW GAMBLE.

a blow. One report of the fight says: "Gamble retired, declaring himself victorious. Stanyard remained on the ground until his friends triumphantly carried him away. The umpires, seconds, &c., had many meetings, and it was ultimately declared a drawn battle."

He is described as a "powerful, game, hard-hitting, clumsy, knock-kneed man, six feet in height, and a born natural fighter." It is strange that there are no records

of other fights of his that we can discover during the next seven or eight years; but there were many battles not reported then, and in all probability any other engagements he may have had were with the smaller fry. Occasionally we have come across his name as a second.

Just about the time, however, that Jem Belcher arrived in London, Andrew Gamble became quite a celebrity, and the curtains were pulled aside from his place of obscurity, and he stands out an exceedingly prominent figure in the fistic world. It all came about in this wise. There were two very prominent sportsmen at that time, whose rivalry in all kinds of sports contributed greatly to the entertainment of their friends and the sporting public. They were Sir Harry Vane Tempest (who, it will be remembered, was the first to admire young Jem Belcher at the One Tun, kept by Will Warr) and Mr. Richard Heathcote. These two gentlemen were never happy unless they were matching their horses, dogs, gamecocks, their guns, or their pedestrian or pugilistic *protégés* one against the other.

Mr. Heathcote had served as an officer in the Blues, until he came into a large fortune from his uncle, and one man in the same regiment, but of the rank and file, attracted this gentleman's attention. His name was J. Noah James, and he came from Cheshire. He was the finest fellow in the troop, and according to the "Oracle of the Ring" he seems to have had several prize-fights before he joined the army. When Mr. Heathcote left the regiment Noah James came with him and became his attendant or "minder," as they are called, for in those days, as our readers will have observed, it was quite customary to take a bodyguard about in case of accident. James would seem, however, to have been a decent sort of follow, and not like Lord Barrymore's henchman, Hooper the Tinman.

One evening Mr. Heathcote and Sir Harry Vane Tempest were at the Cocoa Tree Club, which was then the resort of the fastest men about town, and a fearful gambling hell. Horace Walpole tells an amusing anecdote of this club: "Within this week there has been a cast at hazard at the 'Cocoa Tree,' the difference of which amounted to hundred and four score thousand pounds. Mr. O'Birne, an Irish gamester, had won £100,000 of a young Mr. Harvey, of Chigwell, just started from a midshipman into an estate by his elder brother's death. O'Birne said, 'You can never pay me.' 'I can,' said the youth, 'my estate will sell for the debt.' 'No,' said O'Birne. 'I will win ten thousand, and you shall throw

for the odd ninety thousand.' They did, and Harvey won."

Well, it was at the Cocoa Tree that Sir Harry Vane Tempest and Mr. Richard Heathcote met soon after the fight which we have already described between Belcher and Bartholomew. Heathcote, who had been winning heavily at faro during a lull in the play, offered to back his man Noah James against anybody in the kingdom. "Done with you," said Sir Harry.

And after a little more talk, in which Heathcote guessed that his friend's man would be Belcher, the match was made for a hundred guineas a-side and a bet of five hundred pounds. That's how the sporting swells of that period did business. On the spot, no beating about the bush. But when Sir Harry told his friend who the man was, Heathcote exclaimed laughingly "What, Andrew Gamble, that great knock-kneed Irishman? Why, my man could lick him with one fist. I'll double the bet." And the bet was doubled, making it a thousand.

Reference, however, to this particular battle will only be necessary here, as it is not classed amongst the Championship fights, although it led to the match for the premier position between our hero, Jem Belcher, and Andrew Gamble. Yet it was one of the most exciting contests in the whole annals of the Ring, and was patronised by the highest sportsmen of the land. We will mention a few names of those sports who interested themselves in the battle: the Hon. Berkeley Craven, Mr. G. W. Sparrow, the Right Hon. William Windham, Alderman Harvey Coombe, M.P., Mr. Kelly, the well-known bookmaker, Mr. Lengard, of St. James', and "Harty" Rowe, the big rabbit merchant, of Newgate Market, all backed the Irishman for sums varying from £1,000 to £250. And here we may mention it was usual to publish a list with the amounts betted on prize-fights in those times. The Corinthians were in great force, too. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, the Duke of York, Lord Camelford, Lord Say and Sele, Mr. Fletcher Reid, Sir John Lade, and a host of others had wagered heavily, and the talk was of nothing else at the clubs and sporting drums.

The day fixed was the 1st of July, 1800, and the place selected Wimbledon Common. The ring was pitched within sight of the gibbet upon which dangled the ghastly skeleton of Jerry Abershaw, the notorious highwayman. The daring murderer was the last of the robbers who plied their trade with such reckless audacity upon the lonely spots of Finchley, Wimbledon, Bagshot, and other commons on the outskirts of London.

It was a glorious day, and the attendance was enormous. The Prince of Wales came over in the Duke of Hamilton's phaeton, and the "toffs" were exceptionally numerous. Andrew Gamble was driven over in Sir Harry Vane Tempest's mail phaeton, and James on the top of a coach, amidst a number of Guardsmen, who had backed Mr. Heathcote's *protégé* to a man.

It is not our intention to record the fight, for the reason already expressed. Although the Guardsman fought with all the pluck and determination of a soldier who means to do or die, he found his master, for the terrific hitting of Gamble was terrible to behold, the Rt. Hon. William Windham admitting in his diary that he "had never seen such awful punishment inflicted at any other prize-fight he had witnessed." The final blow, crash on the breastbone, sent the burly trooper on to the flat of his back. The moment they raised his head he vomited a lot of blood, and then fell back in a stupor. A surgeon present examined him, and persuaded them to drive him into town as quickly as possible, and get attention, if the man did not die on the way.

When the doctors saw him they gave no hopes of his recovery, and one chronicler tells the following story, whilst the *World* and the *Oracle* are accountable for publishing a minute description of the fright into which the Prince of Wales was thrown over the affair, for he had attended a prize-fight before when one of the combatants was killed, when a storm of public abuse was poured upon him after the fatal affair.

"On hearing that his case was hopeless Noah James sent for Gamble. Andrew, whose emotional Celtic nature was easily moved, burst into tears as he took the hand which James feebly extended.

"'Forgive me ; my heart is bruk to think o' what I've done to ye."

"'I forgive thee freely, lad. It was no fault o' thine, and I sent for 'ee to tell 'ee so afore I die."

"After a warm pressure of the hand, and an earnest prayer that he might recover, Andrew took his leave quite overwhelmed with grief."

James, however, did not succumb. Blessed with a magnificent constitution he pulled through, thanks to the great kindness and attention paid to him through his master, Mr. Heathcote, who had the best surgeons and nurses, sparing no expense. But Noah was never fit to fight again, and, we believe, he received a pension from his employer, which was continued until his death some few years afterwards.

The friends of Gamble were delighted with the performance of their man. Sir Harry Tempest won £5,000,

two of that from the Prince of Wales. The Hon. Berkeley Craven won £10,000 from Lord Camelford, and money changed hands to an enormous amount.

One thing was discovered—there was no doubt about that. If there was anybody (excepting Mendoza) who was calculated to possess the qualities of Jem Belcher, the Bristol phenomenon, that man was Andrew Gamble. So it came to pass, as we have described in the opening of this chapter, that the match was duly made.

CHAPTER XX.

SMALL STAKES AND LARGE WAGERS. — A SERIOUS EPISODE
WHILST TRAINING.—JEM BELCHER BEATS ANDREW GAMBLE
AND BECOMES CHAMPION.

Six months after the battle with Noah James and Andrew Gamble, and which introduced the latter to our readers as an aspirant to the Championship, the great fight between him and Jem Belcher had been arranged to take place. The match was made at the Black Horse, in Oxenden Street, between the Haymarket and Leicester Square. Even in our own time this house was a famous sporting drum, for it was at the Black Horse that Owen Swift tried to revive his scattered fortunes. Formerly it was kept by Will Warr, who was succeeded by Harry Lee. It was a very favourite resort of the old bucks and young bloods of the West End at this period, and some of the best men of the time frequented the old hostelry.

Amongst the *habitues* of the house was a Dr. Mocre. He was the son of a pretty well known then, but now almost forgotten, Scotch novelist, and a brother of Sir John Moore, of Corunna fame, who was buried "with his martial cloak around him."

Jem Belcher was a particular favourite of the worthy doctor, and it was he who made the match one November evening in the parlour of the Black Horse. A Mr. Kelly, of Lisle Street, to whom we have referred as a large bookmaker, was present, and having backed his countryman against James, and won a "pot" of money, he was anxious to give Andrew Gamble a further opportunity of still increasing that sum. So, finding Dr. Moore singing the praises of the Bristolian, he offered to match his man against Belcher. This the doctor immediately agreed to, and £100 a-side having been settled upon, the money was posted on the following day in the hands of Mr. Cullington, Belcher's friend, at the Black Bull, in Tottenham Court Road, and it only remained for the men to get themselves into trim for the contest for the Championship of England.

Although the match was made for the modest sum of £100 (many years afterwards £200 became the minimum amount for a Championship fight), immediately everything was settled the betting became fast and furious. We find that John Jackson, whose judgment was considered to be infallible by his friends, had a hundred pounds on Belcher, and advised all who consulted him to do the same. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Clarence stood to win £3,000 on the Bristol lad; Lord Fitzharris, who had just returned from Vienna to parade his new title at home, his father having been raised to the Earldom of Malmesbury, had £700 on "our Jem;" Lord Yarmouth ("Red Herring"), £300; Captain Desmond, £700; Squire Mountain, £500; Mr. Aldridge, proprietor of the famous Horse Repository, St. Martin's Lane, £300; Harry Lee, mine host of the Black Horse, Oxenden Street, £300; the landlord of the Crown and Punch Bowl, Seven Dials, £700; and we might continue the extensive list if we thought it would interest our reader, for, as we have before stated, it was the custom in those days to give the names of winners and losers in the papers which devoted themselves to the chronicling of matters pugilistic. The *Oracle*, which furnishes us with the above, has a further long string of names of winners of sums of £1,000 down to £20. Even Paddington Jones, who, it will be remembered, was Belcher's first opponent in the London Ring, laid £30 to £20 upon his quondam conqueror.

So it will be seen that there was plenty of interest taken in the fight during the month which was to elapse between the signing of articles and the performance itself. Young Jem Belcher went to the "Hamlet of Little Chelsea," we are told, to train, which we suppose

would now be West Brompton, and the following incident, which might have had the effect of creating another disappointment, took place. But let us quote our informant:—

“On the Saturday before the battle, four stalwart roughs—supposed to be in the pay of some of Gamble’s backers—went down to Little Chelsea, watched Belcher enter a public-house, followed him, and grossly insulted him. Jem, however, probably divined that their object was to provoke a quarrel, at any rate he made no reply to the remarks levelled at him. At last one of the ruffians, finding that Jem was not to be provoked into taking the initiative in a row, struck him, whilst his pals closed round to assist. But before they could realise what was happening, Jem shot out his arms stretched him on the floor, and, in quicker time than it takes to write the words, laid two of his companions beside him. The fourth thereupon bolted, hotly pursued by the Bristol youth, who speedily caught him up, and, seizing him by the collar, held him at arm’s length, and kicked him on his seat of honour till the fellow howled for mercy; then pitching him into the gutter, Jem turned on his heel and walked home. This dastardly and deliberate attempt to “nobble” Jem, for there could be no doubt that that was the design of his assailants, caused great indignation, and we are bound to say that it was denounced as heartily by all Gamble’s backers as by those of Belcher.”

Monday, the 22nd of December, 1800, was the day appointed, that upon which Napoleon Bonaparte only just escaped assassination from an infernal machine explosion. They had attempted to kill the First Consul in the earlier part of the year, but had been frustrated by the confession of one of the conspirators, and the whole lot, seven in number, were arrested at the opera, where Napoleon had gone with a perfect knowledge that his would-be murderer would be present.

The place chosen for the fight was Wimbledon Common, and the exact spot fixed upon was that at which the battle between Gamble and James had been fought six months previously. Bill Gibbons, the Commissary of the Ring, seemed to have a *penchant* for Jerry Abershaw, highwayman, for this was the second time that he had pitched his ring within sight of the skeleton, which still rattled and clanked in its chains, and swung to the four winds of heaven from the gibbet.

As early as six o’clock the great stream of pedestrians and vehicles commenced moving out of London past Hyde Park turnpike. “As the day wore on,” says a contemporary paper, “the cavalcade could only crawl along

at a snail's pace, and for a great space looked like a long, extended mass of equipages." All ranks and classes were represented, and it was estimated that at least twenty thousand people assembled to view the fight. Peers and publicans, counts and costers, right honourables and rag merchants, baronets and butchers, bucks from St. James', and "blokes" from St. Giles made their way to Wimbledon Common on that memorable Monday of December, 1800.

Royalty was to the front again, the Duke of Clarence, afterwards "Good King Billy IV.," but the Prince of Wales was prevented from viewing the nose bleeding on this occasion, he being kept at home at Carlton House from the same complaint with which he suffered frequently and severely. All the "toffs" whose names we have often introduced were present, for not to have visited the Championship fight would have been considered quite as bad as absenting oneself from Ascot or Goodwood now. Our friends, the Right Hon. William Windham, Lord Albemarle, Colonel Fitzpatrick, the Hon. John Ponsonby, Colonel North, Sir Charles Bampfylde, and, of course, Colonel Hanger were there. General Tarleton is also mentioned as being present. He had just returned from Portugal, where he had been striving to forget the loss of the beautiful and accomplished Mrs. Robinson, the "Perdita" to whom he was sincerely attached, and who had turned the heads of half the society men in London, including the King himself, and whose delightful literary work and acting had made her a great favourite with the public.

"But who can paint her feeling heart,

Her taste so pure, refined?

No pen sublime, no pencil's art,

Can show her polished mind."

So wrote an Oxford undergraduate about Mrs. Robinson in the February of 1793 on seeing her portrait. Lord Camelford, of course, was there with his dog Trusty and his faithful mulatto "minder," Bill Richmond, who did some good work in the Ring, and about whom we shall have something to say in chapters to come. And then there were present also (according to a newspaper of the time we have before us) Lord Say and Sele, Lord Yarmouth, the Hon. Mr. Coventry, Mr. Tufton, Colonels Montgomery and Ogle, Captain Desmond, Squire Mountain, Messrs. Cullington, Lee, Kelly, and Aldridge. The professionals included John Jackson, Will Warr, Paddington Jones, Jack Bartholomew, Bill Gibbons, and a host of other well-known knights of the Ring.

The first to arrive was Jem Belcher, accompanied by his brother Ned, who subsequently cut a figure in the

ring, but was no comparison to Jem and another brother, who will in due course be introduced to our readers. According to the *Oracle*, Ned Belcher was his brother's bottle-holder, whilst the experienced Bill Warr officiated as second. Gamble, who appeared upon the ground about noon, had Mendoza for his second, and an Irish-



HENRY LEE,
UMPIRE AND BACKER OF JEM BELCHER.
(From a print 1808.)

man, named Coady, as his cup-bearer. In addition to these officials there were two others, one for each man, called in the report "deputy assistants." They were Tom Tring, the porter of Carlton House, who fought Big Ben Brain, officiating for Belcher, and Elisha Crabbe acting in a similar capacity for Gamble. The umpires

selected were Messrs. Mountain, Lee, and Cullington, the last named, as we have already stated, being the stakeholder. Much confidence must have been placed in these three gentlemen, for, as a matter of fact, all of them were staunch adherents to Jem Belcher, and they had backed him for considerable amounts.

Says the *Oracle*: "Notwithstanding Gamble had beaten Noah James, the Cheshire Champion, a pugilist who had been successful in seventeen pitched battles, and whose game was said to be superior to any man's in the kingdom, still the bets from the first making of the match were six to four in favour of Belcher; and Will Warr, before the combatants stripped, offered twenty-five guineas to twenty on the Bristol youth, but it was not taken, although on the previous day Gamble's friends and fellow-countrymen had offered 5 to 4 on him."

As they entered the ring there was a wide difference between the two men. The fine, graceful figure of Jem Belcher, seemed built more for activity than apparent strength, for the muscular development was by no means great, although his hitting power was. He stood 5ft 11½ in, an inch less than his opponent, who was over 6ft. Jem's weight was then less than 12st, whilst Gamble weighed over a stone more. The Irishman's shoulders and loins were tremendous, and his hard, muscular arms looked as if, when he brought them into play upon his antagonist, he would have a poor chance with these human sledge-hammers. Certainly, Andrew's knees were knocked, and his symmetry of figure could not compare with Jem's; yet he looked the more formidable of the two.

As they sparred before each other, Gamble appeared a bit shy, knowing that he was meeting a man of very different calibre to the trooper of the Blues, whom he had vanquished and nearly killed a few months previously. So he was excessively careful at the commencement. Jem seemed in no hurry to lead off, and at last Andrew, always impetuous, got into distance and let go the left. With the greatest ease Belcher stopped it, and before Gamble knew what was the matter he received one, two, three sharp blows in such double-quick time that he couldn't make out whence they came, and, staggering back, looked about with a serious face in wonderment. He soon, however, realised the fact that he had somebody smarter than himself to deal with, and at once made up his mind the tactics to adopt. They were to bring his weight and strength to bear, to rush in and wrestle. Getting together again he made a sudden rush and got a grip of the young Bristolian; but Jem was up to every move, for after a very brief struggle he

slipped down and terminated the round. There was a shout of delight from the Irishman's friends, who thought Belcher had been thrown, and offers of 5 to 4 on the Patlander were shouted out. But when they came to the scratch again, Gamble showed Jem's fist marks plainly on his face, whilst the latter was all smiles and absolutely unscathed.

He advanced with such spirit and confidence, and with such a determined expression in his eye that Andrew retreated, and Bill Warr shouted to his young friend "Why, he's afraid of you, Jem." Still Andrew got nearer to the ropes, until he was dangerously near, and, pausing for an instant, Belcher feinted with the right and Andrew popped up the guard, when Belcher let go the left, catching his opponent such a terrific crack that down he went, and for a few seconds lay motionless. The noise of the blow could be heard all round the ring, and it must have been something exceedingly severe for a thirteen-stone man to be felled in a simple manner like that. A roar of applause greeted the Bristol youth as he came up again, and 2 to 1 was the betting in his favour. Evidently Gamble was flabbergasted, and, besides, one eye was all but bunged up when he came back. The blow undoubtedly cowed him, and as they came up next time the Irishman had made up his mind to retreat. This he did all over the ring, followed by Belcher, and the jeers of Jem's partisans, who kept on shouting "He's afraid of you, Jem." "I know he is," replied that worthy, which made Gamble exceedingly wild. Belcher once or twice after this held his man rather too cheaply, and in consequence received a few very severe body blows. At length Jem's opportunity came, however, for his left went in smack on the Irishman's nose, the right followed with miraculous quickness, and poor Gamble's face was smothered in blood. But Andrew, who was goaded to madness by the jeers of the crowd who favoured Belcher, and by the smart volley of blows that he had received, rushed at the Bristol youth, regardless of the reception he received, and caught Jem in his arms before he could avoid him. With a tremendous effort the Irishman threw Belcher violently, and fell upon him crosswise. The Paddies' delight knew no bounds, as they greeted Belcher's fall with shouts of derision and triumph. Notwithstanding this temporary reverse, there were plenty there to offer 4 to 1 on the Bristolian, but the Irish division were not taking any.

And now the Bristolian did something that could not have raised him much in the opinion of his aristocratic friends and patrons, although it is said that all is

fair in love and war. Belcher no doubt desired to get his man completely out of temper, so he commenced chaffing him, putting his tongue out, making unseemly noises with his mouth, and generally behaving himself in a not very gentlemanly manner. Of course, the mob enjoyed this immensely, especially when it had the desired effect by getting Master Andrew in such a "paddy" that he could scarcely contain himself. Then Jem Belcher, as cool as the proverbial cucumber, went in with the determination to polish his great adversary off. Here is an account of how he accomplished it :

"With a quick step forward he was on to his man, and his blows fell so sharp and fast about the Irishman's head that he was utterly bewildered. Half blinded with the blood streaming down his face, Gamble could only hit wildly and at random, his blows met nothing but the unresisting air, whilst Jem kept pasting him mercilessly with both hands till, with a tremendous punch on the neck, he once more stretched Andrew on the turf.

"The Irishman was a pitiable spectacle : his right eye was completely closed, and all that side of his face was badly swollen, whilst the other optic was also in mourning. It was easy to see that he was utterly demoralised by the severe and rapid hitting of his foe. Jem gave him no time to recover, but set about him in a most vigorous style, welting his man all round the ring, till he finished him off with two fearful blows, one in the pit of the stomach, the other in the ribs. Gamble completely doubled up, fell backwards, and lay gasping horribly for breath. It was all over with him, he could fight no more that day, and so, after a battle which had lasted not quite ten minutes, James Belcher won the proud title of Champion of England !"

As might be expected, the Hibernian division were enraged to a fearful extent at losing their money, and some went so far as to accuse Andrew Gamble of being a party to his own defeat. Of course, this was ridiculous, for the Irishman had met a man superior in every way to himself. Still so persistent were some people in giving that as a reason for Andrew's defeat that in the *Oracle* for December 26, 1800, the following (presumably emanating from Gamble) appeared :—

"FIVE HUNDRED GUINEAS REWARD.

"BELCHER AND GAMBLE.—Whereas a report is now in circulation that Gamble sold the last battle he fought with Belcher, on Wimbledon Common, a reward of 500 guineas is now offered to any person or persons who will prove the same, to be paid on the conviction of or incontrovertible proof against the parties concerned. Any notice or evidence to that effect addressed to Z.Z.,

(post paid), No. 14, Vine Street, Piccadilly, will be immediately attended to."

Nobody was able to give sufficient proof of Gamble's guilt, so the money was unclaimed. But his friends never forgave him for not licking the young Bristolian, which, by the bye, was a rather difficult thing to accomplish, and the Irishman, not being able to get anybody to back him for a fight in London, at length left for the Emerald Isle, his own native land, where, we believe, he settled down to his trade as stonemason, and gave up pugilism. Anyhow, we bid adieu to him here.

Jem Belcher, as Champion, we shall have more to say about in the immediate future. He had, of course, won golden opinions by his victory, and had established himself in a position as Champion in a manner that nobody at his age had ever done before. He had proved that the best of the old school of boxers had no chance with him, and he did, indeed, revolutionise the style of fighting in this country, which will be seen as we further trace his career.

CHAPTER XXI.

AN IMPROMPTU DUST-UP. — WAR AT WIMBLEDON. — JEM BELCHER AND JOE BERKS. — THEIR SENSATIONAL MEETING.

THE easy manner in which Jem Belcher disposed of Andrew Gamble, as described in the previous chapter, proved very distinctly that the old style of boxer had not the ghost of a chance with this young phenomenon. There was destined to rise a new school, founded more or less on Jem's method. Yet there was one man, many thought superior, and that was Mendoza, although he was double Belcher's age, and, as we have stated before, nobody more than Jem himself desired to put this to the test.

Mendoza, however, although it will be remembered he once allowed himself to be matched with the Bristol man for six hundred guineas when he was arrested, had no intention of meeting Belcher. Besides, he had at

this time taken the Admiral Nelson, in Whitechapel, and having a wife and several children, he stuck to business, and could not be tempted to enter the Ring again. Jem Belcher frequently went down East with his friends for the express purpose of irritating Dan, so that he might pick a quarrel which would lead to the coveted battle.

On one of these visits, in company with Paddington Jones, Captain Desmond, John Cullington, of the Black Bull, in Tottenham Court Road, and Colonel Ogle, Dan had just introduced a pupil, of whom he thought a great deal. He was a co-religionist, named Isaac Bitton, and the above-named gentlemen, with a host of Mendoza's friends, went to the latter's sparring-rooms, in Capel Court, in order to see the novice trotted out. Now Paddington Jones, who, it will be remembered, had been beaten by Belcher, had become that worthy's close friend. So far was Tom from bearing malice towards the "marvellous boy" who had thrashed him, that he was loudest of all men in his praise and admiration of Jem's splendid qualities as a fighter, and when Belcher fought Andrew Gamble, Jones had put on all the money he could scrape together, and was richly rewarded for his confidence.

Jones had accompanied his friend to Mendoza's, expressly for the purpose of having the gloves on with the new man, and the Jew, delighted to show his youngster off before several West End swells, was only too pleased to let him have a turn with the veteran.

It was soon evident that rumour had not lied about the prowess of this young Hebrew, and crafty old strategist as he was, Paddington Jones found that he had met his match. Indeed, the novice was much too clever for him. This delighted Mendoza very much indeed, and his praise of the "poy" irritated Belcher and his friends greatly, so they resolved on leaving to find somebody who would take the conceit out of the Jewish division. More wild than anybody was Jones himself, and the next morning he went to Belcher and declared that if he could only get somebody to back him he would, old as he was (then six and thirty, whilst the Jew was two and twenty), fight the braggart Israelite, and thrash him. Tom was so much in earnest and so anxious to take on the job, that Jem promised to find him the backers. He spoke to Captain Desmond, Squire Mountain, Mr. Kelley, Mr. Aldridge, of St. Martin's Lane, and Dr. Moore, who were hobnobbing at his friend Cullington's house in Tottenham Court Road, and twenty guineas were subscribed and put down there and then in the parlour of the Black Bull,

Belcher being authorised to make the match. This was done, and the day fixed for the fight was Monday, the 13th of July, 1801.

Of course, it is not our intention to relate the particulars of this mill, but as certain events transpired at the meeting, which led to incidents of great importance to our Champion's career, we must ask our readers to accompany us to Wimbledon Common and observe what happened.

It is a scorching hot midsummer day, the roads are thick with dust, and the journey down is the reverse of a pleasant one. Yet many swells turn out in their stylish equipages, conspicuous amongst them being Sir Wheeler Cuffe, a new aspirant to sporting honours, who has just distinguished himself by riding his own bay horse, Old England, a scion of Lord Derby's Peter Teazle, against Mr. Parkhurst's Welter, and winning, too. His curricule, of vivid yellow, is one of the spiciest traps on the road, although as far as grandeur goes, it is beaten by the Hon. Thomas Coventry's tilbury, the latter young aristocrat having come into a colossal fortune, is determined to cut a figure in society. He has but a few days before made his appearance in the park with a carriage and six, with five outriders, and his turn-out has caused more sensation than that of royalty itself. But the week before he had lost £8,000 on a single billiard match at Margate, and is already marked down by the hawks as a pigeon that is to be speedily and ruthlessly plucked. In addition to these two stylish youths, who are the new stars in the galaxy of fashion, there are all the old stagers who never by any possibility missed attending a mill in those days.

You will recognise Sir Henry Vane Tempest and his rival plunger, Sir Richard Heathcote, little Tommy Onslow driving a "sociable" full of Guardsmen; there is Sir John Lade perched upon the box of a lofty drag which he tools with consummate skill. But you will miss a figure that is usually at his side, that of his lady, who was popularly and not unjustly credited with being his equal in the three arts in which he prided himself in excelling—to wit, driving, boxing, and *swearing*. It is no uncommon thing to see Lady Letitia Lade at a prize-fight, and the following paragraph is printed in the *Oracle* of July 14, the day following our journey to Wimbledon, "Lady Lade expresses her regret that she was not at the boxing-match on Monday last. Her spouse assured her that she was already *sufficiently expert*, and though she might not be a perfect mistress of the *cross buttock*, yet we could wager any sum that very few ladies could put in their blows with more *dexterity and effect*."

That was the way in which writers of one of the most fashionable London daily papers spoke of society ladies in those days.

But to return to the road. There are Lord Camelford very badly dressed, with his famous bull-dog Trusty, and his dusky groom, Bill Richmond, and amongst the familiar faces you will detect those of Mr. Fletcher, Reid, Alderman Harvey, Christian Combe, Alderman Macaulay, Capt. Desmond, Lord Say and Sele, Lord Delaval, Lord Tyrconnell, Squire Mountain, Colonels Ogle and Montgomery, Messrs. Cullington, Lee, Kelly, Aldridge, and a host of other notorious sporting men about town. The chosen "peoplish" have come in swarms from Whitechapel and Houndsditch, from Duke's Place, Aldgate, and from Petticoat Lane, to support the "poy Isaac," on whom they have wagered large sums of money, trusting to Mendoza's assurance that the youngster must win.

Without describing the battle, it will be necessary for us to state that before this great and brilliant company a disgraceful scene arose. The balance of the betting was in Paddington Jones' favour, the odds, after they had been fighting for some time, being 3 to 1 on Tom, whilst the Jewish East Enders became exceedingly excited, and there was the greatest difficulty in keeping the roughs out of the ring. One stalwart half-drunken individual made himself particularly obnoxious in endeavouring to force himself into the enclosure. He was a great brawny butcher from Woolwich, who had gained much notoriety there as a bruiser, and being under the influence of drink thought he could do what he pleased. On two occasions he managed to get into the arena, and was twice ejected. The third time Jem Belcher gave him a shove and sent him flying through the ropes, when the blackguard revenged himself by attacking Mr. Aldridge, of the famous horse repository in St. Martin's Lane. A general free fight ensued, and it was not for some time that sufficient order could be obtained to renew the fight. That having been done the men fought away fiercely until Tom Jones was knocked out of time by the powerful young Jew.

Just as they were leaving, a loud voice in the crowd shouted out, "Where's young Jem Belcher? Where's your champion?" Jem, peering through the crowd, recognised the big butcher who had created the row in the ring. This Woolwich infant's name was Joe Berks, and the ruffian, at the termination of the fight between Jones and Bitton, had challenged anybody present to fight him. On hearing his name called out in this manner, Belcher walked over to where the bully was,

and asked him what he wanted. The reply was a blow aimed at Jem's head. Our hero was a bit too quick for Mr. Marrowbone though, and dexterously avoiding the attack, Belcher slapped him smartly over the cheek. With a volley of oaths the intoxicated butcher yelled "Oh! you'll fight, will you?" and proceeded



JOE BERKS.

to strip himself of his white smock. Jem, smiling at the audacity of the fellow, simply buttoned up his coat and awaited the issue of events, amidst the curiosity of the crowd, which had become very thick in their immediate vicinity, anticipating some fun which was not on the programme.

They had not long to wait, for Master Joe Berks was in earnest, and rushed in furiously and fearlessly upon Jem in such a sudden and unexpected manner that the latter was quite unprepared for the strength and force which he put into the attack. For fully five minutes the two fought desperately. It was all one round; no seconds, nor scarcely room to move in, but they hammered away at each other in an extraordinary manner, until, at the instigation of some of the swell sportsmen, Bill Warr and John Jackson interfered and stopped the men, at the same time intimating that they should have the set-to properly in the ring. Here was an unlooked-for treat—the great Jem Belcher performing in the arena with a colossal unknown. As they peeled it was observable that the Bristol lad had received a cut over the eye; whilst the butcher was bleeding at the nose, and had a gash on the lip.

Into the ring they went, and everybody thought to see the tipsy, big, blustering butcher receive a rare and immediate licking. Not a bit of it though, and few could believe their eyes, for although Joe Berks did not display a knowledge of science, he soon showed that, drunk as he was, he could hit exceedingly hard, straight, and often, and that he had any amount of “divil” in him. Once the butcher brought the Champion to his marrowbones with a tremendous blow on the side of the head, and, to quote one of the chroniclers: “The bystanders were petrified. The Champion of England, the brilliant, invincible, irresistible, phenomenal Jem Belcher knocked down by a man whom nobody knew—nobody, at any rate, among the recognised patrons and professors of the Fancy! What could it mean? Could it be possible that in this big, noisy, insolent butcher they saw the man who was destined to lower the colours of the illustrious Bristol youth, and tear the laurels of the Championship from his brow?”

It would appear that Belcher was unable to keep many of the blows out. The noise, confusion, and uproar around the ring must have been fearful, for Berks had many pals from the East End, and when they saw the big butcher holding his own against the Champion they became perfectly frenzied. Jem’s friends could not make out for the life of them why he did not finish the fellow off. The only reason was that he couldn’t. At length, however, there was a look of fierce determination on the countenance of Belcher, and he was thoroughly roused. In spite of persuasion on the part of his friends not to demean himself by doing battle with the drunken ruffian, Jem went in with a will and tried all he knew. *Slash, slash, slash* went his knuckles into the bleeding

face of the butcher. Yet he stood gamely to the man of science before him. Never did Belcher look so savage, and at length, after twenty minutes' fighting in most desperate ding-dong fashion, Belcher, with a tremendous hit on the mark, settled his man, and rolled him over on the grass, and thus ended one of the most sensational turn-ups ever witnessed in connection with our Champions.

Most exaggerated reports appeared next day in the papers as to the damage sustained by Joe Berks, the *Oracle* informing its readers that the fight ended in the butcher "receiving an unfortunate blow which took off his nose and part of his upper lip," whilst the *Morning Post* announced that Berks was "so dangerously ill that his life was despaired of." This very fortunately turned out to be untrue, although the man had received some very rough handling, and, as a matter of fact, he had his nose cut by Belcher's knuckles so deeply that the scar was conspicuous for the remainder of his life.

There were some good judges present, Lord Camelford amongst them, however, who felt sure that Jem Belcher had caught a Tartar, arguing that if Joe Berks could give the Champion so much trouble whilst in a drunken and untrained condition, he might in all probability be more than a match for him if properly prepared for a good straightforward mill. So out of love of pure sport and to give a brave man fair play, his lordship determined to back Joe Berks against the Champion of England. He was, however, apparently in no particular hurry to do this, for we learn that Camelford sent the butcher first to Mendoza, with whom he was "put out to nurse," and initiated into many of the tactics of the ring, in which he was palpably deficient. He was also carefully looked after and kept in strict training, making marvellous strides in both science and physique, to the admiration of Mendoza, who detested Belcher, and to the satisfaction of Lord Camelford and his friends, who kept their intentions as secret as possible.

It was in the July of 1801 that the turn-up with Belcher occurred, and it was not until September 12 following that the match was made. We read: "On Saturday, Belcher met Berks at the Cock, in Sun Street, Spitalfields, when Jem accepted his formal challenge for 100 guineas." Seven days later, on September 19, we are informed that they met at the same house "to proceed to the battlefield." This seems very strange that the Champion should agree to fight so soon after the signing of articles, but the only explanation we can give is that both men must have been preparing some time before, and it was not until the last moment

that they were enabled to agree as to amount and fixture. However, this "promptness and eagerness on both sides," as one historian puts it, was of little avail, for when the men met at the Cock, in Spitalfields, to proceed to the battlefield, it was discovered that the police had got scent of the affair, and that a magistrate's warrant had been issued. It was consequently decided to postpone the meeting until the 12th day of October.

As it turned out this was very fortunate in one respect, for the 19th of September, the very day upon which they had settled to fight, clashed with a great sporting event, and would have deprived many of the most enthusiastic of the swell sportsmen from being present. It was the day upon which Sir Harry Vane Tempest's Cockfighter and Mr. Johnston's Sir Solomon were to run off their grand match at Doncaster. This event caused the greatest excitement in sporting circles, and so many aristocratic followers of the Fancy journeyed to the Town Moor that Messrs. Belcher and Berks must have been very thankful to the magistrate's considerate postponement, for had the fight come off on the original fixture the attendance would have been scant indeed.

Perhaps it may be interesting to our readers to give a few details of the grand match which so fascinated our sportsmen of the period. Since the famous contest between Hambletonian and Diamond no race had attracted such general attention as the coming duel between Cockfighter and Sir Solomon. Sir Harry Vane Tempest, as our readers know, was exceedingly popular in London circles of fashion and sport, whilst up in his native Yorkshire the Tykes swore by him. Mr. Johnston, on the other hand, was a rich Northumbrian squire, utterly unknown in the metropolis—had never, indeed, been further south than Doncaster, not even to Newmarket, though he was passionately fond of the Turf, and was a large breeder of bloodstock. The betting was 6 to 4 on Cockfighter. The match was for 1,000 guineas a-side, over a four-mile course, and the whole sporting world flocked to Doncaster to see it. Never before had the old Yorkshire racing town seen such a gathering of sportsmen—patrician and plebeian—never had such an excited and enthusiastic multitude assembled on the Town Moor. The Tykes, to a man, had put their money on Cockfighter, though it was a disappointment to them to see Shepherd, the Yorkshire jockey, who had piloted Sir Harry Vane Tempest's horse to victory in the St. Leger of 1799, riding Sir Solomon; whilst a stable lad was entrusted with the guidance of their pet. But there was a greater disap-

pointment in store for them, for Sir Solomon romped home an easy winner, and nearly a quarter of a million of money changed hands on the issue.

But to return to our muttons. The match between our two men was fortunately postponed, and before describing the first great battle between the Champion and Mr. Joseph Berks, to which we propose devoting another chapter, let us have a little to say about the brave butcher, who had the temerity to tackle the clever Bristol youth, and furthermore to dispute the title in the ring.

On glancing at the papers of the period, with accounts of his turn-up with Belcher, we find that he is described as "Bourke, a butcher from Woolwich," whilst Pierce Egan, in "*Boxiana*," follows suit, and states that he was an Irishman. Now this is wrong, as also the name of Burke given in the "*Chronicles of the Ring*." Joseph Berks was a native of Wem, in Shropshire, some ten miles distance from Shrewsbury, and was originally a cooper by trade, although he afterwards followed the calling of a butcher. "*Pancratia*," which is the most reliable authority upon these matters, tells us that he was a powerful, heavy-made man, six feet high, and weighing fourteen stone. Also, that on the 18th of September, 1797, he fought a severe battle in Hyde Park with "one Christian, a shoemaker, much fancied by the sons of Crispin." The "contest lasted fifty-five minutes, during which there were twenty-two rounds of severe boxing. Berks, despite a wrangle for a foul, was declared the winner."

So it would appear that Joe was not altogether the novice he was thought to be amongst the Belcher section, and with Mendoza's coaching and his plucky, determined spirit, was thought by Lord Camelford and his friends good enough to bid for the Championship.

CHAPTER XXII.

GOOD TIDINGS OF PEACE. — A RUMPUS IN BOND STREET. —

BELCHER V. BERKS, — A DESPERATE BATTLE.

THE period between the 19th of September, 1801 (the day upon which the great fight between Joseph Berks and James Belcher was to have come off, but for magisterial interference), and the altered day of the battle, October 12, is memorable in the world's history, for it was upon the 1st day of October, 1801, that the preliminaries of peace between Great Britain and France were signed. And what joy that little word "peace" brought to the hearts of our grandfathers! For fifty-one years out of the hundred composing the eighteenth century this country was at war. The French Republic had declared war against us in 1793, and from that period we had been fighting all over the globe. We were alone against many, even our own kith and kin, and when we look back we wonder how it had been possible to survive the strain. But for the wisdom of our statesmen, and the valour of soldiers and sailors, to say nothing of the fighting quality of our men, there would have been no Empire of to-day. To William Pitt and the Marquis of Wellesley; to Harris, Lake, and Arthur Wellesley; to Howe, Eliot, St. Vincent, and Nelson, backed up by the bull-dog pluck of the Britons who in the Ring and with its followers kept up the standard we were enabled to just hold our own against the hosts arrayed against us.

But never was there such rejoicing in this country as when the news came that peace was signed with France. Men and women cried like children with joy to know that mourning and misery, bloodshed and famine prices, crushing taxation and starvation fare were over and past. Throughout the whole of the country were rejoicings, firework displays and illuminations, whilst people embraced each other in the streets. In the metropolis not a window was without a candle—even the poorest would place the rushlight, and the chandlers' shops did an enormous trade. Yet there was one individual who has been on several occasions before our

readers, who declined to follow the multitude in its rejoicings, and it very nearly cost him his life. Besides which it might very likely have influenced the battle which we shall presently describe.

This individual was none other than Lord Camelford, who was supporting Joe Berks against Jem Belcher. His lordship did not approve of the peace, which he denounced as dishonourable to England, and he point blank refused to place a single light in his house. He lived in Bond Street, and all the windows in the other residences were ablaze. His alone remained in funeral darkness. The crowd at once noticed it, and howled and hooted when they knew to whom the place belonged, preparing to smash the windows. Lord Camelford, expecting something of the kind to happen, however, had stationed himself near his door with a heavy bludgeon, and immediately the first stone was thrown rushed in amongst the mob, and sent five or six stunned and bleeding to the ground. The others, taken thus by surprise, fled, and his lordship re-entered his residence. The absence of the multitude, however, was very brief, for hundreds of them returned armed with sticks and stones, and every pane of glass in the windows were smashed. In the midst of the crashing and hooting, a first-floor window was thrown up, and there Camelford stood foaming with rage, and with a great loaded holster pistol in each hand. In another instant he would have fired upon the crowd, when there is no telling what might have been the result. Fortunately, however, two friends in the room threw themselves upon his lordship and wrested the weapons from him, and forced him into a back apartment and locked the door.

On the following night Lord Camelford, who was apprehensive of another attack, engaged the services of some forty second and third-rate pugilists, and the public learning this steered clear of his house. These fighting men were looked after by Bill Richmond, who has already been introduced to our readers as his lordship's henchman. Richmond was destined later on to figure very prominently in the ring, and even aspired to championship honours. The portrait we give is from a painting by Hillman, taken some eleven years after the events happened, which we now relate. Such was the little incident which might have ended very seriously for his lordship, and lost Joe Berks his principal supporter.

At last the long-looked for day (the 12th of October) arrived, and at Enfield, where the battle was to come off, all was excitement. Besides the usual aristocratic followers of the sport, there had assembled a huge concourse of roughs and pickpockets from the lowest

slums of London. The stage which had been erected was, however, guarded by several of the leading pugilists, amongst them being "Gentleman" Jackson, Will Warr, big Tom Tring, Andrew Gamble, Bitton, Paddington Jones, and Jack Bartholomew. As time went on the crowd became very impatient, for it was nearly one o'clock, and most of the people had been standing there



BILL RICHMOND.

From a portrait by Hillman, 1812.

since ten. At length Berks made his appearance on the stage, and there was a great shout of pleasure from thousands of throats. The following is a description of the opening scene, taken from the *Morning Post* of that date:—"Berks having stripped, began to show play for the amusement of his friends, who did not forget to make the welkin ring with their plaudits. However, Belcher not ascending the stage as he expected, he

dressed himself again, amidst cries of 'Where's Belcher? Berks immediately assumed the attitude not of a fighter but of an orator, and in the following eloquent manner addressed the multitude; 'Gemmen, I com'd here, d'ye see, to fight Jem Belcher. I'm here, and he isn't. I wish he was, for, on the word of a butcher, I'd have cleaved his calf's head, and given him such a chop in the kidneys as would soon have brought him to his marrow-bones.' The report then goes on to inform us that the huge crowd, suspecting that they were going to be done out of their amusement, yelled "Where's Belcher? Bring him out; where is he? Don't keep us waiting." Again and again the demand, "Where's Belcher" went up from a thousand throats. At length Andrew Gamble jumped upon the stage, and roared out, "Where is he? Why at Bow Street, to be sure, he was grabbed on the road."

"It's a lie! It's a lie!" they shouted. "He's afraid to fight. Bring him out, bring out Belcher," But it was no lie, for the authorities had arrested Jem, and after a time the great crowd dispersed, a disorderly, disappointed lot, prepared to do their worst on the road to town, and committing many acts of robbery and violence. Now it appears that the police were much upset about the Camelford affair in Bond Street. They felt that instead of the pugilists being paid by his lordship for protection the Bow Street runners should have been engaged, so they accordingly took their revenge by spoiling the fight. There was no intimation from anybody as to a probable arrest, but on the Sunday night, the eve of the fight, Townsend, the celebrated Bow Street officer, went to Lord Camelford's house, where Belcher was sleeping, and arrested him in bed, his lordship knowing nothing of it until his return early in the morning, he having been all night at the Cocoa Tree Club.

The authorities, however, appear to have been so far satisfied with spoiling the sport, for Jem was let off on his own recognisances to come up when called upon. Camelford was furious over the affair, and swore very severe against the police, who only chuckled at him, for they knew that they could touch him on no more tender point than his love for bruising. After this the strictest secrecy was observed by those promoting the fight, and it was not until the afternoon before that the "office" was given, and then only to a chosen few. On Tuesday, 24th of November, 1801, Jem Belcher and Joe Berks, attended by their seconds and a few friends, left London stealthily in closed carriages, and drove to Maidenhead. Belcher put up at the Sun, and Berks at the Bear. After they had left London the news became circulated, and

an intense and sudden excitement was created amongst followers of the Fancy. To the surprise of the men and their friends, carriages of all descriptions came rolling in to Maidenhead as early as nine o'clock, and before noon all the high-class sportsmen of London had arrived on the scene. One thing, the roughs had not been able to get there, and never had there been such a gathering of the *crème de la crème* of the sporting world since "Gentleman" Jackson fought Dan Mendoza seven years previously.

Early in the morning men were at work erecting the stage upon which the combatants were to appear under the direction of Bill Gibbons and Paddington Jones. The locality selected was Hurley Bottom, about four and a half miles from Maidenhead, a place most conveniently situated to avoid capture, as it is upon the borders of no less than four counties, and a bolt could easily be made into Bucks, Berks, Middlesex, or Oxon.

According to the reports published at the period, soon after eleven the men left their respective inns and were driven to the field of battle, followed by an immense cavalcade of horse, foot, and carriage folk. Sir Thomas Apreece was chosen referee, John Cullington was umpire for Belcher, and Mr. Lemon Hart, the great Navy rum contractor, was for Berks. Whilst these preliminaries were being settled, Belcher mounted the stage, accompanied by that prince of seconds, Joe Ward, and a Bristol lad (probably Jem's brother Ned) as bottle-holder. He was shortly followed by Berks, and Jem at once stepped up to him and extended his hand, and said with a laugh, "Well, Mr. Berks, you can't complain that I've kept you waiting *this* time. I'm here all ready." "Aye, aye," said the big Shropshire man; I'm glad to see as thee means to fight to-day." "Oh," replied Jem, with a frown, "it was no fault of mine that I didn't meet you before, and you know that very well."

Harry Lee, boniface of the Black Horse, in Oxenden Street (afterwards Owen Swift's house), was Berks' second, and his bottle-holder was a friend named Rhodes. Betting 2 to 1 on the Champion as the men stepped into the centre of the stage and shook hands before proceeding to hammer each other for the glory of the title of Champion of England.

Berks when stripped appeared to be a much bigger man than Belcher, and certainly was the more powerful looking man of the two. He had been splendidly trained, and there wasn't a superfluous ounce of flesh upon his body. In fact, by all accounts he was in the pink of condition, and Mendoza had done his work most creditably. He, as we have stated, stood six feet in

height, and weighed on this occasion 13st—a most formidable antagonist. The broad scar which Jem Belcher's fist had left across his nose by no means added to his beauty, which was not quite of a class that a member of the fair sex would fall in love with at first sight.

Belcher, who had been most careful in his preparation, scaled about 12st, and was just a trifle shorter than his opponent, being 5ft 11½in. There was no great development of muscle about Jem's frame, but it was splendidly symmetrical, and every movement of his limbs, as he sparred before his adversary, gave evidence of his extraordinary agility. And here we may mention that only a few days before the fight we are about to describe, Belcher gave what was considered a marvellous exhibition of his lissomeness, by throwing a stone a distance of 140 yards with his right, and 120 yards with his left hand, Captain Barclay having wagered him £10 that he could not throw a stone over 100 yards with each hand.

As they faced each other it was observed that Berks shaped infinitely better than he had done four months previously when he had his turn-up with Belcher; yet there was a wide difference in their styles. However, that was of little consequence, for it was at once evident that the Shropshire man's game was slogging, and not boxing, for after one or two unimportant passes he dashed in at Belcher like a bull at a gate. The Champion was hardly prepared for such a vigorous attack, and to the surprise of everybody, received a straight, heavy blow under the right eye, which sent him staggering back. There was a frantic yell of joy from the Shropshire man's division, and Mendoza rubbed his hands with glee. "What had come over Belcher?" he enquired. "Where was all his cleverness? Bah!" And then the layers of odds looked exceedingly glum, for the butcher came again with a rush, and over went Belcher with Berks on top of him.

In the succeeding three rounds the fighting seemed pretty equal, but those who were near to the stage could observe that whilst Joe's face was already decorated, there wasn't a mark visible save a redness under the eye upon the Champion's face. It was evident to the careful observer that Jem was playing with his man. This was particularly palpable in the fifth round, when Belcher feinted with his left, drew his opponent's blow, which fell harmless, and then delivered his right full on Joe's big nose with such terrific force that it laid open the old scar, and blood rushed from it as he went down flat on his back.

The tremendous roar which went up from the spectators proved that they recognised the fine stroke, and everybody knew then that Belcher was himself again, that peerless fighter that his previous victories had shown him to be. The followers of Berks, including Mendoza, could not help acknowledging to themselves that their man was decidedly outclassed, and that his only chance of defeating the Champion was in getting a lucky blow in during one of his rushes, which might disable Jem. Offers of as much as 10 to 1 were made, but nobody was rash enough to accept, whilst Lord Camelford was proof against the chaff of Sir Henry Vane Tempest and Mr. Fletcher Reid, Belcher's backers.

The Shropshire man was somewhat shy after this tumble over, and showed no disposition to come to close quarters in the next round, Belcher, however, perfectly cool and unflurried, quietly stalked after him across the ring and watched his opportunity carefully. It came sooner than he expected, for Berks flurriedly left himself open and Jem, as quick as lightning made a spring, so quick and sudden, that it startled those near the platform, and landed his right fair between the eyes, sending him down in a manner like one of his own beasts being pole-axed. There was a deep gash across the bridge of the nose of the unfortunate Berks, and the blood, says one account, literally gushed from the wound, defying all Harry Lee's efforts to staunch it.

Any odds on Belcher after this and no takers. Joe Berks was naturally more shy than ever, and in the succeeding two rounds slipped down immediately Jem struck him, and the crowd yelled at him to stand up and fight, calling him coward and much stronger names. Yet Berks certainly had no sign of cowardice in his nature; he was outclassed, and he knew it. He was as brave and determined a fellow as ever stripped for a fight, and he proved it to those who had abused him by his action in the ninth round. Joe had perfectly realised that he did not stand the ghost of a chance with his fists against his brilliant opponent, and that the only way to save the fight was to bring in his superior strength at wrestling, when, if he could throw Jem upon the hard boards of the platform, he might turn the tide in his favour. Fortune favoured him, for the next time he rushed in, Belcher missed a slashing blow, and the Shropshire man had him tight in his embrace round the waist. The struggle was desperate, but the heavier weight of Berks at length told, and Belcher was thrown heavily to the planks, with his opponent on top of him. It was a most severe shaking that he experienced, and

on coming up for the tenth round the Champion was very unsteady. Berks, seeing his condition, tried the same tactics, and was again successful, and in the hugging match which followed got Belcher down no less than three consecutive times. The faces of Berks' backers brightened, for there was just a chance for their man, who, now elated by these successes, and encouraged by the cheers of his friends, took heart of grace and attacked his foe with more fury and resolution than he had done throughout the whole of the battle.

The fighting was terrific on both sides, but Joe Berks, in his desperation, had forgotten all that Mendoza had taught him, whilst Jem concentrated the whole of his great scientific knowledge upon the situation. Joe delivered round-arm blows, which when they got home fell practically harmlessly on his shoulders or back of the neck. Belcher sent his in like arrows from a shaft, slashing the Shropshire man's face, and painting him like a Red Indian. So desperate and exciting must have been the battle at this period that the spectators were wrought up to a frenzied pitch of enthusiasm, and there was continuous shouting, as one writer puts it, "like the roar of Niagara, so deafening that a man could not hear his own voice in the general Babel." Again Berks dashed in and held his man, but he had lost his strength from the great exertion and flow of blood, and this time Belcher threw him with a thud, his heavy weight upon the stage causing every board to start.

The Shropshire man came up very slowly to the call of "Time," and he must have been a pitiable object with bruised ribs and bleeding face and half-closed eyes. Furthermore, he had lost his head entirely, and rushing in he stooped and caught Belcher by the leg. Cries of "Foul! foul!" now rent the air, but Belcher, cleverly hooking his left round Joe's neck, rattled some smart half-arm blows in until Berks was compelled to release his hold. Belcher placed the right and left in with startling rapidity until, to quote our historian, "his opponent's face was hidden in a mass of blood." He then tripped Berks up, and that worthy went down upon his back heavily.

The butcher was now hopelessly beaten, and even Mendoza advised him to give in; but the brave Joe would have another attempt. He could hardly walk to the scratch, whilst Belcher seemed to be as cool, strong, and fresh as ever, as he stepped up to his now exhausted adversary. "Gently with him, Jem," cried Gentleman Jackson, and Jem with a pretty smile, went up to him and with open hand pushed him on the chest, and he fell once more upon his back.

It was all over, only Berks would not acknowledge his defeat, and begged to be allowed to have one more round. Lord Camelford, however, called upon Lee to take the man away, at which the second called upon Rhodes, Joe's bottle-holder, to throw up the sponge, and a great shout was raised by the multitude as James Belcher was hailed the winner of this hard-fought battle, which had lasted about half an hour, and entitled Jem still to call himself Champion of England.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THREE THOUSAND POUND MATCH.—JEM BELCHER AND JOE BERKS. — A LUST-UP AT CAMBERWELL FAIR. — THEIR FINAL BATTLE.

AFTER the battle between the above warriors, which we described in our last chapter, and which caused so much excitement at Hurley Bottom, Mendoza, who had, it will be remembered, backed the Shropshire butcher, received a challenge from Belcher to fight the Jew within a month, staking 300 guineas to the other's 200. The ex-Champion, however, wrote saying that he had given up the pugilistic profession, for he had to support a family of six children and attend to his business as the landlord of the Lord Nelson, in Whitechapel. He, however, added that there was only one man he would fight, and that was Jackson, whose unhandsome and unfair conduct in their previous contest had excited his indignation. He declared that at all costs he was willing to meet Jackson for 100 guineas, with a proviso that the latter would not avail himself of what Mendoza stigmatised as the "base and cowardly advantage of holding his antagonist by the hair."

Of course the latter part of his letter was laughed at, for although Jackson did, as we recorded when describing the fight, clutch the Jew's hair, it was certainly

Mendoza's fault for not having had his hirsute adornment cut, for the Hebrew was evidently so proud of his black curly locks, that even before a fight he would not sacrifice them. Gentleman Jackson took not the slightest notice of this challenge, and treated the whole thing with contemptuous silence. This he could well afford to do, seeing that he had for three years kept himself open to accept the challenge of any man in the world, and Mendoza had not replied.

The little excitement that was created on account of these two challenges, however, was quickly supplanted by a matter that cropped up, being the result of the battle between Berks and Belcher alluded to above. A few days after the affair the Earl of Radnor, as Lord Lieutenant of the county of Berkshire, issued warrants for the apprehension of James Belcher and Joseph Berks as combatants, and Henry Lee and Joe Ward as seconds, "for unlawfully assembling and publicly fighting at Hurley, in the county of Berkshire." They were taken into custody; but, all having substantial friends (save Berks), they were bailed out. The poor butcher, who had received such a thrashing, was deserted by Mendoza in the hour of need, and, strangely enough, not one of the Corinthian patrons of the Ring came to his rescue, so the unfortunate fellow, suffering physically from the punishment he had received, had to put up with lodgings in the common gaol at Reading.

We can scarcely believe that Belcher and his friends could have been acquainted with the situation, or it is certain that they would never have allowed such a thing to happen. Anyhow it reflects no credit on the Jew, for he might easily, being a licensed victualler, have bailed the poor fellow out.

Well, on Friday, January 29, 1802, just two months after the battle, the culprits appeared before Mr. Bond, the magistrate then sitting at Bow Street. And here we may as well quote from the reports given at the time, in order to give a specimen of the style in which his worship conducted these inquiries. Mr. Bond having elicited the fact that Belcher was a butcher in Hungerford Market (for the Bristol man followed his old trade at the time), the magistrate called for his bail, they being Mr. Thomas Brown, gentleman, of Whitcombe Street, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, and a Mr. Evans. When the latter presented himself, the following colloquy ensued, which we will give as printed:—

The Magistrate: "Your name is Evans, I am informed. As all you fighting men are strangers to me, favour me with your Christian name."

"Philip, your worship."

"Pray, Philip Evans, what are your pursuits in life? I mean what trade or profession are you?"

"I am an oyster merchant, and live in Hungerford Market."

Having satisfied himself on this point, the magistrate proceeded :-

"We now come to Mr. Ward, who acted as second in this contest. It is very remarkable that I have not had the honour of knowing any of the fighting men before me. They have never yet come within my boundaries. Your name is Joe Ward? Pray, what trade do you follow, or how do you live?"

"I'm a blacksmith, and live in the neighbourhood of Sloane Street."

"Have you got bail? 'Tis strange that such a distinguished personage lives in my neighbourhood without my knowledge of the fact!"

"I have got bail, and with submission to your worship there are many strange things in your neighbourhood that neither you nor any of the magistrates are acquainted with."

"Pray, what age are you, Mr. Ward? This question, if not interesting to the Bench, is at least so to the fighting world."

"Fifty-six, sir."

"Have you always followed this boxing vocation? At your time of life your attention ought to be directed to other objects."

"I sometimes take a spar, sir, and I sometimes attend meetings; but I'm a plain, downright blacksmith."

"Come, sir, I'm not here to carry on an unnecessary conversation with you. Have you bail?"

Bail, as we have said, was found, and they were all committed for trial at the Newbury Quarter Sessions, which were held six months after their appearance at Bow Street. Belcher was sorely persecuted during the whole of this period, and dared hardly attend even a boxing meeting as a spectator. Here is a quotation from a daily paper, which is a fair example:—"On Tuesday (April 6, 1802), Belcher had announced a display of the art of self-defence at a public-house called the Peahen, in Gray's Inn Lane. Gamble, Belcher, and several other pugilists of fame set to, and highly diverted an immense concourse of persons till about ten o'clock, when Mr. Bond, having received information, despatched officers, who very kindly paid them a visit and took into custody, not only the principals, but the whole of the company, and lodged them in the Compter (as the old city house of detention was then called) for the night."

One month after this, in the May of 1802, Belcher, Ward, Lee, and Berks (who had been incarcerated the whole of this time, more to the shame of the others concerned) were brought up on the last day of the Newbury Quarter Sessions. We read in the account of the trial that "Mr. Dundas, the Chairman of the Sessions, addressed the defendants. He said the prosecution was at the instance of the county, but had been removed, by writ of *certiorari*, into the Court of King's Bench. He admonished them to leave off the pugilistic profession, and particularly directed his attention to Belcher, of whose generally peaceable conduct he had heard so favourable a report. The court was very highly pleased at the respectful manner in which they had surrendered themselves to the laws of their country, and it was understood that, unless they were again sufficiently atrocious to violate them, they would not be called upon to answer their misconduct."

It is only necessary to read between the lines of that report to discover that some of the influential friends of Belcher had been to work and had successfully, to put it plainly, tampered with the law. It was a great farce, but the principal actors played their parts well. All the prisoners, indeed, looked perfectly penitent, according to the accounts, and no doubt the Chairman believed that his every word of advice was having a marvellously good effect. We wonder what he thought when he read the following paragraph, which appeared in the *Oracle* and the *Morning Post* about a fortnight later:—"Belcher and Berks have been matched at Newmarket, by Captain Fletcher and Fletcher Reid, Esq., for 200 guineas a-side. Belcher has already set off to Yorkshire to put himself in training, accompanied by Joe Ward, and Berks remains in the neighbourhood of Newmarket for the same purpose. The battle is agreed to take place within six weeks, but where or when will be kept as much a secret as possible."

The stakes, which were originally fixed, as mentioned in the above paragraph, at 200 guineas, were increased to 1,450 a-side, although it is doubtful whether this enormous sum did not include one thousand pounds, a bet between the principal backers. Nevertheless, it was the largest battle money ever contested for, save that which we mentioned in an earlier chapter between Tom Johnson and Isaac Perrin, which was 1,500 a-side. Mendoza and Harry Lee looked after Berks in training, and old Joe Ward gave Jem Belcher his breathings, and everything went well with both men, the Bristolian being favourite at 7 to 4 on. The final arrangements were made, and the day fixed for the 17th of June,

1802, the battle to take place upon a wooden stage to be erected at the little Yorkshire village of Grewelthorpe, about six miles from Ripon, between the hours of twelve and two. The object for selecting this place was that it was between the West and North Ridings, so that if magisterial interference occurred, it would be easy to move from one jurisdiction to the other.

To cut a long story short, the stage was erected, the money staked, the men were on the spot, and a swarm of spectators in position to see the great fight on this particular Thursday, June 17, 1802, and everybody was on the tip-toe of excitement. Then came an incident which dashed their hopes. Lo and behold, arrived the Dean of Ripon, accompanied by quite an army of justices of the peace. They announced their determination to prevent the fight. The crowd only jeered at them, however, for they were determined to have their day's sport, come what might. Finding that they were so determined, the magistrates ordered the town clerk to read the Riot Act, but still those assembled jeered and treated the whole matter as a joke, for there were no soldiers to hand, and the score of police had no earthly chance of arresting anybody. The Dean and the justices then retired to consider what they should do next, whilst the mob clamoured for the fight to commence.

Jem Belcher, with Joe Ward and Bill Gibbons, his second and bottle-holder, mounted the stage, and was soon followed by Berks, accompanied by Elisha Crabbe. Then came the question as to what had become of Harry Lee, who was to officiate as Joe's second. After some delay it was discovered that Lee was there, but had point blank refused, in the face of the Dean's interference, to fill the post of second, and Berks refused to have anybody else to act for him. Matters came to a dead-lock. After a tremendous squabble, interspersed with yells from the angry crowd, Belcher offered to have a friendly bout with Berks for the mere love of the thing, ignoring seconds and stake money; but the latter declined, and immediately set off in a post-chaise, amidst the groans of the multitude.

Of course, there was an end to the affair, as far as it went, and Belcher was the hero of the hour. Mr. Fletcher Reid presenting him with £50, and £5 for his expenses to London. All the papers spoke in favour of Belcher, exonerating him from blame, and condemning Berks' actions. But a letter appeared in the *Oracle and Daily Advertiser*, dated July 1, 1802, which put a slightly different complexion upon the matter. It is worth quoting word for word:—

"SIR,—The wager for which I was to have fought with Belcher at Grewelthorpe was 1,450 a-side; Captain Fletcher betting upon me, and Mr. Fletcher Reid upon Belcher. The match was to be fought between twelve and two.

"Captain Fletcher was on the stage half an hour before Mr. Fletcher Reid could make up the sum betted. Belcher did not come upon the stage until half-past one, and then appeared in boots; consequently not very likely with an intention to fight. Immediately on his coming on the stage, Captain Fletcher came to me at the house and desired me to put on my fighting dress and be ready immediately. This I did directiy. I was then asked by Mr. Fletcher Reid, 'Where is your second?' I answered, 'Let us fight without seconds, as Harry Lee has refused on account of the magistrates; for, though no man can more respect their authority, which I would not attempt to resist, I thought it would be fair enough to get a start of them.

"Mr. Bolton, of York, held the bets to the amount of 2,900 guineas. I had been in training seven weeks at Middleham, and was never in better condition. I ran and leaped with people, and always beat them. I was exceedingly well treated by the people there, and must say that Captain Fletcher behaved amazingly well, and like a gentleman to me. I told him it was not for the sake of money, but of my honour, that I wanted to fight.

"Belcher had not been ten minutes on the stage when two or three gentlemen came and told him to get off, for that the magistrates had issued their warrants. Belcher, on this, was directly going off, when I said, 'Belcher, stop and fight at all risks, and we shall see who is the best man.' I must say it is not true, as stated in some of the papers, that Belcher made no reply, but acted the part of 'Orator Mum.'

"It appears odd to me that Joe Ward was at Grewelthorpe the day before, but did not appear on the day of the fight at all. I do not wish to impute anything wrong to him, but I think it very strange. The above is a true statement, which nobody will deny, and which Belcher, if he has any regard for the truth, dare not contradict.—I am, sir, yours, &c.,

"JOSEPH BERKS."

The statements over the whole affair appear to be contradictory, for in the reports it distinctly says that Joe Ward ascended the stage with Belcher, and that the Champion was only too anxious to fight. However, it was a good thing that it so happened, for had the battle taken place there would have been an awful swoop down by the authorities.

Two months after this *fasco* an accidental meeting brought the men together again, for there had been no renewal of the challenge, and the affair was practically left to fizzle out.

At the beginning of the century Camberwell Fair was looked upon as a great saturnalia, and we have a most interesting account of the great annual scene of



TOM OWEN, JOE BERKS' SECOND.

revelry and riot of fun and frolic that took place every August upon what is now the ornamental Green. The *Observer*, of August 19, 1832, gives the following account, but the incident we are about to relate took place there just thirty years prior to this, and no doubt then the fun was much rougher than at the later period.

"CAMBERWELL FAIR.—The revels of this fair com-

menced yesterday with much spirit, notwithstanding the weather was so unfavourable. Richardson's Theatre occupies a large space of ground in the centre of the Green, and is fitted up with a degree of splendour we could not have anticipated. Alger's 'Crown and Anchor' Tavern, as usual, eclipses all others of its contemporaries; it ranges from one end of the Green to the other, and its interior is ornamented with chandeliers, variegated lamps, flags, banners, &c., which present a very splendid effect. There are numerous other sources of amusement to satiate the appetites of the public, and the Bonifaces anticipate a plentiful harvest should the weather but prove congenial."

Such is the picture of Camberwell Fair, which for years before and after—indeed, until 1855, when it was abolished—was exceedingly popular. It was on August 19, 1802, that Jem Belcher, accompanied by a few friends, went to enjoy "all the fun of the fair." Almost the first person to meet them was Joe Berks, who, as was frequently the case, had been drinking not wisely but too well. The Champion's attention was attracted by hearing his own name several times, for Berks was explaining to a crowd of admirers how he would have thrashed Belcher, had he not "cut it," over their fight in Yorkshire. Now this was more than Jem could stand. Quite colly he pushed his way through the crowd, and asked Berks what he meant. The reply was, it is related, as follows:—"Mr. Belcher, I'm a man as sticks to my word; what I say I mean, and to show you that I'm not bragging for nowt, I'll fight you now—here, this minute." So it was arranged that the two men should go to the back of the Cock Tavern and have a turn on the bowling-green, for Belcher's blood was up, and the other man, as we have said, was half drunk.

Amongst the pugilistic friends of the two present were Will Warr, Joe Ward, and Harry Lee, who followed, together with a number of others, to see fair play. But those who had been standing near soon spread the news that there was to be a dust-up in the grounds of the tavern, and a wild rush was made until the doorways were jammed by the crowd, and fortunately ingress as well as egress prevented.

They were quickly at it, Berks having gone in advance and whipped off his coat and shirt. Belcher was following suit, when the half-drunken Joe attacked Jem whilst he was peeling. There was a cry of "Shame!" "Foul!" and Warr and Ward tried to prevent them from getting on with the fight. As Berks rushed in again, Belcher was steady and ready, and caught his

man full in the face, following up the blow with a shot under the left ear, which sent the Shropshire man upon his beam ends.

That was enough. Everybody then agreed that it was no place or time for such an encounter, and Berks, being dazed with the couple of blows and the drink, was easily persuaded to defer business until the following day, when it was arranged that they should be at Harry Lee's house, the Black Horse, in Oxenden Street, Leicester Square, at noon.

The news soon spread that the two old antagonists had thus by accident come together once more, and that they had fixed the following day for the purpose of settling their difference. So on the morrow there was quite a formidable assemblage of sports, amongst them Mr. Fletcher Reid, who had been informed of the fracas by Belcher the previous night. Nobody, however, came to support Berks, and there was a suggestion of postponing the fight, only that the two men were in such earnest and so desirous of settling the affair that they declared that they were ready to fight for love. Then Mr. Cook, Mr. Reid, and a few others volunteered to subscribe a purse, everything was arranged, and the party went off quietly to the place selected, viz., Tyburn Turnpike.

By one o'clock they had assembled in a large field immediately behind St. George's Chapel, which faced Hyde Park. Of course there was no stage erected, neither was there a roped arena; but a huge ring was formed by those assembled. No time was lost, and Mr. Aldridge, who had been appointed referee, entered the ring, and after announcing that £30 had been subscribed, called the men into the enclosure.

Belcher was supported by Joe Ward and Bill Gibbons, as second and bottle-holder, whilst Berks had for his second Tom Owen, whose portrait we produce, and who will at future periods figure a good deal amongst the characters we shall describe, and his bottle-holder was an individual nicknamed "Yokel, the Jew," but whose real cognomen we are unable to ascertain.

It is not our intention to describe the battle in detail. The style of the Shropshire man's fighting was the same as when he appeared before. His experience had taught him that the only chance he possibly could have was by playing the rushing game.

Round after round they fought, and Jem Belcher went down several times with a good shaking; but he always managed to get in some slashing blows, and there could be no doubt who was the better man. The tenth round must have been an exciting one, and we quote a description made of it by an eye-witness:—

"Berks set to with spirit, and came to close quarters. Belcher put in some awful hits, and struck unusually sharp; he cut Berks under the left eye, then under the right, and thirdly planted a most dreadful blow between the throat and the chin—so severe that it lifted Berks off his feet, and his head came first to the ground. Belcher fell from the force of his own blow, and as they both lay, the blood gushing from Berks' throat, he collected it in his mouth and squirted it over Belcher. This Jem did not relish, and swore he would pay him for it in the next round. Berks, however, declared he did not do it intentionally."

This curious description goes on to say that this was the Shropshire man's last effort, for although they fought three other rounds, it was all over with Berks. Indeed, whilst on the ground he would have expressed his willingness to give in, only that Tom Owen crammed a handkerchief into his mouth and stopped his utterance.

"Take him away," was shouted from all sides. He was scarcely able to see or stand, and was shockingly cut about the face. At last Joe Ward asked him if he would give in, and he murmured "Yes," and Jem Belcher was proclaimed conqueror for the fourth time over the desperate fellow who had more pluck than science. His friends placed him in a hackney-coach, and he was driven home to his residence near Grosvenor Square.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE DAYS OF DUELLING.—STARTLING DEATH OF A GALLANT OFFICER ALL THROUGH A DOG.—BELCHER LOSES HIS BEST PATRON.—JEM BELCHER AND JACK FIRBY.—THE BRISTOL MAN'S LAST VICTORY.

A few days after the battle in which Belcher finally vanquished Joe Berks, as described in the last chapter, Mr. Fletcher Reid gave a dinner at the One Tun in Jermyn Street, or, more correctly speaking, in a narrow court leading from that thoroughfare into St. James' Market. A number of the professors of boxing were invited, amongst them the two late antagonists. Berks

was in a shocking plight, but he entered an appearance, and Belcher turned up later. On the latter entering the room, Mr. Fletcher Reid, as soon as the applause which welcomed the Champion had subsided, stood up and made the following remarks, according to a report we have before us :—" Now, Berks, you're a good fellow and a brave man. You've fought Belcher four times. Now, come, confess you've no chance of ever licking him." Berks grinned and said, " Yes, master, Jem's a bit too good for *me*, I reckon." " Then why not shake hands and be friends?" " I've no objection," said Belcher, stepping forward. " And I've nowt to say agin it," rejoined Joe, holding out his hand, which the Champion shook heartily. From that time Joe Berks and Jem Belcher were the closest friends.

This satisfactory little episode occurred in the August of 1802. We now wish our readers to accompany us to the same celebrated hostelry some eight months later. The One Tun was for many years the rendezvous for the patrons of pugilism, and stood on the site where now is the Criterion. As our readers will remember, the tavern was popular since the time of Figg and Broughton, and was at the beginning of this century kept by our old friend William Warr, Belcher's patron, and once an aspirant for the Championship.

On this particular occasion which, to be exact, was on the evening of Tuesday, the 5th of April, 1803—a jolly party of thorough sports have assembled, for there is important business on the *tapis*. On the morning of the same day there has been a foot-race against time by Joe Berks, the butcher, for Mr. Fletcher Reid had backed Belcher's late opponent to run from St. James' Market to Chalk Farm and back within the hour. That worthy has accomplished the feat, and has received a handsome reward, for he did it in forty-six minutes, and pockets twenty guineas for his trouble.

The party is by no means a large one, but some of the best sports of the day are present, amongst them the above-named gentleman, his namesake, Captain Fletcher, the Hon. Lumley Saville, who has just given Mr. Johnson 1,000 guineas for his horse, Sir Solomon, the Hon. Cavendish Bradshaw, Sir Henry Vane Tempest, the Hon. Berkeley Craven, Lord Say and Sele, Squire Mountain, Colonel Ogle, and Colonel Montgomery, who had become Jem Belcher's most enthusiastic supporter.

The object of the meeting is to definitely settle the time and place for the great match that had been made by the Champion Belcher and Jack Firby, " the Young Ruffian." " Monty," as the Colonel was facetiously called by even the Prince of Wales, who was one of his

most steadfast friends, was a lover of the fistic art, and although only eight-and-twenty was one of the most conspicuous and dashing dandies of the day. As soon as it has been definitely settled that the battle shall take place at the coming Newmarket Craven Meeting, the young officer offers to back Belcher against the other man and lay £600 to £400, declaring that he would drive the Champion to Newmarket in his own curricule. Captain Fletcher, who is backing Firby, immediately takes the bet, and the arrangements being practically settled, the glasses go merrily round, and the meeting does not break up until long after midnight, Colonel Montgomery being the life and soul of the party.

Little did those assembled on that occasion, though, dream that it was the last time that they should see the gallant officer alive. As he was such a strong supporter of the Champion, perhaps we may be permitted to relate the incident which brought his existence to such a sudden and unexpected end. The morning after the meeting at the One Tun, the Colonel, as was his custom, mounted one of his horses and rode into the Park, accompanied by a favourite Newfoundland dog, almost a puppy. He had not proceeded far when another larger, stronger, and older dog of the same breed set upon the Colonel's dog, which was, as a matter of course, getting much the worst of it. Montgomery dismounted and endeavoured to separate them. But let us give the account as it appeared. The Colonel said :

"Who owns this brute? If he isn't called off I'll brain him."

A gentleman rode up and said, "The dog is mine, sir."

"Well, call him off, or I'll knock him down with my whip."

"Please to recollect, sir, that he is *my* dog," said the other.

"I don't care whose dog he is. I say I'll knock him down if he attacks mine."

"Then, sir, you must knock *me* down too."

"That is as may hereafter happen," retorted the Colonel. "Why don't you get off your horse and pull your dog away?"

"I beg you to understand, sir, that I'm not accustomed to be spoken to in such an arbitrary fashion."

"Well, sir, if you're offended, there's my card, and you know where to find me." And so saying, the Colonel threw his card insolently to the other, and, whipping the other dog off and whistling to his Newfoundland, rode off.

It transpired that the gentleman was a hot-headed sea captain, named Macnamara, and commander of His Majesty's ship *Cerberus*. He sent a friend to wait upon

Montgomery, and they agreed to meet on the same evening, at six o'clock, at Chalk Farm, just at the foot of what is now known as Primrose Hill. Both were good shots, so pistols were agreed upon. At the signal they fired, both of them falling hit, the Irishman with a bullet in the groin, and the Colonel with one through his heart. The affair naturally caused quite a sensation at the time, for the gallant officer was much respected and loved. The Prince of Wales, when the news was brought to him, was said to have wept bitterly, and the Duke of York was terribly cut up, as the officer had served in two campaigns with him, and greatly distinguished himself.

But perhaps the man who felt it most keenly was Jem Belcher, who was away training at the time. He had lost a true and valued friend—one who had shown such interest in him, and in the fight that was to come off.

But to our subject, when we will devote a few lines to Mr. Jack Firby, whose portrait appears. Originally a waiter at the London Tavern, he was first brought into notoriety amongst ring-goers by a sensational battle he had with Symonds, "the Old Ruffian," in 1791. This battle was long remembered as one of the most tremendous exhibitions of hard hitting ever given in the ring, and Master Jack gained much good opinion by his victory. And here we may mention that neither of these men was nick-named "Ruffian" on account of rude, uncultivated manners, but because in the fight referred to they went about the business in such a surprisingly rough-and-ready manner.

In the following year Firby increased his reputation by defeating Tom Tyne, who, although lighter than his antagonist, was looked upon as a very clever and tricky boxer. Then came Jack's downfall, as he was beaten by Jack Bartholomew in 1795, which apparently put a check to his pretensions to first-class fighting. Since then he had not appeared as a principal in the ring, but it was rumoured by those who constantly boxed with him that he had vastly improved. So much so that Captain Fletcher—who, it will be remembered, found the money for Berks for his fight with Belcher—believed that "the Young Ruffian" was able to take the Champion's colours down. Indeed, it was at the instigation of Mr. Fletcher Reid and the Captain that the match was made, although Belcher at first declined on account of the indictment against him still holding good.

At length, however, his scruples were overcome, and he went into strict training at the old Kensington Gravel Pits, under the charge of Bill Gibbons, whilst Firby was put under Jack Bartholomew at Brentford.

It was not until Sunday, April 10, 1803, that the two warriors arrived at the land of gee-gees, the battle being arranged to take place on Tuesday, the 12th. Newmarket in those days was patronised by all the nobility and gentry, and to judge from the list of visitors to the Craven Meeting, given by the contemporary



JACK FIRBY ("THE YOUNG RUFFIAN").

journals, more than half the peerage must have been represented at the Metropolis of the Turf. No doubt many were attracted as much by the coming fight as by the racing, for it was assuredly a most important event. It was intended to bring the battle off early in the morning upon the Heath, and there was no reason to expect any

magisterial interference, for there were some very "big pots" who had promised their patronage, although the Duke of Grafton and Lord Claremont had raised objections, and had declared that it was their intention to do all in their power to prevent it. It was with anger and regret, therefore, that on the Monday the following notification was published :—

"Newmarket, April 11.

"To the Constables for Suffolk and Cambridge, resident in Newmarket and elsewhere.

"Whereas, it appears from the public papers that a meeting for the purpose of boxing is intended to take place near Newmarket, in violation of the peace—We, the undersigned magistrates of the counties of Suffolk and Cambridge, do hereby order the said constables resident in Newmarket to give notice to Belcher and Firby (the supposed names of the combatants) that it is our determination to use every legal method to prevent the said unlawful meeting from taking place in either of the above counties.

"(Signed) EASTON, Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk.

"SID. AFFLECK.

"EDW. WILSON.

"JAS. THEO HAND.

"COLONEL JEFFERSON."

This was a pretty fine state of affairs, and a meeting was organised amongst those most interested to discuss the best way to act. It was determined that news should be put about that in the face of the magistrates proclamation it would be madness to fight, and therefore the men would leave Newmarket on the same evening. It was only a blind, for at a later and more silent meeting it was decided that they should depart peacefully, drive into the county of Essex, pitch the ring and bring off the mill as quietly as possible.

So at seven o'clock Jem Belcher, who was staying at the George and Dragon, drove off in a post-chaise, accompanied by Bill Gibbons and Joe Ward, his second and bottle-holder, accompanied by Mr. Fletcher Reid, who, it will be remembered, was Jem's principal backer. Following them shortly afterwards came Jack Firby, with Bartholomew and Berks and Captain Fletcher, whilst bringing up the rear was a goodly array of carriages, coaches, tilburies, and curricles, evidently belonging to the swells who preferred pugilism to racing. They made their way along the London Road until coming to Bourne Bridge, when they turned off to the left and passed through Linton. Travelling on about half a mile further (then being some fifteen miles from Newmarket), they thought themselves safe, so turned off

the main road on to a piece of common ground, where Bill Warr and Bill Gibbons set up the ropes and stakes.

Squire Mountain was chosen referee, and at nine o'clock all was ready for the men to enter the arena. Before they did so, Mr. Fletcher Reid, accompanied by his cousin, the Captain, stepped forward and informed the men that besides the stakes a purse of 100 guineas had been subscribed by the noblemen and gentlemen present, who wished the combatants to decide how the money should be apportioned. After a brief conference between them they elected that ninety guineas should go to the winner and ten to the loser.

There were only about three hundred people gathered around the ring when the men entered, and from a list before us we mention the names of a few to show how the aristocracy patronised pugilism at this period: Sir Harry Vane Tempest, Lord Say and Sele, the Hon. Lumley Saville, the Hon. Cavendish Bradshaw, Mr. Ashburnham, the Duke of St. Albans, the Marquis of Titchfield, the Earl of Jersey, Lord Villiers, Lord Henry Fitzroy, Lord Charles Somerset, Sir John Shelley, and Mr. Delane Radcliffe. Besides these were Colonel Whalley and Lord Camelford, the latter having just returned from Paris, where report said that he had been very successful at the gaming tables, having netted the nice little sum of £20,000.

Such were the names of some of the sportsmen who had gathered round to see James Belcher and John Firby contend for the Championship of England. The betting was 6 to 4 on the Bristol man. As they stood up stripped in the ring, the disparity in their sizes must have been very noticeable, for Firby was a fine, strapping fellow, standing 6ft 1in and weighing 15st, whilst Belcher's height, it will be remembered, was 5ft 11in, and his weight but 12st. Belcher was, however, in much better condition than his opponent, who could easily have trained off a stone of his weight to advantage.

For quite a minute not a single blow was struck, and the spectators waited in breathless excitement. At last Jack Firby made a desperate lunge at Jem's head, which that worthy dexterously ducked, thereby avoiding the blow, whilst he immediately returned with left and right upon Jack's face. The latter ran in and held Jem in his iron grip, raised him, and threw him as if he were but a bag of feathers. There was a tremendous yell from "the Young Ruffian's" friends, and certainly the severe treatment did the Champion no good.

Still Belcher did not appear much the worse for it as he came up for the second round, and one account says that before Jack could make up his mind what to do Belcher

nailed him on the mouth with such severity that the blood instantly gushed out in a perfect torrent, and quick as thought Jem sent his right in the ribs, with a smash that knocked "the Ruffian" clean off his pins. Ponderous Jack came up with a very serious expression on his broad, good-natured face, and determined not to allow Jem to steal a march upon him again. But Belcher tried a little trickery. He feinted with the left, shot out his right, and following up smartly, rattled away at half-arm with such rapidity that Firby was fairly nonplussed, and after a feeble and ineffectual defence, fell with the blood running in streams down his face.

And so they went on, Belcher gradually getting the best of it. At the sixth bout a correspondent of the *Sporting Mirror*, who was an eye-witness, writes:—"It now became apparent that Belcher's strength increased, whilst that of his adversary was much exhausted."

Only eleven rounds were contested, but they fairly electrified the spectators. Belcher drove "the Young Ruffian" round and round the ring, putting in blows with astonishing rapidity. Firby was as helpless as a child before him, and was finally sent down on the broad of his back with a fearful right-hander on the jaw. His seconds, Berks and Bartholomew, respectfully suggested to Captain Fletcher that their man should be allowed to fight no more, and that gentleman at once acquiesced, so Jem Belcher was proclaimed victor, and still retained the Championship.

Jem was only a young man, twenty-two years of age, and had carried all before him, and few dreamed, who saw him polish off the great Jack Firby, that it would be his last victory. Such, however, was the case, and it will be our painful duty to tell in the next chapter how Jem Belcher met with a serious accident and had to resign the championship, and although he fought two more battles with good men, he failed to hold his own. Everything went against him, as all had gone for him up to that period, and his star descended as rapidly as it had ascended.

CHAPTER XXV.

BELCHER'S CHAPTER OF ACCIDENTS.—HE RETIRES FROM THE CHAMPIONSHIP.—INTRODUCING THE "GAME CHICKEN."
—MILLING AT MIDNIGHT.

WE shall now shortly come to a name upon the roll of our British Champions which belonged to a man whose extraordinary yet brief career as a prominent pugilist stands out alone amongst the long list. Henry Pearce, known as the "Game Chicken," from the reason that his friends contracted his first name to "Hen.," appeared in the London ring in 1804, fought six battles, winning them all, and died in the early part of 1809. It was a short but brilliant career that we shall have to relate. Before, however, commencing our task, we have to dispose of our friend the Champion, Jem Belcher.

When we last left that worthy it will be remembered that he had defeated the "Young Ruffian," Jack Firby, and having won all his battles had proved himself invincible, for nobody seemed capable of standing before the marvellous Bristolian. Fortune had indeed smiled upon him from the very first time he came to London. But she is a fickle dame, and at the very zenith of his fame Jem Belcher's luck was destined to turn, and that at the very moment when so much more was expected of him. He was only twenty-two years of age after his defeat of Firby, yet he had held the Championship against all comers. He was certainly a wonderful young fellow, and before proceeding to chronicle Jem's downfall let us leave our readers a picture of this smart athlete, as drawn by one who knew him well, and described him immediately after his battle with Firby. Here it is:—

"Belcher," says the writer, "is a dashing, genteel, young fellow, extremely placid in his behaviour, and agreeable in his address. He is without any remarkable appearance of bodily strength, but strips remarkably well, displaying much muscle. Considered merely as a bruiser, I should say he was not so much a man of science, according to the rules of the pugilistic art, as that he possessed a style peculiar, or rather natural, to

himself, capable of baffling all regular science, and what appeared self-taught or invented rather than acquired by practice. He was remarkably quick, springing backwards and forwards with the rapidity of lightning. You heard his blows but did not see them. At the conclusion of a round his antagonist was struck and bleeding, but he threw in his hits with such adroitness that you could not discern how the damage was done. His style was perfectly original, and extremely difficult to avoid or withstand. Indeed, like that of the great masters in every line, it was truly 'his own.' The spectator was struck with its neatness and elegance; his opponent confused and terrified by its effects; while his gravity, coolness, and readiness utterly disconcerted the fighting men with whom he was often opposed in mimic as well as actual combat. Add to this, that a braver boxer never pulled off a shirt, and we need hardly wonder at his eminent success."

The above description of Jem Belcher by one who had seen him fight all his battles up to that period is a true portrait of the fighter. Now for his misfortunes, from which he never recovered. A month after the fight alluded to above, that is to say, on the 12th May, 1803, the following was published under "Law Intelligence" in the daily papers:—"Mr. Garron this day moved for the judgment of the Court on four defendants, James Belcher, Joseph (but in the indictment erroneously called Edmund) Burke or Berks, Joe Ward, and Henry Lee, who were described as labourers. These defendants had allowed judgment to go by default. The indictment charged that they, being persons of evil and malicious dispositions, and fighters, duellers, rioters, &c., had on the 25th of November, 1802, in the county of Berks, conspired and combined together that James Belcher and Joseph Burke or Berks should fight a duel, and that the other two defendants should be aiding and assisting in the said fight or duel; and that in pursuance of the said conspiracy the aforesaid James Belcher and Joseph Berks unlawfully and riotously assembled together with fifty others, to the disturbance of the public peace; and that the said Belcher and Berks did fight a duel, with the other two defendants aiding and assisting, &c., &c."

The prisoners were defended by the learned lawyer, orator, and wit, Thomas Erskine, afterwards Lord Chancellor, and so eloquently did he plead their case that Lord Ellenborough let them off by binding them over in their own recognisances of £400 to come up when called upon for judgment. This was all very well, and no doubt a lenient way of dealing with the case. But how did it affect the Champion? It really meant

that if he fought again he would have to pay the £400, and be dealt with severely for the second breach of the peace, by, no doubt, receiving imprisonment. This made Belcher have serious thoughts of retiring from the Ring; but something happened six weeks later which proved to be misfortune No. 2, and that decided him. In fact, it left him very little choice.

On the 24th of June, 1803 he was playing rackets with a gentleman named Stuart, at the court in Little St. Martin's Lane, when the marker, returning a ball, did so with such violence that before Jem could guard his face it caught him in the eye, almost knocking it from its socket. So much did this affect him that he was taken with an attack of nervous irritability, which is said to have been uncontrollable. There was no question about his retirement after this, and in the July of 1803 we find Belcher installed as mine host of the Two Brewers, in Wardour Street, into which house his former backers and patrons had generously placed him, in order to show their sympathy after his accident.

Amongst the kindest of all was the eccentric Lord Camelford, and we read in the sporting notes of the day that his lordship not only contributed much towards Belcher's new venture, but made him a present of his celebrated dog "Trusty," which he re-christened "Belcher." This was apparently a marvellous specimen of the canine fighter. He had never been beaten, and at the time of his death, which did not take place until years after Jem possessed him, he was credited with no less than 104 victories.

There is a strange story about how Lord Camelford became possessed of "Trusty," which we may be excused for relating. The dog at one time belonged to Mr. Mellish (of whom we shall have much to say in future chapters), and his lordship took a great fancy to him. After much persuasion, Mellish agreed to take two guineas a pound for his pet. So after feeding him up with as much tender tripe as "Trusty" could devour, he was put in the scales. He weighed 42lb, so the price paid for him was 84 guineas.

Belcher, as might be expected, did a roaring trade at his sporting house, and his friends and the public rallied round him in great numbers. Of course, the first question was—who was to take the young Champion's place? With a certain amount of impudence, Berks announced that he should claim the title. Now, this hardly pleased Jem Belcher, for he had thrashed Joe four times, and he also had an idea that he would like to see the honours held by another Bristol man. Besides, since his stay in London he had received some

glowing accounts of a young chap in his native town whom he had known very well.

This was none other than Henry Pearce, to whom we have alluded at the commencement of this chapter. So Jem Belcher wrote to his fellow-townsmen, asking him to come up to London and do his best to win the Championship of England, and thereby keep up the reputation of Bristol.

"Hen" Pearce, as he always wrote his name and declared he was christened, was born at Bristol in 1777, so was twenty-six years old at this time (four years older than Belcher). Whilst serving his apprenticeship to a master butcher in his native town the lad attracted much attention for his skill at boxing. No record, however, of any engagements in the ring can be found, although Pearce before this must have had several minor battles, or Belcher never would have thought him good enough for the Championship. Naturally nobody knew anything about him in London, so when he made his appearance at the Two Brewers, and Belcher introduced him as a fellow-townsmen who could spar a bit, few looked upon the rosy-faced young man as a coming Champion.

Belcher, however, tried his young friend privately, and was quite satisfied it seems, for only two days after his arrival we learn that he was taken down to Gentleman Jackson's rooms in Bond Street to be tested, and, if found good enough, to be matched for the Championship. The "Gentleman" put on the gloves with the new arrival, and expressed himself as quite satisfied with the "Chicken's" abilities, advising that as he (Jackson) would be dining at the Clarendon on the following day with a number of sporting gentlemen and patrons of the Ring, the new comer should be introduced and a public trial be arranged. Shortly afterwards, Jack Firby came upon the scene, having been especially sent for to try conclusions with the "Chicken," and it was determined that, if possible, the trial should take place that very night, on the quiet, at the Horse and Dolphin, in Windmill Street.

But let us tell what happened in the words of Mr. Edward Hayward Budd, the famous cricketer, who was present. He writes:—"About ten o'clock at night, Pearce, who was in bed at his lodgings, near the Strand, was aroused from his slumbers by a messenger from Mr. Jackson, summoning him immediately to the above-named public-house, where he met Firby, whom he was to fight for the amusement of the gentlemen referred to. After several desperate rounds the fight terminated in favour of Pearce. The white waiscoats of the gentle-

men and the walls of the room, which was only about 10ft square, were splashed with blood, and the landlord, fearing a fatal termination on the part of Firby, had a woman in to wash the walls at night. Before leaving, Jackson told the 'Chicken' to call upon him at his rooms in Bond Street at twelve the following morning. On being asked how he felt on his appearance the next day, Pearce said he felt very well, but having been locked



HENRY PEARCE (THE "GAME CHICKEN.")

out of his lodgings he had had to walk the streets all night."

So the Game Chicken made quite an impression on his arrival. It was not, however, their policy to shout out the wonderful pluck and skill possessed by the Bristolian upon the house-tops. The little affair at the Horse and Dolphin was to be kept quiet, as those who were in the know wanted to take the odds, for it was supposed that

directly he threw down the gauntlet it would be taken up by the bold aspirant, Berks.

And now we shall have to pass on to the August of 1863, and we wish our readers to accompany us to Shooter's Hill. It is Thursday, the 11th, and there is to be a great bull-baiting day out there, to which all the members of the Fancy will journey to a man. There is an unusual concourse of people, for the weather is delightful, and the sport promises to be good. Bill Gibbons is there with his celebrated bull. He is so well-drilled that he foils all the efforts of the dogs. Accompanying old Gibbons is the "Game Chicken," who, being a stranger, has gone down to see the sport under Bill's wing. Joe Berks is also there, as usual, with more liquor aboard than is good for him, and the sight of the new claimant to the Championship (for the matter has somehow or other leaked out) stirs his curiosity and makes him frown. He is unable to get an introduction to the "Chicken," however, and it is not until the day's sport is all over that accident throws them together.

The scene of their meeting is at the Green Man and Still, in the Old Kent Road, as they are returning, for it is a favourite house of Bill Gibbons. Berks, as usual, is blustering and bumptious, and being much taller than Pearce, treats the Bristolian in quite a patronising manner. The "Chicken" is very quiet and well conducted and takes little notice of Berks' somewhat insulting remarks. It is quite evident, though, that Pearce is by no means agreeably impressed with Master Berks, and he looks as if he would have no objection to slipping off his coat and having a dust-up there and then. Joe, with a sneering laugh and a "hope to meet you again, Mr. Pearce," goes off in a dog-cart with some of his friends, for there is a match going on at the Fives Court, in St. Martin's Lane, in which the great Cavanagh is engaged, and it is there that they are to finish the day. Gibbons, also intends taking the young Bristolian there, so he and Berks are destined to meet again in a few hours. Joe has been drinking more since they left the Old Kent Road, and is pretty well drunk. He makes remarks about the "Chicken" that brings the colour to that worthy's face, but old Bill Gibbons implores him to keep his temper, and bide his time. At length the "Chicken" can stand it no longer, and it is a question of going straight for the bully there and then, or taking advice from the old adage that "discretion is the better part of valour." He chose the latter, and bids his friends good night and retires, going home to Jem Belcher's house, the Two Brewers, to which hostelry he has just shifted his lodgings. - When the "Chicken" has gone, however,

Berks becomes unbearable, insulting everybody who had taken notice of Pearce, and declaring that he could lick the yokel in two minutes. "Bring the d — d turnip-headed countryman here, and I'll settle him right off," cries Mr. Berks. Now there happens to be present a bitter enemy of the bully, and thinking it a good opportunity to see him get a thrashing, hurries over to Wardour Street and tells Jem Belcher the state of affairs. Happening to be in the bar is our old friend Mr. Cullington, who keeps at the time the Coach and Horses, in St. Martin's Lane, and he offers to provide a room in his house if the men could only be brought together.

Just at that moment who should come into the house but John Jackson, who, as usual, had been dining out with some of his swell acquaintances. He was accompanied by several gentlemen, whose names are familiar to our readers, including Mr. Fletcher Reid, the Hon. Berkeley Craven, Mr. Mellish, Lord Say and Sele, Lord Eardley, Captain Halliday, and several other well-known men about town. The question is put, and remembering the other impromptu battle with the "Chicken," they resolve to repeat the fun if possible, much against the wish of Jem Belcher, who thought that sort of thing likely to spoil the legitimate sport.

The dashing young Yorkshire squire, Henry Mellish, of Blyth, however, expressed such a desire to see the men set-to, and promised to contribute something exceedingly handsome towards the expenses, that the objection was overruled. The young squire had only just attained his majority, and come into possession of a large unencumbered property. He had about this time fairly taken the sporting world by storm. There was not a single manly sport in which he did not excel all his contemporaries. He was the swiftest amateur runner of his time, and the finest rider to hounds even amongst the "cracks" of the Midlands. As a whip, not even Sir John Slade was his superior, whilst at boxing, wrestling, and fencing he had no equal outside the ranks of professionalism. He was, moreover, an accomplished artist and musician, and as a dandy he almost out-rivalled Beau Brummel in the fastidious taste of his dress and the perfect polish of his manner. There was no mistaking the "breed" of the man as you saw him sitting behind his matchless team of browns. One writer describes the person of this fashionable young man in the following terms:—"His figure was that of a perfect athlete. He stood 5ft 10in in his stockings, and weighed just 11st 7lb. His handsome face was quite colourless, and the whiteness of his complexion contrasted strongly with his curly, jet black hair and long,

drooping black moustache. Such was Harry Mellish." No wonder, then, that his persuasion had something to do with deciding the evening's entertainment. A messenger was sent off to Joe Berks at the Fives Court, saying that Jackson and a party of swells were waiting his presence to fight Henry Pearce for a purse of fifty guineas. Now Joe was well wound up, and anxious to try conclusions with the "Chicken," although he durst not do so publicly, for it will be remembered that he, like Belcher, was bound over in £400 to keep the peace. This was a fine opportunity, then, of taking down the Bristol man, easily earning fifty guineas, and all without the slightest risk.

In the meanwhile the "Chicken" had been aroused from his peaceful slumber, as in the case of the affair with Jack Firby, and the small but select party made their way to Mr. Cullington's house, where shortly after midnight all was ready, and the men took their places in the ring. The room was not quite so small as that occupied during the fight between the "Chicken" and Firby, but the arena was far short of the regulation size. Gentleman Jackson looked after the arrangements, and acted as referee, Bill Gibbons and Joe Ward seconded the "Chicken," whilst Berks was waited upon by Gamble and Will Warr. A considerable amount of wagering on the event took place, Squire Mellish giving a taste of his quality as a plunger by laying an even thousand on the "Chicken," whom he fancied directly he clapped eyes on him.

When the men stood up the disparity in height was very remarkable. Berks was six feet, and weighed over 14st, and was somewhat clumsily built; the "Chicken," though considerably shorter and lighter than his opponent, was splendidly made, weighing about 11st 7lb, and standing 5ft 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. His chest was magnificent—45in. in circumference. Berks had a long scar across his nose, which had been given to him by Jem Belcher, and he was a bit "lushy," and when they commenced it could be easily seen that his slow, ponderous round-handed blows were of small avail against the straight, rapid hitting of his active adversary.

The space at their disposal hardly gave a chance for displaying science; it was really a question of which should hit harder and oftener than the other. As recorded the fight indeed presented few features worth mentioning. That fifteen tremendous rounds were got through in the short time of twenty minutes of the utmost excitement is all that can be said. Berks tried very hard to hammer the "Chicken," but the latter was too quick and too clever for him, and lashed out so

straight and hard that Joe was unable to keep him out, and finally a terrific blow on the forehead stretched him full length upon the floor.

Everybody thought that he was knocked out; but Berks was a plucky fellow, and he pulled himself together and once more faced Pearce. The latter, whose blood was now up, went for his man like a lion, and another equally hard-dealt blow once more laid him out, and the "Chicken" was hailed victor. The new man had proved himself a tough morsel, and a powerful hitter at his two impromptu mills, and that Jem Belcher had made no mistake in bringing him to London we shall discover in future chapters.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FIELD DAY ON WIMBLEDON COMMON.—JOE BERKS AND THE GAME CHICKEN,—A VETERAN AND THE EBONY PUG.

THE "Game Chicken's" first appearances were not in the ring proper, as our readers will understand by the foregoing introduction, but were engagements got up on the spur of the moment only. Still they were sufficient to prove that the metropolis had acquired another good man from Bristol, the town where all the best of them seemed to be bred and trained. His two opponents, Jack Firby and Joe Berks, were, however, neither satisfied, for the lateness of the hour (midnight) that the fights in both cases took place, coupled with the fact that Joe Berks at least was far from sober, detracted somewhat from the importance of the victories.

Jem Belcher, who had introduced the Chicken, though, felt confident in his man's ability, and he enthusiastically declared to the noble patrons of the Ring, who had so generously supported him through his career, that he had found the coming Champion; so the

new man, although he was a comparatively dark horse, had plenty of money behind him to make a match with anybody willing. Now the licking that Berks had suffered seemed to preclude him from showing a desire to try conclusions with the Bristolian again in the legitimate ring; but those who imagined so were greatly mistaken, for Joe was a plucky fellow, and when he was tackled at the Coach and Horses, he freely expressed himself as to his belief that a mean advantage had been taken of him, being more than half-drunk and having lost his head. Consequently, he was not the sort of fellow to sit down and tamely admit the superiority of the Chicken. Besides, he had set his mind on being Champion of England; he saw nobody, now that Belcher had gone, to beat him, and it was scarcely likely that he would give way to this untried stranger. The friends of Berks, too, encouraged him, and in Lord Camelford he still found a steadfast adherent, who had stood by in all his battles, and had no intention of deserting him then.

So it became an open secret that Joe Berks meant to fight Henry Pearce for the Championship immediately the former's recognisances had expired, for it will be remembered that he had been bound over, together with Jem Belcher. Not until the year 1803 was closing, therefore, was it thought safe to make public the intentions of Berks' party, but at length the backers of the two men agreed that they should fight early in the year, and the money (£100—£10 to go to the loser) was at once subscribed.

The Hon. Berkeley Craven and Lord Camelford were the principal backers of Berks, whilst the new fashionable young sportsman, Mr. Mellis's, Mr. Fletcher Reid, and Captain Halliday put up the pieces for the Chicken. Jem Belcher, with great prudence, selected old Bill Gibbons to get Pearce into proper condition, and our friend Paddington Jones was told off to look after the preparation of Joe Berks.

We read that the system of training at that period was very much of the rough-and-ready order, for one writer of the time says:—"Raw eggs to improve the wind, and raw beef to make them savage, were the glorious non-naturals that composed their regimen." Then, of course, nothing much could be done for either, as the battle was fixed for January 23, 1804, and the match was not ratified until the December of the previous year, giving a trainer a poor chance. In those days it seemed though, that the reduction of weight was of very little consideration. So long as a man was sound in wind and limb, could run a mile or so without blow-

ing too much, and stride off in a ten mile walk, he was considered quite good enough for a half-hour's punching in the ring, for the battles at this period seldom lasted longer than that.

Naturally the interest taken in the coming event was remarkable, for few outside the handful of Corinthians who had seen the Chicken's indoor fights knew anything about the Bristol man. Still when it was good enough for Jem Belcher to stand by him, everybody had the greatest confidence, so they backed the dark horse until the betting was 7 to 4 on Pearce.

Monday, the 23rd of January, 1804, was by all accounts a beautiful clear frosty day, and as it had been arranged to bring the mill off so near as Wimbledon Common, well nigh the whole sporting world of the metropolis turned out to see the battle which should decide who had the better claim to the Championship of England. Hackney coaches, gigs, chaises, drags, and every conceivable kind of vehicle lined the roads, whilst the costermongers, with their "flying bedsteads," were much in evidence. Now there was a reason for this, as Caleb Baldwin and the veteran George Maddox were both engaged to do office, the former to be one of the Chicken's seconds, and the other to look after the affairs of the ring. Both these men were costers, and for all times it is well known that this class of the community is most gregarious. But they had no conception that there would be such a treat in store for them as that which happened after the great event of the day, or no doubt their numbers would have been greatly multiplied.

But of that anon. Let us to the ring-side in imagination, and watch Mr. Henry Pearce, *alias* the Game Chicken and future Champion, make his initial bow in public.

Joe Berks was the first to make his appearance when all was in readiness, alighting from a hackney-coach, in which he had been seated with Tom Owen and Paddington Jones, his second and bottle-holder. He immediately, amidst much shouting, entered the arena, and in three or four minutes he was joined by the Game Chicken, who was accompanied by Jem Belcher, who came in for a tremendous ovation, and followed by his esquires, Bill Gibbons and Caleb Baldwin.

Great was the curiosity when the men commenced to strip. The burly form of Joe Berks was pretty well known, for he was no novice, as our readers are aware. He stood 6ft 2in, and weighed 14st, whilst the Chicken's height was 5ft 8½in, and he scaled 12st 7lb. But Pearce's figure stood out in all its beautiful lines, and

so, says one report, that all were "reminded by the conformation of his chest and limbs of the athletic form of Tom Johnson, when that celebrated boxer was at his best, the indisputable and invincible Champion of England." This didn't alter the fact, though, that Berks was a prodigiously powerful fellow, as the Chicken must have thought, for we are told that he commenced in a very cautious manner, and evidently realised the difference in the man who stood before him in the ring from the half-drunken fellow he fought at the Coach and Horses.

It would seem also that Berks had not forgotten the thrashing he had received, for he was equally cautious, and the opening of the business was, to say the least of it, a trifle slow. This the spectators by no means relished, and they grew exceedingly impatient. At length they drew nearer to each other, when, to the surprise and disappointment of all, they closed and fell, the Chicken uppermost. The crowd gave way to their feelings by derisive cheers, and chaffed Berks unmercifully, he being the bigger man. They accused him of cowardice, which was too bad, as although Joe was a blustering ruffian, he was as game a man as ever stood in a ring.

The badinage of the crowd seems to have put the Shropshire man upon his mettle, for immediately they opened the second round he rushed furiously in upon his opponent in a most determined manner. The Chicken, however, had been on the alert for this style of fighting in the first round, and stepped back as he "milled on the retreat," as they called it then. Keeping his man off with masterly jobs in the face with his left, he slowly retired towards the ropes. Just before getting there, however, he put a stopper upon Berks' forehead that made him reel again. Before Joe could recover the Chicken caught him (still upon the stagger) and threw him with a fearful thud upon his back. This surprised everybody, and those who had never seen Pearce fight before were now convinced that not only was he far superior in science to the other man, but that his generalship outclassed Berks.

As the big man was sent up by his seconds he was bleeding profusely, and it took both Tom Owen and Paddington Jones all they knew to send him up for the third round in a manner at all presentable. Again he opened with a rush, but this time the Chicken stood his ground, and a furious passage of arms ensued. Berks was very unsteady, but some of his tremendous round-arm blows got home on the Chicken's body and made him wince. "The balance,"

as one writer puts it, "of the hitting was with Pearce, whose straight, arrow-like deliveries played havoc with Joe's physiognomy. At last, in making a desperate lunge, Berks over-reached himself, the Chicken fetched him up with a cut under the chin, and then closed and threw his man apparently with ease."



GEORGE MADDOX, "THE COSTER."

The two succeeding rounds appear to have been of much the same description, but the third gave rise to slight hopes for the followers of Berks. The Chicken had stepped up smartly to his man, and put in a heavy blow on the cheek, which Joe countered with such a tremendous hit with the right on the side of the head that Pearce staggered and went down on one knee.

"Bravo, Berks!" was shouted from all parts, and his seconds advised him to go in and settle it. In the confusion, however, the Salopian seemed to forget the rules, and did not attack his man at once, which he could have done, only *one* knee being on the ground. He lost his opportunity, for Pearce came down upon his hands and knees, finished the round, and was escorted to his corner by his seconds.

Here is a description of the seventh round:—"Berks came with a tremendous rush that seemed equal to carrying half a dozen Pearces before it. But the Chicken was ready and fell back adroitly; then, as Joe bored in, met him with such an awful punch between the eyes that Berks dropped both hands, spun round for a moment like a teetotum, and then fell on his side. Tom Owen and Paddington Jones promptly hurried to his assistance, and plied sponge and brandy bottle to such purpose that Joe was sent up actually smiling for the eighth round, and with only the lump on his forehead to show what a fearful smack he had received."

Five to one was at this period of the battle offered on the Chicken, but there were no takers, for it was evident that Berks had lost control of his temper, a fatal thing in a fight like this, whilst Hen Pearce was as cool as the proverbial cucumber, and intent upon aggravating his opponent as much as lay in his power. We read that the Salopian's "eyes blazed with fury, his whole frame shock with passion as, with a kind of howl, he flung himself upon the imperturbable Chicken. It was a fatal step. His wily, self-possessed foe fell back, guarded or avoided his random sweeps, and then springing forward, hit him fearfully about the face, till in fact Berks' frontispiece was an indistinguishable mask of gore. Such an awful towelling did the Chicken administer that when at last Joe was hit down, bruised, bleeding, and breathless at the ropes, Mr. Fletcher Reid called out, 'Twenty to one I name the winner,' and several others offered evens that Berks did not come up again."

They would have lost their money, though, for Joe was a veritable glutton, and when Captain Halliday suggested that he should give in, Joe's rage made him nearly foam at the mouth.

We need not, however, go through every round. Here is the most vivid description of the finish that we can select:—"Time" called Squire Mountain, who was acting as referee, and with one furious rush Berks was away from his corner and at his man before his astonished seconds could regain their breath. Headlong he ran at the Chicken, struck at him, missed and fell on his face. In the next two rounds Berks was like a

mad bull—he ran at his opponent the moment time was called, and was consequently out of breath when he came up with his cool, imperturbable foe, who met him with a crushing blow on the jaw, that rolled him over as if he had been shot. But Joe wouldn't hear of giving in. He was boiling with rage. In vain his backers and seconds advised him to give in. For the last four or five rounds they implored him to surrender, but he resolutely and fiercely refused, begging them each time to let him fight one more round. At the close of the twenty-fourth the Chicken, stepping quickly forward, sent in a right-hander on the forehead, which sent Joe down on the broad of his back, to all appearances stunned. Just as his seconds lifted him his senses returned, and raising his head, he said, 'Chicken, tha's licked me. I reckon thou'st too good for me, laad ; but I bear no malice. Gie me thy hand.'

And so ended the first public battle in which "Hen Pearce, the "Game Chicken," figured. We cannot, however, leave the battlefield on that memorable 23rd of January, 1804, without recording what transpired after the great fight, for although it really has nothing to do absolutely with the Championship, these records would be quite incomplete without properly introducing to our readers the men who figured in the remainder of the day's sport.

So interesting had everything been, and so well had all progressed, that the noble patrons of the Ring had appetites for a little more, especially as the day was young, it then being only a little after noon, for the big event had lasted just one hour and twenty minutes. Gentleman Jackson was therefore authorised to offer a purse for competition.

George Maddox, the old coster who had charge of the ring paraphernalia, at once responded by throwing his rabbit-skin cap into the arena, and the yell that went up from the Westminster lads literally rent the air. Now, Maddox, who was in his latter days known as the veteran *par excellence*, was born in the year 1756, at Tothill Fields, Westminster, so he was at this time forty-eight years of age. George was a costermonger, and we will quote one who knew him personally, and who has left the following sketch :—"George Maddox was a civil, facetious, illiterate man, but possessed of manly courage and forbearance. Though he fought more battles than any man I knew of in his time, he never had a spark of resentment in his composition. His hardihood and resolution in the battle were not more remarkable than the coolness, almost stoical, with which he spoke of victory or defeat, in his own natural and rough

manner. He seemed satisfied that having done his best, the best could do no more, and generally spoke strongly of the 'goodness' of the man who had given in to him."

He never hung about sporting pubs. or low tap-rooms, sponged upon gentlemen, or sought patronage of the great. After winning a fight he would go back to his humble occupation of costermonger, quite satisfied if he were able to buy the missus a new rig out, or himself an extra "shallow and smoke." The "donkey dragoons" (as the costers were then called) of Westminster were very strong, so no wonder Maddox was cheered when he threw his cap into the ring. At first nobody responded. The fact of it was George was such a very tough old mortal and such a devil to fight that nobody cared to tackle him. At length a fellow named Seabrook, who had appeared in a few minor mills, and whose avocation was a dustman, stepped into the ring, having been bribed to do so by the amateurs by the offer of £4 if he would stand up and fight. The affair was a farce. Maddox punished his man all over the ring for three rounds, giving him a fearful gruelling, and Master Seabrook cried "Hold, enough!"

Maddox was in the act of putting on his coat prior to receiving the easily-earned purse, when an ebony gentleman stepped out of the crowd and declared that he should like to have a turn with a professional pugilist. George looked at him for a moment, and then throwing away his coat, said "Well coom, Massa, thou needn't goo further, for I'll take thee on meeself."

Nobody could make out who the dark gent was who were not amongst the nobs. They knew, however, well enough, for the ebony one wore Lord Camelford's livery. It was none other than our old acquaintance, Bill Richmond, to whom we have before referred as his lordship's servant and companion. Now, as he will play a part in these records on several future occasions, we will take this opportunity of saying a few words about his career.

The story of William, or Bill Richmond, for such was the name of the negro boy, certainly had a romance about it. Born in the year 1763, of slave parents, in one of the townships, of Staten Island, he was simply given the name of Bill, and afterwards, according to a very ancient custom, adopted that of his birthplace for want of any other. His owner was a clergyman named Chalton, but when the American War of Independence broke out, and Virginia declared against the Crown, the reverend gentleman fled to England, leaving all his possessions behind him, and his slaves to do the best they could.

When one of the English generals, Earl Percy, retook Staten Island, which had been for a time in the hands of the rebels, he found Bill Richmond wandering about without home or habitation, and, taking a liking to the boy, made him his servant. When the Earl returned to England, on succeeding to the Dukedom of Northumberland, the young nigger accompanied him. His good opinion of the lad being confirmed, and as the very act of stepping upon English soil had manumitted him, the Duke, to prevent the boy running wild, sent him, as aforesaid, to school, which showed how much his Grace was in advance of the prejudices of his age.

After giving his *protégé* three years' schooling, he gave him the choice of a trade, and Bill choosing cabinet-making, he was apprenticed to a respectable handicraftsman of the city of York, the Duke paying all charges. As a scholar and as an apprentice, the young negro conducted himself in a most exemplary manner, and when his seven years were up continued for several more under his old master, and was esteemed a very good workman.

Like most of his race, he had a great love for finery, and as in those days male attire was not confined to black, blue, and grey, he had a good chance to array himself in the most gorgeous hues, and probably walked about York in a costume that would now make a peripatetic negro minstrel die of envy. As doubtless the only specimen of the African race the stay-at-home people of York had ever looked upon Bill was sufficiently conspicuous, but when he enlivened his sables with the plumage of the peacock, it was scarcely to be wondered at that he was a butt for all the would-be wits of the street.

Richmond, however, did not tamely submit to these jokes, but went for his tormentors in a style that by-and-bye compelled them to respect his fists, if they did not respect his person. Practice makes perfect, and without ever having received a lesson in the noble art in his life, the black after a while picked up a considerable amount of skill in the management of his mawleys, and soon became a wholesale terror to his many foes.

It was about this time that Lord Camelford enlisted him into his services as a good, useful man, and a by no means insignificant "minder." Bill, however, had never appeared in the ring, and it was on this occasion that his master had induced him to have a try what he was made of.

Richmond was an athletic looking fellow when he peeled off my lord's livery, and he gave everybody the impression that he was a good one. On this occasion,

however, he sadly failed to distinguish himself, for old George went for Massa with such vigour that, knowing little or nothing of tactics in the ring, the ebony gent became fairly flabbergasted. He was hit under the ropes in the first round, thrown out of the ring in the second, and in the third received such a smack in the eye that he declared that he was blinded, and would fight no more. Lord Camelford looked glum. But Bill Richmond, who made his first appearance so ignominiously, was destined to become celebrated, and we shall meet with him again. Old George Maddox became the second hero of the hour, whilst the Chicken had established himself well enough to follow Jem Belcher in holding the Championship of England, and it had been a long time since the patrons of the Ring had such a magnificent field-day.

CHAPTER XXVII.

KING GEORGE III. AS A DOTARD.—MOULSEY HURST.—THE TWO BRISTOLIANS.—THE CHICKEN AND ELIAS SPRAY.

For some reason which we are unable to explain, Henry Pearce, the "Game Chicken," had a long spell of rest after his defeat of Joseph Berks, described in our last chapter. The only explanation we can give for the victor remaining absolutely idle is that he was advised by Jem Belcher to issue or accept no challenges until the affair alluded to had blown over, for at this time the authorities were very much down on prize-fighting—in fact, on sport altogether. To begin with, good old George III., who, it goes without saying, was as cranky as could be, had suddenly taken a fit into his senseless old noddle to turn religious. It was sheer funk that did it, without doubt, for Napoleon Bonaparte was up to his tricks again, and in spite of Lord Nelson having assumed the command of the Channel Squadron, French privateers had even entered the mouth of the Bristol Channel, had captured several of our merchant vessels, and had defied our cruisers to catch them. So the old dotard of

a King trembled for the safety of the country, and ceasing his sporting excursions took unto his Bible and Prayer Book, praying the Almighty to stay the invasion of his realms. And here we may mention that "Gaffer" George's great sporting excursions were limited to hunting the stag in Windsor Forest about twice weekly, although he rarely got anywhere near the hounds upon his sturdy old cob, but was coached by his huntsman as to the incidents of the chase, which he would relate afterwards as if he had personally witnessed them.

But all this gaiety he suddenly dropped when he thought "Boney" was coming, and took to praying, and the 20th of February, 1805, he appointed a solemn fast day. It is curious to read what a failure this turned out to be. The volunteers were to muster and march to their parish churches, the Lords and Commons were to listen to their chaplains, and the Lord Mayor was to attend St. Paul's. As a matter of fact, very few volunteers fell in, the Peers and Commons *had* to turn up, but much against their will, but the Lord Mayor was supported by two aldermen only. How many would have entered an appearance had it been a *feast* instead of a *fast*, we wonder? So the sovereign having set the puritanical example and ceased his own harmless sport, the authorities were down upon his subjects, who desired to continue their evil ways, instead of following their royal master's psalm-smiting example. It was difficult, however, to suppress some sport, particularly prize-fighting, for was not fighting in the very air that surrounded our not too tight little island at that period? And it was infectious, for the majority of Britons were more for fighting than for praying, and we are certain that if our brave volunteers had been called by bugle to arms, instead of church parade, they would have mustered to a man.

Still it was dangerous to bid defiance to the law, and there were many then unrepealed statutes which dealt very summarily with irreligion, so on the very day that King George appointed for prayer several noble patrons of the Ring met like conspirators in the upstairs room of Jem Belcher's, the Jolly Brewers, in Wardour Street, to discuss the arrangements for the "Game Chicken's" re-appearance in public.

Amongst these violators of the King's wishes were several whose names are familiar to the readers of these pages. There were present:—Sir Harry Vane Tempest, Captain Halliday, Captain Mellish, the Hon. Berkeley Craven, the Hon. Bob Lascelles, Lord Say and Sele, Lord Eardley, Mr. Chersey, Squire Mountain, and a few

others. The Honourable Berkeley Craven declared that he had discovered a man worthy to be matched with the "Chicken." He had dropped into Will Warr's house one evening, and had seen a man spar in a manner that surprised everybody. He discovered from Warr that he was still another scrapper from Bristol, and an acquaintance of Henry Pearce's. His name, Mr. Craven said, was Spray or Spree, he was not quite certain which.

"Why, that's the coppersmith!" exclaimed Jem Belcher. "Well, what do you know about him, Jem?" asked Craven. "All I know is that he licked Bill Jackling, and that he has a name down in the West-country, that they think as much of him as they do of Hen Pearce, and some, I believe, think him superior to me."

This modest speech must have brought smiles to the faces of the company present. Anyhow, the writer who gives the above particulars, and must of necessity have been present at the meeting, tells how they all laughed a little doubtfully, for they knew Jem well enough, and that he was anxious to get up a match with his *protégé*, for the latter had been idle exactly a year. More by bad luck than anything else though.

But to continue our report of this distinguished meeting at the Jolly Brewers, as handed down to us. Mr. Craven continued: "I was sure the man was a good one, although Warr would tell me nothing about him, further than that he came from Bristol, and that he was anxious for a job." "Will you back him against the 'Chicken?'" asked Captain Halliday, abruptly. Mr. Craven hesitated. He had witnessed Pearce's fight with Joe Berks, and had a great respect for him. "Ah! you think the 'Chicken' a bit too good for your new man, eh?" remarked Halliday, with a sneer. The tone with which the words were spoken nettled Craven—at all times a headstrong, passionate man—and his sharp rejoinder was, "I think nothing of the kind. If the 'Chicken' will fight for 30 guineas a-side, I'll back Spray against him." "Let's make it a purse of 50 guineas," suggested Captain Halliday. "Forty for the winner and ten for the loser. Several others I know will contribute, and I'll have a bet on with you." The Hon. Berkeley Craven agreed, but insisted upon receiving odds. "Oh!" rejoined Halliday, "I'll give you odds with pleasure. Will £70 to £40 suit you, or £700 to £400, if you like." The contemptuous manner in which these long odds were offered still further irritated the Hon. Berkeley. "I'll take £700 to £400," he said emphatically, and the bet was booked. Such is the graphic picture of the

meeting of those Corinthians which has been handed down to us.

It would appear that on the next day they met again, and the two Bristol men were requested to be present in the evening. A dinner was served to some dozen swells in Belcher's upstairs room, and when the cloth had been removed, and the pipes and cigars, with grogs, had been brought in, Pearce and the stranger were announced to have arrived. They had, as a matter of fact, been downstairs in Jem Belcher's parlour for some considerable time, smoking and drinking together, and talking over old times at Bristol and their several mutual friends, for they belonged to the same circle, although they had never met either with the gloves or raw 'uns. Elias Spray being a very industrious man, stuck to his business as a coppersmith, which was a trade at that time looked upon as one of the very superior crafts. Indeed, nobody would have believed, to have seen the two fraternising, that a battle between them was being brewed upstairs, and that in a very short time they would be hammering each other's heads without mercy.

When they were introduced and refreshments found for them, Mr. Fletcher Reid, who was the spokesman, briefly recapitulated the terms of the match, and asked them to put their signatures to a written engagement to fight. Both being agreeable, the business was soon completed, and the Corinthians ordered in champagne for them to drink each other's health.

And now it will be convenient to say a few words about the new man. Elias Spray or Spree (the name is frequently spelt both ways) was, as we have said, by trade a coppersmith. He was born in Bristol or its neighbourhood, two or three years prior to the "Chicken's" appearance in the world. Of his performances in his native county we have no record: we only know that he came up to London in 1802 with a big local reputation, and defeated Bill Jackling ("Ginger," as they called him), who was own brother to the ex-Champion, the great Tom Johnson, on Norwood Common, in the November of the same year.

In fact, although it does not appear in all the records, we discover that he fought Jackling on two occasions. Shortly after they met at Norwood, Spray happened to look in at the Pewter Platter, St. John's Street, Clerkenwell, then kept by Ned Butcher, famous in his time as a second and trainer. In the parlour was Jackling, who directly he espied his late antagonist grossly insulted him, and there and then challenged him to fight in the back yard for two sovereigns. The coppersmith, more

on account of the insult than the money, was quite willing, and the impromptu mill took place, and after a desperate slogging match, Jackling again received a thrashing, even worse than that in public, according to the accounts in the contemporary sporting journals.

After this he seems to have stuck to his trade, although (like Belcher) he had come to London with introductions to Will Warr, who then kept the One Tun, in St. James' Market, at the back of Jernyn Street, and who was as able as any member of the Fancy to match a man. Sometimes he would be seen at sparring exhibitions, and he is spoken of in the reports as showing good form with the gloves, but nothing in the way of a fight can we find him associated with after the Jackling affair. When Bristol sportsmen came to London they always asked after Elias Spray, and were surprised that he had not been matched. But there it was; until by chance the Hon. Berkeley Craven saw him spar nothing seems to have been done on his behalf.

As we have already stated, the "Game Chicken" had also been idle for some considerable time, having made no appearance since he defeated Joe Berks. To prove what a retiring, unassuming fellow was Hen Pearce it will not be out of place to relate a little anecdote about him, which occurred after that particular fight on Wimbledon Common.

Immediately after putting on his clothes, and whilst George Maddox was performing in the ring, instead of staying to see the fun and to receive the congratulations of his friends and patrons, he stole away from the crowd unobserved. He was, of course, very soon missed, and inquiries were at once made about him. After considerable time and some anxiety, his friends learned that he had jumped up behind a coach returning to town. Acting on this information, his second, Bill Gibbons, endeavoured to trace him, and immediately set off in the direction of town, making inquiries at every inn along the road. Eventually he found the "Chicken," quite by himself, in a public-house at Chelsea, calmly cooking chops at the tap-room fire, he having purchased them at a neighbouring shop, and brought in with him a loaf of bread and some chertse, evidently intent upon having a good square meal after his exertions. The "Chicken" immediately invited Bill Gibbons to join him in his frugal meal, without making the slightest allusion to his own singular conduct. One who knew him writes:—"Modesty and simplicity characterised the "Chicken" all through his career. His brilliant successes never spoiled him or turned his head; he was always the same simple-hearted, kindly, generous fellow, brave as

a lion, gentle as a woman, who won the affection of all with whom he was brought in contact."

But let us return to our muttons. March 11, 1805, was the day appointed for the battle to take place, and Hampton had been selected as a likely place to bring it off, in spite of the vigilance of the authorities, at the head of whom figured Sir Richard Ford, with his newly-instituted horse patrols. Thither an immense number of sportsmen from all parts of the metropolis and surrounding country made their way; but, arrived at that famous old village, the Fanciers were advised to cross the river, as it would be absolutely safe in the next county.

We have no space to reprint the descriptions of the scenes that transpired during the crossing of the river. Boats were upset and dozens of people were struggling in the water, and the strange part of it was that there is no account of any drowning accidents. By hook or by crook the vast assemblage at length found themselves on the other side of the Thames, and they were in Moulsey Hurst, that place destined to be the scene of so many desperate engagements in the Ring afterwards. This occasion, however, was the very first time that the ropes and stakes had been pitched upon that now classic spot. What memories does the scene conjure up—memories of Cribb, of Tom Oliver, the Gasman, of George Cooper and Tom Shelton, of Jack Randall and Dick Curtis, and Barney Aaron, all of whose battles we shall journey to Moulsey Hurst to witness before our task is finished.

Many a time shall we pay a visit in fancy to mine host of the Red Lion at Hampton—worthy Bob Lawrence, whose beaming face was never so wreathed with smiles as on the days when a fight on Moulsey Hurst brought Corinthians galore to his comfortable hostelry. We shall look upon, in our mind's eye, the drags, the tandems, the curricles, the gigs, the costers' carts, above all the ferry—source of boundless fun to those who rejoice in the spectacle of their friends in a predicament; all these things come to our minds as we think of Moulsey Hurst. Are they not, indeed, still preserved to us in the prints of that inimitable picture of Bob Cruickshank's which used to hang in Tom Spring's parlour at the Castle in Holborn? But of that, and a good deal connected with the most celebrated of trysting places connected with the Prize Ring, we must reserve for future chapters.

Let us introduce our readers for the first time to the celebrated spot upon the Thames, where the second battle of the Game Chicken is to be decided.

The arena is fixed up, the crowd have assembled

around, all having got over the river. The *Morning Chronicle* of that date says:—"Considerable confusion took place in procuring boats to convey the numerous followers across the river, where several not only experienced a good ducking, but some narrowly escaped drowning in their eagerness to reach the destined spot."

Arm in arm with Jem Belcher, the "Chicken," cheered as he went along, made his way to the ring. They were followed by George Maddox and Dick Hall, who were second and bottle-holder, and they all wore the blue bird's-eye kerchiefs in which the "Chicken" fought all his battles. Shortly afterwards the Copper-smith turns up, accompanied by Will Wood, the Coachman, as second, and above all persons Squire Mountain as bottle-holder. Spray sports a light crimson kerchief as his colours. The referee appointed is Gentleman Jackson, and whilst the men are getting ready betting is freely indulged in, the odds being 7 to 4 on the "Chicken," even that the battle does not last twenty-five minutes, and 10 to 1 that the "Chicken" is not beaten in half an hour.

The church clock at Hampton strikes one as the men respond to the call of time, and face each other. The stature, height, &c., of the "Chicken" we have described in a previous chapter. His antagonist is only half an inch shorter, but weighs a stone and a half more—14st to Pearce's 12st 7lb. It is observable that there is a clumsiness about Spray's attitude, and as soon as they open it is evident that he is very slow compared to the "Chicken." Now the Coppersmith, getting as he thinks to distance, shoots out the left, but it is in a half-hesitating sort of manner, and Pearce, as quick as lightning, counters with that terrible left of his, which did such execution in his fight with Joe Berks. It catches him on the temple, and Spray goes down as if he had been poleaxed. 2 to 1 on the "Chicken."

In the next round the Coppersmith makes a better stand, and delivers one nasty blow upon the breast of the "Chicken" that makes him look all legs and wings as he staggers back, and shouts of "Bravo! Coppersmith" are raised. It is only a momentary advantage though, for Pearce recovers himself, springs forward, and with another tremendous blow on the neck fells him to the ground.

It is plain as the proverbial pikestaff to see that thus early in the fight Spray is outclassed, and when the "Chicken" displays a little of his wrestling knowledge by closing on his foe, twisting him round and whirling him off his legs with a terrific cross-buttock, spreading Spray on the ground, everybody believes that

it is all over. Not so, however. If the stranger has little science he has plenty of pluck and resolution, and is as hard as nails. He is as game as they make them. Once more he stands up to the terrible "Chicken," exchanges sharp blows, and then cleverly scores by driving his right full into the pit of his opponent's stomach. Pearce gasps, but does not lose his head. He closes, and quickly throws his man.

This punch, however, has made the "Chicken" look exceedingly queer, and he is as white as a corpse. Spray tries to take advantage of his condition, but Pearce knows too much, and dodging his opponent, gets down at the right time, like a good general. He is soon himself again; but once more the friends of Spray have some little encouragement, for their man, after several unsuccessful tries, manages to get a fierce drive home on to the front of the nose with such force that down goes the "Chicken."

As the latter comes up to the call of "Time," he is bleeding profusely, and Spray's backers yell to him to go in, telling him that now is the time or never. Elias, however, is too weak, and everybody believes that the battle is all over. Squire Mountain's brandy flask is brought into requisition, and Spray revives sufficiently to come again. He is knocked down instantly, and as he comes up for the next round the "Chicken" again cross-buttocks him. Five times in succession he goes down. Yet he pulls himself together in a marvellous manner, but he commences to fight on the dropping system, which makes Pearce very wild and tires his patience, and he hits him all over the ring in a merciless manner, finally knocking him clean off his feet.

Still, for the twenty-ninth time, the plucky fellow comes up, so feeble though that the "Chicken" cannot find it in his heart to hit him, but sends him back with a thrust in the chest, and Spray falling, the seconds throw up the sponge in token of his defeat, the battle having lasted five and thirty minutes.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A BRUMMAGEM DRUISER.—MASS MEETING AT SHEPPERTON.—
GAME CHICKEN AND STEPHEN CARTE.—A GREAT FIELD DAY.

THE Bristol champion, Hen Pearce, who had so suddenly and meteorically burst forth in the fistic firmament after his fight with Spray, described in our last chapter, had little time left on his hands after that engagement. The Midlands, strange to say, had not for a considerable period—something like sixteen years—sent up a man good enough to make a mark amongst the champions. Yet there were more sportsmen, good and true, in Worcestershire, Warwickshire, and Staffordshire than were to be found outside the metropolis, and Birmingham itself took the lead in kindred sports, for their dogs, their cocks, and their pads were generally acknowledged to take the lead. Besides, the hardware country produced at this time some exceedingly enthusiastic supporters of the Ring, amongst whom we may enumerate:—Sir Roger Newdegate, Mr. Leigh, young Lord Brook, Captain Willoughby, several of the Lyttelton family, the Mordaunts, Major Winnington, Mr. Moseley, and Mr. Every, who were ready and willing to back any man who could prove himself capable of aspiring to Championship honours.

It seemed, however, that since Tom Johnson defeated Isaac Perrins, and the London division went home with upwards of a hundred thousand pounds won over the fight, there was no successor from the Midlands. To be sure one made his appearance at the commencement of the century, just five years after Johnson's death, who was thought to be good enough to send to the metropolitan lists. His name was Tom Sidwell, and by all accounts he was a fine fellow. Sir Roger Newdegate, though, unfortunately for this worthy, desired to try him before starting him off to represent their part of the country, and matched him against a novice named Stephen Carte, who came from Nuneaton, having been born there in March, 1780. He was only an agriculturist, and although a powerful, active fellow, knew little or nothing of the science of milling. He soon, however, proved himself immeasurably superior to Mr. Tom Sidwell, and was quickly matched against several other local men, being put under the care of Loxley, a well-known trainer and

scientific boxer. In the February of 1803 he was matched against Fosbrooke, and polished him off in twenty minutes. He followed up this victory by defeating a good man in his way, named Samuel Cook. So far Stephen Carte had acquitted himself in a very satisfactory manner, although only with moderate men. But early in 1804 he had an opportunity of showing what science he had acquired from his tutor, Loxley, for there came to Birmingham a travelling sparring company, amongst them a big Jew, named Sami Abrahams, who was looked upon as one of the cleverest boxers and trickiest fighters in the East End of London. The Hebrew, though, had not for a considerable time trained for a fight, getting more out of his exhibitions. He was, however, induced by Sir Roger or some of the other noble patrons, who promised him a handsome present (win or lose) to meet Carte, and they fought on the 18th of March of that year at Nuneaton, the birth-place of the last-named. The Jew's science all through the battle was vastly superior to the Warwickshire man's, but youth would be served, and his strength and condition pulled him through, Abrahams becoming utterly exhausted after fighting furiously for one hour and three-quarters, during which time fifty-four rounds were contested.

Carte's patrons after this began talking very loudly about the qualities of their man, and he had been already dubbed Champion of the Midland Counties, and received consequently several challenges, amongst them one from a youth named Jem Alcock. The fight came off on August 6, 1804, and it is said that no fewer than 10,000 persons assembled to witness it. The result was another victory for Carte, and so satisfactory had been the agriculturist's progress that Lord Brooke and the Hon. W. H. Lyttelton determined that their man should have a chance in London. So towards the end of February, 1805, we find him in the metropolis, at once flying at big game by challenging the "Chicken."

At this time, however, Pearce, it will be remembered, was engaged in his preparations to meet Spray on the 11th of March of that year, and was away training. On his return to London an introduction took place, and business come to them and there, the great Birmingham aspirant to Championship honours being at once accommodated with a match for fifty guineas a-side, and the date fixed for April 27, or six weeks after Pearce's battle with Spray. It is said that when the men were introduced the "Chicken" cast a critical eye over the Midlander, who stood 6ft 3in in height, Pearce being 5ft 9in, and said good-humouredly, "Well, you're too

big to eat, but I'll do the best I can to oblige you." And so everything was settled in a most satisfactory manner, and the Midlands had once more put a would-be champion in the field. Not to spare any expense or throw away a chance, the Warwickshire gentleman procured the services of Caleb Baldwin and Tom Jones to train their man, and sent him down to excellent quarters at Harefield Place, near Uxbridge. It had been decided to bring the mill off at Shepperton, and, to make it a remarkable field-day, two other fights by celebrities had been arranged to take place in the same ring—one between no less a celebrity than Dutch Sam and Bob Britton, another between the Irish Champion, Jack O'Donnell, and Tom Belcher.

Surely such a programme was enough to attract the whole world of sport from far and near, and a day or two before this great field-day it is reported all the sporting houses were doing a flourishing trade, and the West-country dialects were a good deal mixed up with that of the Midlanders. As one writer puts it:—"All day and night the sporting houses were crowded with comparative or absolute strangers, many of whom turned every 's' into 'z,' and every 'u' into 'oo,' while the others broadened their vowels and lengthened their consonants. And of these the first always wanted the latest news about Pearce, while the latter were equally anxious in their inquiries about Carte. It was not unnatural that the greater portion of the Western custom should flow to Belcher, while the Brums, for some reason or other, pretty well monopolised the Roebuck, in Holborn, in which Joe Norton had now been succeeded by Bill Treadaway."

Saturday morning, April 27, 1805, opened one of those glorious days that accompany the hawthorn when in full bloom, and the sun shone merrily upon the crowds of pedestrians, horsemen, and occupants of vehicles, who made a great exodus from the metropolis, and flocked into Shepperton from every road. And what a mixed lot they must have been, to be sure! Besides the provincials, who had arrived to see their respective men—representatives of Warwickshire and Somersetshire—the Jews from Whitechapel and Field Lane were there to support Britton and Dutch Sam, the Hibernian residents of Seven Dials, St. Giles', and Tothill Fields to encourage the Irishman, and the "nobs" to patronise their favourite, Tom Belcher.

The ring was pitched by Bill Gibbons, and the enormous crowd assembled around, and as there were drags and coaches, with many ladies in the company, the place looked more like a bit of Epsom Downs on a

Derby Day than the field for a prize-fight. Stephen Carte, who was the first to enter the ring, was accompanied by his trainers, Baldwin and Jones, who undertook the offices of second and bottle-holder. He was shortly afterwards followed by the "Game Chicken," who was waited upon by his recent opponent, Elias Spray, and Tom Cribb. Gentleman Jackson acted as referee and stakeholder.



DUTCH SAM.

Without describing in full detail the twenty-five rounds which were fought, and of which there are in existence some excellent accounts, it will be sufficient to give the main features of the battle, which undoubtedly created the greatest excitement, for the Warwickshire giant at one or two periods of the combat looked to many present to have it in his power to vanquish the "Chicken" and stem that worthy's brilliant career.

Everybody remarked how elegantly Stephen Carte placed himself in position, and it is reported that Lord Brooke remarked this to Tom Belcher, who smiling replied, "Yes, my lord, but somebody's taught him to stand like that. It isn't natural to him, and he won't

know what to do presently." Of course, it was the scientific Loxley, the popular Midland boxer, who had educated him to this elegant position, but how true Belcher's words were didn't take long to prove. In the very first round, after some careful manœuvring on both sides, Carte led off, but was slightly out of distance, and unable to recover himself quickly enough. In an instant the "Chicken's" dangerous left was on the favourite spot, the neck, just below the angle of the jaw, and this six foot three mass of flesh, weighing over 16st, went with a thud to the ground.

It must have been quite a different experience to all others gained in the ring to Mr. Stephen Carte to stand before the "Game Chicken," who was an accomplished boxer and natural fighter. Undoubtedly Lord Brooke felt that he had made a great mistake by bringing this man to London, or at least at having matched him against the best man of the time. It was all very well for Stephen to polish off the locals, but he had to face a different class in London. The metropolis is a difficult place for any man to make his mark in, whatever his profession or vocation. And so Carte must have felt before he had been facing Pearce for five minutes. It seemed to have taken the heart out of him thus early in the fight, and instead of rising to the situation and fighting better, he did worse, and when Pearce finished the second round by hitting him severely in the mouth, then closing and throwing him, the friends of the Warwickshire man looked blue, and refused the odds of 2 to 1 offered on the "Chicken."

In the few succeeding rounds it would seem that Carte had some sound advice given to him by his experienced seconds, for each time he rushed in and forced the fighting. That this advice was particularly good, Carte had cause soon to know, for in one of the bouts he dashed in with such fury that the "Chicken" had as much as he could do to defend himself from the herculean attack made upon him. At length Pearce thought he saw his opportunity and tried to counter, but to the surprise of everybody he missed, and in the twinkling of an eye the great brawny arms of his opponent were round his waist, and Carte lifted him bodily from his legs and dashed him down with a tremendous thud. Most people present thought this had settled matters, for both Spring and Cribb were very busy in the "Chicken's" corner, and he was exceedingly slow to time. Lord Brooke seems to have become so confident of the Warwickshire man's success that he stood upon his drag and shouted out that he would lay anybody an even thousand. Sums less in amount were offered all over the assembly, notably

by Willoughby, Newdegate, and Meadows, the latter's father being the gentleman who had lost so much money over Perrins.

Pearce must have been very shaky after this rough treatment, for accounts say that he fought entirely on the defensive for some time, and summoned all the science he possessed to his assistance, for nobody could tell, not even the "Chicken" himself, whether a mad blow might not knock him out accidentally at any moment. After the fight had continued about a quarter of an hour there was an interruption that threatened at one time to finish the whole business. The "Chicken" having landed his opponent on the mark with his terrible left, planted the right on the side of his face twice in succession as he was falling, which he did all of a heap. There were yells of "Foul!" and Tom Jones appealed to the referee. This caused a delay of some five minutes, during which some of the more excited spectators broke into the ring. Mr. Jackson, the referee, declared that nothing of the kind had happened, and ordered the men to fight on. It took, however, some time to clear the ring, and Belcher, Jackson himself, and several of the tip-top pugilists, assisted by the Hon. W. H. Lyttelton (who never missed the opportunity of exhibiting his milling proclivities), and other swells took part.

It was said that the interruption was purposely made by Tom Jones, who found his man unable, unless time could be obtained for him, to come to the scratch, the fearful hit on the mark having practically knocked him out. Be this as it may, the rumpus sufficed to give Carte the chance to recover, and he appears to have come up again looking quite confident. There was some exciting and heavy fighting after this; but the "Chicken" made his superiority more and more manifest, whilst Carte, who throughout the whole of the contest had displayed splendid courage, became weaker every round, and received some fearful punishment about the face and ribs from the sledge-hammer hitting of Pearce.

In the twenty-fifth round the Warwickshire man was beaten. The final blow was delivered on the point of the jaw, and he lay senseless, deaf to the call of time. As soon as he had regained consciousness, the "Chicken" walked over to his opponent's corner and took his hand and spoke some encouraging words. Carte is said to have replied, "I'm not ashamed of you beating me, Harry, because you are a lot cleverer than anybody I have seen or heard of, and half the time I did not know what you were at."

And so the "Game Chicken" had added another victory to his list: but before following his career, let

us in fancy look around the company assembled on that memorable day at Shepperton, and just pause at the ring-side for a moment to notice the other two items, which, although having nothing directly to do with the Championship, had most prominent actors, whose names will always be associated with the history of the Ring and its Champions.

Before doing so, however, we may perhaps be forgiven for taking a perfectly true little amusing anecdote concerning the rector and magistrate at Shepperton. Mr. Hubbard, for that was his name, hearing the cheering which greeted the victory of the "Chicken," left the rectory to see what was the matter, thinking perhaps something had occurred which demanded his magisterial attention. So this valiant parson went forth to protect the peace of the tranquil village and the rustic flock, of which he was the pastor. But the sight which met his eyes when he reached the edge of the common shocked his impulse. He had never seen such a crowd of people gathered together before. He could discern a ring of vehicles two or three deep, and around them an immense surging, swaying mass of people, cheering and waving their hats. Cautiously he ventured to skirt the fringe of the throng, keeping well within the shadow of the trees. But he was espied by some of the roughs, who shouted "Come and let's hunt the devil-dodger," and a score of Westminster and St. Giles' lads bore down upon his reverence. Captain Mellish, however, caught sight of them from his drag, and calling to Gentleman Jackson and a few others to follow him, leapt from his vehicle, and being a swift runner overtook the rowdies before they could get up with the rector. Jackson was close upon his heels, and seizing one of the foremost of the scum by the scruff of the neck, jerked him off his legs and sent him on his back. In another instant the gallant Captain and his friends were alongside Parson Hubbard, and when the "boys" saw what formidable protectors were supporting the Church, they turned tail, and hied them back to their pals. Then the gallant Captain and the ex-Champion politely took off their hats to his reverence, apologised for the rudeness of the *canaille*, assured him that no breach of the peace need be apprehended, that the crowd had merely assembled to witness some good old manly British sports, conducted in an orderly fashion, and offered to escort him back to the rectory. The worthy rector, who was an amiable old gentleman, was quite mollified by their politeness, and informing them that he should not interrupt their sports if they would guarantee that no mischief was done in the village,

took his leave of them, and returned to his library, presumably (the day being Saturday) to finish his sermon for the morrow,

Meanwhile a kind of picnic was going on round the ring. Hampers were opened in drags and in carriages, there was much popping of corks, and everyone, high and low, was regaling himself according to his means, those who had not brought provisions with them having slipped off to the village inn for a hasty snack. The swells on their coaches were enjoying themselves heartily. And, as we have already said, there were ladies among them. Alicia Massingham, Colonel Thornton's mistress, Lady Lade, who had been the *chère amie* of "Sixteen String Jack," the highwayman, and the mistress of H.R.H. "Duke of York" before Sir John took her to wife; Bella Prior, the bold, brazen-faced Phryne, who was at present under the protection of Lord Eardley, and one or two others of the same class, who enjoyed a prize-fight as much as Spanish ladies love a bull-fight. Some were talking of the battle just concluded, the ladies affecting to shudder at the awful punishment inflicted upon the Brummagem giant, whilst they one and all joined in admiration of the "Chicken's" magnificent physique. But there were other topics of conversation even more congenial. The elopement of Lord Petre's daughter with her brother's tutor, and the vain attempt of the irate father to discover the whereabouts of the runaways; the sensational disclosures of the Duchess of Bedford's gambling debts—her Grace was said to have lost £176,000 at *faro*, and three of her intimate friends, two gentlemen and a lady, were supposed to have been in league to rob her; in despair she confessed all to her husband, who had taken steps to make the confederates disgorge their plunder. With these and such like racy topics the swells beguiled the time until the cry of "All out, all out!" was heard.

But to the ring side, where Mr. Jackson is superintending the introduction of Tom Belcher and Jack O'Donnell, of whom we shall on some future occasion have more to say. For the present it will be sufficient to state that Tom was brother to the ex-Champion, Jem of that ilk, and that O'Donnell was the recognised Irish Champion. The "Game Chicken," who had had a wash and change, and had put on a heavy horseman's coat, lent to him by Mr. Fletcher Reid, and did not look in the least like a man who had come out of a desperate battle, sat on a truss of straw next the ropes in Belcher's corner, and all being in readiness, "Time!" was called and the men commenced.

Without describing the fight, we may mention that at

the onset O'Donnell had decidedly the best of it, and as it progressed it was a most exciting affair, until, to the dismay of everybody, when the Irishman had taken the lead, he declared he would go to the scratch no more, and desired that the sponge should be thrown up.

There was no understanding this behaviour, and the hubbub and row that ensued must have beggared description. In the disorder O'Donnell escaped, but the affair created a dreadful scandal afterwards. Still there was another item on the day's bill of fare, so the disappointment was for the time being forgotten, as the third brace entered the ring.

Dutch Sam, one of the best men of his time, and a man in a smock frock, who was introduced as a yokel. This countryman, however, turned out to be that clever Bristol boxer, Britton, who had fought Jem Belcher his first battle.

The men were not long in getting together. Unfortunately, the accounts of the battle which followed are both meagre and conflicting, and we cannot do better than place them before the reader just as they appear in the journals of the day. This is what the reporter of the *Morning Chronicle* says:—"Britton was introduced as a yokel, who was ready to fight for a purse, though Belcher, the "Game Chicken," and many others present knew that he was a boxer of considerable repute from Bristol. For the first four rounds Britton held the lead, when Sam was given to understand that his adversary was a plant upon him. Sam nodded his head, and forcing his man to fight, in a rapid rally dealt out such severe punishment that Britton went down almost done over. Sam's conduct in the fight was most singular. After milling poor Britton down, he threw himself by his side and putting him on the back, exclaimed: 'What, you are a plant, are you? S'elp me cot, I'll soon plant you.' And once during the battle when Britton rushed wildly in, Sam with the utmost contempt threw up both his open hands, calling out to the spectators, 'See the way this plant is trying to kiss me,' and then stepping back quickly, he hit Britton off his legs."

The *Daily Advertiser*, on the other hand, says:—"A more gallant fight was never seen. Both men showed great dexterity and knowledge of boxing, and excellent bottom. The odds constantly changed from one side to the other, and at last Sam won, after fighting thirty rounds in such a style as had not been equalled since the best days of Mendoza."

And so ended one of the most memorable days in the annals of the Prize Ring.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A ROMANCE OF THE RING.—A VISIT TO KING'S BENCH PRISON.—A CHANGE OF FORTUNE.—JOHN GULLY AND THE "GAME CHICKEN."—A BLOOD-CURDLING BATTLE.

AND now we have the pleasure of introducing one who, perhaps, amongst the whole of our portrait sketches of British Champions stands out most conspicuously. His life is one long romance, but in the limited space at our command we shall be able to do but scant justice to the story of his life.

John Gully, who only died in 1863, had undoubtedly the most chequered and extraordinary career of any prize-fighter—Champion or other—whose names are recorded in the annals of the Prize Ring. He was the son of a publican, became a butcher, a pugilist, a bookmaker, a member of Parliament, and a millionaire colliery owner. But let us introduce this marvellous man to our readers on his first appearance in London. To do so we must take them to the interior of the old notorious King's Bench Prison, so graphically described by Charles Dickens in his "Uncommercial Traveller." The Marshalsea, as it was called, is referred to also by Smollet in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and things were pretty much the same then as at the time we propose to visit it and look upon the extraordinary place with our mind's eye.

Smollet thus writes of it:—"The King's Bench Prison appears like a neat little regular town, consisting of one street, surrounded by a very high wall, including an open piece of ground, which may be termed a garden, where the prisoners take the air and amuse themselves with a variety of diversions. Except the entrance, where the turnkeys keep ward and watch, there is nothing in the place that looks like a gaol, or bears the least colour of restraint. The street is crowded with passengers; tradesmen of all kinds here exercise their different professions; hawkers of all kinds are permitted to vend their wares, as in any open street in London. There are butchers' stands, chandlers' shops, a surgery, a tap-house (well frequented), and a public kitchen, in which provisions are dressed for all the prisoners gratis,

at the cost of the publican. Here the voice of misery never complains, and indeed little else is to be heard but the sound of mirth and jollity. At the further end of the street is a little paved court leading to a separate building, consisting of twelve large apartments called state rooms, well furnished, and fitted up for the reception of the better class of Crown prisoners; and on the other side of the street, facing a separate direction of ground, called the common side, is a range of rooms occupied by prisoners of the lowest order, who share the profits of the 'begging box,' and are maintained by this practice and some established funds of charity."

Before us is a print illustrating the racquet court in the Marshalsea Prison. On one side extends some old, comfortable looking dwelling-houses, whilst by the side of the "court" is a large wooden residence, with trees in front. Upon the ground are stretched several watchers of the game, and others are seated on forms, whilst all seem to be provided with "yards of clay," from which the smoke issues. Altogether the picture gives one an idea of a very nice playground. The print is dated 1800, just about five years before our visionary visit.

But let us make our way into this interesting prison, proceed to the racquet court, take a seat, and watch the play. That fine young athlete playing the ball is the man we have come to see. His shirt sleeves are rolled up, and you can note that fine development of the muscular arms, whilst his quickness upon the feet and power about the loins and legs tell plainly that he has physical advantages over most men. That is young John Gully, whose romantic career it will be our duty to lightly touch upon in the present chapter.

He was born at Wick, in Gloucestershire, on the 21st of August, 1783. Whilst only an infant his father, who kept the Crown Inn at the above-mentioned place, moved to Bristol, and that town has claimed this notorious member of the Ring. In Bristol his father opened a butcher's shop, and as the youngster grew up he was initiated into the art of slaughter and carcase dressing, growing up to be a fine, powerful young fellow, master over his mates, and phenomenally strong. Like all the Bristol lads, he was exceedingly fond of fisticuffs, and his superior strength and cleverness, his athletic figure, and his indomitable pluck called forth much admiration from the patrons of the Ring in the West country, and no doubt had he stayed in that town, so renowned for its fighters, he would have been taken in hand. His father, however, having died when he was thirteen years of age, and young Gully for a considerable period having assisted his widowed mother in the butcher's business, they found

affairs to be in a sinking condition, and they shifted their quarters to Bath. The old liabilities stood in the way of success in the neighbouring town, so after struggling desperately against misfortune, John determined to try his fortune in London.

He was twenty-two when he came to the metropolis, where he found that he was not nearly so safe from the persecution of his creditors as he thought he would be, as it was not long before they found him out. He,



JOHN GULLY.

not desiring to be taken back to Bristol, then, through the advice of a new London acquaintance who "knew the ropes" thoroughly, got himself arrested and imprisoned in the King's Bench for a small debt. And that is where we find him as light-hearted and healthy as ever in his life.

But we have not finished with him yet in the Marshalsea. Look who is crossing the courtyard, and making

straight for young Gully. The figure and face are very familiar to us, for it is none other than our old friend, Hen Pearce, the "Game Chicken," whose fights from the commencement we have watched with such interest. What on earth can be his business with the unfortunate young fellow? To be sure they were both butchers, and both came from the same town. Mayhap the "Chicken" knew him, admired his promising qualities as a boxer, and having heard of his misfortunes, desired to assist his young townsman.

Let us play the eavesdropper for this once, and we shall no doubt arrive at the true reason for the "Chicken's" visit.

"Well, lad, what brings 'ee here? I had a letter from Bristol this morning, and they said that you was hunted into this hole, and I've come to see if I can get 'ee out. Yer father was not much good, John, but he was kind to me when I was a lad, and I don't forget it."

"But the worst of the whole thing, Pearce, is that I see no prospect of getting out of this place," says Gully, "without finding some two or three hundred pounds, and I've no friends, even if they were willing, who could afford to do that. I sometimes think, when I look round at the grey-haired old fogies who have been here for the best part of their lives, that I too will get grey, old, wrinkled, and broken in health and spirits, and maybe *die* here," and there is no mistake about it, his eyes glisten, and two great tear-drops start down his ruddy cheeks.

"Dang it, Jack, it mustn't come to such a pitch as that; something must be done." And as the "Chicken" rubs his chin between his first finger and thumb, and looks around vacantly, as if in search of *what* must be done, his quick eyes rest upon a set of boxing gloves that have been left hanging up on the wall.

To the delight of everybody present—and by this time there is quite an assemblage of debtors in the racquet court—the "Chicken" puts on the gloves and demands that his young friend shall do the same. Nobody knows who the stranger is, but they soon discover that he is a master of the art, whilst some old army officers get quite elated and cheer heartily as, playing lightly, the Game 'Un gets home time after time, yet receives a few cleverly planted blows from the youngster, which makes him smile his approbation and nod his head with satisfaction.

The cheering of the few spectators soon calls the attention of others, and in less time than it takes to write it the whole of the debtors, turnkeys, shopkeepers, and everybody connected with the Marshalsea have

turned out and formed a ring, around which they crowd so numerously that the court is well nigh full. Never had such a thing happened before within the precincts of the old prison, and when somebody, who had been but recently admitted, and who had seen Pearce fight and beat Stephen Carte, passes round the word that the stranger is no other than the "Game Chicken," the enthusiasm is intense.

After four or five bustling rounds, in which the professor displays some of his most scientific knowledge, in spite of which Young Gully holds his own, to the disappointment of the crowd the elder man throws off the gloves, takes the arm of his young friend, and walks off.

We just catch the words: "Capital, lad. I've got a notion. Will act at once, and see 'ee to-morrow. Be of good cheer. Good-bye," and with a hearty grip of the hand the "Chicken" has gone.

And now we, too, will leave the King's Bench Prison, where, as Dickens says, "the inmates suffer with 'dry rot,'" for we must hie back to our old haunts, the London sporting taverns, and follow the thread of our story.

The "Chicken," who was as generous-hearted and as brave a fellow as ever stood in shoe-leather, made his way that evening to the Coach and Horses in St. Martin's Lane, where he knew that he would be certain to meet some of the best patrons of the Ring, and he was fortunate enough to find them assembled in good force. The "Chicken" told his story without disguising a single fact, and so eulogised his young friend's abilities as to his quickness, pluck, and physique, that a few of the gentlemen present promised to accompany Pearce to the prison on the following morning and cast an eye over this newly-discovered phenomenon. These patrons of the sport are by this time pretty well known to our readers, for they were Major Mellish, Mr. Berkeley Craven, and Mr. Fletcher Reid.

Accordingly on the following day the four of them drove up in a stylish coach belonging to the last-named gentleman, creating quite a sensation at the gates of the prison. But there was to be no public display upon this occasion, and the turnkey having been generously tipped, the gentlemen and Pearce were ushered into the Palace Court of the Marshalsea, a fine lofty apartment, with a splendid ceiling. Here the gloves were brought in, and the "Chicken" and his *protégé* "peeling" coats and waistcoats, and taking off their shoes, had a fair set-to for the enlightenment of their patrons. There was no light play this time—smack, smack went the gloves into the face, straight from the shoulder, and soon the

crimson was trickling down young Gully's chin. But he stood it bravely, and showed such form that all were agreed that the King's Bench Prison was no place for him.

Before they left that morning the young Bristolian knew that he was to be a free man, and in return adopt the profession of a prize-fighter.

Matters were soon arranged for his release, as the creditors, who firmly believed that they would never get a penny of their money, were very ready to accept a few shillings in the pound, and John Gully stepped forth, breathing the fresh air, into the outer world.

Now, it will be remembered that both Berkeley and Mellish had stood firmly by Pearce through all his engagements. But, somehow or other, Mr. Fletcher Reid never hit it quite with the "Chicken," so when the time came for consideration as to how the novice should be matched a few difficulties cropped up. The most serious of all was the outcome of a bold suggestion made by Major Mellish. He declared that the proper man to be matched against Gully was the "Chicken" himself. This had never occurred to that worthy or to any other of the party, and certainly wanted a little consideration. To match two men against each other in the same school was a most unusual proceeding, especially friends. Besides, who was likely to find the money for the novice?

Not a little to the surprise of all concerned, Mr. Fletcher Reid solved the problem. He declared that he had sufficient confidence in the youngster, after what he had seen, to back him against the more experienced man, and if they would stake the odds of £600 to £400 his money was quite ready.

This offer was immediately accepted, although Gully did not much relish the job of fighting the man who had done him such service. But the "Chicken," in his good-natured, hearty manner, said to him by way of cheering him one day, "I shall give 'ee a d—d good thrashing, Jack; but what's that to being pent up in 'that hole' of a prison all your life?" And Gully was philosopher enough to think so too.

Anyhow, we find that both men at once went into strict training—Gully going to a cottage at Virginia Water, under the care of Dick Whale, and the Game 'Un placed himself under the care of Joe Ward, for he had a presentiment that he would have all his work cut out. The first deposit having been put down at Jem Belcher's in Wardour Street, on the 1st of June, 1805, the battle was fixed to take place on the 20th of July.

Everything went well enough until within a week of the fight, when some ugly rumours were afloat (from whom they emanated nobody knew) that the affair was "a cross." The fact that the "Chicken" was to fight a youngster that nobody had ever heard a word about; the knowledge that they both came from Bristol and were taken in hand by the same patrons; the story of the Marshalsea Prison, which had all become public property; together with the undisguised friendship exhibited by Pearce towards Gully—all pointed to the affair as "a plant." It was very provoking to hear these false accusations made, but worse was to follow.

Anyway, the men left their training quarters on the appointed day, joined their backers, and proceeded to Virginia Water. They were, however, much harrowed by the police, and tried locality after locality to bring the battle off. It was a disastrous day and still further strengthened suspicion. Enough to say this dodging about caused the feeling that the Pearce-Gully fight was a "cross." A great many sportsmen who should have known better desired to withdraw their bets, and the mob howled and abused the men and their backers to such an extent that Mr. Fletcher Reid became so exasperated that he declared all bets should be considered null, and that the battle should be postponed *sine die*. He then drove off the ground with Gully beside him amidst a scene of wild uproar.

This was a nice sort of start for Young Gully: to be accused of participating in a "cross" before he had really appeared in public, and the "Chicken" was so enraged at such a false accusation, and he, who was throughout his career the soul of honour, felt it bitterly. Anyway, there it was, and but for an accident perhaps the imputation would have clung to them until the finish. This is how it came about. At the One Tun, which, it will be remembered, formerly belonged to Bill Warr, one evening a corporal of the Guards had been sparring with Gully, and, getting the worst of it, sneered at the youngster, saying that nobody really knew what he could do with his fists if he was not paid for it. Now this touched the young Bristolian on a tender point. His dander was up in a second. Slipping off the gloves, he called out for a ring to be formed, and he would show the d—d common soldier that he was not worthy to wear the King's uniform. This naturally nettled the corporal, who was a man of gigantic proportions, standing some 6ft 3in, and regarded as champion boxer of his brigade. Nothing loath, therefore, the Guardsman disposed of his gloves, and they set-to in real earnest. The contest lasted a very short time, for young Gully literally

cut his opponent to pieces, blinding and bruising him so fearfully with his sledge-hammer blows that the man had to be taken to barracks and sick quarters. This soon spread like wildfire, and the public began to realise the fact that Master Gully was not such a put-up dummy after all, and at once changed their tone.

So the match was renewed, and the 8th of October fixed for the battle, Pearce going into Kent to train, and Gully to the south coast, near Brighton. The revival of the affair caused more excitement than ever, and when it was known that Hailsham, near Lewes, was fixed, and that it was rumoured that the Prince Regent would be present, together with the Brighton Pavilion *coterie*, which included Colonel Berkeley, Major Hanger, Beau Brummel, Sir John Lade, the Earl of Essex, Golden Ball Hughes, and other celebrities, the excitement went to fever heat. And here we may mention that although the Prince himself did not honour the fight with his presence, the Duke of Clarence did, together with the above-mentioned set.

But let us to the ring side, as we have no further space to devote to preliminary details.

It was a lovely autumnal day, the sun shining mildly out of a hazy sky, with a soft breeze blowing off the Channel. Before an audience, that for high class had not been seen for many a long day, proceedings commenced at precisely one o'clock. Gully, who turned the scale at 14st and stood just under 6ft, had a commanding presence and a splendid muscular development, the admiration of everybody assembled. Pearce, compact, powerful, and as hard as nails, if not presenting such a fine picture as the youngster, looked a formidable antagonist, and the betting was 6 to 4 on the veteran. The latter was supported by Joe Ward and Bill Clarke, whilst Tom Jones and Dick Whale officiated for Gully.

It is not our intention to give full details of this magnificent contest here. In the first round Pearce felled his opponent like one of his oxen. The excitement over the battle, which may be truly described as Titanic—for so terrific were the blows that they scarcely seemed within the power of the human fist—was at fever heat. Here is a most graphically written account of the exciting scene:—"With craned neck, bending forward like hounds upon the leash, the crowd devoured with their eyes every movement of the heroes, panting and even sobbing in sympathetic response with those awful thuds that seemed to vibrate through the solid earth. At the end of each round, hoarse, wild cries of exultation would burst forth, then all would sink into deep silence again, many holding their breath until some

tremendous blow was delivered. All social distinctions were forgotten for the time, the London roughs clambering up the coach wheels, hung on to the drags and phaetons of the 'bucks,' who were far too absorbed in the mighty contest to heed, or be even conscious of being cheek by jowl with such unsavoury companions. Glaring at each other like lions at bay, with eyes on fire, each on guard, the combatants stood for a moment rigid and statuesque, each waiting for the attack. Both were attractive-featured men, as remote from the ordinary type of the prize-fighter as they were from that of the negro; but those terrible battering-rams which each was now again to dash at the other would have rendered an Apollo as hideous as Vulcan, Adonis as unsightly as Cyclops. Gully's tall figure appeared to rise to giant proportions, and once or twice Pearce seemed almost to cower beneath it, but only as it were to concentrate his strength, the muscles of the chest and shoulders rose like coils of twisted cordage beneath the skin, while the sinews of the arms showed like ropes of iron, and the blood-stained face was raised with such a look of unconquerable defiance as Hector might have cast upon Achilles. This terrible picture—terrible from its potentiality—hushed the vast crowd into the silence of death. Then one mighty battering ram was dashed forward, and was balked by its opposite; but Gully would not be denied, and drawing back his left he lunged, broke down his opponent's guard, and landed such a terrific blow upon Pearce's forehead that everyone expected to see him fall senseless; but though it staggered, it did not fell him, and, throwing himself forward, he clasped his adversary in an iron grip, and each strained every sinew for the fall, until both went down together and rolled over and over until the seconds parted them. Not until then was the spell of silence broken, and then every throat sent forth a mighty shout that rose to a roar.

"Such was the kind of fighting between these two sons of Hercules—two friends attached to each other, without an evil wish one to the other—both determined to do their best or test Nature to her snapping strain in the attempt. At one time it looked as if Henry Pearce had found more than his match. There was no thought of 'plant' or 'cross' now, for never had the oldest ring-goer in that vast assembly witnessed a fiercer fight or more desperate struggle for supremacy. Round after round they fought, and gradually the greater experience told, for in the twenty-sixth round, by careful tactics, the 'Chicken' covered himself splendidly from the desperate onslaught of his opponent, and then sent in a sledge-hammer blow which sent Gully to the ground with

such violence that he had to be carried to his corner like a log. He never really recovered from that blow. Yet, like a young lion, he came again and again, and fought so desperately that the appearances of the men were truly sickening. As Gully became weaker there were cries of 'Take him away!' But still he came to the scratch until the sixty-fourth round, when his last effort expired.

"The fight had lasted one hour and ten minutes. Many will shudder at what will be called its brutality; but the same indomitable pluck which animated Gully again and again to come up when all hope was over was the same that has made the English soldier stand still to be shot rather than retreat before the enemy. If we call this heroism, surely we should give the same title to the splendid endurance of the pugilist. Scarcely less enthusiastic was the ovation rendered to the conquered than that bestowed upon the conqueror. Pearce went over to where Gully lay, supported by Dick Whale, and cordially grasping his hand, he said, 'You're a d——d fine fellow; you made it very bad for me, and you're the only man that ever stood up against me so long; he'll be a sharp 'un that beats John Gully.'"

CHAPTER XXX.

VAUNTING AMBITION O'ERLEAPS ITSELF.—FRIENDS AS FOES.

—JEM BELCHER AND HEN PEARCE.—THE LAST OF THE
"GAME CHICKEN."

And now we come to a period at which we shall have to say adieu to one of the bravest of all our fighters, Henry Pearce, the "Game Chicken," whose name stands out in large letters upon the roll of champions as the only one from the days of Figg to the present time—a man who was never once defeated. This is extraordinary, when we come to think of it, for Pearce met some of the best men of all times and although his career was not a long one in the Ring, fight succeeded fight very quickly, and he was during his presence before the

public open to all comers. To be sure there were some brilliant contemporaries, who for some cause never took up the gauntlet he had thrown down—men who after his death (which we shall have to regretfully record as very premature) made their mark as champions, and others who figure as stars of the first magnitude in the fistic firmament. Amongst them were Tom Cribb, Gully, and in all probability each in turn could have beaten Pearce had he lived but a short time longer. That Gully could have done so after the manner in which the two men fought, as described in our last chapter, many thought certain. But it was not to be. The "Chicken" was to die with all the honours fresh upon him, so that he might stand out alone as the one unconquered Champion of the World.

But to our muttuns. A reintroduction will have to take place, for it is some time ago since we last saw Jem Belcher figure in the ring. Now everybody thought that the Champion had retired, never to return to the magic circle. In fact it was looked upon as a tacit pledge upon his part, and on that understanding—after his battle with Ferby ("The Young Ruffian"), on April 12, 1803, together with the terrible accident whilst playing at racquets, when he lost his eye—money was raised for him to take the Two Brewers, where he played the part of host, and was supported by the best class of patrons of the Ring. He still held the proud title of Champion of England, for since Joe Berks had been so decisively beaten by the "Game Chicken," nobody had come forth to claim it. Truly Hen. Pearce might have thrown down the gauntlet to Belcher, but this was the last thought in his mind. He was satisfied to go on step by step in mounting the ladder of fame, feeling that at some not far distant period his friend and countryman would formally retire, when he would be free to hold the title against all comers. In fact, Jem had more than once expressed it as his intention to retire in favour of his pupil, of whom he was justly proud, and for whom he had the warmest regard and greatest admiration.

But this was not to be. The mischief-making and exaggerating tongue is the usual cause of splits being made—of friendship, of happiness and affection set aside. And so it was in this case. Young Ned Belcher, brother to Jem (who, by-the-bye, only once figured in the ring, beating a man named Jones, "The Cockney," at Epping Forest, in 1802), seems to have been one of these mischief-making young gentlemen. In less than a week after the "Chicken's" fight with Gully, and before his eyes had resumed their normal colour (both being in the greenish, bluish stage), he

turned up at Bill Warr's house, and there met young Belcher and a number of members of the Fancy. Naturally the conversation turned upon the recent battle, and Pearce was, of course, the hero of the hour. This did not seem to please Belcher, and he fell into a dispute with the "Chicken," during which he publicly stated that his brother Jem would not have taken half the time to have licked the novice. Although Pearce, as we have stated several times, was one of the best-tempered fellows breathing, he was not at all pleased with this remark, and one word led to another, until during the hot argument the "Chicken" declared that he considered himself virtually Champion, although Jem Belcher held the title in name; and that he only refrained from claiming it out of pity for the misfortunes of his friend. Now this might have been, and we daresay was, perfectly true; but it was a little too candid on the part of Pearce, for Ned Belcher posted off straight to brother Jem, and described, with certain additions and embellishments of his own, the sentiments Hen. Pearce had expressed.

The fat was in the fire. It will be remembered that Jem Belcher's irritability of temper after his accident had been so great that his friends feared for his health breaking down entirely. Time, however, had worked wonders, and the cheerful associations at his hostelry had acted as a restorative, and Jem was himself again. Nevertheless, it took very little to upset him, and this "audacity" on the part of his old pupil, as he called it, sent the Champion off into a temper at boiling heat. Without consultation, consideration, or a moment's pause, he despatched a challenge to Pearce to fight him for 500 guineas a-side.

The "Chicken," who had gone home regretting that he had so far forgotten himself as to speak as he had, was flabbergasted when he received the challenge. He is reported to have exclaimed, "What! I fight Jem Belcher, the best friend I ever had in the world? The man who took me by the hand when nobody knew me, that I owe everything to? No, I'm d——d if I do that!" He went direct to his patron, Colonel Mellish, with the challenge in his hand. The gallant Colonel, no doubt prompted by a desire to give the "Chicken" impartial advice, but at the same time—smelling, like a war-horse in the breeze, a glorious battle that would excite the whole sporting world—pointed out to Pearce that if he adhered to his resolution he would be a ruined man. The Colonel asked him who would believe, did he think, that he was refusing the challenge out of pure generosity? Nobody. They would say that he was afraid to meet the Champion,

and that it was cowardice and not sentiment that was preventing him from trying conclusions with Jem Belcher. Besides, all his friends would desert him to a man, and now he, at the very zenith of his career, would be cut down. Pooh! pooh! it was not to be thought of. So poor Pearce, with a heavy heart and sad face, gave way to the Colonel's superior judgment, and left the arrangement of the affair entirely in his hands.

On the night of the 14th of October, 1805 (just a week after the mighty battle about which everybody was talking between Pearce and Gully had taken place), a grand representative meeting was held at the Coach and Horses, St. Martin's Lane. Amongst the swells we find the following list:—Earl Grosvenor, Colonel Mellish, Mr. Akers, Fletcher Reid, Sir John Lade, Berkeley Craven, the Hon. W. H. Lyttleton, Captain Halliday, &c. They had assembled to bind the match between Henry Pearce and Jem Belcher. Neither of the men was present; but the Champion was represented by his brother Tom, whose portrait we give, and who, although never up to Championship form, fought as many battles as his brother Jem, and who must be included amongst the Heroes of the Ring. Will Warr appeared for the "Chicken."

Now Tom Belcher was an excellent speaker, and after a few seconds' pause, as he arose to allow the burst of applause to die away, he informed the company that, as they were aware, many thought that his brother Jem should either retire from the Championship or prove his ability to hold it. He desired them to believe that there was not the slightest ill-feeling on the part of his brother against his former pupil; but the Champion thought, on reviewing the prominence that Henry Pearce had gained in the fistic world by his brilliant displays, that he was entitled to claim the title, or at least do battle for it with the man who held it. It was, therefore, his brother's intention to afford Pearce the opportunity of winning that proud distinction in the only satisfactory and honourable manner, by fighting for it in true British fashion. There was a tremendous, prolonged cheer after this neat little speech, and when Will Warr got upon his legs to respond for Pearce, he scarcely knew what to say. He—who it will be remembered, was also a Bristol man, and had introduced Jem Belcher to the London Ring—was greatly grieved at the turn things had taken, and sorrowfully expressed himself on behalf of the "Chicken," saying that all who knew the men must have a feeling of sorrow that circumstances should compel them to meet, and nobody regretted it more than Pearce. But there seemed no alternative but that the "Chicken"

should accept, however reluctantly, the challenge; but he wished it emphatically to be understood that he (the "Chicken") insisted that over this affair Belcher's wishes and convenience were to be consulted in every particular.

These speeches smoothed matters considerably, and amongst such a distinguished assembly the money was soon forthcoming. Mr. Fletcher Reid, who had been Belcher's first backer, naturally stood by him, and Captain Halliday volunteered the whole of the money for the "Chicken," declaring that if he won he should have £250 out of the £500. Articles were drawn, a hundred deposit on each side made, and the date fixed for December the 6th of that year, 1805. All the details were in fact gone into then and there. One curious stipulation was that the ring should be 20ft square instead of 24ft, although we have never been able to understand why or from whom this departure emanated. All expenses were to be defrayed by private subscription, the charge for tickets to the inner ring was to be three guineas, and umpires and referee were chosen that evening. Colonel Mellish consented to act for Belcher and Berkeley Craven for Pearce. The Hon. W. H. Lyttleton was chosen referee, and John Jackson was appointed stakeholder and timekeeper.

There was none too much time for Jem to get himself fit—not enough by any means; but Pearce was as fit as a fiddle, for the week's light dissipation had done little harm to his magnificent physique. Colonel Mellish had placed the house of his farm bailiff, close to Blythe Hall, at Belcher's disposal; but the keen Yorkshire air was a little too much for the Champion, and his trainers, Joe Ward and Dick Whale, had serious thoughts of shifting his quarters, but Jem would not hear of it. Pearce, on the other hand, was enjoying the balmy yet bracing air of Clifton Downs, near his own home, and was in daily practice with the best men of Bristol, getting himself into magnificent fettle.

It is needless to state that such a match for the Championship created the intensest excitement. Not even the news of our victory over the French at Trafalgar could overbalance the interest. It was only two days before the fight we are about to relate that the *Victory* arrived at Portsmouth with all that remained that was mortal of our great hero, Nelson. This cast a sadness over everything, but still the fight was the topic in every sporting drum, and who would have loved it better than the dead Admiral?

At length the long looked-for day, the 6th of December, arrived. It was a dull, cold, raw, windy day, the ther-

mometer just on freezing point, and the clouds threatening snow. The place selected had been on the borders of Nottingham and Yorkshire, not far from Doncaster, and close to Blyth Hall, for Tom Belcher had won the toss for selection. Belcher was practically on the spot; but the "Chicken," with Captain Halliday, had to journey from Worksop, where they had taken up their quarters for a day or two, bringing Gully, Cribb, and Will Warr with him.



TOM BELCHER,
BROTHER TO THE CHAMPION.

Everything had been so perfectly arranged beforehand that there was really nothing to do but to get the men into the ring and to work. This was at once done, Jem Belcher having first gone over to Pearce immediately on his arrival and shaken him heartily by the hand. There were a good number of traps from Nottingham, Leeds, Sheffield, and adjacent districts, but the rougher class of Londoners were very few. The farmer and agricultural labourer, however, were largely represented. There were also some splendidly appointed turns-out, amongst

them that of the Earl of Lincoln, with a large party from Clumber, Earl Grosvenor, and Berkeley Craven.

As they faced each other there was a marked contrast in their physical development. Jem had the advantage in height, standing 5ft 11½ in; the "Chicken" being but 5ft 9in. But Belcher was 12st 7lb against Pearce's 13st 2lb, and the latter was trained to a pound, whilst the Champion could have spared at least half a stone. In age Jem was but twenty-four, as it will be remembered he commenced his Ring career as quite a youngster, whilst Pearce was twenty-eight. Yet the latter looked the younger of the two.

They both posed in a masterly manner. In but a few seconds after sparring, Belcher shot that wonderful left out over Pearce's guard, and caught him a stinger on the eye. There was a burst of applause, for it was evident that Jem had lost none of his smartness. As the crimson stream flowed from a cut on the brow the crowd yelled "First blood! first blood!" Then Pearce adroitly closed and, holding his man in a grip of iron, threw him heavily. Belcher evidently realised the necessity for forcing the fighting, for on renewing he fought with the greatest activity, and never in more magnificent style. Six blows to one did he get home on the "Chicken's" ribs or face; but good judges, who were near, could see plainly that splendid as the science and judgment were, Belcher lacked the power and force of delivery, and Tom Cribb declared after the battle was over that he would sooner have received a dozen blows from the Champion than one straight hit or throw from the "Chicken." The latter was palpably out-manœuvred, but he fought as coolly and as confidently as if he were in a boxing saloon, and when he did land it was like a kick from a horse. Curiously the Champion could never evade the fall, yet Belcher persistently hit his opponent without a return until his admirers went frantic with delight. It is curious to read some of the remarks quoted in special reports. Whether they were really made, or whether they emanated from the fertile brain of the scribe who wrote them we know not, but they are droll, to say the least of them. When the "Chicken" became more than usually pummelled, one or other of the Tykes would call out, "Thou't better go whoam, lad, whilst thou'st got any bones left whole." "If thou'rt a 'Chicken,' thou'll never live to be an old cock," cried another. "Pot him, Jem; pot him, spit him, roast him! Hurrah, for the yellor 'un," and then there was a waving of yellow bandanas.

Pearce fought stubbornly and carefully, but not so

quickly as was his wont. But it was a fierce battle, and old Joe Ward summed the whole affair up in a few words in speaking of the contest in after years. The veteran said, "They sparred like Humphries and Mendoza, only better; and they slogged like Gully and Gregson, only harder!" Now, as the first was the model of pugilistic science and the second of hard hitting, no further commentary was possible.

Within a quarter of an hour from the commencement of hostilities both men were terribly punished about the face—the "Chicker" bruised and bleeding, and one of the champion's eyes all but closed. Then came the most sensational episode of the whole battle. Belcher dashed in most recklessly, hammering away at his opponent as if he hadn't another moment to live. The cheering was tremendous, and all around the ring were frantic with excitement. Never had the champion fought so furiously. He seemed to be fired by the shouting, and rushing in closed with his antagonist, and with one terrific effort actually threw him over the ropes and outside the ring.

It was a tremendous effort, but it had cost the Champion dearly, and those who were close enough to look at the face of Joe Ward as he saw to his man after this would have been chilled by the expression if they had been backing the Champion. He had well nigh exhausted himself. Will Warr realised the situation at once, and whispered to the "Chicken," "Jem's nearly done up; he can't stand much more; I know him to an ounce; give him no time, force the fighting, and the battle's ours."

In spite of Belcher's endeavours to gain time, the "Chicken" acted strictly upon the advice given, and forced the fighting with a vengeance, giving him bear-like hugs and throwing him in a crushing manner. Once he got the Champion over the ropes with the left and had raised the right. Belcher was as a baby in his power. The wildest shout went up. Then a deadly silence fell upon the scene. Hen. Pearce paused, then as one report puts it, "With a magnanimity that would have covered the noblest hero with glory, much less this poor, ignorant prize fighter, he said, 'No, I'll take no advantage of thee, Jem; I'll not strike thee lest I hurt thy other eye.' Then, relaxing his hold, he walked to his corner."

But it was all over. Joe Ward, after the champion had been thrown again and again, urged him to give in, but he stubbornly refused. His left arm was almost useless. His only eye was nearly blinded, and he could scarcely stand. Still he would come up to be thrown again. It was the last. Eighteen desperate

rounds had been fought in thirty-five minutes, when Jem Belcher faintly murmured "I can fight no more." It was an honourable victory for the "Game Chicken," and it was his last appearance in the ring.

Let us suppose four years to have elapsed.

On Friday, April 28, 1809 the "Four-in-Hand Club" held its opening meeting in Cavendish Square. After the meet and drive round a dinner was given, to which upwards of forty sat down, consisting, of course, of the tip top sports of the day. When the dessert came on and a few toasts had been proposed, Gentleman John Jackson, who was one of the guests, rising to his feet, apologised for interrupting the conviviality of the evening, but the fact was he had only just learned that his old friend, the "Game Chicken," of whom he was sure that all present were as warm admirers as he himself, was very dangerously ill, and was besides in exceedingly straitened circumstances. He hoped, therefore, that "my lords and gentlemen" would generously contribute something to assist one who had afforded them such glorious exhibitions of British pluck and scientific pugilism in days gone by. Jackson's appeal was liberally responded to, and we believe he collected 150 guineas that night for his old friend and comrade. But alas! the generous relief came too late to benefit poor Harry Pearce. On the following Tuesday there appeared in the morning papers the subjoined announcement:—"On Sunday afternoon, at 4.30 o'clock, died the celebrated pugilistic hero, Henry Pearce, alias the 'Game Chicken,' and once the Champion of England. His fighting career was put an end to by a complaint of the lungs, brought on by dissipation; habits which at length caused his dissolution. The 'Chicken's' last fight, it will be remembered, was with Jem Belcher, whom he thrashed on December 8, 1805. After that event he returned to his native city, Bristol, where he started business as a publican, and it was there, in the month of November, 1807, that he performed that splendid act of heroism which we have described in a previous chapter when he rescued a girl from the great fire in Denzil Street at the peril of his life."

A short time after that noble deed the "Chicken" again distinguished himself in rescuing one of the fair sex from insult and outrage. The story is thus told in a contemporary print in this way: "Over Clifton Downs, near Bristol, Pearce perceived a young woman suffering much from the rude attacks of three men. Regardless of the consequences, Pearce in-

stantly interposed, when they fell upon him with fury, but the courage and science of Pearce, soon made them repent of their temerity. The 'Chicken' received the onset with such coolness and intrepidity, and so successfully planted his levelling hits that one of them of the name of Hood, was so satisfied in seven minutes that he bolted, and left his companions to the care of Pearce. In a quarter of an hour the 'Chicken' served out Morris and Francis, the other two, that they declined the strife, and apologised for their rudeness, while the terrified female could only thank her gallant defender for his seasonable protection."

These were in themselves gallant deeds, but we think their credit is enhanced when one remembers that Pearce had no cause to love the sex that he thus so chivalrously championed. His wife was a shameless and abandoned woman, who embittered his life and ruined his home; indeed, she was the real cause of his early death, for it was her infidelities that drove him to the drink which killed him. To escape from her he fled from his native place, never to return. For some time he travelled from town to town, giving sparring exhibitions and teaching the art of self-defence. He had no lack of pupils, for his name and his exploits were known all over the kingdom; but he seldom stayed long in one place. The "Chicken" was giving lessons in Oxford when Jem Belcher and Tom Cribb fought their second battle, and he was so anxious to see the fight that he set off in a post-chaise over night lest he should fail to be in time. The long bleak night drive across country to Epsom gave him a severe cold, which settled on his lungs, and aggravated the pulmonary disease from which he was already suffering. Yet to all the old friends whom he met at the ring side he appeared to be in excellent spirits, though evidently not in robust health. After Cribb had proved the victor the "Chicken" said to his old patron, Captain Barclay, "that he hoped he should soon get well, that he might teach Cribb how to fight." That hope was never to be realised. Pearce returned to London with some of his friends, and on February 9 took a benefit at the Fives Court. But the cold which he had caught on that fatal night drive had played terrible havoc with him in the meanwhile, and those that had seen him on Epsom Downs but a week before were shocked at the change in his appearance. He was too ill to spar; and, indeed, was only just able to walk to the Court from the Coach and Horses, a few doors off, to thank his friends for their generous support. Still, no one

dreamed that the end was so near, and the announcement of his death came as a surprise to all.

The "Chicken" died in his thirty-second year at the house of his old comrade, Bob Clarke, the Coach and Horses, St. Martin's Lane. It was Hen Pearce's last wish that he might be buried beside his companion-in-arms, Will Warr, who had died but six weeks previously. That wish was complied with. His remains lie close to those of his brave but less fortunate fellow-townsmen in the burial ground of St. James' Church, in the parish of St. Pancras. Such was the end of the "Game Chicken," one of the finest characters that ever adorned the history of the Prize Ring during the 150 years of its existence. He was without doubt a magnificent fighter. The author of "Pancratia," the best judge of boxing of his day says, "During the time Pearce enjoyed good health his excellence as a pugilist was admitted by all parties, and he stood above all competitors. In uniting the courage of a lion with true kindness of heart, Pearce must command our praise. He was a tremendous hard hitter, and his left-handed blow was so terrible in its effects that his opponents have been seen in a complete state of stupor for several seconds, and often have never recovered the proper use of their faculties during the fight."

As a fighter we rank the "Game Chicken" a little lower than Jem Belcher at his best; but, as a man, Henry Pearce has had no superior among prize-fighters. He had a big heart, a chivalrous soul, a gentle, kindly spirit. With this last tribute of admiration and respect, we bid our final farewell to Henry Pearce, the "Game Chicken," some time Champion of England, the very beau ideal of a brave, strong, true-hearted Englishman.

CHAPTER XXXI.

FURTHER ADVENTURES OF DAN MENDOZA.—HIS LAST VICTORY
AND SENSATIONAL FIGHT WITH HARRY LEE.

AND now, before proceeding to chronicle the various struggles for the Championship, we feel it our duty to describe the later adventures of our old friend Dan Mendoza, who had, until defeated by Jackson, held the coveted title. It is some time since he has figured upon these pages as a principal, and it is singular that the record of his pugilistic career is so imperfect. He tells us himself in his book that he figured in no less than thirty battles, but with the exception of his fights with Humphries, Will Warr, and John Jackson, which we have already recorded, we have only the barest reference to some six others. As we have already mentioned, Dan Mendoza's career was an exceedingly chequered one. Besides having on several occasions embarked in business, he had opened an academy for boxing at the Lyceum Theatre in 1791, when that theatre was newly built; he had been, besides a prize-fighter, instructor to lords, divines, lawyers, merchants, artists, and had spent a life of luxury and extravagance. In consequence of his style of living he had fallen into difficulties, and was thrown into the King's Bench, where he remained for a considerable time until, we presume, he was rescued by some of his former patrons. Upon obtaining his release he was only too glad to accept any employment, and became a recruiting sergeant in the Fifeshire Regiment of Fencibles.

This was in 1795, consequently he held this position at the time of his great fight with Jackson. After that event he seems to have got tired of soldiering, and procured a situation as sheriff's officer, in which capacity, according to the several anecdotes to be found in his autobiography, he proved himself exceedingly proficient, and was so successful in making arrests of debtors, that more writs poured in than he could possibly serve.

In the autumn of 1796 he threw up this occupation and went to the West of England with an actor named Barrett, visiting the principal towns of Devon and

Cornwall, Dan giving sparring exhibitions, whilst the other recited. During several years he seems to have wandered about the country, and in 1799 he joined a man named Stretton, who gave selections from Chas. Dibdin's musical pieces, while Dan Mendoza varied the performance with his boxing. Here is an extract of one of the bills of the Stafford Theatre, which we think worth giving:—

“Between the parts Mr. Mendoza, the celebrated pugilist, will display his scientific knowledge of self-defence against a practised pupil, by which he has foiled many an opponent.

“End of Part 1st, Mr. Mendoza will exhibit and lecture upon the scientific skill and method of fighting of those celebrated Pugilists, Big Ben, Johnson, Broughton, and Perrins.

“End of Part 2nd will be displayed others equally skilful in the science, Humphreys, Ward, Wood George the Brewer.

“The ladies are respectfully informed that there is neither violence nor indecency that can offend the most delicate of their sex; as an affirmation of which Mr. Mendoza has, by repeated desire, performed before their Majesties and the Royal Family.

“The whole to conclude with Mr. Mendoza's own Original Attitude.

“Admittance: Boxes and Pit, 2s.; Gallery, 1s. To begin precisely at 7 o'clock.”

Eventually he had, however, to leave the show business, for he was followed about by old creditors, and served with writs, so he took a situation as sutler to the camp of the Nottingham Militia. But he soon overran the constable and lost his position, returning to the showman business. At Carlisle, however, he was arrested for one of the debts and thrown into prison. This was just at the time when the Bank of England issued notes of one and two pounds, stopping payment of specie—an act that became so unpopular that it drew down such ridicule that persons issued notes for twopence.

This suggested to the sharp Israelite a very ingenious idea. “It occurred to me,” he says in his book, “that being a public character, I had every chance of disposing of such. I therefore caused a plate to be engraved, and had a number of impressions taken, which were quickly disposed of. So great was the demand for them, that two persons beside myself were constantly employed in filling them up and signing them.”

These notes were a kind of promise to pay on the Bank of Elegance, and consequently not a forgery, and were signed only Daniel Mendoza, and the whole

thing was a joke. The Hebrew, however, made a good deal over it.

After being a prisoner for six months, he was enabled to make arrangements with his creditors, and being once more a free man, resumed his Thespian - pugilistic wanderings. During these he met at Edinburgh Mr. Fletcher Reid, who induced him to make the match with Jem Belcher, to which we have already referred. It will be remembered that this battle was to be fought in Scotland; but Dan came to London, found his home sold up, and his wife and children next door to starvation. On the morning after his arrival, to add to his misery, Dan was arrested on information of the proposed fight and taken before Sir Richard Ford at Bow Street and bound over to keep the peace.

Naturally he was accused of getting out of the match by coming to London; and in all probability he did, for it must be remembered that Jem Belcher was only twenty, whilst the Jew was thirty-six, and had not figured in the ring for five years. After this he managed to get enough money to take the Admiral Nelson, in Whitechapel Road, and according to his own statement established an excellent trade there, it being the rendezvous for the East End Fancy. Although he opened a sparring room at the house, one of the conditions of his licence was that he should not engage in any pugilistic encounter, and that was the reason for his repeated refusals to meet Belcher and Pearce.

It was at this time, too, that there appeared in the *Daily Advertiser*, of Wednesday, December 1, 1801, the reply from John Jackson in answer to a challenge purporting to come from Dan Mendoza. It ran as follows: "Mr. John Jackson will have no objection to vindicating his character by meeting Mr. Mendoza, provided he will premise not to give information to the *Bow Street Magistrates*." The latter part, of course, alluded to the Belcher fiasco.

It turned out, however, to be a hoax, for Mendoza caused a paragraph to appear, denying that he had authorised anybody to challenge Jackson, adding that he felt particularly hurt at the idea that he was compelled to sit down tamely under injury, or incur the risk of offending his best friends, "and particularly the respectable magistrates of that division, by resuming a profession which, both from principle and conviction I had wholly relinquished."

It was in this letter that Mendoza stated that he had fought thirty-two pitched battles. He certainly had not forgiven Jackson for the thrashing he had received, especially for the holding him by the hair, which, it will

be remembered, lost him the fight. In after years, however, he and Jackson became fast friends, for Mendoza, in his autobiography, acknowledges himself as under deep obligation to Mr. Jackson.

For a time it would appear that Dan pursued the even tenor of his way as a Whitechapel publican, but his extravagant habits led him once more into trouble. He was again arrested for debt, and thrown into King's Bench, where he passed four years of his life, and would have remained there undoubtedly for a considerable time longer but for an Act of Parliament for the release of insolvent debtors, which was passed about that time. Upon regaining his liberty he took a public-house in Webber Street, Blackfriars Road.

During the best part of the time through which we have taken our readers, in company with Mendoza, Henry Lee, the publican and pugilist, had been the Hebrew's friend and adviser. Lee had entered the ring in Ireland, and fought several battles, and was a Dublin man. Some time after coming to England he assisted Dan at his boxing entertainments. At the time of which we speak, however, Harry was landlord of the Anti-Gallican Tavern, in Shire Lane, which ran through where the New Law Courts now stand, and was a favourite sporting house of the period. So popular was the hostelry, indeed, that the Duke of Norfolk and the Earl of Barrymore, besides other *bons vivants* frequented the house.

About the period at which we have arrived, however, Henry Lee, like his pal, had overrun the constable, and was arrested for debt. He immediately sent for Dan, who found him in a low sponging-house. The Jew at once agreed to be bail; but he was not considered good enough, so he induced his brother and a friend to join. As the debt and costs only came to about £20, it says little enough for those three gentlemen's credit. However, as is so frequently the case, money matters led to a rupture amongst the two old friends.

The above was Mendoza's version of the story as told in the *Daily Advertiser* of the period, and it is remarkable that a paper of such respectability should have opened its columns and devoted so much of its space to the subject.

A few days after, Henry Lee made the following rejoinder in the same paper, but it would appear to be too smart to have come from him personally, and no doubt the whole thing was written by some friends, who were journalists. Here are selections from it:

"Among the extraordinary events that fate and folly produce, I believe insanity itself never dreamed of an

epistolary correspondence between Daniel Mendoza and Harry Lee. What devil could have provoked him to exhibit his wonderful stock of honour, virtue, and benevolence in so public a manner I am at a loss to divine." After a lot more in the same style, the writer comes to his facts. "It is true I was sued on two writs of ten pounds each, a circumstance that has frequently happened to honest men than Harry Lee or Daniel Mendoza. It is also true that I called upon him to assist me in procuring my enlargement, which, by the bye, was but a slender tribute for the gratitude he owed me. He certainly promised me bail upon my promise of settling both actions. As Mr. Mendoza admits, I did pay one; but I am very sorry for his own sake he did not keep a little nearer the truth with respect to the other, as that might have relieved him from the reprobation that injustice, fallacy, and ingratitude merit. The second action, upon which I was accused of having run from bail and left Mr. Mendoza under the piteous, lamentable, and ruinous circumstances to pay, stood exactly thus at the time of the letter: The debt and costs came to £16, the alternative was either paying it or going to prison. £14 I raised and paid, so that all Mendoza could be possibly liable for was the vast sum of £2, which I have also paid Admitting for a moment, Mr. Editor, that I had left Mr. Mendoza a few pounds to pay for me, the offence, surely, would not be held in any very serious light by him, if he will have the goodness to call to his recollection the situation in which he left all his friends who were security for his integrity when he commenced as sheriff's officer. . . . In fine, sir, Mr. Mendoza has upon some very urgent occasions been driven to the solitary friendship of Harry Lee, who afforded it him in the most ample manner his capacity would permit. Upon several occasions have I solicited the pecuniary assistance of my friends in aid of what my own abilities could afford, and this, too, for the purpose of extricating him from the most irksome of all personal inconveniences, as well as to succour his almost famishing family. Perhaps Mr. Mendoza has forgotten the letter in my possession, expressive of the obligations I have conferred upon him," &c.

If the above statement made by Harry Lee be true, then Mendoza must have more fighting reputation than principle, and could not be regarded as much of a man. It is curious to note that in his autobiography he makes little allusion to this quarrel, which, as we shall presently see, led to the Israelite entering the ring once more.

In a very short time came another letter from Men-

doza, which embraced the challenge. It ran as follows:—"He was not, however, content with this abominable usage of me, he went up and down the town circulating lies and calumnies against me, and threatened to beat me as soon as he had the opportunity. In short, he gave me such a challenge that I could not, in justice to my honour, refuse. The black ingratitude of Harry Lee is now very conspicuous: after cheating, deceiving, I may say robbing his friend in need, he now waits to give him a kicking into the bargain; but I have no doubt that I shall stop his career and put in a blow of just indignation and honourable resentment against a man whose conduct is a disgrace to any rank of life. I am, much against my inclination, forced to this fight, not from any fear of Harry Lee, but from a sense of violating those rules and peaceable conduct in which I had resolved to pass the remainder of my life."

And so the two old friends determined to fight. It is not our province, however, to give a full description of the battle, as the stakes were only for fifty guineas, and the fight was not for the Championship. Everybody, with the exception of the Jews, sided with Harry Lee, who went to John Jackson for assistance and advice, which the ex-Champion willingly accorded. Yet there was a general opinion that wrong would triumph over right when the fists came in, and Dan was made favourite from the first.

Mendoza went to Orpington to train with his old rival, Will Warr, where they put up at the old Artichoke Tavern, whilst Harry Lee betook himself to Wimbledon, in company with John Gully. The date fixed for the battle was March 21, 1806, and the place fixed upon at the eleventh hour was Green Street Green, a place about a mile from Farnborough. The weather had been fearfully severe, and we read of snowdrifts existing in this neighbourhood as deep as ten feet during the middle of the month. Fortunately, however, a change took place, and the snow disappeared, and within the week the weather became most agreeable.

There was a tremendous foregathering of Israelites, and one would almost believe that the neighbourhood of Petticoat Lane and Whitechapel had been drained of all its inhabitants. Yet the number of followers of Harry Lee were comparatively few, although those who did support him belonged more to the Corinthian class of sports.

Lee had the honour of being waited upon by Hen Pearce, the then Champion, whilst John Gully was selected as bottle-holder. Mendoza had Will Warr and George Nicholls. Jem Belcher was appointed umpire for

Mendoza, and John Jackson officiated for Lee, whilst Lord William Hamilton acted as referee.

Harry Lee was an exceedingly good-looking man, with something of the gipsy look about him, long, straight hair, and a thin, wiry figure. He was at this period thirty-four years of age, weighed about 12st, and his height was 5ft 9in. The Jew was at a disadvantage in all these



GEORGE NICHOLLS (MENDOZA'S SECOND).

details. He was nine years older, *i.e.*, forty-three years old, only stood 5ft 7in., and weighed about a stone less. Still the wonderful performances of the ex-Champion called for the money, and Dan started the mill favourite, with 3 to 1 being laid upon his chance.

One account says:— "The men advanced from their corners and eyed one another with curious attention;

but instead of the usual hand-shaking, showed that this was a duel to the death by simply bowing. The spectators, however, would not have it so, and a great cry arose from all parts of 'Shake hands!' and when neither attempted to obey the popular mandate, the referee stepped forward and said he would not allow the fight to proceed if the usual custom was not complied with. Mendoza looked very disagreeable at this, but Lee laughed good humouredly. 'Oh, I've no objection,' he said; then, holding out his hand, 'Come, Dan, don't bear malice.' Very reluctantly, and with the worst possible grace, Mendoza went through the form. As far as sentiment went this little episode considerably raised Lee in the opinion of the spectators, who gave him a rattling cheer; but as they did not allow their sentiments to interfere with their pockets, it did not make the smallest difference to Dan's position in the betting."

And then the battle proceeded. Soon it was evident that Mendoza was still the same clever, punishing fighter as of old, for he out-generalled Lee at every turn. His magnificent skill excited admiration in every round, although Harry Lee fought with a desperate pluck and determination. Indeed, those who had doubted these qualities in the Irishman were bound to confess their error. But the Jew was too good for him, in spite of his rushes and desperate hard fighting. Both Jem Belcher and the "Game Chicken" were bound to acknowledge that the Israelite's skill was surprising. He stopped over and over again the rushes of his opponent, and in the twelfth round literally drove him across the ring, and ended by knocking him clean out of it. "Two to one on Dan," screamed the Israelites, half beside themselves with delight.

The battle never really trembled in the balance. Lee, as we have said, was absolutely outclassed. Mendoza was spiteful, and his dark eyes gleamed with hatred at his opponent. He was pitiless, and seemed to gloat over the punishment he could inflict, until Harry Lee presented really a frightful appearance, all semblance of humanity being pummelled out of him by the Jew's terrible fists. Yet it was not until he had stood up for the fifty-third round that he found that all power was forsaking him. Mendoza seemed almost as cool and fresh as when he started, and Lee's seconds begged of him to give in, but the brave fellow persisted that he was not beaten.

At length, in the fifty-third round, Lee literally tottered to the mark. Then Mendoza stood with malice gleaming in his eyes, and with that same jeering laugh of contemptuous superiority, crowing over his

fallen foe. When "Time" was called there was no response, and Lord William Hamilton, the referee, declared Mendoza victorious.

The Israelite on that day scored his last victory, and although we may have necessity to refer to the Jewish warrior again, we have for the present done with him. He fought Tom Owen and was beaten, and that was his last appearance in the ring, although he lived to the ripe old age of seventy-three years, shuffling off his mortal coil in Horse Shoe Alley, Petticoat Lane, in the year 1836.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"WHO SHALL BE CHAMPION?"—JEM BELCHER RESOLVES TO RECONQUER IT.—HIS FIRST FIGHT WITH TOM CRIBB.

IN 1807 the question was who should be Champion of England? It will be remembered that on the 6th of December, 1805, the "Game Chicken" had won the proud title after his defeat of Jem Belcher in the battle we have described that took place at Blythe. The "Chicken" had waited for a year in London to defend the title against all comers who dared to dispute it, and had then returned to his native town, Bristol, where he took a public-house. His health was none too good at this time, having been much impaired by the free-and-easy life he led in the metropolis, and his friends advised him to give up the Ring as a profession and think of fighting no more.

It would seem that Hen Pearce at this time had formally resigned the Championship, so it was, as we have said, a question of who should wear the belt. Jem Belcher, it was maintained, had proved in his fight with the "Chicken" that his palmy days were over, and the only men who could be thought of as likely candidates were John Gully and Bob Gregson, the latter being a recent and big importation from Lancashire.

But Belcher had not quite finished. His irritability of temper—made more irritable by his misfortunes—did not permit him to settle down, and he fancied himself good enough, after the departure of the "Chicken" to aspire once more to the Championship. Now it will be remembered that Jem had lost one eye by that unfortunate game at racquets, which certainly put him to a disadvantage, and he had also lost much of his physique, and was besides getting a bit stale, for he lived a most unhappy life with his "better half," who was fearfully jealous of him, and was mistress and master too.

There are some amusing anecdotes told of this unhappy pair, one of which may be worth relating. If Jem stayed out late at night she declared that he had been "carrying on" with other women, and if he by any chance made it the small hours of the morning he was in mortal dread of the "missus." On one occasion Belcher stayed away the whole of the night, and dared not face her. He had spent all his money, and owed a pretty good sum at the tavern at which he had been making merry. He declared that he would never face his wife again. But his old friend and fellow-townsmen, Will Warr, hit upon an ingenious idea of getting out of the difficulty. He went to Belcher's house with a solemn face and told his wife that Jem had the previous night been seized by a press-gang, and that she might never see him again. The lady upon hearing this news went into hysterics, for in her heart she loved her husband, and at the idea of losing him broke down entirely. Will Warr saw his opportunity, and suggested that all might yet be well by promptly paying a small ransom—say £25—before Belcher was shipped. The "smart money" was immediately produced, and the ambassador went off triumphant. That day Jem and his pals had a merry time, and when the money was exhausted the ex-Champion returned home to be welcomed in the arms of his wife, and congratulated upon his lucky escape.

But what with his wife's bad temper, to say nothing of his own, Jem did not lead a happy life. He was subject to fits of melancholy, and often his friends thought that it would really end in suicide. Nevertheless, his defeat by the "Chicken" had not convinced him that his fighting days were over, and he still hankered after another attempt to retrieve his laurels, and when Pearce virtually retired from the Ring, he declared that whoever made a bid for the Championship would have to tackle him first.

No heed, however, was paid to these assertions, so

no little surprise was created in the sporting world when an announcement appeared that Jem Belcher was matched to fight Tom Cribb for 200 guineas a-side. The surprise was due to two reasons—first, nobody believed Belcher meant fighting again; secondly, Tom Cribb was thought scarcely class enough to aspire to Championship honours.

A glance at Tom's engagements show that at this period he was no particular "flyer." Born at Hanham, in Gloucestershire, on July 8, 1781, he was at the period we are writing about just twenty-six years old. His first two victories had been over two veterans nearly twice his age—George Maddox and Tom Blake. His third success was for 40 guineas, over Ikey Pig, a Jew, and was considered to be more on account of Ikey's want of pluck than superiority on the part of Cribb. In the fourth engagement Tom was beaten by George Nicholls, a man unknown then to London fanciers. Tom's fifth engagement was with Bill Richmond, our old friend the Black, at Hailsham, in the same ring in which the "Game Chicken" defeated Gully, and an eye-witness gives the following account of the affair:—"To call it a battle is to disgrace the synonym of fight. It was a most unequal match. Richmond, finding that he could not get at his steady and formidable opponent, hopped and danced about the ring, sometimes falling down, at others jigging round in the style of an Ethiopian dancer. Cribb appeared somewhat puzzled by his opponent's long black pegs, and could not be persuaded to go in and lick him off-hand, as everyone knew was well within his power. Twenty minutes elapsed without a single blow of any consequence passing. In this manner they spun it out for an hour and a half, when Cribb was acknowledged victor, without being the least hurt."

Undoubtedly such a record was not conducive to the opinion that Cribb was capable of vanquishing a man like Belcher. But there were good judges who had seen Tom box, who had the greatest confidence in his abilities, and amongst them was Mr. John Jackson, who frequently had him up to spar in his rooms at Bond Street. Another good judge was the celebrated Captain Barclay, to whom Cribb had been introduced. He declared that Tom had all the qualities that go to the making of a champion, and expressed that opinion to Jackson. So much, indeed, did the Captain think of Cribb that he offered to back him for 200 guineas a-side.

Whilst Tom Cribb had found this new and important patron, poor Jem had lost his truest and most substantial friend, a gentleman whose name has so frequently figured in these pages, and as this sportsman has played

so prominent a part in these chronicles it will only be fitting to quote one of the short obituary notices that appeared at the time.

"On Thursday morning, January 24 (1807), died at Shepperton, Surrey, where he had resided for the last two years, Mr. Fletcher Reid, well known in the sporting world, particularly as one of the greatest patrons of gymnastic genius. The evening previously he had spent jovially amongst some select companions, and retired at rather a late hour. In the morning his servant found him dead. Mr. Fletcher Reid was a native of Dundee, Scotland, near to which he had succeeded to estates by the death of his mother, which afflicting intelligence he had received only two days previous to his decease. He left a wife and two children, who had for some time past resided with his mother."

The following verses appeared shortly afterwards:—

In the still of night Death to Shepperton went,
And there catching poor Fletcher asleep,
He into his wind such a finisher sent,
That no longer "the time" could he keep.

Thus forced to give in, we his fate must lament,
While the coward grim Death must we blame;
For if on the morn he to Shepperton went,
He feared Fletcher's true science and game.

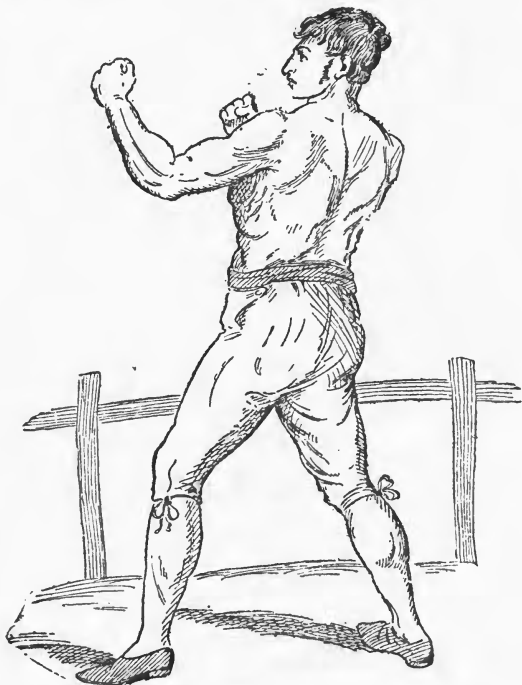
Then repose to his ashes, soft rest to his soul,
For harmless was he through life's span,
With the friend of his bosom enjoying the bowl,
And wishing no evil to man.

It was a terrible blow to Belcher the loss of his great friend, who was always willing to back him for anything against anybody, and it was very fortunate for Jem that he had two other noble patrons ready to put down the money. They were the Marquess of Tweeddale and Major Morgan. These two gentlemen visited the Jolly Brewers, in Wardour Street, and asked Jem if he were ready to accept the challenge issued by Cribb, and the following was Jem's reply:—

"They think," said he, rather warmly, "because I have lost an eye any one can beat me. Who are they going to put up against me next, I wonder? Why, if I had both eyes I could lick Cribb with one hand. Will I fight him? Yes, of course, I will. I'll let them see that I'm Jem Belcher yet."

So the match was made, and the money was staked by the Marquis, the Major, and Captain Barclay. The latter took Cribb under his own wing to Bromley, in Kent, and one of the conditions was that Tom should train according to the Captain's method.

We have his book upon training before us now, and there is much in it that was novel in the system at that time. The famous athlete and pedestrian proved how good it was by his own wonderful performances. His original idea on the subject of training was based upon that *regimen* founded upon scientific principles which



THOMAS CRIBB.

From a painting by De Wild, 1811.

has been carried to such a pitch of perfection at the present time. Walking and running formed an important feature in Captain Barclay's method of preparation, and Tom Cribb in later years (for he lived until 1848) would often speak of the "doing" the gallant Captain would give him. A twenty mile walk, with his patron as pace-

maker, was no joke, for he scorned moving at less than five miles an hour. But Barclay was too cautious to begin otherwise than by degrees with his pupil. The following was the method:—First through a course of physic to get the gross humours out of his body. Then allowed to stroll about as he pleased, with a gun in hand, over the estate of the Captain's friend, Colonel Ogle. After a week or two of this healthy recreation, his regular walking exercise began; ten or twelve miles a day, increased by small stages up to twenty, whilst regularly every morning and evening he ran a quarter of a mile at top speed. His food was of the simplest, plain joints or steaks underdone and half a pint of old ale twice a day. Under this *regimen* Tom was reduced from 15½st to about 11st 12lb, and Captain Barclay pronounced him fit for anything.

Jem Belcher went through his usual course of training with his brother-in-law, Bob Watson, at his home in Bristol; but about two weeks before the fight he came to London, met a number of friends at the Gloucester Coffee House, in Piccadilly, proceeding thence to the Wheatsheaf, Virginia Water, in order to complete his preparation,

Tuesday, April 8, 1807, was the day fixed for the battle, and the place chosen Moulsey Hurst, a spot which became so famous in after years that it was known as "The Cockpit of the Ring." Naturally the appearance of Jem Belcher once more in the arena was sufficient to draw an immense crowd, recruited from all classes of society, and royalty deigned once more to patronise the sport. H.R.H. the Duke of Clarence (afterwards King William IV.) was present, he having driven down on Captain Barclay's drag. The Sailor Prince was immensely fond of the sport, and had been present at the battle between the "Game Chicken" and Gully, and that between Cribb and Richmond. Amongst the distinguished spectators also were the Duke of Beaufort, the Marquis of Tweeddale, Sir John Lade, Sir John Shelley, Paul Methuen, Tom Sheridan, Major Morgan, Colonel Ogle, and, of course, Captain Barclay.

Old Joe Ward and Bill Gibbons had charge of the ring arrangements, and pitched an arena twenty feet square for the combatants. Belcher was waited upon by John Gully and Bob Watson, whilst Cribb had the services of his old opponent, Bill Richmond, and the veteran Will Warr. Jem wore around his waist the celebrated Belcher handkerchief (yellow, with blue stripes), and Cribb donned the blue bird's-eye, both popular fogels at that time.

With the air of certainty, as if all were over bar the shouting, Belcher advanced to the call of "Time" by John Jackson, who officiated as referee. But Cribb looked also confident, and was a much stronger man, weighing 2st 2lb heavier than the ex Champion. Tom stood steadily awaiting the attack, and Jem apparently thought his adversary's defence too strong to be forced, so broke ground. Then, coming forward in his old style, he planted two hits right and left on Cribb's body. They did no damage, however, and Tom returned them as lightly, when they came to a rally and closed, Jem very cleverly back-heeling his adversary, bringing him to the ground amidst deafening applause, when 3 to 1 was laid upon Belcher.

And so the account we have before us continues with the minutest details of the battle, making it far too long for us to give in its entirety. In the second round Tom continually retreated, but Jem was too quick for him, as springing in dexterously he landed one on the body and another on the head. Again Belcher planted one on the head, when Cribb returned smartly, but overbalancing himself went down.

In the succeeding round Cribb showed to some advantage, for he exchanged blow for blow with Belcher, and although he had not the best of the hitting, just when he closed, he threw Jem heavily and fell on him, though as he fell Belcher contrived to put in a stinger on the nose, which fetched blood.

In the fifth round, however, Belcher took a decided lead, which he maintained throughout the remaining dozen rounds. One account says: "Cribb was outfought at all points. If he attempted to attack, Jem was too quick for him—broke ground—and then when Tom least expected, was on to him, hitting like a horse kicking. Now and then Tom would skilfully parry two or three slashing hits, but in the end Jem would get one stinger home, which staggered Cribb, and before he could rally blows were showered upon him like hail, till bruised and bleeding, he was glad to get down anyhow to escape the awful punishment his adversary was ladling out so liberally. Tom bore bravely up under the terrible fire, and now and then gave back a blow that made Jem wince. But the ex-Champion was too much excited to feel pain, and, on receipt of one of these stingers, would only renew his attack with greater fury, till after five bouts of the finest fighting probably ever witnessed in the ring, Jem closed with his man and threw him. The applause at the end of each round was tremendous. Both men had fought well, and though Cribb was clearly overmatched and outgeneraled, yet no one could deny

that he had stood up with fine courage and determination to his formidable foe."

By the sixteenth round the battle had evidently reached a critical stage, for though Cribb had received a terrible mauling, he seemed as strong as ever. He was undoubt'edly a glutton, and as hard as nails, so it was thought by a good many present that it would take Belcher a good time to knock out such a p'ucky and determined man, even if he succeeded at all.

But in the eighteenth round Belcher shot in his right on the side of the head with such violence that Cribb went down, and was picked up dazed. There was a general movement towards the ring, as though the crowd took it for granted that the battle was all over. But Jackson shouted for them to keep their places. None, however, with the exception of Belcher's seconds, knew that Jem had by delivering that terrific hit, severely injured his right hand.

On they fought until the twenty-fifth round, when Tom showed his superiority of condition, and Belcher was glad to get down to avoid his adversary's tremendous deliveries. The excitement now became intense. Belcher was evidently very weak and his right hand was almost completely disabled. The left, too, was getting puffed by constant contact with Cribb's hard head. Jem could no longer stand before the rushes of his heavier and more powerful foe. He was glad to get down on every available opportunity. Then Belcher, primed with doses of brandy, made a desperate bid for victory, but Tom, in the twenty-ninth round, by an extraordinary effort of strength, threw his man clean over the ropes.

Then our account goes on to say:—"So far from Belcher being absolutely beaten, in the thirty-first round, though Cribb put in most blows, Jem gave his adversary a violent fall. This was the gallant James' last expiring effort. It was foolish of him, when he must have felt the vital necessity of husbanding all his forces to take such a lot out of himself by throwing his opponent, for the fall did not do Cribb half so much harm as it did Belcher. From this time Tom had matters all his own way, Jem was always either thrown or hit down. Yet he maintained the contest with indomitable gameness till the thirty-seventh round. From this to the fortieth it was little better than mere hugging, for Cribb was now so tired that he could hardly strike a blow, though he was far stronger on his legs than his opponent.

"In the forty-first round Tom, by a desperate effort, contrived to put in two terrible blows, or rather shoves, which sent Belcher up to the ropes, where he fell utterly,

exhausted. When his seconds picked him up he was unable to stand, and gasped out to Bob Watson that he could fight no more."

That was the finish of the sensational battle which was to be the stepping-stone to Tom Cribb holding the Championship of England, and that Belcher was within an ace of winning, for he had never fought better in his life. Jem was naturally much cut up about his failure, and was determined to have another try. That battle we shall come to by and bye, and describe it, for it was the last of Jem Belcher's career in the ring.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A PUGILIST'S ROMANTIC CAREER.—LIVELY SCENES AT NEW-MARKET. — JOHN GULLY AND BOB GREGSON. — THEIR FIRST FIGHT FOR FOUR HUNDRED GUINEAS.

AFTER the battle between Belcher and Cribb it was thought by most that the first-named would never again have a chance to re-win the Championship. Many, however, believed that Tom might make a bid, so there were three spoken of as likely candidates. John Gully, who had fought and been beaten by the Game Chicken, and who was then Champion; Tom Cribb, who had beaten the ex-champion, and Bob Gregson.

But who was this Bob Gregson, who aspired to such high honours? Let us introduce him to our readers.

According to "Fistiana" and the accounts of the period, Robert Gregson was born at Heskin, in Lancashire, three miles from Chorley and ten from Preston. He seems to have been fairly educated, and was said to have come from very good Lancashire stock. Pierce Egan, in "Boxiana," gives quite a glowing account of Bob, but there are so many discrepancies and blunders in that book that we take the author's accounts with several grains of salt. Egan says that for some time he

commanded the Liverpool and Wigan steam-packet. But as there is nor ever was such a boat, unless he was a bargee on the canal, the author of "Boxiana" leads off with a mistake. However, Pierce Egan knew Bob Gregson very well, no doubt, for he must have been frequently to Bob's chop-house, and listened to mine host record his early career and fistic performances.

The author of "Boxiana" tells us that "For a period of seven years all the pugilistic heroes of Lancashire, as well as those from other points, who met him in combat, surrendered to his conquering arms, and the name of Gregson was sounded from one end to the other as the proud champion of that populous county." The number of Lancashire lads who met Bob Gregson are too numerous to mention, but there are a couple with such romantic associations that make a brief mention of them worth while.

There was a Mrs. Gawthorp, a buxom and blooming widow of Preston, upon whom Bob had cast amorous glances, whilst she in return looked with anything but dislike upon her stalwart admirer. But there was a rival in the field in the person of a strapping, good-looking fellow named Harry Mandersley. The widow scarcely knew which of the two athletic swains she liked the better—she distributed her favours pretty equally between them, and at length the jealousy of the pair reached such a pitch that they resolved to fight for the privilege of courting Mrs. G. They did fight, and Bob was the winner of the prize, the handsomest one, he was gallant enough to say, that ever a man fought for.

After this little affair another of Gregson's antagonists named Bill Halldrop, turned up. He also loved a widow with masculine tastes, who belonged to a famous family of boxers and wrestlers, and when asked by Bill to give him her heart and hand replied that he must prove himself a man. The love-sick swain was ready enough to do all that might become a man, but he naturally wanted to know what particular test of manly prowess his mistress required of him. She promptly enlightened him upon this point. He was to thrash Bob Gregson and become champion of Lancashire. It was almost as cruel a test of his devotion as that which the Count de Lorne's *inamorata* demanded of her lover when she flung her glove in among the lions and desired him to fetch it for her. But Bill Halldrop did not shrink from it. He straightway challenged the formidable Bob Gregson, and as promptly got licked. Bill was a plucky lad, and could not bear the scorn of his mistress, so he challenged his opponent again. They fought with the

same result. Bob still held his title of Champion of Lancashire. But whether the lady gave way and took poor Bill to her buxom bosom after the second attempt history does not relate. Anyhow, we think she was unworthy of her sex if she did not.

So much for the romantic incidents of Bob Gregson's Lancashire career, for we must pass over the other real or imaginary incidents of his life and quote Pierce Egan from "*Boxiana*" again in chronicling the event which first extended his fame beyond his native shire.

"The tremendous Joe Berks now made his appearance in Manchester, threatening destruction to all the pugilists in the county who should have the temerity to enter the lists with him, when Gregson was once more called upon to avenge the honour of his native soil, and to repel, if possible, this daring invader. It was a truly brave contest, and the gluttony of this pugilistic cormorant was more than completely satisfied, as he publicly declared a short time afterwards that his appetite had never been good since that period. The battle took place at Higher Hardwick, when, after forty minutes had elapsed, Berks acknowledged Gregson to be his master."

There has been a deal of controversy about this statement of Pierce Egan's, some declaring that these men never met, and that it was pure invention on the part of the author of "*Boxiana*." This, however, is not true. Certainly we can find no account of the battle, which, undoubtedly, was of sufficient importance to be chronicled; but in the daily papers of the year 1807—long before Egan wrote his book—it is distinctly stated that Berks and Gregson fought, and that the latter was victorious, further adding, that through this success, Bob Gregson determined to come to London, and try his luck for the Championship of England. But, according to our well-known author, this was not determined upon immediately, for Egan says, "Soon after his battle with Berks, Bob's prospects in life experienced a material change, owing to a severe domestic calamity in the loss of an amiable and affectionate partner"—[perhaps he refers to the widow]—"and he now not only bade adieu to Lancashire, but, in all probability, to pugilism in future on being presented with a commission in the army. His regiment, named after the county, was quartered at Plymouth, to which place Gregson repaired to join the standard; but finding that his finances were not able to support the character of an officer with that respectability which such a situation required, he relinquished the project, and entered rather imprudently into the gay pursuits of

fashion at that place, so that when he arrived in the metropolis, to use a sporting phrase, he was nearly cleaned out. Bob now experienced some vicissitudes—facts are stubborn things—and it was from the necessity of the moment only that Gregson was induced to enter the ring as a pugilist.”

Gregson, anyway, came to London in the autumn of 1807, just about the time that John Gully and the Game Chicken were matched to fight for the second time. The daily papers for August 26, 1807, contained the following paragraph: “Gully and the ‘Chicken’ are again matched, but the constitution of the latter is so shaken by intemperance and excesses since his conflict with Belcher that it is thought he can never face his man, being unable to undergo the exercise of training.”

Soon after that, on the 30th of September, the journals informed the public that, “It is supposed that the battle between Gully and the Chicken will not take place, as the Chicken seems very shy. If the Chicken does not fight Gully will claim the championship and £50 forfeit.”

The very next day it was announced that the Chicken had forfeited the money down, and on the same page was a paragraph, the following being a copy: “Gregson has sent a challenge to Gully, which has been accepted.”

Now, very little was known in London about Bob Gregson, but on the evening of July 12, 1807, Daniel Mendoza and Isaac Bitton, the two Jewish pugilists, took a joint benefit at the Five Courts, St. Martin’s Lane, which was tremendously crowded, the swells being in great force. The sensational incident of the evening was the introduction by John Jackson, who was master of the ceremonies, of a new boxer. This was Bob Gregson, and his fine Herculean proportions and powerful frame called forth the greatest admiration from all assembled. He stood 6ft 2in, and had a huge, big-boned frame. To test his capabilities he was pitted against Isaac Bitton, who weighed upwards of 17st, and whose activity was extraordinary. Gregson soon found that he had a different class boxer to contend with than the yokels he had met in Lancashire; but he acquitted himself in such an admirable manner as to not only attract the attention of John Jackson, but some of the most enthusiastic and aristocratic patrons of the Prize Ring, who felt confident that they would be able to get some good sport out of him.

Amongst those who were particularly struck with the Lancashire man were Major Morgan, Captain Mellish, and Lieutenant Wedderburne Webster, of the 11th Dragoons. This latter young sport was very rich, and anephew to the late Mr. Fletcher Reid, inheriting much

of that gentleman's passion for athletics, particularly boxing. This young cavalry officer had already made a name in the world of sport, having distinguished himself by performing some extraordinary equestrian and pedestrian feats. For a wager of 500 guineas he had walked from Ipswich to Whitechapel, a distance of seventy miles. So easy was the task for the



ROBERT GREGSON.

From a print published by C. Smeaton, 139, St. Martin's Lane. Feb., 1813.

active young officer that (accompanied by John Jackson) he covered sixty-five miles in nineteen hours, and consequently had five hours to complete the remainder. A week or two later he rode his favourite mare, Buzzard, over the same distance within five hours for a wager of 600 guineas.

Having, as we have said, plenty of money, he aspired

to emulate his deceased uncle, and his first protégé was, fortunately for that gigantic individual, Bob Gregson. Gully's principal backers were the Marquis of Tweeddale, the Hon. Berkeley Craven, and Capt. Barclay.

The October of 1807 must have been, indeed, an exciting one for sportsmen, for besides the great fight, the match for 500 guineas between Captain Barclay and Isaac Wood, the celebrated professional pedestrian, was to be decided. The date was fixed for the 12th, near Newmarket, and so it was arranged that the fight should be brought off two days later. The conditions of the foot-race were that each man was to go as he pleased for twenty-four hours, the one who had covered the greatest distance at the close to be adjudged the winner, and Wood to concede twenty miles. The captain was considered to be certain to do 130 miles, which would necessitate Wood doing 150—thought to be beyond a possibility. Odds, though, of 100 to 90 was laid on Wood, but at the start the betting had gone clean round in favour of the captain, some offering 5 to 2 on him.

The whole thing, however, was disappointing, for Wood having done eight miles in the first hour slackened down to five and a half in the sixth hour; then, after completing forty miles, to the amazement of all, resigned. Wood's backers were naturally indignant, especially as they had laid odds on their man at first.

It was some consolation, however, for the crowds who had come to Newmarket that the fight was to take place two days afterwards, and the place was exceedingly lively by all account, accommodation to be had by late comers nowhere.

Bob Gregson, who had trained with Wood at Brighton, got himself into splendid condition, whilst John Gully, at Eastbourne, had the advantage of the society of Captain Barclay and his attendants, Tom Cribb and Will Warr, so he had plenty of good company and sound advice.

The people flocked into the metropolis of gee-gecs from all parts of the country when it was known, after a meeting at the Rutland Arms, that the Wednesday was to be the day, and that 9 a.m. was the time, so that the battle might not interfere with the races in the afternoon, the particular spot chosen being Six Mile Bottom.

Quite punctually to time the men were in the ring, Gully attended by Tom Cribb and Bill Copley, Gregson by Bill Richmond and Harry Lee. Will Warr and John Jackson were also in the ring, "lest," says the reporter, "occasion might demand their services." Sir John Sebright, the well-known Hertfordshire sportsman, was

referee, and at ten o'clock the men faced each other, the betting being 6 to 4 on Gully.

Not often had a pair of such well-trained giants stood together in a ring. Gully's attitude was the better of the two, for he had had the advantage of practice with Tom Cribb and Will Warr, and we are told that "for a moment these two men eyed each other with a fixed and steady stare, the spectators holding their breath in intense expectation. Then Gully broke the spell by feinting with the left, but Bob, cautious and wary, stopped the extension, and fell back; another pause, another feint from Gully, a little harmless sparring, and then at last in went Gully's left full and fair on Bob's cheek. Gregson promptly returned it with a round handed clout on the side of the head. Then they closed, and after a clumsy struggle fell side by side."

The report goes on to say that in the next four rounds Gully did not increase the lead. He threw away a good deal of his caution and went in for slogging, at which game he found Bob quite as good as himself. Some terrific blows were exchanged; Gregson's being mostly round, fell on the side of the head, leaving little visible mark, whereas Gully's were delivered with great precision, and left big bruises on his adversary's face.

In the succeeding round, it appears that Gregson rather astonished Gully and his friends, for he broke through the guard, and put one from the shoulder on to the right eye. So severe was this blow, that it not only drew blood and almost closed the eye, but it hit Gully off his balance, and he fell like a lump of lead. There he lay with his eyes closed, and for a few seconds all thought that he was knocked completely out. The anxiety of Gully's seconds as they lifted him to the corner and chafed his cheeks, dashed cold water over him and held the brandy bottle to his lips, may well be pictured. Captain Barclay, the Hon. Keppel Berkeley Craven and others near the ropes leaned over and watched in breathless silence the efforts of the seconds, for the time was nearly up. It was quite touch and go, and Cribb and Warr were only just able to get their man on to his feet as the order was given to renew.

We are told that there was little to choose between the appearance of the two, for Gully's face, after the last blow, was swollen and turning black, his eye was cut, and his ear bleeding, whilst Bob's face was of a rainbow colour and smothered in little lumps. Gregson, encouraged by what he had achieved, then rushed in, and would have punished Gully had that worthy not rallied immediately his foe was before him and made

such a gallant defence that cheers were raised amongst the crowd. But Gregson was not to be denied. He had learnt too many tricks in wrestling to not know how to take advantage of the situation. Mindful of the old Lancastrian's rough play, he rushed in, caught Gully in his arms and flung him with astounding force to the ground. Had he fell on him in all probability he would have there and then finished the fight, but he apparently did not wish to take any undue advantage, so he went to his corner, accompanied by the ringing cheers of those assembled. The reporter of the *Morning Chronicle* in his account, which appeared next day, said, "By the amateurs present this was thought to be the finest round that was ever fought, and now all felt that it was only Gully's superior science that could enable him to stand against so formidable an opponent."

The odds after this changed to 5 to 4 on Gregson, and his followers became very jubilant. But for some unknown reason Bob, in the very next round, behaved in such an extraordinary manner that their joy was turned to sorrow. Bob made two slashing hits, which were cleverly stopped. Then Gully, stepping in, sent his left in hard on the cheek. It was undoubtedly a nasty smack, but no one was prepared for what followed. Gregson, to the amazement of everyone, deliberately dropped, or rather to put it in the words of an eye witness, "laid himself down." There was a dreadful roar from Gully's partisans of "Foul! foul!" "Cur!" "Coward!" &c. Of course it was no foul, for he had received a blow before falling, and the referee ordered them to fight on.

As they continued both men became very weak, and the rounds were somewhat uninteresting, so they will be hardly worth recounting. But somewhere about the twentieth round the battle had reached an exciting stage, so we will quote one of the best descriptions we can find:—

"Both men were so weak that it seemed that a chance blow might knock either out of time. Their friends cheered them on frantically. 'One more hit will settle him, Bob.' 'He's done, Gully; steady, steady, and you must lick him.' It was only with the utmost difficulty that either could raise his hands—they hit feebly at one another two or three times—blows that would not have crushed a fly; but at last Gregson with a heavy lunge knocked his opponent down, and fell by his side with the force of his own stroke.

"Gully was now the more marked of the two; his right eye was quite closed, and the whole of that side of

his face dreadfully swollen; but he appeared to be getting back his wind and strength, for in this round he steadied himself, and with a straight punch in the face hit Gregson off his legs.

"In the following round Gully twice hit Bob severely in the body, but was thrown heavily by Gregson in the close. Then came a sensational and exciting episode. Bob, in making a furious right-handed lunge, missed, and fell; as he was falling, John caught him a severe smack on the side of the head. 'Foul!' was the cry from Gregson's friends, whilst 'Fair! fair!' was shouted by the Bristolians. Again the referee told them to fight on. From that moment Gully slowly but surely wore his man down. Gregson indeed fought with the utmost spirit and determination, and more than once at the end of a round the two fell so exhausted that it seemed doubtful whether either would be able to come to 'Time.' But Gully always rallied the more quickly, and his lasting powers were evidently superior to those of his opponent.

"At length the two bleeding warriors rolled about the ring like a couple of drunken men, unable to reach one another or put in a blow, the rounds finishing by them both rolling down together. Still Gully was thought to have the best of it, and, finally, amidst the wildest excitement, in the thirty-sixth round brought the contest to an end by a blow on the throat which sent Gregson to the ground senseless. Poor Bob lay where he had fallen, and it was some minutes before he regained consciousness. Gully had just strength enough left to jump in the air with joy at the welcome sound of victory. He then collapsed, and was carried to Captain Barclay's carriage scarcely less helpless than his opponent."

It was evidently a very near thing, and most unsatisfactory to the Lancaster man's partisans. Little wonder then they determined to try again. But of that we shall have more to say in a future chapter.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A GRAND FIELD DAY.—THREE GREAT BATTLES IN ONE RING.
—TOM CRIBB AND GEORGE HORTON.

BEFORE continuing the careers of John Gully and Bob Gregson, whose first meeting we described in the last chapter, it will be necessary to give an account of a battle (not for the Championship) between Tom Cribb and Horton. In the first place, because Tom was shortly afterwards destined to hold the distinguished title; and, secondly, Gully and Gregson held their meeting in the same ring. Indeed, it was one of the biggest field-days ever organised during the existence of prize-fighting. To commence with, Cribb and Horton were to do battle, to be followed by Gully and Gregson, and finally, Dutch Sam and Cropley were to fight it out. No wonder, then, tremendous excitement raged—three battles, and one (the second-mentioned) for the Championship.

But let us, before recording the events of this great day, introduce George Horton. His antagonist, Tom Cribb, destined to become such a shining light in the Ring, has already appeared before our readers.

Horton was born at Bristol, that hotbed of pugilism, in 1782, and, like so many West-country warriors, was a butcher by trade. It is strange to notice that the felling of oxen and men seemed to go hand in hand, for many of the great Bristol warriors were concerned in the meat trade. Horton's business was principally connected with export, and the young butcher was remarkable for the strength he displayed in carrying the carcasses of beasts aboard ship. Indeed, according to accounts, his strength of shoulders and loins must have been enormous. He had had several pitched battles whilst only a youngster, but his first big fight was with a sailor on the deck of one of the ships to which he was supplying dead meat. The dispute arose from a question as to the quality of the meat Horton was supplying, and there was only one way of settling it—to fight it out.

The man who had made himself objectionable to Horton was Ned Weston, a perfect terror to all seamen who sailed from the port of Bristol, and a fine, powerful natural fighter. The battle took place, as we have

said, upon the deck of the ship, and in the presence of the officers and crew, who laughed at the audacity of the landlubber tackling their champion. They were mistaken, though, for young Horton, although less in stature and weight, knew more of the art than the sailor, and in less than a quarter of an hour had him hopelessly beaten.

This victory caused quite a sensation in Bristol when it became known, and the sportsmen of that town soon took the youngster in hand, matching him against one Pardo Wilson, a well-known local man. It was by all accounts a desperate encounter, the men fighting until the twenty-fifth round, when they simultaneously exchanged blows with such tremendous force that both were knocked out of time. Soon after this Horton met Kelly, who had been thought good enough to be matched against the notorious Caleb Baldwin. The Irishman made a poor fight of it, and the Bristolian's reputation was consequently considerably raised by the victory.

Then came his battle with Jack Lancaster, in which he found more than his match. It was, however, no disgrace, for he had met a man of exceptional ability and physique, and had made a brave fight of it. He was more fortunate in his next engagement, defeating Patrick Ford, who subsequently gained considerable fame in the Prize Ring.

He did not fight then for some time—not until he met George Cribb, brother to the famous Tom of that ilk. This was on September 5, 1807, nearly a year prior to the event we are about to record. The battle arose out of a quarrel that ensued after a sparring exhibition held at the "Game Chicken's" house in Bristol, and it was proposed to fight it out then and there. Tom Cribb, however, who was present, would not permit his brother to do anything of the sort, refusing to allow George to meet Horton for any less sum than fifty guineas a-side. The money was found, and the men met near Bristol, when in half an hour the young butcher had his man beaten.

This victory seems to have quite turned Horton's brain, whilst his conceit knew no bounds, and being encouraged and flattered by the "Chicken," he determined upon visiting London. His parents, who were very proud of their pugilistic progeny, and had visions of the name of Horton being handed down to posterity amongst the Champions of England, rigged Master George up extravagantly (for it appears they were very well to do), gave him a well-filled purse, and promised to find him in cash until he was able to make his name in the metropolis.

So with all the swagger imaginable, Master George Horton came to London. He was a finely-built and exceedingly handsome young fellow, and upon his arrival in town soon made many friends, attracting plenty of followers, who were ready to flatter him for what they could get out of him. He was a constant attendant at the Fives Court and the principal sporting drums, spending his money freely and becoming quite a conspicuous character. One of his favourite haunts was "Bob's Chop House," in Holborn, afterwards known as the Castle, and now the Napier Tavern, about which we shall have much to say in future chapters, where he fraternised with the stars of the fistic world.

One evening George Horton was present at the famous hostelry, whereat a goodly number of the Fancy had assembled. He was half drunk, and in his usual blustering style made some allusion to his victory over George Cribb, adding some very offensive remarks upon the family generally. Tom Cribb, who was amongst those present, fortunately was one of the best-tempered fellows in the world, or there would have been a disturbance on the spot. He, however, simply took his pipe from his mouth and remarked, "Well, don't make such a fuss, you haven't beaten *all* the family."

The young butcher turned round fiercely and declared that he would like to do so, and that he was ready to take Tom on at any time, and put down a deposit on the spot, declaring that he was prepared to fight him for £100 a-side.

Naturally Tom Cribb could not but take such a public challenge seriously, so he turned to his patron, Captain Barclay, and asked him what he thought. The gallant Captain immediately declared that he was quite willing, if Horton's friends would cover the money. And then it was evident that this public challenge had been pre-arranged, for Lord Somerset, another of the guests present, at once declared himself willing to be answerable for Horton's battle money. So the "Game Chicken," anxious for his *protégé* to have a turn with the popular pugilist, Tom Cribb, jumped up and proposed that the articles should at once be drawn and signed.

This having been done, the question arose as to the date of fighting, when Bob Gregson proposed that the battle should come off in the same ring in which he was to fight Gully, and in which it had already been arranged that Dutch Sam should meet Cropley. This proposal was hailed with acclamation, and the second week in May was fixed for the triple event. Although Tom Cribb had done much to secure the admiration of sportsmen, even to the beating of the famous Jem Belcher, he had

not quite won the confidence of the patrons of the Ring at this period, and the interest in the coming day's sport was undoubtedly centred in the battle between Gregson and Gully, which we shall describe in our next chapter. Captain Barclay, however, swore by him, and even at that time declared that there was nobody able to enter the ring who could beat him, and that he was confident that Tom was the coming Champion. On the other hand, the "Game Chicken" declared that his countryman was the finest fellow that ever peeled, and was confident that he was destined to wear the Champion's belt.

Everything went well, and the *locale* was kept quite secret until the Saturday night before the battle, which was fixed for the following Wednesday. Even then only a favoured few had the word passed that it had been decided to bring the three affairs off on the borders of Bedford and Bucks, a few miles from Woburn. Dark as the matter was supposed to be kept, however, the cat was let out of the bag by some incautious member, and on the Monday the Marquis of Buckingham gave public notice in the *Bucks County Chronicle* to the following effect:—

Buckingham House, London,
May 8, 1808.

Information having been transmitted to me, His Majesty's *custos rotulorum* in and for the county of Bucks, of an intended riotous assembly, aiding and assisting in a breach of the peace, by a boxing match within that part of the County of Bucks which touches or joins on the Counties of Bedford and Herts, near the town of Dunstable, and that the said illegal and riotous assembly will take place on Tuesday, the 10th inst., notice is hereby given that proper steps have been taken for the detection and punishment of all persons acting as aforesaid in breach of the peace, by the attendance of the magistrates, high constables, petty constables, and other peace officers entrusted with the execution of the law within the county.

NUGENT BUCKINGHAM.

Custos Rotulorum of Bucks

The annoyance that this created may be better imagined than described, not only amongst the ranks of the Fancy, but in all classes of sporting society. Indeed, never was pugilism more popular than in the first decade of the present century. One distinguished aristocrat had promised (and eventually did) to attend this great outing, to witness the three battles. He was no less a personage than the Duke of Sussex. Unlike his brothers, the Regent, Clarence, and York, the Duke was not a frequenter of prize-fights, and possibly this may have been his first and last visit to one, but it goes to prove how attractive pugilism must have been to induce his Grace Sussex, the best of all the sons of George III. His

Royal Highness' memory will be respected by all true Masons, for his name is indelibly associated with the Craft; besides which he was the only one of the family endowed with refined literary tastes, and possessed one of the finest libraries in the kingdom.

So with the knowledge that Royalty would be present, accompanied by absolutely the bluest blood in Britain, besides representatives of literature, art, and science, to say nothing of the whole world of sport, it was believed that the Marquis would never carry out his threat, and so those answerable for the arrangements were determined to adhere to the original programme.

Another illustrious personage who was present was Lord Byron. At that period he was studying at Cambridge University, and he went over and took up his quarters in the same tavern at Woburn with Tom Cribb and his party. For years after, in a letter to John Murray, he recalls several reminiscences in detail of this event. He writes of how honest Tom was disgusted at the smell of lavender in which the towels put for his use were kept, though the scent was rather approved of by Horton, who in his way was a bit of a dandy. Byron was amongst the hundreds of celebrities who journeyed to Woburn on the Saturday and Sunday and secured all the beds and stabling that were to be found in the village.

Here is a graphic description of the appearance of the place upon this memorable occasion:—"Never was the quiet little town so frightened out of its propriety. All day long on Monday fresh relays arrived in carriages and on horseback from all parts of the kingdom, seeking the accommodation that could not be procured. The most fabulous prices were offered by lords for a settle in the kitchen or a bundle of straw on the floor; barns, outhouses, and sheds were gladly seized upon by persons who never slept before on anything harder than down and under silken coverlets, and paid for at hotel prices. Even tool-houses, anything that afforded a shelter from the sky, rose to a premium, and ultimately could not be had at any price; so late comers had to live and sleep in their carriages, and those who came on horseback bargained to sleep with their horses, and had to take their meals out of doors, on tables brought out on the pavement."

The above is a picture of the scenes in which the enthusiasts of the noble art figured nearly a century ago. How changed are they to-day! The luxury of a well-lighted and warm room, with a cushioned seat to recline upon in evening-dress is indispensable to the patron of the fistio art to-day.

At length the morning of the 10th of May, 1808, broke warm and sunny, and still people arrived by thousands, gentlemen on horseback, gigs, tandems, curricles, carts, and waggons streamed into the place. Then, to everybody's disappointment and amazement, the Marquis of Buckingham, mounted on horseback, appeared in the town, followed by the magistracy of Bedfordshire and Huntingdonshire, whilst bringing up the rear were their constables and volunteers from the surrounding districts, together with the Dunstable Yeomanry, with drums beating and colours flying, sabres drawn, and cartridge-boxes filled. They looked very fierce, but if the truth were known there was not a man amongst them who would not, if he could, have enjoyed the sport.

We have no space to give to the description of the scene which followed. A consultation was held, at which Colonel Berkeley, Gore Langton, Lord Somerset, Captain Barclay, and a good many more were for proceeding at all hazards. But the authorities were in earnest in spite of the distinguished visitors. Messengers had been despatched from Woburn in all directions, and Bucks, Beds, and Herts were all up in arms. The magistrates were determined to take the severest measures to frustrate any attempt at a breach of the peace within any of their districts.

The Duke of Sussex had arrived, and it became evident that something had to be done. An account of what followed at the consultation we quote:—"Then jovial Sir John Sebright burst out, 'By G——,' he cried, 'we won't be balked. If you like to go as far as Market Street, my park is at your service.'" A tremendous cheer greeted this patriotic offer, nobody for a moment taking into consideration the seventeen miles that interposed between them and their destination. To gain this, however, all had to retrace their steps, and again defile through Woburn. . . . Along the kerb were drawn up yeomanry, constables, volunteers, the first and last with loaded firelocks. And these precautions were not altogether superfluous, for the bucks and bloods were terribly irritated at being thwarted, and many were with much difficulty restrained by the more prudent from levelling missiles at the windows."

It is hardly credible, but all the reports of the period declare that the whole seventeen miles from Woburn to Market Street was thronged with people. They came from north as far as Yorkshire, from south, east, and west. As they passed through the villages, it is stated as much as a guinea a mile was offered for any kind of conveyance.

It was not until two o'clock that the advance guard arrived at Market Street. The weather, as we have stated, during the morning had been fine, but now the sky became overcast and the rain came pelting down, adding materially to the discomfort of the situation. As the crowd filed into Sir John Sebright's beautiful park there was a perfect deluge.

No time was lost in getting the ring fixed, opposite the house, on a fine level piece of ground. Bill Gibbons, assisted by many willing hands, had everything ready before three o'clock, and around the arena were rows of pedestrians, who, in spite of the sloppy state of the grass, lay or sat down. These were girded by a triple ring of horsemen, and beyond were hundreds of carriages.

It had been decided that Tom Cribb and George Horton should open the ball. The colours were tied to the stakes; dark blue for Cribb, and yellow and white for Horton, and with John Jackson holding the watch, "Time" was called on the stroke of three, and amidst a pitiless storm beating down upon them the two pugilists got to work. It is not our intention (this not being really a Championship fight) to give the full details. We shall only outline the affair.

There was little to choose between the men. In age they were within a year of one another, both being between six and seven and twenty; in height Cribb had only the advantage of a quarter of an inch, Horton being just over 5ft 10½in. In weight, however, Tom had the advantage of a stone; he turning the scale at 14st, whilst George was exactly 13st.

They started with most good-humoured expressions on their faces, but according to the reports this happy state of affairs lasted but for a very brief period, for Tom "put in one of his battering-ram thumps upon Horton's ribs, doubling him up like a child with the croup." After this a lively rally ensued, when George caught his opponent a stinging blow on the throat, but received such a stunner behind the ear that he went down like a log of wood.

The betting was now at 6 to 4 on Cribb, and in the second round Tom felled his man again. After this Horton fought desperately, but got much the worst of the slogging. He, however, managed to rush in, catch hold of Tom, and throw him a nasty cross-buttock. For a moment the spirits of Horton's friends rose, but although Cribb fought on the retreat, and appeared slow in his movements, he always managed to get there, and in one round Horton, thinking his antagonist was flinching as he beat a retreat, rushed in, but to his surprise, received both fists, one quickly after the other, between the eyes.

An account says :—" Keeping his balance for a moment, Horton staggered and fell a helpless mass at his opponent's feet."

After that it was virtually over. His eyes were nearly closed, yet up he came round after round in the pluckiest manner. It was, however, a very one-sided affair. To be sure, twenty-five rounds were got through, but after the first half-dozen it was evident to all present that Cribb could do what he pleased with his man. He told Lord Byron afterwards that he so disliked beating him for " He looked so pretty !" And George Horton was undoubtedly an exceedingly handsome fellow.

At length it was evident that the Bristol man was hopelessly beaten, and at the instigation of Horton's backers, Harry Lee, his second, threw up the sponge in token of his defeat, and amidst a tremendous ovation Tom Cribb, the coming champion, was declared the victor, he having up to that period won six fights out of seven.

The ring was quickly cleared and preparations made for the next and chief item on the programme, the battle for the Championship between the two G's—Gully and Gregson—to which we shall devote the next chapter.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE HONOUR GAINED AND DECLINED.—JOHN GULLY AND BOB GREGSON. THEIR SECOND BATTLE. — THE END OF A ROMANTIC CAREER.

BEFORE describing the battle which followed that between Cribb and Horton, at Sir John Sebright's park, on the memorable 10th of May, 1808, in presence of the immense concourse of people, composed of royalty, gentry, and all classes of the followers of the Fancy, we must ask our readers to allow us to digress somewhat. It will be better before taking them upon the battlefield,

once more to give a brief history of how the match was made, when we will follow the adventures of that memorable day.

After the battle which took place at Six Mile Bottom, Newmarket, between the warriors whose names head this chapter, and which was fought upon the 14th of October, 1807, the Championship still remained in abeyance, for the "Game Chicken" had practically finished his career, whilst Tom Cribb had previously beaten Jem Belcher, the ex-Champion.

John Gully, however, was the man looked upon as the rightful owner of the title by most, but there were still believers in the great Lancashire giant, Bob Gregson; and that not without reason after the close contest we have already described. That Gregson still believed in his power to turn the tables may be gathered from the following epistle he sent to Gully in November:—

MR. GULLY,—It is the wish of myself and friends, that I should try my fortune with you in another battle for £200 a-side. If you are inclined to give me the opportunity I shall thank you to say so; and also to name the time when it will be convenient to meet to put down the stakes and arrange the particulars.

R. GREGSON.

John Gully lost no time in answering the above; he, by return, sending the subjoined reply:—

"MR. GREGSON,—I accept your challenge; but I wish you would make the match for £250, instead of £200, a-side. I shall not delay a moment in returning to town and making the necessary arrangements as to time, place, &c.

JOHN GULLY.

And so a meeting was convened forthwith. Gully, who was staying at the time at Norwich, came to London at once, and before Christmas the following agreement was drawn up and signed:—

Major Morgan, on the part of Gregson, and Mr. Jackson, on the part of Gully, agree to deposit 50 guineas each this day (December 22, 1807), and a further deposit of 50 guineas on the 1st of March, 1808, or forfeit the first 50 guineas; and on the Monday following the Craven Meeting the remainder of the stakes to be made good, or the 100 guineas also to be forfeited; and that the Hon. Berkeley Craven be requested to hold the stakes on the day of battle.

Then was published the

CONDITIONS OF THE BATTLE.

1. The battle to take place on the Wednesday following the First Spring Meeting, between the hours of ten and twelve a.m.

2. To fight in a roped square of forty feet.

3. Neither to fall without a knock-down blow ; subject to the decision of the umpires.

4. Three umpires to be chosen upon the ground, viz., two, and one in reference.

(Signed) CHARLES MORGAN.
JOHN JACKSON.

There seems to have been little desire to keep the particulars away from the authorities, for the above paragraphs appeared in all the journals of the day devoting their columns to the noble art, and we wonder that no steps were taken to stop the whole affair. Little or nothing, however, seems to have been attempted, and Bob Gregson made his headquarters the Load of Hay, an old hostelry even in our time, but now rebuilt, situate upon Haverstock Hill.

At that time it was, of course, all rural around, with here and there a few houses and farms dotted about, but a clear country road to Hampstead Heath, and it was on that fine open space that Bob took his breathers.

Most people thought that it was only Gully's superior skill that won him the battle, and that if Bob Gregson could only acquire a little more science, his physique was more than a match for the Bristol butcher.

And now let us return to the ring-side in Sir John Sebright's park at Market Street, the little village which is half in Herts and half in Bucks.

It will be remembered that in our last chapter we left them clearing the ring ready for the second battle of the day, that between the two men whose contest we are about to relate. The rain had been coming down in torrents throughout the whole of the fight between Cribb and Horton, but no sooner had they left the ring than small patches of blue sky spread above, and the clouds were chased away by a strong breeze to the horizon, allowing the sun to shine out in all its splendour upon the dripping leaves and beautiful surroundings.

Bob Gregson was the first to step into the ring. He had made his toilet in Lord Barrymore's carriage, and appeared before the public attired in white breeches and white silk stockings, but without shoes. Gully was quickly after him, having made his change in Captain Barclay's barouche, and adopted precisely the same costume.

A tremendous cheer greeted the two warriors. Gully, as we have before stated, stood exactly 6ft, while Gregson was $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches taller. The latter was a tremendously muscular and powerful man, and Gully looked slight beside him, although his form was a model for an Apollo. Harry Lee, as before, looked after Gregson, whilst

Ward officiated for Gully. John Jackson was the referee, and Captain Barclay and Major Morgan acted as umpires. Hen Pearce ("The Game Chicken"), Bill Richmond, Old Will Warr, and Bill Gibbons also remained within the arena, but for what purpose it is difficult to comprehend. John Gully, in a frank manner and with a smile upon his face, held out his hand to the Lancashire man, but the latter took it somewhat sullenly, and his expression denoted that he had not forgotten their last meeting, and that it was to be a battle to the death on this occasion, so far as Bob Gregson was concerned. "Time" was called, and they at once set to work. Here is a description of the first round, which must have been short and sweet:—"Watching his opportunity, Gully drew back and then sent two terrific blows, one after another, right through his opponent's guard, the one landing on the throat, the other on the neck, sending Gregson, who fell with his feet under him, to the ground like a log."

The effect, it is stated, upon the spectators was electrical. Every man leaped to his feet, and cheer upon cheer rang out from thousands of voices. "6 to 4 on Gully" was the cry, and the Lancastrian's friends had such confidence in their man as they saw him rise from the ground that they took the odds freely.

Gregson came up a little shaky for the second round, but he at once got to work, aiming a blow at Gully's head. The latter avoided, however, by neatly shifting position. Bob dashed in again, and a lively rally ensued, in which he got in some telling blows, especially one on the Bristolian's loins. Then Gully caught his man round the neck, a sharp tussle ensued, and they both came to the ground heavily together, amidst more cheering. To quote the account again:—

"Bob opened the next round well by putting in a terrific blow full upon Gully's chest, but though it resounded all round the ring it hardly shook that pillar-like form, and advancing upon his antagonist, John got in blow after blow, though receiving some in exchange, until Gregson, ducking under his guard, caught him round the waist, and by a prodigious effort threw him. When the Lancashire lad again toed the scratch his head was swollen, and he was bleeding freely from the mouth."

The odds were now 2 to 1 on Gully, without much response, for his superiority was palpable to all—more so, considerably, than upon the occasion of their first meeting. What Bob lacked in science he endeavoured to make up in force, and no doubt with a less powerful but equally clever antagonist than Gully might very probably have turned the tables.

After several rounds had been fought without any decisive damage being done, a tremendous uproar was created by a certain act upon the part of Gregson, that elicited loud cries of "Foul! Foul!" He had tried so many times to get at Gully, but was always beautifully stopped, that he became mad with rage at the applause bestowed upon his adversary. In fact, for the moment, he lost his head, and, rushing in, he stooped suddenly and caught Gully round the thigh. Then, with prodigious strength, he raised him in his arms, and, after holding him up for some seconds, dashed him to the ground.

The referee took no notice of the demand for the recognition of a "foul," so the battle proceeded. The next round was all in Gully's favour; he appeared to do exactly what he chose with Bob, he receiving six successive blows on the head without a return. The last knocked him clean off his legs.

In the fourteenth round Gully broke clean through his opponent's guard, and felled him with a right and left-hander. A report says:—"In the next round he fought like a rabid bull, but Gully avoided all his blows with matchless skill, and put in a hit for his every miss. Twice did Gregson turn his back upon his opponent, and make for the ropes, but each time Gully brought him back, held him up, and flogged him until he was all but senseless, then let him fall between his arms."

It must have been a terrible sight to have seen such a brave fellow punished. The Gregson party, amongst whom were several of his own countrymen, shouted, "Purr the ——! Kick his brains out! Bite his —— nose off;" But the "purring" business was quite out of the question, for the men were fighting in their stockinged feet.

Round after round they fought; but Gregson only came up to be knocked down again—until, in the twenty-seventh, he received such a stunner under the left ear that he fell, deprived of sense and motion. Gully, although much marked about the face and body, seemed not much the worse for a battle that had lasted one hour and a quarter, and in which they had both been "slogging" all the time. The applause was terrific as Gully was acknowledged to be the best man of his time, and entitled to be recognised as Champion of England.

When the cheering had somewhat subsided, the victor made signs that he wished to speak, and addressing the referee and principal patrons, Gully declared that the fight was none of his seeking, that having, since the last battle, taken unto himself a wife and gone into the public line of business, he had hoped to have been

allowed to remain in peace. However, after the result of the first fight he had considered himself bound in honour to accept Gregson's challenge and give him his revenge. Now he wished that Gregson would not force him into another battle, for he had no wish to enter the prize ring again.

Poor Bob Gregson was conveyed in a senseless condition back to an inn at Market Street, where he lay until the following Saturday before he had sufficiently recovered to enable him to be conveyed back to London.

With the third fight, that between Dutch Sam and Cropley, we have nothing to do here. Suffice it to say that it did not commence until six o'clock, lasted an hour, and resulted in a victory for Sam.

So it was seven o'clock before the multitude filed out of Sir John Sebright's park, which looked after they had departed more like a ploughed field than a gentleman's estate. And here let us call attention to the enormous interest this fight called forth. Tom Moore, the poet, in a letter dated November 4, 1811, wrote thus to a friend:—

"I suppose you have heard that during 'the Talents' administration (the administration which, on account of its containing so many clever men was nicknamed 'The Government of all the Talents') Windham received an express from Lord Grey, which made a great sensation in every town it passed through, but which turned out to be the *announce* of a battle between Gully and Gregson, sent by the Foreign Secretary to the War Secretary, 'on public service.' The Right Honourable William Windham was one of the most talented statesmen of the day, and a very fine scholar, but at the same time one of the most ardent supporters of the Prize Ring that ever lived."

Gully had thus leaped into notoriety. But it did not turn his long head. After his first battle with Gregson he had taken the Plough Tavern, in Carey Street, where the Law Courts now stand, and after the second fight thither everybody flocked to get a glimpse of the Champion, and the hostelry became more famous than ever. There in a white apron behind the bar, was mine host, assisted by his wife. He must have done enormous business, for the sports came from all parts, and consisted not only of the Fancy, but of City swells and West End dandies, and the popping of champagne corks was music all day to madam's ear.

And now it will be an opportune moment to trace the marvellous, not to say romantic, career of our hero, although we briefly touched upon it in a previous chapter. He had had enough of fighting, as he declared, in the ring, so declined the Championship and turned his atten-

tion to the Turf. He was a man of very little education, but a cute, clear-headed fellow, with a very quick perception. He became a bookmaker, and it is recorded that at the commencement of his career in that capacity he was very shady, and mixed up with a host of blacklegs. Within a period of four years after the fight above recorded, however, he was executing commissions for the best men of the day, amongst them Colonel Mellish, and a little later even for the Prince Regent, for whom he was appointed special agent.

So rapidly did he make money, that in 1827 he could afford to give the Earl of Jersey 4,000 guineas for Mameluke, the Derby winner, who involved him in a loss of £40,000 over the Leger, through the starter being got at by that old arch villain, Crockford. But when settling day came the first man to enter the rooms, and the last to leave them, was John Gully. He shortly afterwards became master of Upton House Park, in Hertfordshire, as well as of a fine residence at Newmarket, where, during the racing season, he entertained the most aristocratic sportsmen in the most sumptuous manner.

Gully won large sums of money on the racecourse. He made with his partner, Robert Ridsdale, £60,000 over St. Giles' Derby, and many another good haul did this partner make fairly and unfairly. In 1846 Gully won the Derby and the Oaks with Pyrrhus the First and Mendicant, an exploit which had only once been accomplished before.

In 1832 he was returned to the first Reform Parliament as Member for Pontefract. Greville, in his "Memoirs," writes:—"Gully's history is extraordinary . . . Having become rich he embarked in a coal speculation, which answered beyond his hopes, and his shares soon yielded immense profits. His wife, who who was a coarse, vulgar woman, in the meanwhile died, and he afterwards married the daughter of an inn-keeper, who proved as gentlewoman-like as the other had been the reverse, and who is very pretty besides. At the Reform dissolution he was pressed to come forward as candidate for Pontefract, but after some hesitation he declined. Latterly he has taken great interest in politics, and has been an ardent Reformer, and a liberal subscriber for the advancement of the cause. When Parliament was about to be dissolved, he was again invited to stand for Pontefract by a numerous deputation; he again hesitated, but finally accepted. Lord Mexborough withdrew, and he was elected without opposition. In person he is tall and finely formed, full of strength and grace, with delicate hands and feet, his face coarse and with a bad expression, his head set well

on his shoulders, and remarkably graceful and even dignified in his action and manners; totally without education, he has strong sense, discretion, reserve, and a species of good taste which has prevented, in the height of his fortunes, his behaviour from ever transgressing the bonds of modesty and respect, and he has gradually separated himself from the rabble of bettors and blackguards, of whom he was once the most conspicuous, steadily asserted his own independence, and acquired gentility, without ever presuming towards those whom he had been accustomed to regard with deference. His position is now more anomalous than ever, for a Member of Parliament is a great man, though there appear no reasons why the suffrages of the blackguards of Pontefract should place him in different social relations towards us from those in which we mutually stood before."

Such were the words penned by Charles Greville about the ex-prize-fighter, and from such a bitter pen as his it speaks well for John Gully. He sat in Parliament only two sessions, making a few bye speeches, and resigned, giving as an excuse ill-health.

Soon after winning the Derby with Andover (1854) he sold off his stud and ended his Turf career, which had extended over fifty years. At Corking Hall, near Durham, he passed the latter days of his adventurous career. By his two wives he had twelve children, but most of them died before him, one falling in the Indian Mutiny, but several of his grandchildren still survive.

And now we must let this extraordinary man make his exit, for in these pages he has finished playing his part, although we may have occasion to allude to him in future chapters.

John Gully died on the 9th of March, 1863, at the above-mentioned seat, at the ripe old age of eighty. His wish that he might be buried at Ackworth was carried out, and there he was interred on the 14th of March, the Mayor and Corporation of Pontefract and an immense concourse of gentry and tradesmen following him to the grave.